WOMEN IN ACTION SPORT CULTURES

Identity, Politics and Experience

Edited by

Holly Thorpe and Rebecca Olive

Global Culture and Sport Series

Holly Thorpe • Rebecca Olive
Editors

Women in Action Sport Cultures

Identity, Politics and Experience

palgrave
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To future generations of women in actions sports, and the women who paved the way for them.

Endorsements

'A highly engaging collection that covers an array of fascinating topics from roller derby to parkour. Once started, it's hard to put down'.

–Robyn Longhurst, *University of Waikato, New Zealand.*

'This volume opens the topic of 'sport' to postcolonial feminisms, queer theory, critical masculinities, and a continuing regard for the social lives of women and girls'.

–Krista Comer, *Institute for Women Surfers, USA*

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Notes on Contributors

Matthew Atencio, PhD, is an assistant professor at California State University East Bay in Hayward, California. He teaches courses related to social justice and research methodologies in the context of urban sport cultures and schools. Dr. Atencio researches socio-cultural issues related to youth sport, including both traditional and lifestyle/action forms. He also investigates pedagogical innovation in physical education, outdoor education, and broader school systems. Dr. Atencio has worked within international research settings such as Australia, Scotland, Singapore, and the USA.

Becky Beal, Ed.D., is a professor of kinesiology at California State University East Bay, where she teaches courses in the sociology and philosophy of sport and serves as the associate director for the Center for Sport and Social Justice. Dr. Beal has been researching the cultural and political dynamics of skateboarding for over 20 years and has published several articles, book chapters, and a reference book on the topic. Currently, she is collaborating with Drs. Atencio, McClain, and Wright to explore urban politics and the differing practices of parents and community groups' investment in skateboard parks.

Kath Bicknell, PhD, investigates embodied cognition and skilled action in live performance. She is infectiously interested in what this teaches us about the world we live in and the bodies we have. Her research draws on her experiences as a mountain bike racer to advance interdisciplinary debates in the humanities and sciences. Drawing on her background in performance studies, she currently works with a talented team based in the Department of Cognitive Science at

Macquarie University in Sydney and as a freelance media professional. Dr. Bicknell regularly writes opinion pieces, features, and equipment reviews for global cycling media.

Katherine Bischoping, PhD, is an associate professor of sociology at York University. Her trajectory from statistics to applied survey research, and then to qualitative approaches in sociology and beyond, including playwriting, has been informed by her abiding fascination with research methods. Dr. Bischoping's projects examine the behind-the-scenes work of methodologists, the role of narration and memory in oral history methods, gendered discourses in cultural narratives, and cultural work and workers. She has been published in such journals as *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, and *Sex Roles*.

Lisette Burrows, PhD, is a professor in the School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Sciences, University of Otago, New Zealand. She has been researching and teaching health and physical education pedagogy for over 20 years. Her research draws on poststructural theoretical tools and insights from the sociology of education, sociology of youth, curriculum studies and cultural studies' perspectives to explore the place and meaning of physical culture and health in young people's lives. She is also interested in the ways health imperatives expressed at policy and government level are taken up and responded to in community contexts.

Megan Chawansky, PhD, is a Faculty Member at the University of Kentucky. She has worked and researched in the Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) sector since 2008. Her research focuses on socio-cultural power struggles around gender, and the way in which these struggles shape the subjectivities, bodies, and lives of girls and women.

Riley Chisholm, PhD, is an associate professor of sociology at St. Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia, Canada. Her research is in the area of fear, gender identity, and politics; however, in recent work, she is beginning to look at issues around ontology, farming, and food security.

James Connor, PhD, is a senior lecturer in the School of Business, University of New South Wales (UNSW), Canberra. His work on sport focuses on doping, team culture, and fan behavior, informed by his research in emotions theory (*The Sociology of Loyalty*, Springer, 2007). He has published in sport, medicine, and sociology journals and currently holds two World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) social science research grants.

Hamish Crocket, PhD, is a senior lecturer in Te Oranga, School of Human Development and Movement Studies, University of Waikato, New Zealand. He draws on sociological and psychological theories to study ethical subjectivities within both action and traditional sports. He also has related strands of research focusing on gender, coaching, and qualitative research methods.

Barbara Humberstone, PhD, is a professor of sociology of sport and outdoor education at Buckinghamshire New University, UK. Her research interests include embodiment and nature-based sport, and well-being and outdoor pedagogies. She co-edited (with M. Brown) *Seascapes: Shaped by the sea. Embodied Narratives and Fluid Geographies* (2015) and (with K. Hendersen and H. Prince) *International Handbook of Outdoor Studies* (2016), and has published papers in a variety of journals. Dr. Humberstone is editor-in chief of the *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning* and was chair of the European Institute for Outdoor Adventure Education and Experiential Learning (2004–2008). She is a keen windsurfer, walker, swimmer, and yogini.

lisahunter, PhD, researches and teaches in physical and movement cultures, including surfing, health and physical education, teacher education, sport and leisure, and research methodologies. A current focus is on historical and contemporary narratives of surfing at personal, organizational, and cultural levels. She explores many contexts to pay attention not only to identity, practices, and pedagogies in surfing and relationships with the sea, but also in relation to schooling, teacher education, sex/gender/sexualities. Dr. lisahunter has become fascinated by methodologies of sensory and visual narrative as part of participatory research, and is publishing widely on this topic.

Steph MacKay, PhD, is an independent scholar located in Ottawa, Canada. She has published in a range of scholarly journals and books on the topics of gender in digital skateboarding media, social theory, obesity, and campus media. Her current project explores the role digital community media plays in facilitating women's entry into Great Lake surfing and providing female surfers with a space for the construction of cultural identities. Dr. MacKay spends copious amounts of time outdoors and tries to get on snow/surf/skateboards whenever possible.

ZaNean McClain, PhD, is an assistant professor of kinesiology at California State University East Bay. She received her doctorate from Oregon State University, specializing in sport pedagogy. Her research expertise relates to investigating youth and parent participation in urban sport contexts, in relation to

gender, race, ethnicity, and social class discourses. Dr. McClain also investigates the enjoyment and physical activity levels of youth with and without disabilities, within the context of in-school physical education programs. She teaches a range of courses related to using innovative sport and physical education pedagogies with diverse populations.

Mihi Nemani is the principal lecturer in the School of Sport at Manukau Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand. She has been passionately involved in the sport of bodyboarding at national and international levels. As a Maori Samoan female bodyboarder, she contributes a unique perspective to surf culture by drawing upon her own experiences in and out of the surf. Her research interests involve investigating the roles ethnicity and gender play when participating in lifestyle sports such as bodyboarding.

Rebecca Olive, PhD, is a Lecturer at The University of Queensland and Southern Cross University in Australia, where she teaches cultural studies, gender studies and sport sociology. Previously, she was a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Waikato. Working across cultural studies, gender studies, history, and sociology, Dr. Olive's interest in action sports stems from her PhD research about women's experiences of recreational surfing, both in the water and on social media. As well as publishing in journals such as *International Journal of Cultural Studies* and *Sport, Education & Society*, she contributes to surf media and publishes her own blog, 'Making Friends with the Neighbours'.

Adele Pavlidis, PhD, is co-author of *Sport, Gender and Power: The Rise of Roller Derby* (2014) as well as of several other articles in internationally recognized journals. As an interdisciplinary sociologist, Dr. Pavlidis works across the areas of sport, leisure, youth, and well-being. She is a lecturer in sociology and a member of the Griffith Centre for Cultural Research at Griffith University, Australia.

Victoria Robinson, PhD, is a professor of sociology/director of the Centre for Women's Studies at the University of York. Her research interests are in risk sports, masculinities, heterosexualities, and fashion and footwear, underpinned by an engagement with feminist and critical masculinity theory and a cultural sociology of the everyday. With Diane Richardson, she is co-editor of Palgrave's international series *Genders and Sexualities*.

Georgina Roy, PhD, surfs recreationally and finds herself magnetized to surfing spaces. In 2013 she completed her PhD, entitled 'Feminism in New Sporting Spaces: Gender, Subjectivity and the Female Surfer in Britain', at the University of Brighton. She is currently an independent researcher.

Lucy Spowart, PhD, has taught in the field of sport development for 20 years, has a doctorate in sport sociology, and is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, UK. She now has a dual life as associate professor in Clinical Education at Plymouth University and as director and Level 3 triathlon coach for 'Believe and Achieve Triathlon Coaching', where she specializes in supporting women (frequently mothers) to achieve in triathlon and multi-sport events, including ironman. Dr. Spowart's research interests reflect her dual roles. She has published in the area of motherhood, lifestyle sports, qualitative methodologies, and more recently, lecturers' experiences of gaining professional accreditation.

Synthia Sydnor, PhD, earned her doctorate in interdisciplinary humanities at the Pennsylvania State University and began her career at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she is an associate professor with appointments in Kinesiology & Community Health and the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory. She is co-author of *To the Extreme: Alternative Sports*, *Inside and Out* (2003) and has been a National Endowment for the Humanities scholar. Her work, focused on cultural–historical analysis of sport and ritual, has appeared in journals such as *Studies in Symbolic Interaction* and *Interface: A Forum for Theology in the World*.

Holly Thorpe, PhD, is associate professor in Te Oranga, School of Human Development and Movement Studies, University of Waikato, New Zealand. She works primarily in the field of the sociology of sport and physical culture, with her research interests including youth, gender, women's health, action sports, mobilities, sport for development, social theory, and qualitative methods. She is a recipient of both Fulbright and Leverhulme Fellowships, and author of *Transnational Mobilities in Action Sport Cultures* (2014) and *Snowboarding Bodies in Theory and Practice* (2011). She was co-editor (with Douglas Booth) of the *Berkshire Encyclopedia of Extreme Sports* and the *Greenwood Extreme Sports Series*, and more recently the *Routledge Handbook of Physical Cultural Studies* (with Michael Silk and David Andrews).

Charlene Weaving, PhD, is an associate professor in human kinetics at St. Francis Xavier University. Her main research area is sport philosophy focusing on gender analysis. Past research projects include an examination of the Legends Football League (LFL), the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), and women athletes posing nude.

Belinda Wheaton, PhD, is an associate professor in sport and leisure studies in the Te Oranga, School of Human Development and Movement Studies, at University of Waikato, New Zealand. Previously she was an associate professor in sport and leisure cultures at the University of Brighton, UK, where she

taught sport sciences, sport and leisure studies, and sports journalism. She is best known for her research on the cultural politics of informal and lifestyle sport, which include a monograph, *The Cultural Politics of Lifestyle Sports* (2013), and several edited collections, including *Understanding Lifestyle Sport* (2004).

E. Missy Wright, PhD, is an assistant professor of kinesiology at California State University East Bay. Dr. Wright earned her doctorate, specializing in psychosocial aspects of sport and physical activity, from Michigan State University in 2013, where she worked at the Institute for the Study of Youth Sport. Since starting at East Bay in 2013, Dr. Wright has taught courses in critical inquiry in kinesiology, sport and exercise psychology, and social inclusion in physical activity. She especially values conducting community-engaged research, with her research examining inclusivity with youth sport and physical activity settings in the Bay Area, California.

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Introduction: Contextualizing Women in Action Sport Cultures

Holly Thorpe and Rebecca Olive

Surfer Alana Blanchard and snowboarder Gretchen Bleiler are among the growing number of action sports-stars who have infiltrated broader popular culture. Although no longer competing on the World Surfing Tour, American professional surfer and model Alana Blanchard remains the highest-paid female surfer, earning more than US$1.8 million in 2014 (The Stab List, 2014) from her various sponsorships, including Rip Curl, Sony, and T-Mobile. Blanchard exemplifies the blonde, tanned, toned 'surfer-girl' persona, and she uses online and social media platforms to self-promote her bikini-clad physique and surfing lifestyle to international audiences. With over 1.4 million Instagram followers, almost 2 million Facebook 'likes', and 180,000 Twitter followers, she is featured regularly on the world's 'hottest athletes' lists. American snowboarder

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Gretchen Bleiler also became a hot commodity in contemporary popular culture and after winning a silver medal in the 2006 Winter Olympic half-pipe event, featured for the second time in *FHM* and *Maxim* magazines. As these examples illustrate, media representations of women in action sports tend to celebrate a young, white, heterosexual, athletic femininity, with 'other' women remaining largely invisible. In other words, the media tends to focus on those women who demonstrate physical prowess and a risk-taking attitude, while simultaneously maintaining a heterosexual femininity, and thus can be positioned as a 'sexy' commodity for male consumption (Chen, 2013; Cole & Hribar, 1995; Gill, 2007, 2008; McRobbie, 2009; Thorpe, in press). This book creates space for the lived experiences of the many other ways that women participate in action sport cultures around the world. Arguably, the women who are charging down steep mountain faces in Alaska, climbing the most challenging routes in the Yosemites, dropping into concrete bowls with their male peers, and surfing everyday in their local communities are all contributing to redefining what it means to be a sportswoman today. This book challenges stereotypical representations of women in action sport cultures by prioritizing the everyday lived experiences of a diverse range of participants—including mothers, lesbians, 'brown' participants, older women, and non-Western girls and women—across a wide array of nontraditional sports, and in so doing, explores the shifting terrain of girls and women in sport and physical culture in the twenty-first century.

Contextualizing Women in Action Sport Cultures

In previous research, the term 'action sports' has been used to refer to a wide range of mostly individualized activities such as BMX, kite-surfing, skateboarding, surfing, and snowboarding (Thorpe, 2014; Thorpe & Wheaton, 2013). While many of these sports have come to be integrated into mainstream competitions and culture, in the early phases of their development at least, these activities differed from traditional rule-bound, competitive, regulated western 'achievement' sport cultures. Various other categorizations have been used to describe these activities,

including extreme, lifestyle, and alternative sports (Booth & Thorpe, 2007; Rinehart, 2000; Wheaton, 2004); however, the term 'action sports' is increasingly the preferred term used by sporting industries and governing bodies, as well as many sporting participants themselves (many of whom resent the label 'extreme sports' which they feel was imposed upon them by transnational corporations and media conglomerates during the mid and late 1990s). While the term action sports as used by the industry typically refers to the boardsports (i.e., skateboarding, surfing, snowboarding, wakeboarding, and kiteboarding) and a select few other activities (i.e., BMX, motocross, mountain biking) that have been incorporated into action sports mega-events such as the X-Games, in this book we refer to action sports more broadly to include activities that developed as an alternative to more traditional, rule-bound competitive sports. Particular examples of such sports in this collection include roller derby, mixed martial arts (MMA), climbing, and ultimate frisbee. While many of the action sports considered in this book have undergone rapid growth and are at various stages of commodification and institutionalization, core members within these sporting cultures continue to celebrate a different ethos that values self-expression, creativity, physical and social play, and often do-it-yourself philosophies (Olive, 2015; Pavlidis, 2012; Pavlidis & Fullagar 2012; Thorpe, 2011; Wheaton, 2013).

As will be illustrated in this book, each action sport has its own unique history, identity, and development patterns. However, many of the activities under the industry-defined umbrella of 'action sports' came into existence during the 1960s and 1970s at a critical juncture when increasing female participation challenged organized sports (as well as many other social institutions, such as education and the workforce) as an exclusive male bastion. Unlike in modern sports, women actively participated in the early forms of many action sports (i.e., snowboarding, climbing, skateboarding, surfing), and although fewer in number, women often participated alongside men, and thus action sports did not necessarily face the burden of years of historical and institutionalized sexism that plagues most other sports. Following this, it has been argued that action sports offered the potential for alternative gender relations because the activities developed in a different context to traditional sports and thus were not so entrenched in traditional gender rules and norms (Beal, 1996; Thorpe,

2007; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). Other sporting cultures included in this book (i.e., MMA, roller derby, ultimate frisbee), however, have emerged as separate from the 'action sports' cultural industry and overlap with other sporting cultures and traditions. For example, roller derby was developed by women for women, with histories of development linked to pre- and postwar social conditions (Pavlidis & Fullagar, 2014a, 2014b). With such different development patterns, it is inevitable that gender identities, politics, and experiences vary considerably across the different action sports featured in this book, offering a productive comparative opportunity.

Despite the potential for more equitable spaces for women's participation, young white males have long constituted the dominant force at the core of most action sport cultures (Beal, 1996; Kusz, 2004; Wheaton, 2000), and there remains a widespread celebration of youthful, hedonistic fratriarchal masculinities, and the marginalizing of women and 'other' men in most action sports cultures (Kusz, 2004; Thorpe, 2010; Wheaton, 2000). Yet not all women accept their marginalization, with some adopting proactive roles in the action sports culture and industry as instructors, athletes, journalists, photographers, CEOs and manufactures, and committed recreational participants (Pomerantz, Currie, & Kelly, 2004; Thorpe, 2005, 2007; Young & Dallaire, 2008). While still fewer in number than men, women are successfully negotiating space in these male-dominated sporting cultures and industries via active participation and demonstrations of physical prowess and commitment (Beal, 1996; Thorpe, 2009; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). In so doing, some have developed an array of unique strategies to negotiate spaces for women within male-dominated sporting cultures and industries. Other women set about creating their own sporting spaces (i.e., roller derby). Whereas, some of these strategies are politically inspired with or without the feminist labeling, others are more informed by neoliberal discourses of individual entrepreneurialism (Prügl, 2015; Rich, 2005; Ringrose, 2007; Rottenberg, 2014).

The increasingly visible roles of committed women in local action sport communities *and* highly competent action sportswomen in broader society have further contributed to the popularity of these sports among girls and women. The inclusion of women in globally televised events

including the X-Games and Olympics (skiing, mountain biking, kayaking, snowboarding, BMX, freestyle skiing), blockbuster movies focusing on female surfers and inline-skaters such as *Blue Crush* (2002) and *Brink* (1998), and the representation of female action sport athletes in the mass media (e.g., *Vogue, Seventeen, Glamour, Sports Illustrated for Women*) have all added to the visibility and legitimization of women in action sport. Yet, women's participation in some action sports is more visible in popular culture than others. For example, female snowboarders have been included in the X-Games since its inception in 1997, whereas female skateboarders and freestyle skiers were excluded until 2002 and 2005, respectively; women continue to be barred from all motorbike and snowmobile events. Thus, while the number of female participants has exploded in some action sports, others remain the exclusive domain of males.

As a result of the increasing visibility of (some) women in (some) action sports, expanding female niche markets, and opportunities for female-only lessons, camps, and competitions, the female action sport demographic has grown over the past three decades. Snowboarding, kayaking, and skateboarding, for example, were among the fastest-growing sports for American women in the early 2000s (NSGA, 2003). In 2004 female skateboarders constituted approximately 25.3 percent (or 2.6 million) of the 10.3 million skateboarders in the USA, up from just 7.5 percent in 2001 (Darrow, 2006; McLaughlin, 2004), and the number of American women who surf every day grew 280 percent between 1999 and 2003 (Darrow, 2006; Women a Focus at ASR, 2003). While the reliability of such industry-produced statistics is questionable, the athleticism of committed female participants is now highly visible on the mountains, in the waves, rivers, and lakes, and in particular forms of media. As a result of which, there is some evidence to suggest that boys and men are adjusting and, in some cases, radically altering, their perceptions of women's abilities and capabilities (Olive, 2013; Thorpe, 2007; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). In part due to these changes, action sports are increasingly attracting female participants from varying age groups, sexualities, abilities and levels of commitment, and from different cultures and ethnicities (Comer, 2010; Roy, 2013; Thorpe, 2014; Wheaton, 2013). Thus, it is important to note that, with such growth, girls and women in action sport cultures do not constitute a homogeneous category.

A variety of competing femininities exist within most action sport cultures, some of which actively challenge the maleness of these sporting cultures at local, national, and international scales, while others passively accept, support, even reinforce, male hegemony. Girls and women experience action sports in diverse ways, and this diversity nurtures various identities among women. For some women, participation is a gratifying experience and an important site for the creation and negotiation of cultural identity, in which they earn status as committed participants. Many 'core' participants continue to be assessed by male standards of sporting prowess and commitment, and those who accept such standards and demonstrate the appropriate skills can gain symbolic and cultural capital from their performances (Thorpe, 2009; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). Although such women vary in ages, ethnicities, and sexualities, it is the young, white, heterosexual, slim and able-bodied woman that continues to be the most visible in media representations of action sports.

For other women, their passivity in action sport cultural spaces conforms to more traditional gender roles. The fashion seekers, poseurs, pro hos, and 'girlies' are often less committed participants in terms of sporting performances, while remaining committed to cultural identification. Many of this group negotiate an identity in the mixed-sex environment by emphasizing their heterosexual femininity, particularly through their clothing and feminized appearance. Some of these women set out to accommodate the interests and desires of men rather than involve themselves in the action sport culture; Connell (1987) calls this compliance with subordination 'emphasized femininity' (p. 183). Connell has observed a range of femininities in the broader social gender order and emphasized the complex strategic combinations of compliance, resistance, and cooperation among the different forms. She notes that the interplay among femininities is a 'major part of the dynamics of change in the gender order as a whole' (p. 183). This is certainly the case in action sport cultures. However, there are many other women who are deeply committed to action sport cultures without being active participants, as mothers, partners, sisters, and in various roles in the industries. The contributions of such women remain silenced in action sports media and in much of the academic research, both of which continue to largely prioritize the experiences of 'core' participants (Donnelly, 2006).

Since the mid 1990s, researchers have dedicated considerable attention to identity politics in action sport cultures, with many focusing on gender relations and the experiences of women in male-dominated sporting cultures. Sociologists, anthropologists, historians, cultural studies scholars, geographers, media studies, and education scholars have investigated the multiple (and often contradictory) ways women negotiate space within male-dominated action sport cultures such as adventure racing (Kay & Laberge, 2004), skateboarding (Atencio et al., 2009; Beal, 1995, 1996; Pomerantz et al., 2004; Young & Dallaire, 2008), sky diving and snowboarding (Laurendeau & Sharara, 2008; Thorpe, 2006, 2008b), surfing (Comer, 2010; Booth, 2001; Henderson, 2001; Heywood, 2008; Knijnik, Horton, & Cruz, 2010; Olive, 2016; Olive, McCuaig, & Phillips, 2012; Roy, 2011, 2013; Roy & Caudwell, 2014; Spowart, Burrows, & Shaw, 2010), and windsurfing (Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). Some scholars have explored the relations between different groups of women in action sport cultures, particularly Wheaton's seminal work on women in windsurfing cultures and Thorpe's research into various snowboarding femininities. Others have focused on particular groups within action sport cultures, such as snowboarding mums (Spowart), lesbian surfers (Roy), and recreational surfers (Olive), to reveal the nuances within women's lived experiences and everyday politics. Others have focused on representations of women in various media, including mass, niche and social media (e.g., Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011; Henderson, 2001; MacKay & Dallair, 2013a, 2013b, 2014; Olive, 2015; Pavilidis & Fullagar, 2014; Thorpe, 2008b, In Press). To facilitate their analyses of the complex gender practices, performances, and politics operating within action sport cultures, researchers have engaged an array of theoretical perspectives, including hegemonic masculinity, various strands of feminism (i.e., liberal, radical, and third-wave feminism) and, more recently, some poststructural feminist engagements with the work of Bourdieu (Thorpe, 2009; Olive & Thorpe, 2011), Deleuze and Guattari (Knijnik et al., 2010; Roy, 2011, 2013), Foucault (Spowart et al., 2010; Thorpe, 2008), and postcolonial feminisms (Thorpe & Chawansky, in press). With distinct understandings of power, structure, agency, and resistance, the various theoretical perspectives have facilitated different insights into the place of action sport bodies in the 'reproduction of social and sexual structures' (Shilling, 2005, p. 198), as well as the various forms

of agency and activism available to some female action sport participants within existing social, economic, and cultural structures.

This book builds upon and extends the existing research on women in action sports cultures with 17 chapters from established and emerging scholars writing on a wide array of action sports, including surfing, climbing, roller derby, parkour, snowboarding, skateboarding, ultimate frisbee, mountain biking, bodyboarding, and MMA fighting. We have organized the chapters into five sections: (1) Researching gender in action sport cultures; (2) Gender relations and negotiations; (3) Female action sports identities and lived experiences; (4) Action sports in transition: Consumption, technology, risk, and desire; and (5) Media, politics, and pedagogies. Although the chapters in these sections build knowledge specific to each sporting culture, there are clear themes running across the discussions and examples that build upon the current body of existing literature, as well as point to new tensions in contemporary action sports research.

Section One of the book, Researching Gender in Action Sport Cultures, engages with broad reflections from the field in terms of action sports research issues, methods, and limitations. In particular, this section engages with the importance of drawing on influences from across fields in order to move research and knowledge in new directions, using new approaches. Chapter 2, Looking Back, Moving Forward? Reflections from Early Action Sport Researchers, offers insights from researchers who developed early work about women in action sports cultures. This chapter is a nod to the significance this early work continues to have in pushing forward thinking about contemporary sports, and the experiences of women as participants. With their work spanning a number of sports, Becky Beal, Douglas Booth, Jason Laurendeau, Catherine Palmer, Robert E. Rinehart, and Belinda Wheaton were among those who laid the foundations for the field and have influenced the ideas, directions, and approaches of the researchers in this book. Their reflections on the influences over their own work helps to contextualize the development of current research projects, as well as highlighting the role that our own positionalities play in shaping our work. Following the notion of positionalities, Chap. 3, Surfing Together: Exploring the Potential of a Collaborative Ethnographic Moment, explores one action sport space from seven perspectives—conceptually, subjectively, and geographically. Taking advantage of the confluence of multiple surf

sport researchers being in one place at the same time, Rebecca Olive, Holly Thorpe, Georgina Roy, Mihi Nemani, lisahunter, Belinda Wheaton, and Barbara Humberstone explore the potential of collaborative research for providing new insights into a sporting culture, as well as into ethnographic research processes. As well as the possibilities, this chapter explores the productive tensions that can emerge from researcher vulnerabilities necessary in this kind of method.

Section Two engages with the gender relations and negotiations that shape experiences of women in action sport cultures. This section explores the relational experiences of women who inhabit a range of gender positions, as well as the role of men and transparticipants. In Chap. 4, Sporting Gender Relations, Life Course Transitions, and Implications for Women Rock Climbers, Victoria Robinson argues that while past research has focused on the hegemonic masculinity of male rock climbers, this has stopped explorations of female perspectives on relational aspects of climbing experiences and relationships. Robinson views women's experiences through aging, transition, and the life course, allowing new perspectives on not only climbing but also experiences of risk, parenting, and bodily changes. The theme of risk continues in Adele Pavlidis and James Connor's discussion of sex-integrated roller derby in Chap. 5, 'Don't Be a Douche': An Introduction to Sex-Integrated Roller Derby. With roller derby, a unique example of a female-dominated and driven sport, Pavlidis and Connor explore what happens when women face the physicality of men on the track in this very physical sport. Renowned for their toughness, derby girls are both challenged and validated by the relational physical contact, which they make sense of in various ways. In Chap. 6, Parkour, Gendered Power, and the Politics of Identity, Belinda Wheaton draws on examples from the UK, Iran, and broader media to discuss how male parkour practitioners apparently eschew aspects of traditional sporting masculinity, in particular aggression and exclusion. Despite this, and while the male-dominated parkour community aspires to the inclusion of women, many of their male/masculine performances continue to unintentionally exclude women from parkour spaces. In the final chapter in this section, Chap. 7, The 'Girl Effect' in Action Sports for Development: The Case of the Female Practitioners of Skateistan, Holly Thorpe and Megan Chawansky engage with the

continuing privileging of white, neoliberal feminist ideals in sport for development programs, with a case study of the heartening educational skateboarding organization *Skateistan*. While illustrating the capacity for reflexive critique among *some* women working in the field of Action Sports for Development, the authors ultimately argue for deeper critical considerations of the 'girl effect' in action sports, and the rise of 'missionary feminism' among female enthusiasts from the One-Third World.

Section Three, Female Action Sports Identities and Lived Experiences, reveals the multiple and fluid identities of women in action sport cultures, with a particular focus on the experiences of women who have often been overlooked in much of the research to date. In Chap. 8, Negotiating Moral Terrain: Snowboarding Mothers, Lucy Spowart and Lisette Burrows contextualize snowboarding mothers' experiences within the 'risk society', and draw upon Foucault's ideas of 'governmentality' and 'technologies of self' to illustrate how women who are pregnant, or with young children, negotiate discourses around social and moral risk-taking. In Chap. 9, No One Wants to Mess with an Angry Mom: Females' Negotiations of Power Technologies Within a Local Skateboarding Culture, Matthew Atencio, Becky Beal, ZaNean McClain and Missy Wright also adopt a Foucauldian perspective to provide fresh insights into the roles of mothers and other adult women involved in supporting, developing, and even defending, girls participation in a local skatepark in the San Francisco Bay area. Chapter 10, Coming Together and Paddling Out: Lesbian Identities and British Surfing Spaces, is written by Georgina Roy who sheds important light on how female sexual identities are negotiated as part of 'everyday' surf spaces. Focusing particularly on the experiences of lesbian women surfers in three different surf locations in Britain, Roy explores the 'felt implications of heteronormative surfing spaces' and reveals how the participants in her study negotiated these spaces through participation in lesbian-centered social networks, in both physical and virtual spaces. In so doing, this chapter is among a number in this book that highlight the importance of online spaces for building women's relationships and networks, and in the increased blurring of gender relations and negotiations within and across online and physical cultural spaces (also see Chaps. 13 and 15, also see Olive, 2015). Chapter 11, the final chapter in this section, is a response to the lack of non-white women's

experiences, and an overemphasis on stand-up surfing, in the burgeoning surf-related literature. In this chapter, titled The Experiences of 'Brown' Female Bodyboarders: Negotiating Multiple Axes of Marginality, Mihi Nemani and Holly Thorpe draw upon Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual schema to explain how Maori and Pacific Island female bodyboarders negotiate space in the hierarchical surfing field in New Zealand.

Section Four, Action Sports in Transition: Consumption, Technology, Risk, and Desire, features three chapters that reveal new trends in action sport scholarship and practice. In Chap. 12, Technology, Equipment, and the Mountain Biker's Taskscape, Kath Bicknell draws upon insights from phenomenology and anthropology to investigate recent developments in bike design aimed at improving the ride experiences of female mountain bikers. By exploring the way new technology mediates individual and social experiences in mountain biking, Bicknell reveals the dynamic relations between equipment, perception, cognition, and performance, which have important implications for women's behavior and embodied perceptions of risk. In Chap. 13, The Changing Face of Ultimate Frisbee and the Politics of Inclusion, Hamish Crocket focuses on two controversial developments in North American ultimate frisbee, and the much debated implications for women's participation. Here he focuses on digital and social media to reveal the contestation of gender inequities within ultimate at a unique conjuncture in the development of this traditionally mixed-sex sport. In Chap. 14, the final chapter in this section, Girl Power Figures, Mythic Amazons, and Neoliberal Risk Performers: Discursively Situating Women Who Participate in Mixed Martial Arts, Riley Chisholm, Charlene Weaving, and Katherine Bischoping present a fascinating overview of the ways women are being discursively situated in media representations of MMA. The chapters in this section are diverse, but collectively offer an important commentary on the rapidly changing terrain of action sport cultures and point to the opportunities and challenges for researchers who seek to stay at the cutting edge of such developments.

In the final section, Section Five, of the book, Media Politics and Pedagogies, our three authors engage with some of the current directions of action sports research in terms of film, online and interactive digital and social media, and the kinds of pedagogies that are enabled

by these. The interest in various embodied and intentional processes of teaching and learning in sports has long been a focus in studies of education and curriculum, but is having increasing influence in making sense of the impacts of women's participation in action sports cultures. In Chap. 15, Carving Out Space in the Action Sports Media Landscape: The Skirtboarders' Blog as a 'SkateFeminist' Project, Steph Mackay discusses for-women-by-women skateboarding media, highlighting the interest in images, stories, and other representations of women's participation. Applying second- and third-wave feminist lenses to online media, McKay illustrates how these new media allow women to 'talk back' to male-dominated ideas about how media can be produced and consumed, and by whom, as well as how women can embody a range of skateboarding femininities. Chapter 16, Visual Narratives of 'Female' as a Political Position: Pedagogies of Surfing Events and Their Media, by lisahunter, emphasizes the importance of media in action sports cultures, illustrating how it has been used to perpetuate white, male participation, while diminishing women's experiences. Taking an intersectional approach, lisahunter deals with marginalization in terms of sex/gender, sexuality, and colonial politics to argue that when visible, certain kinds of femininity have remained dominant, thus perpetuating established surfing identities. Spanning various media from advertising, films, magazines, and social media, this analysis illustrates how studies of media must encompass more texts and experiences, as well as imagining the powerful ways of knowing that these produce. In Chap. 17, Cultural Pedagogies—Action Sports, Synthia Sydnor illustrates how academics can make productive pedagogical use of the resources described by McKay and lisahunter, in her use of action sport films and online sources as teaching tools. In particular, Sydnor uses the 'doing' of watching films coupled with a knowledge of the key points of course readings to encourage students to participate critically in their own consumption of the media available. This approach privileges that which is deemed contemporary and exciting to students, while still merging readings, concepts, and theories to develop their everyday critical toolbox. Finally, we are honored to include some final comments from Simone Fullagar, who contextualizes the book within broader research in gender, sport and cultural studies.

Looking Forward: Future Feminisms in Action Sports

Over the past 20 years, feminist researchers have made many valuable contributions to understanding the gender relations in action sport cultures, and the multiple forms of power operating on and through women's bodies in the various physical and mediated spaces of action sporting cultures. As well as reshaping how we think about sport and physical culture, such work has contributed to thinking in sport history, feminist theory, gender studies, media studies, and girl studies. With an emphasis on the relationships between culture, bodies, subjectivities, and power, the chapters in this book build upon this work and highlight important new directions for research and activism.

However, there is still a need for more research that works at the intersections of our own and others multiple axes of identity and subjectivities, and more critical analysis of the many dimensions of power and privilege that enable and constrain women's experiences within and across local, national, and global contexts. Arguably, more work is still needed on the relations between women and men, girls and boys, with different levels of commitment and ability, sexualities, class and ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, and those utilizing varying strategies for access to symbolic and cultural capital within their respective action sport cultures. While much of the earlier research has focused on the experiences of privileged white women in the One-Third World, a few scholars are exploring the growing popularity of such activities among women in the Two-Thirds World (Thorpe, 2014) and non-white participants (Knijnik et al., 2010; Wheaton, 2013). This book features four chapters that build upon this scholarship, including critical discussions about the growing popularity of parkour among women in Iran (Wheaton), the experiences of 'brown' female bodyboarders (Nemani and Thorpe), the growth of action sports programs for girls in the Two-Thirds World (Thorpe and Chawanksy), and the continuing emphasis on white, Western femininity in historical and contemporary representations of surfing (lisahunter). Similarly, experiences of people who do not sit comfortably in the categories of female/male or feminine/masculine—for example, transpeople—are also almost completely ignored in research about action sports. In this

collection these issues are only touched upon in one chapter through a more complex consideration of the impacts of 'sex-integrated' sports (Pavlidis and Connor). While we applaud such developments, we also argue that much more research is needed that prioritizes the experiences of more diverse sex/gender issues, including experiences of LGBTI issues and non-white girls and women in both the One-Third and Two-Thirds Worlds, as well as scholarship that moves beyond the experiences of able-bodied and 'core' participants.

Despite many ongoing structural and ideological inequalities in action sport cultures, there are signs of hope that feminist theorizing and politics are evolving and responding to the challenges of the times. Indeed, there are some exciting developments with action sport scholars and practitioners working together. For example, three-time world champion longboarder Cori Schumacher has been working with English professor and author of *Surfer Girls in the New World Order*, Krista Comer, to establish The Inspire Initiative to 'unpack the complex forces at work within ourselves and our surf culture in order to initiate a grassroots effort to shift the current tide of sexualization' in surfing culture (www.theinspireinitiative.org). Schumacher and Comer continue to work together and with others on a series of initiatives such as the Summer Institute for Women Surfers, a political education initiative, and a 'fully developed History of Women's Surfing' that will 'serve to create an appreciation for the paths our grandmothers and mothers have tread before us'. Schumacher in particular is an advocate for what she has termed 'surf-feminism', and is an outspoken, feminist cultural commentator in surfing culture. Other such collaborations include the Surfing for Social Good Summit, with the inaugural event held in Bali in 2015 and organized by big-wave surfer Easkey Britton, and the second event held in Raglan, New Zealand, in 2016, was collaboratively organized by lisahunter, Belinda Wheaton, Rebecca Olive, and Easkey Britton, all affiliated with the University of Waikato. With such collaborations between feminist scholars, athletes, activists, educators, and local communities, we should anticipate exciting new directions for feminist theorizing and practice in action sport cultures.

These collaborations between media, community, activists, and researchers are examples of growing possibilities for knowledge produc-

tion and community engagement that research may create, as well as forms of pedagogical work that researchers are able to engage in. In the classroom, in the field, in publications, and in other forms of media, the researchers in this collection are actively participating in communities, writing in magazines, producing online media, and contributing to organizational and governmental policies. In inspiring ways, the approaches the researchers take to such activism and pedagogy are driven by the ideas and approaches of participants in the various sports and cultures themselves (see Olive, 2016). Watching the impact of academics and action sport participants' activism in developing resources, media and policy will be interesting in the coming years, as the numbers of participants increases, as the sports further integrate into the mainstream (e.g., inclusion in mainstream broadcasting and the Olympics), and as they popularize in places outside of Europe, North America, and Australasia.

The influence of action sports in societies and cultures across the globe has been significant in shaping girls' and women's experiences of youth, media, sex/gender, sexuality, bodies and sport, and this influence is set to grow. Witnessing the passion, critical thinking, and participant-focused approaches of researchers in this book, we are excited to see how action sport research—in particular, the contributions of women as researchers and participants—will continue to grow and build upon the strong foundation of research in this field.

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Part I

Researching Gender in Action Sport Cultures

2

Looking Back, Moving Forward? Reflections from Early Action Sport Researchers

Holly Thorpe, Rebecca Olive, Becky Beal, Douglas Booth, Jason Laurendeau, Catherine Palmer, Robert E. Rinehart, and Belinda Wheaton

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Today, scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds are employing an array of methodological and theoretical approaches to understand and explain the experiences of individuals and groups within action sports cultures in local, national, global and virtual contexts in both historical and contemporary conditions. However, it is important to keep in mind that this work builds upon a strong academic foundation established by scholars who forged new ground in the mid and late 1990s when they argued for, and clearly illustrated, the need to understand and explain new trends in sporting participation and consumption. Among their number were (in alphabetical order) Becky Beal (skateboarding), Douglas Booth (surfing), Jason Laurendeau (sky diving), Catherine Palmer (the commodification of risk and extreme sports), Robert Rinehart (alternative sport media and events) and Belinda Wheaton (windsurfing). These scholars were scattered across the disciplines (i.e. sociology, cultural studies, history, anthropology) and indeed the world (i.e. Australia, England, Canada, New Zealand, the USA). They were working mostly independently with very little, if any, other research in action sports to draw upon to inform their analyses and interpretations.

In this chapter, we present the responses from the aforementioned scholars to a series of questions (again in alphabetical order) focused less on the key findings from their research and more on their personal journeys into and through researching action sport cultures. In particular, it has been their attention to women's and gender issues that have been of significance to our own work. We have been fortunate to have many of these scholars as formal or informal mentors and/or academic friends, and thus are very grateful for their willingness to share their experiences and sage advice with us. Of course, this is far from an exhaustive list. Various others have made valuable contributions over the years, and their work is drawn upon extensively in the chapters in this book. However, in the reflections of the scholars in this chapter, we hope that other researchers will find the following insights from these academic pioneers helpful (perhaps even inspirational) as they embark on their own journeys in action sport and/or gender studies.

1. **Where did your initial motivation/inspiration/interest in researching action sports come from?**

Becky Beal: My original interest stemmed from informally observing a group of skateboarders use a public sculpture as their playground in the summer of 1989. I was fascinated by their skill and creativity and the apparent joy they had. I then started paying more attention to skateboarders. It became readily apparent that there were no adults supervising or coaching the youth; instead, skateboarders were the ones who constructed the activity. This participant-run aspect of skateboarding was one of my main interests. As a former athlete in traditional sports, I had issue with the authoritarian methods used in coaching, especially how my and my teammates' voices were frequently disregarded. Another component of skateboarding that caught my attention was the artistic aspect. Creating innovative ways of moving oneself and the board through space is fundamental to the sport. The participant-run nature and artistic impulse of skateboarding resonated with me. Delving into the social and power dynamics of these social worlds stemmed from this initial interest.

Douglas Booth: My initial interest in action sports derived from three inter-related quarters, their athletic forms, social organisation, and association with the natural world. The athletic forms of action sports, which involve falling, gyrating, sliding and accelerating, activate specific physical sensations. Roger Caillois, the theorist of play, called these pleasurable, affective and addictive sensations *ilinx*. I watch in wonder as the best athletes manage these sensations to maintain stability and balance while also retaining clarity of perception. The social organisation of action sports politically resonates with me. Action sports are the antithesis of rule- and tradition-bound established sports which have long struck me as unnecessarily and excessively bureaucratised for what amount to forms of play. The culture of action sports exudes irreverence. Rather than celebrating and championing competitive relationships (as the essence of social life and personal success), devotees of action sports rejoice in their individuality, lifestyle choices, self-expression, creativity, health and fitness. In action sports the body is a vehicle of joy and pleasure (as distinct from

an instrument of labour) and a stage for personal challenges and tests (rather than to provide entertainment for paying spectators and for displays of overt aggression).

My third interest derives from my love of the natural world. Action sports typically share close relationships with natural environments—oceans, lakes, surf, mountains, rivers, canyons, skies. Devotees interact with, and read, the earth's natural forces such as oceanic waves, thermal currents, gravity and wind. Participants may occasionally refer to conquering a mountain, bombing a slope or slashing a wave, but more often they attach spiritual and religious meaning (and sometimes personas) to these features with which they stress harmonious relationships. Not all action sports engage the natural world. Skateboarding, for example, is a classic urban activity. However, skateboarders also reconceptualise urban landforms and terrain. Such reconceptualisations politically challenge local authorities for whom these structures have precise functions.

Jason Laurendeau: It was my first sociological love, really. At the time that I encountered my initial courses on sociocultural dimensions of sport and physical activity, I had been involved in skydiving for a number of years. I quickly realised that this presented fertile ground for research. In my earliest research into the general area of 'alternative sports', I came across the work of Becky Beal, and knew I wanted to focus my work in this direction.

Catherine Palmer: My interest was sparked by two events that happened in the late 1990s—the tragic deaths of 21 tourists and their guides on a canyoning trip in Interlaken in 1999, and those of 8 mountaineers on Mt Everest in 1996. In both cases, it was the production of risk knowledges that interested me; that is, the ways in which these activities were promoted by commercial operators as 'high thrill, low risk', especially in light of the deaths of inexperienced backpackers and mountaineers. I was less interested in researching the 'doing' of action sports and more interested in the processes of discursive management that went with the promotional culture of adventure tourism when sold to particular segments of the action sports market.

Bob Rinehart: I was in Sacramento, mid-1990s, at my friends' house, watching ESPN—when this crazy sky surfing competition came on. I'd researched non-mainstream sports in the context of sport as cultural performance, and sport as performance (and performative) art, and saw these sport formations as quite liminal spaces. While most of the dominant, mainstream sports were, in my opinion, locked into/solidified, these new—what did you call them? ESPN called them Extreme, then eXtreme, then X—sport formations were still malleable forms. They piqued my interest.

Belinda Wheaton: My motivation was initially learning to windsurf after having spent years as an 'athlete' competing in alpine skiing. When I started to windsurf in my 20s, and then worked in the industry for a while, it struck me how completely different it was in its values to most sports cultures I had participated in up to that point. Then when I was a graduate student at Goldsmiths College (London) studying the sociology of culture and media, we were immersed in literature about the postmodern condition, looking at popular culture, and consumer culture, particularly in relation to art and film. It made me think about how windsurfing, and other similar sports, seemed to have more in common culturally with these activities than traditional sports.

2. **What discipline do you work in, and how was your early work on action sports received by your field?**

Douglas Booth: I primarily work in history, a discipline that has paid little collective attention to action sports, especially compared to sociology. My early work examined surfing as an action sport in the contexts of mass consumerism in the second half of the twentieth century and the radical cultural *Zeitgeist* of the 1960s (in which nationalist, class, gender and social movements coalesced against Western and capitalist institutions). In this work I highlighted the ambiguities of pleasure and discipline in surfing. I, and others, argue that these ambiguities still exist in surfing and other action sports, notably in their professional and competitive wings. Moreover, in the case of surfing, the physical pleasures enjoyed by professionals frequently place them in conflict with recreational devotees around the use of surf breaks for competitions.

Jason Laurendeau: I was trained in a somewhat traditional Sociology department, and though my work was supported in general terms by the department and its members, I certainly sensed a degree of 'why would you study *sport*?' from fellow sociologists.

Catherine Palmer: I'm a (lapsed) social anthropologist. My early work was well received, in part, because I drew on classic anthropologists such as Mary Douglas to inform my work and I published in anthropology journals, such as *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. At the time (late 1990s, early 2000s) the anthropology of sport—broadly defined—was also in its infancy, so socio-cultural studies of sport across the board, that were rooted in anthropology, opened up some fruitful dialogue about theories, methods and the shifting focus of our discipline.

Bob Rinehart: I have a PhD in kinesiology from the University of Illinois, but my subdisciplinary areas would likely be (formally) sociology of sport, history of sport. It was as well received as any other research.

Belinda Wheaton: I would say I work broadly within sociology of sport and leisure. However my interests and work have always crossed disciplines. My undergraduate was in sport studies, I then did something of an MA in communication and culture, and my PhD was housed in sociology. The sociology of youth and British cultural studies were initially big influences theoretically. I've remained quite eclectic and multidisciplinary. My interest in lifestyle sports was well received in all of these communities.

3. **How do you think your role as a (non)participant contributed to your understandings of this movement culture? Upon reflection, how do you think this positioning helped and/or hindered your research?**

Becky Beal: I am a non-participant. When I first started the research (at the age of 26) the participants assumed I wanted to become a skateboarder. I decided then to clearly delineate my purpose which was to document their worlds, not try to become a skater. My status may have helped in that I could honestly play the naïve role and have fewer boundaries for asking the participants to explain the most mundane aspects. Obviously, I don't have the same lived experiences as skaters

which can create some separation and, thus, lack of trust. I find today (26 years later) that I am in an interesting space. I am not a participant, but I do have quite a bit of knowledge about the sport. It's a strange place to inhabit; knowing about the activity without actually doing the activity. So as I chat with skateboarders now, I have to be much more savvy about when and how I let them know about my extensive knowledge base because I don't want to come across as the expert on their experiences, but I don't want to be disingenuous either. To address that concern, I situate my knowledge as a respect for their activity and that I continue to want to learn from the participants.

Douglas Booth: My participation in surfing has given me a greater appreciation of the athleticism involved in action sports, a better understanding of the relationships between human movement and the environment, and deeper insights into the cultural nuances of different physical pastimes. On the one hand, participation has not necessarily assisted my comprehension of the broader socio-historical contexts of action sports, which is an academic endeavour that demands immersion in the literature. On the other hand, participation has unquestionably facilitated my understanding of their affective dimensions (*ilinx*).

Participation has also had a positive unintended consequence with respect to my approaches to and representations of my research. The decisions I make as a participant have parallels in the sometimes serendipitous choices that researchers make when selecting their evidence, theories, methods and, no less importantly, modes of representation. The last mentioned is especially pertinent to historians who primarily present their findings as narratives. Far from flowing from the evidence, as some historians still misleadingly insist, narratives are literary devices that reflect their author's ideology, politics, ethics and the ways in which they present/construct societies (wholes) and groups (parts) and the relationships between them.

Jason Laurendeau: My role as a participant was integral in my earliest work in this area, if only because I learned about the sociological perspective by thinking about skydiving, which I knew fairly well at that point. From there, my insider status facilitated access and a personal

understanding of the activity and its meaning to participants. Though I didn't know it at the time, I was really an autoethnographer in the making, as my own experience was fodder for much of my early analysis of skydiving. This is not to suggest that insider status does not have its limitations—it certainly does. In terms of the kind of work that I do, however, and how I have come to understand social research, it has been beneficial for me personally.

Catherine Palmer: In terms of action sport, I'm not a participant, but across my research career, I've been both an insider and an outsider in the movement cultures I've been interested in knowing more about. I can see merit in both. I don't think only insiders can 'get' or appreciate the world under study—sometimes outsiders see things that insiders don't—and some of the richest, most insightful commentary can come from non-participants. That said, I think in some cases being a participant does help with access to field sites and subjects, but it doesn't necessarily make the analysis and interpretation of data any easier. If anything, there are particular challenges when trying to make the familiar 'strange'.

Bob Rinehart: Of course, our own standpoints and degree of participation influence the angle and approach we take on anything. I don't think 'helped and/or hindered' is the right term, but of course I know what you mean. I come from the view that, if I explain how I see my positioning, that context strengthens the verisimilitude of my research outputs—and thus should strengthen how it is received. Positionality—such as overt acknowledgement of class privilege, for example, is always going to be an issue in research. But, as John Loy once said, 'Does this mean that only Polish black lesbian rugby players from Madison, Wisconsin are the only ones who can research Polish black lesbian rugby in the American midwest? Probably not'.

Belinda Wheaton: I've worked across a number of different movement cultures with very different initial positionings from elite participant to non-participant. Unquestionably, being a participant helps to gain access and acceptance. However in my work I've tried to problematise insider and outsider as a misleading dichotomy. In every culture I have spent time researching, my role has shifted in numerous different ways depending on context, geography, gender, race, etc. For me the key is

to be reflexive about that positioning, and what it tells us—particularly the absences.

4. **When and how did it become apparent to you that gender needed to be part of your research?**

Becky Beal: Right away, as skateboarding was certainly male identified and male dominated. And I was not only interested in understanding female perspective in a male-dominated setting, but was interested in the motivations of these males to participate in a non-traditional sport, one that featured more of an artistic sensibility.

Douglas Booth: By the 1990s gender had become an integral element of sport history under the impetus of scholars such as Roberta Park, Patricia Vertinsky, Susan Birrell and Catriona Parratt. Irrespective of the subject matter, the subdiscipline (as an actor comprising professional associations, journals and conferences) expected and anticipated historians to consider gender perspectives. Indeed, historians who ignored gender almost invariably attracted adverse attention, whether at conferences, in book reviews, or from reviewers of grant applications and journal articles. In this climate, it was axiomatic that I too would embrace gender.

Jason Laurendeau: Becky Beal's work on skateboarding really got me launched in this direction. And once I started thinking about gender and its importance, I only became more and more convinced that this was an area that would hold my interest for some time.

Catherine Palmer: Since my PhD studies, in the mid-1990s, when I undertook an ethnographic study of the Tour de France. As a female researcher looking at an all-male event, issues of gender were key for me, particularly, in terms of thinking about my position as a researcher and my location in the field. This is a theme that's pretty constant in my research. I've since looked at all male drinking cultures in sport, and in other settings where issues of female researcher safety have been paramount.

Bob Rinehart: Look, gender is not my major focus. But gender, like race, like class, like sexual orientation, may (in my view) be more or less salient in certain types of research. To *only* look through a gendered

lens, just as to *only* look through a neo-Marxist lens—again in my view—is committing a mistake in research. Being eclectic with the lenses we use makes our research more pragmatic—we have a larger 'toolbox' from which to interpret the world. This is not to denigrate individuals who research from a single standpoint, or a single positionality or theoretical base. Taken in the context of their (and my) 'blind spots', we can learn from many ways of researching.

Belinda Wheaton: Neither women's experiences nor gendered power relations was the main focus of my research (which was forms of consumption and identity). However, as a female in the very male-dominated culture of wave sailing, the marginalisation of women, and the need to look at women's experiences was clear from the outset. I'd heard a few conference talks about surfing and none of them had addressed gender at all. However it took me a lot longer to realise that many of the status hierarchies within the culture where related to the politics of gender, and that being white and heterosexual was central to my own, and other people's positionality.

5. **Did you experience any challenges in focusing on gender? If so, please explain.**

Becky Beal: The main challenges I have are to engage in a critical dialogue with participants about gender and, in particular, barriers for female participation. In my earliest work I interviewed many teenagers and young adults who did not readily reflect on gender as a social construct, and the males also did not reflect on their privileged position. So carrying on a conversation that asked males to critically reflect on gendered aspects of their activity was difficult. Currently, the main challenge I encounter is the common assumption that there is no intentional discrimination and that skateboarding is an open activity. Therefore, many participants assume that if females aren't skateboarding it is by choice.

Douglas Booth: Not initially. The literature with which I engaged expressed considerable theoretical and political agreement regarding gender as a structure that constrained female participation in society and sport. Although evidence shows that many action sports have followed different historical trajectories to traditional sports, the gendered out-

comes remain the same. During the formative years of action sports women, participated more freely, and alongside men: action sports were unburdened by the entrenched sexism that plagues most traditional sports. But these relationships changed. In the case of surfing, despite favourable treatment and positive representations of female boardriders in the media and women's competitive successes in the third quarter of the twentieth century, the fraternity closed ranks: in the late 1970s and early 1980s the fraternal structure of surfing consolidated to the detriment of women.

The challenge for historians came a little later with the introduction of new questions around whether gender barriers to female participation were changing and, if so, under what conditions. Within a structural theoretical framework these questions focused on notions of agents breaking the shackles of constraint. But the framework is too limiting and incapable of advancing debates about gender change. Structural concepts allow little scope for political agents who might strategically capitalise on opportunities and thus shape and reshape ideological images and meanings, especially those that circulate in mass consumer culture. Conversely, notions of pure, unencumbered free-willed agents ignore the socio-economic conditions that produce and reproduce everyday lives and which effectively limit and constrain divergent and fresh forms of thinking and acting. The pioneering work around these issues in action sports was done by a group of female scholars, which included Becky Beal, Holly Thorpe and Belinda Wheaton.

Jason Laurendeau: The main challenge of focusing on gender (and doing critical work more generally) was that I worried about how my 'subjects' (many of whom were/are also personal friends) would receive my work. It was the worry itself, rather than the responses I've received from action sports participants, that was the problem.

Catherine Palmer: One of the challenges for me has been how to write about behaviours typically associated with gender (such as drinking and its assumed association with masculinity) without it necessarily being couched as a gender project. It's an extension of Judith Butler's formulation of 'undoing gender'. I've tried to find new ways of theorisng gendered behaviours that don't erase or undo gender completely,

but that foreground other aspects of the behaviours or cultural practices I am interested in.

Bob Rinehart: I'm sure I did. Mostly the expectations of others.

Belinda Wheaton: Not in terms of access. My positioning as an elite female allowed me access to most spaces. However, as I wrote about in my PhD, it was harder to access the experiences of the more marginal women like the windsurfing widows. The ethnographic nature of my research was key in getting beyond the discourse, and seeing how gender played out in day-to-day interactions, spatially, and materially.

6. **How do you think/feel your own sex/gender influenced how you approached this subject—in particular how you write/wrote about women in action sports?**

Becky Beal: It's difficult for me to separate out my gender identity from other identities I have. My female identity is impacted by my age, my racial identity, my sexual orientation, my gender ambiguous self-presentation, my competitive traditional sport identity, and being the only girl in a family of three brothers. The last point is significant in that I grew up with a family that had differing representations and meanings of being male, and I witnessed how my brothers negotiated their contested meanings of masculinity with each other, my parents and me. The dynamic gender identities and relations in my family made me keenly aware that there are multiple styles and fluidity of gender and that particular gender styles were tied to privilege. Of course this sensitised me to the complexity of issues males face, but I have lived out my own contested gender identity as one who identifies as gender non-conforming. When I first became interested in skateboarding, I was drawn to the fact that there seemed to be more room for different ways of being male and female than in traditional sport, but simultaneously there was jockeying going on for status and the discourses used to justify privilege were still deeply gendered. My own experience of gender creates sensitivity to the notion that it is always relational and tied to power. Therefore, when I write about females in skateboarding I try to acknowledge the variety of gender expressions and locate those in context of power relations.

Douglas Booth: I surf for physical and psychological pleasures: the adrenaline rush of the vertical drop, the elation of gliding across the face of a wave, the euphoria of passing under the lip of a spitting wave, the breathlessness of a long ride, and the exhaustion of sustained paddling. In the surf I cannot escape the weight of discipline imposed by a culture that compels me to (mostly) abide by the 'rules'—I (generally) refrain from 'dropping in' and from 'snaking'. In these contexts gender and sex are irrelevant; I do not feel gender or sex in the surf. The surf does not know the concepts of gender or sex which disappear under the lip and under tonnes of whitewater. Gender and sex are analytical categories constructed for social research.

As analytical concepts, gender and sex have, on numerous occasions, prompted me to query whether men and women experience action sports in different ways. The literature is certainly replete with claims of differences, especially with regard to style, risk and fear. Irrespective of the truths in these claims, they raise for me questions about biology. Historians and social scientists mostly sidestep these questions, but *ilinx* involves affective sensations and in the context of action sports is as much a biological as a social concept. In my view, historians of action sports and gender cannot totally dismiss these sensations.

Jason Laurendeau: I think it has had a tremendous impact. In some of my earlier work, I wrote about gender by focusing on women's experiences in action sports cultures. More recently, however, I've focused more intently on interrogating masculinities, in part, at least, because of my own gender position. This is not a linear process where I've moved away from writing about women, but my own struggles with performances of masculinity (my own included) have led me to focus more clearly in that direction in recent years.

Catherine Palmer: My work on action sports wasn't empirically based, but an analysis of media texts. It didn't feel as though gender was a big influence in my approach to the subject. I suspect if I'd actually climbed Everest, for example, my gender may have played a more immediately obvious role in the research. I certainly wrote about the ways in which female climbers, such as the British climber Alison Hargreaves, were portrayed in the accounts that surrounded the fatalities on Everest.

Bob Rinehart: Again, I believe that our own life experiences obviously shape how we approach the world—and that includes the world of research. I coached men's and women's swimming (females and males—children to young adults) for many years. I think I brought some empathy to that task, and I would hope that that 'tool'—empathising with the 'other'— would be something I could transfer over into research about girls and women in alternative, avant-garde sports.

Belinda Wheaton: Yes absolutely—I've written about this at length in Babes on the Beach (2002), and again in *Cultural Politics of Lifestyle Sports* (2013).

7. **What theories have informed your understandings of gender in the action sport(s) you studied?**

Becky Beal: I have been informed by many different theoretical perspectives on gender, all I would say fall under the general category of critical feminist theories that look at how gender is connected to power and is both structured and performed in various contexts.

Douglas Booth: Theory is not the holy grail for all-encompassing enlightened truths. Theoretical shifts in sports studies over the last twenty years remind us that theory is merely an analytical tool to serve a particular interest at a particular moment. As my analyses of action sports have demonstrated, theories typically exist in the context of their times (e.g. structural accounts of constraint on gender), or as choices made by a researcher in the search for their preferred answers. My contemporary theoretical interests in the realm of gender in action sports remain tied to issues of the biology of *ilinx* and the complex interactions between genes, hormones, neurochemicals and the physical environment. Interestingly, this is also a focus of scholars working in the area known as 'new materialisms'.

I am also deeply interested in how researchers construct their narratives around female participation in action sports. Reflexivity is a critical theme in narrative construction and one used with great effect by a number of scholars including Rebecca Olive, Catriona Parratt and Patricia Vertinsky. They openly reflect on their assumptions, experiences and

actions pertaining to culture and gender. They regard their narratives as political processes, rather than empirical-analytical tools, for formulating generalisations about the experiences of women.

Jason Laurendeau: R. W. Connell's neo-Marxist work on masculinities was foundational for me. In recent years, I've moved towards a more post-structuralist framework.

Catherine Palmer: Because my work looked at the discursive production, management and erasure of 'risk', and because of my disciplinary background, I was drawn to the work of Mary Douglas on risk subjectivities and risk communities.

Bob Rinehart: Many. I don't research using specific theories in order to 'test' theories. I use a more inductive approach.

Belinda Wheaton: Initially following the orthodoxies of the day, I used Connell's hegemony masculinity, and various mainstream and sport-based post-structuralist feminist approaches. The turn to Foucault has definitely been strong in sport studies. I found the cultural geography literature really helpful in understanding space. Most recently I've been using more of the race literature for insights into the positions of white women. My approach is very inductive, and I rarely have a commitment to a theoretical framework before starting a piece of research.

8. **What methods did you employ to facilitate your understanding of action sports? Looking back now, what do you see as the strengths and limitations of this/these methods for understanding gender, and particularly women's experiences?**

Douglas Booth: The methods I employ in understanding action sports, including the place of gender, are the same as I engage in all research, irrespective of the subject. I search for, gather and collect data, evidence and information from every conceivable source relevant to the subject. In fact I believe that everything offers potential evidence and that researchers need to remain constantly alert to those possibilities. As a historian I then work that material into a narrative, drawing on logic, theory, rhetoric and politics, to construct the strongest possible argument, one capable of eliminating and or rebuffing counterinterpretations.

One of my primary historical methods is contextualisation. Context, of course, is not a pure analytical tool. The philosopher of history Frank Ankersmit likens contexts to clouds that obstruct the airline passenger's view of the ground: 'the clouds of…context prevent us from seeing the past itself or distort our view of it'. Ankersmit's peers Alun Munslow and Keith Jenkins similarly remind us that 'no context is ever exhaustive' and historians always have the option of 'another context'. Nonetheless, I believe that systematic contextualisation is a powerful tool for building strong arguments. Systematic contextualisation should incorporate forces and constraints (including structural, ideological and institutional forms), major events, human agencies, and convergences and contingencies (i.e. the interrelationships between events and human agencies that generate unforeseen events and circumstances). Krista Comer's *Surfer Girls in the New World Order* (2010) is a good example of this approach applied to surfing.

Jason Laurendeau: This is a big question, and I'm sure not to do it justice here. But perhaps the simplest answer to this is that I increasingly see myself as a methodological bricoleur, drawing on whatever methods are best suited to the research question(s) and problem(s) that I am taking up at a given moment. I don't see different methods as 'triangulating' on some social reality; rather, I aspire to what Laurel Richardson eloquently advocates in a process she calls crystallisation. This both aligns with my ontological and epistemological assumptions, as seems to me to provide the kind of flexibility necessary to approach a constellation of research questions about gender in action sports.

Catherine Palmer: I've used a combination of media/textual analysis and in-depth interviews. It's pretty standard in that respect, but both allowed me to capture the ways in which people spoke about their experiences of adventure tourism as well as the ways in which these activities were represented. I have just started a new project using GoPro cameras to interview research participants on the move. That's very exciting and challenging at a practical level.

Bob Rinehart: I have tried to remain engaged by discovering new theories, new methods, and so forth. However, I certainly have focused down onto qualitative, narrative work. And more than that, my work with and for ethnographic practice in many forms has tended to lock me

into that kind of work. Obviously, any time you make a choice, you deny yourself another: that is both a strength and a weakness.

Belinda Wheaton: Initially I used media analysis and then ethnography. This was really important in being able to tease out the contradictory roles of experiences and differences between the way people spoke about things and what they actually did. Unpacking these contradictions really helped me to understand the politics of identity such as gender.

9. **Have you seen any major changes in girls and women's participation in this/these sports since you first published you work?**

Becky Beal: Yes, many more females participating, the growth of 'girl-only' groups, and an industry that now intentionally targets females. Of course most of this marketing to females (at least in the USA) uses the neo-liberal discourse around 'girl power'.

Douglas Booth: I see more women than men in learning-to-surf classes but women remain very much in the minority at the surf breaks I visit (of course, these cold water breaks at the very bottom of the South Pacific are not necessarily indicative of any trends). The athleticism of core female participants on the mountains, in the waves and rivers, and on lakes is now highly visible in the media, and popular and academic literature suggests that boys and men are adjusting, and in some cases radically altering, their perceptions of women's abilities and capabilities.

Jason Laurendeau: I haven't been working in this area for a terribly long time, but I worry that the changes we seem to be seeing do not run very deep, and perhaps even distract us (using 'us' in the broadest terms) from the task of continuing to challenge gender inequalities.

Catherine Palmer: In terms of adventure tourism, the change has been about shifting demographics more broadly—an increase in tourists and the rise of a new leisure class among non-traditional markets. Women and girls are part of this mix.

Bob Rinehart: Of course. The world, including gendered (and stereotypically gendered) roles, is changing. But, in my view, it is still not equitable. As a critical theorist, I would probably agree with George Sage's

view that I don't necessarily have to provide solutions, but it is sufficient to uncover some of the remaining problems—a critical mass of individuals must be marshalled to create change. Girls' and women's participation rates have grown, they are not seen as anomalies in the action/lifestyle/extreme/alternative sport area, and yet: many of the mainstream values, such as unequal pay packets and television time for females, still are naturalised unnoticed problems.

Belinda Wheaton: Sports certainly have more visibility, and I would say in some sports and contexts, there are more women taking part. Windsurfing in general has been in stagnation or decline; I don't see that many women doing it in a committed away, and the equipment has become increasingly expensive and excluding. I do see quite a few women who kite surf though and certainly more women paddle surfing and surfing. But they remain, at least in the UK, white relatively privileged women who already had some sort of physical capital and entree into water-based recreation settings. There are some really interesting patterns in girls' participation via the media, particularly in online spaces.

10. **What changes have you seen in research on women in action sports?**

Becky Beal: The main changes have been with addressing more diverse groups and a focus on global dynamics.

Douglas Booth: In the space of a decade I have seen the emergence of new theories, a greater acknowledgement of gender complexity and concomitant questioning of reductionist approaches to gender, more reflexivity, and increasing numbers of female scholars studying action sports. Given the political nature of gender, it is not surprising that some feminists still remain locked into structural conceptualisations and models of gender that frame the cultural precepts of subjects. These models effectively reduce the range of options available to both women and men and limit the alternatives as to how they might think or act, typically in the interests of preserving male privilege. Admittedly these issues are not easily resolved theoretically, especially at the societal level. However, as argued above, contextualisation and reflexiv-

ity—Patricia Vertinsky usefully employs the term reflexive contextualisation—are undoubtedly constructive and useful methods.

Jason Laurendeau: Most importantly, there is much more *breadth* to the body of research in this area. More scholars drawing on a wider array of theoretical, methodological, and substantive questions and frameworks are building on the foundational work of Beal, Booth and Wheaton.

Catherine Palmer: There is lots of it being done now! The range of sports being studied is ever expanding, but it's interesting that the debate over what we call action sports continues. Are they lifestyle sports, extreme sports, adventure sports, action sport or whiz sports, to hark back to Nancy Midol's early term? I like the ways in which debates over definition continue to allow us to think about the constitutive qualities of these kinds of sports.

Bob Rinehart: Research in both men and women in action sports has tended to follow the kinds of research patterns that we have seen within mainstream sport studies (both studies of mainstream sports and mainstream kinds of research). One would think that would make the research patterns more 'scientific' in the sense of ordered, patterned, logical. But that, in my opinion, isn't necessarily the case. As well, some of the research doesn't follow the logics of 'action' sports: we've all gotten to be less risk takers in the name of the corporate university, somehow.

But yes, there have been more studies on women (as opposed to men) in action sports than before. There haven't been a lot of queer theory-based studies, however (as one example). 'Queering' the studies, seeking the non-normative, would, to me, make sense if only in the ways that the avant-garde would constantly be moving into new territory.

Belinda Wheaton: Lots of research that is emerging is using a broader range of theoretical perspectives, which is interesting. For me, the use of online spaces and impact on young women has been really interesting. However, there has still been too much focus on privileged white femininities.

11. **What do you see as some of the challenges facing scholars study-ing women in action sports today?**

Becky Beal: One of the key challenges is acknowledging and documenting that different groups of females have different and sometimes conflict-ing agendas with respect to action sports. We not only need to address patriarchy, but other forms of privilege/discrimination that impacts the quality and access to participating and administering these activities.

Douglas Booth: Material conditions appear ripe for the continued growth of female participation in action sports as well as for ongoing com-mercial interest in women's involvement, at least in the West. Whether women in the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) nations and least developed countries gravitate in significant numbers to action sports is another matter. Academic interest, and the recruitment of new and especially young scholars, invariably follows material condi-tions. Global participation and official interest by governments and non-government organisations will influence scholarly developments. Arguably, academic progress today depends on the integration of scholarship, practice and policy. Holly Thorpe's research into action sports for development and peace in least developed countries suggests potential for an official embrace of these pursuits and new policy initiatives.

Once a subfield or discipline reaches a critical mass of scholars, internal challenges inevitably arise. Common among these are institutional issues (e.g. employment opportunities, access to research grants) and profes-sional issues (e.g. access to journals, vocational opportunities, policy set-ting). At some point fragmentation follows, whether along definitional, personality, political, theoretical, methodological or content lines.

For the moment, I believe that research into action sports could ben-efit from big picture historical perspectives, comparisons with traditional sports, comparisons across different action sports and analyses of policy settings. Many of these sports have their own distinctive histories, envi-ronments, geographies, identities, development patterns, equipment, physical requirements and, of course, gender relations.

Jason Laurendeau: There are many. Perhaps the most important to me, at the moment, is how we convince others of the relevance of our work. If we are to challenge deep-seated inequalities rooted to gender (as well as 'disability', class, race, sexuality, etc., etc.), it is not enough to 'preach to the converted', as I myself have been guilty of. We must find more ways to broaden our conversations, both within academia and without, all at a moment in which the very foundations of post-secondary education and critical inquiry seem to be under fire.

Catherine Palmer: I suspect they are the same challenges facing scholars across the board—new managerialist approaches to higher education, neo-liberalism, juggling teaching, admin and research, dwindling pots of research funding. The challenge is always convincing others of the value of the research and its contribution to established or emerging disciplines. Researching sport—be that action sport or other kinds of sport—can suffer from a 'legitimacy' problem that we as an academic community have done well to overcome.

Bob Rinehart: Ennui. Replication. Safe topics.

Belinda Wheaton: I've written about this at length in *The Cultural Politics of Lifestyle Sports*! For example, the focus on white women is still a major issue. Too many PhDs I read don't look at whiteness or intersectionality. Also the continuing focus on the Global North.

Recommended Reading

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Laurendeau, J. (2011). "If you're reading this, it's because I've died": Masculinity and relational risk in BASE jumping. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 28*(4), 404–420.

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3

Surfing Together: Exploring the Potential of a Collaborative Ethnographic Moment

Rebecca Olive, Holly Thorpe, Georgina Roy, Mihi Nemani, lisahunter, Belinda Wheaton, and Barbara Humberstone

Ethnographic methods have been a mainstay for action sport researchers. Some of the pioneering work on action sports cultures drew inspiration from the theoretical approaches developed by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) tradition, as well as method-

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ological approaches employed by the more ethnographically oriented Chicago School (see Wheaton, 2007). Various researchers have adopted and developed ethnographic methods such as observations, participation, interviews and media analysis to develop rich understandings of the cultural practices and power relations within action sport cultures (Beal, 1995, 1996; Humberstone, 1986, 2004, 2015; lisahunter, 2013, 2015; Nemani, 2014; Olive, McCuaig, & Phillips, 2015; Olive, 2016; Roy, 2011, 2013; Thorpe, 2012, 2014; Thorpe & Olive, 2016; Wheaton, 2000; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). It is important to keep in mind that the researcher is 'always inevitably present' in such research processes (Stanley and Wise, 1993, cited in Wheaton, 2002, p. 246). This is certainly true in critical studies of action sports cultures.

To date, many action sports scholars are approaching their subjects with an embodied understanding of cultural norms and values developed via their own past or present active participation. The strengths and limitations of studying these sporting cultures from an 'insider' perspective have been the subject of much debate within the field—particularly (but not exclusively) sport and youth (Donnelly, 2006; Evers, 2006; Humberstone, 2009; Pavlidis & Olive, 2014; Wheaton, 2002, 2004). The challenges of negotiating multiple roles (i.e., critical researcher, active participant, feminist) in the field of ethnographic inquiry have also garnered increasing critical reflection (Olive & Thorpe, 2011; Thorpe, Barbour, & Bruce, 2011; Wheaton, 2004). For example, approaching her ethnographic study of windsurfing culture as a highly proficient female athlete, journalist and partner of an elite male windsurfer, Wheaton (2002) notes that while this 'insider knowledge' helped her develop rapport with participants and identify relevant sources and themes, one of the hardest tasks during the early phases of her research was negotiating the path that allowed her to understand and acknowledge participants' worldviews and subjectivities, while also gaining the 'critical distance' necessary to contextualise those views and actions (Wheaton, 2002, p. 262; see also Carrington, 2008; Davies, 2007; Flemons & Green, 2002; Gale & Wyatt, 2009; Olive & Thorpe, 2011; Saukko, 2003; Sparkes, 2002; Thorpe & Olive, 2016). As Thorpe and Wheaton (2013) argue, the key issue is not whether one

approaches their study as a past or present (non)active participant, or conducts interviews, focus groups, observations or discourse analysis. Instead it is about the reflexivity of the researcher in terms of how their dynamic position in the action sports culture *and* the academy, and their movement between these fields, influences their research questions, methodological choices, and theoretical approaches and representational styles, at various stages during their project.

Reflexivity and positionality are often negotiated as lone acts in action sport research and beyond, yet continuing to approach them alone is perhaps another case of the way 'many scholars of sport have ignored debates concerning power, authorship, and the Other' and have also been 'quick to project expert hegemonic analysis upon the athlete' (Rinehart & Sydnor, 2003, p. 8). Following Rinehart and Sydnor (2003); Pavlidis and Olive (2014) note,

> It is increasingly clear that conversation, collegiality and collaboration are key in not only thinking through the limitations of our subjective ethnographic and cultural relationships, but in aiming to account for it during the research process. (p. 226)

In this chapter we explore the value of collaboration for enhancing our reflexivity and our capacity to engage with multiple positions and perspectives in the field, and problematise previous researcher identifiers such as the insider/outsider dichotomy. While we conceived of the project as a fully collaborative process, we feel this full collaboration has only been partially achieved. In part this is a result of practical issues including time constraints, multiple research commitments and geography. In this way, this chapter does not claim to be truly collaborative, rather it is a first step towards what collaborative fieldwork amongst colleagues might look like, as well as the kinds of challenges and potential it offers. In so doing, we took inspiration from scholars such as Diversi and Moreira (2009) who are adopting highly creative, collaborative approaches with the aim of identifying 'experiential betweenness' and 'connectedness with others' (p. 21). While not entirely collaborative, the shared fieldwork experience and various stages of dialogue and

reflection in this project meant that 'we have thought ideas and reached levels of understanding…that hadn't occurred to our individual minds' (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, p. 222). In contrast to others who have focused on the process of collaborative fieldwork or the process of collaborative writing, the focus in this case is on the heightened reflexivity that we discovered through researching with others, giving us greater access to multiple positions, perspectives and experiences in the field. It also gave us insights into various power relations operating in the field in a range of ways including cultural insiders and outsiders, locals and non-locals, and across academic hierarchies.

Imagining Collaborative Ethnography

This project was formed at the intersection of three 'moments'. First, it builds upon Rebecca and Holly's interest in reflexive and collaborative research approaches (Olive & Thorpe, 2011; Pavlidis & Olive, 2014; Thorpe et al., 2011). Second, the unique critical mass of critical action sports researchers engaged in using feminist and reflexive ethnographic methods at the Department of Sport and Leisure Studies at The University of Waikato during early 2015 was an opportunity not to be missed. And third, the proximity of all scholars to the well-known surfbreaks of Raglan, a small town on the west coast of Aotearoa, New Zealand, enabled this particular project to take place. At The University of Waikato, Holly Thorpe and lisahunter have been staff members for some years, Mihi Nemani completed her master's there in 2013 with Holly as her chief supervisor, Rebecca Olive arrived in 2014 as a post-doctoral research fellow, Belinda Wheaton in 2015 as an associate professor, and Professor Barbara Humberstone was a visiting scholar from January until March. In addition, having completed her PhD about women, sexuality and surfing, Georgina Roy had recently worked in the Department as a teaching assistant and was living in Raglan, the town where we carried out this project. The presence of so many scholars who have researched surfing or surf sports offered an excellent opportunity to explore the potential of a reflexive research collaboration. After an initial brainstorming session, Rebecca and Holly sent an email invitation.

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January 27, 2015
Hi all,
Recently Holly and I were talking about ethnog-
raphy, observations and subjectivity, and the
value of multiple researchers observing the same
field. This led me to a brain flash - with so many
of us working about issues of surfing and subjectiv-
ity, why don't we do a small, collaborative research
project!
  The idea is to consider surfing from our diverse
range of subjective perspectives, and to see how
one surfing moment and space can be understood and
experienced so differently. The proposal is to all
go surfing together one day, taking field notes
before, on the day and a little while after (to get
some reflexive distance), and to write a chapter
about what we find.
  ...
Looking forward to hearing from you,
Bec (and Holly)
```

The invited group represented a range of perspectives and positions relating to action sports: Rebecca's research is about recreational women surfers in her hometown community in Australia; Holly has focused on women's bodily negotiations of snowboarding spaces and action sports more broadly; Georgina's research relates to female bodies and sexualities in British surf space; Mihi has studied the intersection of gender and ethnicity amongst New Zealand bodyboarders; lisahunter's work focuses on women's surf events and media; Belinda's extensive work on lifestyle sports stemmed from her early work about power relations in windsurfing culture; and Barbara's research has produced autoethnographic insights into the potential of nature-based sports, in particular windsurfing.

Despite the apparent similarities across the group—for example, all either identified as, or were positioned as, women/female—there are many points of difference in our researcher and sporting identities, some that we recognised early and some that emerged as the project progressed.

The group consisted of different sexualities, nationalities and ethnicities, relationship and motherhood status, surf craft and style (bodyboard, longboard, shortboard, windsurfer), ages (from late 20s to 60s), and a range of surfing experience and ability, ranging from keen-windsurfer-but-non-surfer (Barbara) to occasional participant (Holly) to serious recreational participants of varying degree and experience (Rebecca, Belinda, Georgina, lisahunter) to a multiple world champion (Mihi). In surf literature, the issue of local relationships to surfbreaks has been highlighted as a significant aspect of cultural power relations (Olive, 2015), and we discovered that it emerged as an important issue for us too. Holly has lived in Raglan for over ten years; Georgina is a current resident for over a year who has visited multiple times as a surfer; Rebecca had been a resident for eight months at the time of the research; lisahunter is familiar with the town and surfbreaks through surfing and researching there; Mihi had not visited for a long time but has fond memories of surfing in Raglan; Belinda had recently migrated with her family; and as a visiting fellow, Barbara had visited on many occasions to windsurf, but this was her first time to the surfbreaks.

Our positionality and investment as surfers and local residents began to be revealed in the early stages of communication as we negotiated a time and place to meet and surf. The initial email responses to the invitations showed genuine excitement about the opportunity to explore surfing cultural spaces in a collaborative way. As expectations for participation in the project began, various workloads, life circumstances and working styles emerged as issues to negotiate at an individual and collective level. As the date neared and we could get a better sense of the forecast, Georgina, Mihi and lisahunter expressed their desire to meet early when the tide was high and conditions were likely to be better. While we were all aware of the potential pleasure of surfing together, there were other factors that impacted our availability—travel, children, sleep patterns, work commitments and investment in surfing as part of our identity. In addition, while some were excited about going surfing, Holly and Belinda were nervous about the potential of the waves being too big and therefore excluding them from participating, while Belinda was faced with navigating an unfamiliar surfbreak, which can be a challenging experience.

On the day, we were lucky to wake up to a warm, sunny morning. We met at 9.30 a.m. at a lookout above the beach to make a decision about

where to surf. Mihi and lisahunter had both driven over an hour to join the group. Belinda and Barbara's male partners, along with Belinda's dog, Cookie, joined us. We started the discussion with brief introductions to the research group (as not everyone knew each other) and a conversation about the process for the surf and post-surf reflections. Here it was acknowledged that we each have developed different ways of doing and recording ethnographic observations, and this diversity was encouraged amongst the group. For example, lisahunter uses photography as an important part of her fieldwork and asked the group for permission to photograph them during the surf session (Fig. 3.1).

We each arrived with ideas about where would be best to surf based on having already surfed that day (Georgina) or checked the surf in person or on online cameras. The swell was breaking with some size closer in at the beach, so we decided on Manu Bay, which was smaller and has a shoreline that allows spectators and, perhaps more importantly for this project, our non-surfing participants to view the surfbreak easily. Manu Bay has multiple access points out to the surf, and as a point break it is somewhat predictable in the way the waves break. It is a busy and sometimes chaotic surfbreak, and the amphitheatre-shaped geography

Fig. 3.1   The group gathers at the lookout for the surf-check and introductions. Photo credit: Stuart Holland

that allows easy observation of the waves can be intimidating for less confident surfers, whose every move is visible from the shore. It also presents a rocky shore line, which at low tide means a long, seaweed-covered walk across unstable rocks to get to the water. Nonetheless, it was the best option for most of the surfers/researchers.

After making our decision we all drove the five minutes to Manu Bay car park where we proceeded to get ready for the surf session—getting boards out of cars, waxing them, putting on swimsuits, wetsuits and sunscreen. Although a keen windsurfer, Barbara does not surf and so decided to observe rather than come into the water. This decision was not a foregone conclusion:

> **Barbara**: *Sat for some time on water's edge watching the scene, wishing I'd got a body board but knowing I wouldn't have used it there, anyway.*

The other six entered the ocean at our own pace and in places that we felt most comfortable with—some went across the rocks and others out from a nearby boat ramp. For some these options were familiar, for others it was a daunting experience requiring careful deliberation (Fig. 3.2).

Fig. 3.2 Belinda crossing the rocks to the surf. Photo credit: lisahunter

Belinda: *Walking across the rocks doesn't look hard but it is. My legs feel shaky. I'm not sure why. Approaching the water's edge I slip and bang my knee. I'm happy to be wearing a long suit. Walking across the rocks, I'm struggling to stay upright and not fall flat on my face.*

Like our multiple entries into the water, we each occupied different positions before, during and after the surf. For some the act of surfing/ researching lasted little over an hour, whereas others stayed at Manu Bay for over two hours, observing, swimming, chatting, enjoying the weather, and getting a sense of the cultural and geographical dynamics of the space. With most of the group having conducted participant-observations in previous research projects, there was an encouragement to embrace our own individual approaches to this type of fieldwork rather than imposing strict guidelines on what to look for and how to act as surfer/research-ers in the field. Moreover, the roles of researcher, surfer and researcher/ surfer or surfer/researcher were as fluid as the water, with some switching back and forth between these identities during the session. While we had decided to make notes separately after the surf session, some met up later for a coffee at a local café where the conversation covered various aspects of the morning.

Over the next two weeks, we shared our field notes on Google Docs, a shared online, private platform, where we were able to read and comment on each other's interpretations, memories, reflections and observations. Those who were able to comment in that time offered a valuable dialogue that prompted reflection on themes and differences across the observa-tions. After three weeks, we met in person at The University of Waikato (Mihi, who lives in Auckland—a city two hours north—joined us via Skype) to discuss the day, our experiences, the field notes and comments, develop the analysis and outline a structure for this chapter. This was a fruitful and affirming conversation in thinking about the value of collab-oration for making sense of surf culture and developing researcher reflex-ivity, how theory explicitly and implicitly informed our observations and reflections, and how various forms of power were operating amongst the group and in the surf. In particular, all researchers expressed the sense of collegiality and support they had felt at being part of this research moment. This discussion was recorded. It was agreed that Rebecca and

Holly would develop the first draft of this chapter with others providing feedback and comments that would shape it as it developed to a final version.

Creating an Interpretive Zone: Reflections on the Process

For each of us, our methodological and theoretical approaches encourage us to ask that researchers value/privilege voices from the field (i.e., participants) and that we do not look for definitive truths. In this chapter, our approach was informed by our various feminist ethics and politics, which encouraged us to minimise hierarchical power relations and create a research space in which collaborators felt safe to express their voices, opinions, concerns and experiences (Davis, 1997). To achieve this, we conceived of our individual and collective experiences, observations, field notes, comments and conversations as inhabiting an 'interpretive zone'. In particular, we drew upon Gerstl-Pepin and Gunzenhauser's (2002) use of the 'interpretive zone' as a 'place where multiple viewpoints are held in dynamic tension as a group seeks to make sense of fieldwork issues and meanings' (Wasser & Bressler, 1996, p. 6, in Gerstl-Pepin & Gunzenhauser, 2002, p. 142). More specifically, we adopted a feminist interpretation of the interpretive zone with the aim of creating a research climate that enabled our researcher vulnerabilities and researcher blind spots to be revealed.

'Making sense' and 'making meaning' happens in ways that are always multiple, and thus we acknowledged the value of both recording textual recollections of the event and engaging in dialogue with one another both immediately after the event (e.g., at the boat ramp, car park, café) and in a shared Google Docs folder. Recording memories as notes facilitated individual memories and voice, allowing choices in what gets written and what does not. In contrast, dialogue between participants or between a participant and another, prioritises interaction, verbal and visual text and shared memory making, another form of collaboration. We sought to value both throughout this process, but individuals have different styles of 'making sense' and 'making meaning', as well as dif-

ferent ways of working individually and collectively within busy lives. Thinking about how our various positions and viewpoints might be in 'dynamic tension' throughout this process (from initial invitational emails to sharing comments on the final written document) helped us account for different positions and perspectives in a shared space both as surfers and researchers. Already in the description of our process, there are a number of insights and differences relating to our fieldwork approaches, attitudes and investments that became quickly apparent. However, the dynamic tensions between the various positions, perspectives and power relations we occupied were further revealed through our field notes, comments and discussions.

Positionality: Identity Politics Amongst (Collaborating) Researchers/Surfers

As previously discussed, our commitment and relationships to surfing (as participants and researchers), and to Raglan (as resident/non-resident), were varied. These positions were interpreted by ourselves and by others in interesting ways. For example, when we met at the top of the hill and briefly introduced ourselves, many of us located ourselves in relation to surfing. Holly introduced Mihi to the group as a multiple World Champion Bodyboarder. However, Mihi deflected this positioning, instead emphasising her respect for the academics around her, whose work had significant influence on her Master's project. Despite being a competent surfer, Belinda identified her newness to Raglan and with her nerves about surfing in a new place. However, she did not mention her status as an action/lifestyle sports scholar, a status that was highlighted by Mihi's comments. lisahunter refused to identify, a disruptive approach to normalising identity politics which she embodies in her everyday practices.

Reflecting now, many of us introduced ourselves by focusing on the things we are not—a surfer, a local, an established academic—while the things we are—a surfer, a local, an established academic—went unremarked unless highlighted by someone else. Arguably, this is one example of how power relations are embodied and difficult to locate in oneself.

For many critical scholars, locating ourselves as having access to particular forms of power can be considerably harder than locating how we are positioned on the margins of particular spaces.

Admittedly, in conceiving this project, Rebecca and Holly failed to fully consider the potentially unequal distribution of academic capital operating amongst the group as an issue. Holly and Rebecca have worked together on multiple occasions, impacting their ability to pre-empt how this might be felt and interpreted by various members in the group. However, in their field notes both Georgina and Mihi commented on their position as emerging researchers with much to gain or lose from participation in this collaboration, an important point we will develop further on. What is clear from these examples is that the hierarchies operating within each field—surfing ability, academic position, 'local' status—overlap, with each researcher having access to different forms and quantities of capital (i.e., social, cultural, physical, economic) depending on the interaction and space.

As Gerstl-Pepin and Gunzenhauser (2002) remind us, collaboration should not assume equality in terms of the distribution of forms of power. In fact, most collaborative research teams are highly hierarchical and much less reflective on power relations. Adopting a feminist approach to collaboration, we tried to minimise power relations, and at least create a 'safe' space where our colleagues/peers might feel able to discuss such issues if they felt them to be present/problematic, and to bring to the fore any relations of power that were/are invisible to others. Some such issues emerged early, and others very late in the writing process; we also expect that some remained unspoken. The key point here is that we acknowledge that there are always limitations to reflexivity—we all have 'blind spots'—and while we hoped one of the benefits of such a project would be that we can work with each other to shed a little light into some of these dimensions of power that are more difficult for us/others to see, we acknowledge that we cannot resolve all such power relations, nor anticipate or respond to the very different interpretations held by some group members. Thus, based on our experiences, we join Gerstl-Pepin and Gunzenhauser (2002) in their struggles to negotiate all power relations within collaborative research projects.

In writing about their own collaborative ethnographic approach May and Pattillo-McCoy (2000) noted that 'collaborative ethnography increases the body of data that can be used to describe and understand the social world under observation. At the same time, the reflexive analysis of our own personal and intellectual biographies illustrates how the composition of an ethnographic team (or duo) clearly influences the type and content of data collected' (p. 66). What we are claiming as collaboration does not just include the original experience but also the construction of field and research texts associated with the experiences. As a team of individuals we constructed our original field texts, returning to collaborate in a reflective discussion of what we had read of each other's notes. This, along with original texts was initially redesigned by Rebecca and Holly as the first and second writers, was then overwritten and commented upon by other members of the group.

Geographical Positioning in the Surfing Field

While our various positions within and across local, surfing and academic fields informed our approach to this project, our geographical placements at the surfbreak also gave us access to multiple spatial perspectives on place, space and power relations in the surf. Whereas the former allows a conceptual understanding of the ways power operates across fields, the latter is a more material, physical perspective on the surfing field as a geographical space and place. The capacity to occupy multiple positions within this particular surfing-related space and place was one of the aspects of this collaboration we were excited about from the beginning. One particular example that reveals the potential of such collaborative fieldwork and of multiple experiences in the same time and place was an encounter between Mihi and a male longboarder (see Fig. 3.3).

   Mihi notes:
   I get near the line-up and I see a wave approaching. Realising I have the inside right of way, I turn and catch it but a middle aged white male longboarder drops in on me. Maybe he didn't see me so I give him the benefit of the doubt. I will call him off next time, I'm just happy to be in the water.
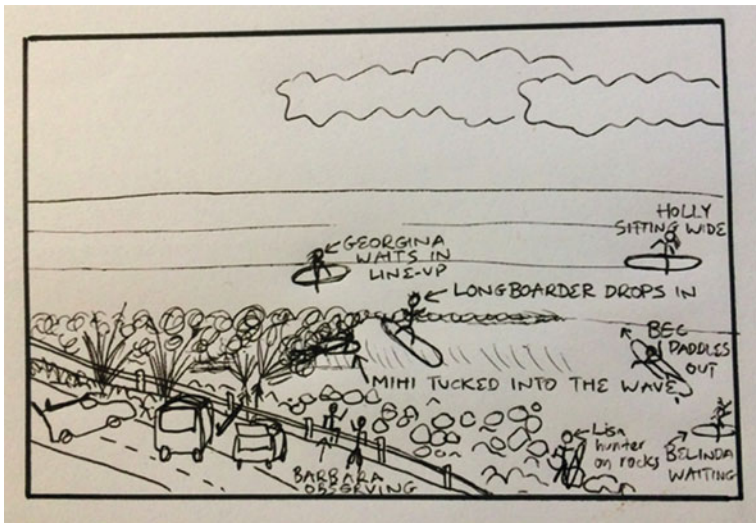
Fig. 3.3 Scene represented by Holly Thorpe after the surfing event

Once back at the line-up another wave comes. I'm clearly right at the take-off point so shouldn't get dropped in on. Hang on, this guy is paddling for my wave. What a rude dude! 'Yup, Oi, Yup, Yup Yup', I yell loudly. I know he hears me but he still drops in. I'm tempted to yank on his leash so he falls off but decide to zoom around him instead. As I go past him I push his board a little. <u>Now he pulls off</u>. What an egg! Burned by a bodyboarder I think to myself. Even though I'm not a local by any means this blatant dropping in is not only rude but dangerous…

I see Holly so I paddle over to her. Maybe this is a good time to chat about PhD options. 'I just watched your thesis unfold right in front of me', she says…

Rebecca commented on Mihi's notes (at the underlined text above):

Yeah, I remember this and it really annoyed me when it happened. In Australia, I see bodyboarders get dropped in on so often and I don't know why surfers think it is okay. Bodyboarding looks like so much fun to me…The board hierarchy thing is one of my least favourite things in surfing culture.

Researchers responded differently to this event. Given Holly's personal and proximity to Mihi and her marginal position in the surfing field, the best response available to her was to offer Mihi comments of support based on their shared knowledge of surfing politics. Minutes later, Rebecca's own positioning allowed her to observe and respond in a different way. In her field notes, Rebecca wrote,

> *Not long after, he tried to snake me on a wave, but I went anyway. He stayed on it, but so did I, so I essentially dropped in on him. In part, I stuck it out because I'd seen him drop in on Mihi (and others) as well as being so greedy, so it was as much a 'letting him know' as it was a personal decision. Definitely not super cool on my part, but I don't feel bad about it.*

In responding in this way, Rebecca became part of the events unfolding, adding a new aspect to the original drop-in. While Georgina did not see the earlier encounter between Mihi and the male longboarder, her position in the water did allow her to add to our understanding of these events.

> *Three older, 'middle aged' white men on longboards in particular are taking a lot of the waves, and don't seem to be showing much consideration for the notion of a 'line-up'. Because there are three of them continually paddling into position, they are picking up most of the better set waves. I hear one of them make a comment about a 'girl' dropping in on him.*

We can only speculate that the comments overheard by Georgina were in relation to Rebecca dropping in, but our speculation can be a lot more accurate with multiple positions and observations rather than one. Additionally, while she did not witness the incident or Rebecca's response, lisahunter had reflected in her field notes about power relations relating to Mihi's use of a bodyboard (Fig. 3.3):

> *I'd wondered how she'd get on…body boarders are a target for stupid surfers who want someone to 'other'…will today be any different?*

The multiple geographical researching positions in the water offered an interesting consistency to the reading of this event from a female surfing perspective. However, understanding individual interpretations and

responses in the field involves unpacking of perspective and reflection on the influence of our multiple subjectivities.

Perspective

The similarity and diversity of our perspectives proved incredibly valuable in developing a nuanced and multi-layered interpretative zone. In particular, it was our post-surf conversation at the café, our reflection notes, our engagement with each other's notes, and our follow up meeting, which allowed a productive analysis to occur. It allowed us to highlight the differences, contradictions and blind spots in our observations of ourselves, others and events, and engage in a dynamic tension of ideas, interpretations and perspectives. As Gerstl-Pepin and Gunzenhauser (2002) explain, their long-term 'collaborative team ethnography' highlighted that 'the essential problem is that dialogue is paradoxical and does not lead to clearer interpretations' (p. 138). Instead their research was a 'bringing together' (p. 138) of various researcher and participant positions and identities.

With seven 'women' present in a line-up that is culturally male dominated, this was always going to have particular limitations which are impossible for us to really know. A point that Barbara suggested during her reflections from the shoreline:

> **Barbara**: *I wondered if six women made a difference to the surf scene on the water.*

As Thorpe et al. (2011) explain, some aspects of researcher subjectivities are very difficult to account for or even to notice. The embodiment of whiteness and heteronormative bodies has remained problematically invisible in many research accounts, as has the specificity of these in particular research settings. Researching with others helped highlight taken-for-granted aspects of the field that would be difficult to account for on our own. Our different readings of group hierarchies and each other's bodies in the field are a good example of this.

Hierarchies

An important aspect that emerged from this project was the hierarchies that existed amongst the group. These hierarchies were in place in our previously discussed positionality in terms of academia, surfing culture and relationship to place—in this case Raglan and Manu Bay. Another aspect of this might have been our previous experiences surfing with each other. Rebecca, for example, had separately gone surfing with Georgina, lisahunter, Belinda and Holly on previous occasions. For Barbara, not going surfing incited feelings relating to being a part of the day:

> **Barbara**: *After watching at the edge of the sea, I really wanted to get into the water and noticed Rebecca exiting round the corner in a launch area. So went round and went for a swim. Felt much more part of the group when Belinda and Holly turned up to get out and had a conversation about concepts and apparent age gendering of surfers whilst swimming around. Nice place to talk concepts!*

The power relations amongst the group were most highlighted by Mihi and Georgina. This was significant especially considering the vulnerability that became apparent in their research reflections (Fig. 3.4).

As Blumer, Green, Murphy and Palmanteer (2007) pointed out in discussing their own efforts at collaborative research, 'It is impossible to talk about developing a collaborative research team without discussing the role of power', for each of the four researchers involved in this collaborative project 'held unique places on our team because of variation in age, student status, title, education, knowledge, degree and so on, despite our homogeny of gender and apparent similarity in race' (p. 47). As highlighted in this chapter, we experienced similar power relations in our collaborative ethnographic moment in the surfing field, some of which were anticipated from reading such literatures and whereas others came to the fore as the project continued.

Embodiment: Whiteness and Size

Of course these considerations occurred in other ways too, in particular in relation to bodies. A particular example is the various responses to

Georgina:

I think about writing the fieldnotes and wonder how best to approach it. I haven't really stopped to think very hard about what the whole thing entails. If everyone is going to share their fieldnotes with everyone else, there is a whole bunch of ethical and personal dilemmas involved with that. In my own research I have been used to writing observations and reflections about people who will most likely never read my research. I have also been friends - or at least friendly - with the majority of participants. If they did want to read my fieldnotes, I probably wouldn't mind too much. Most of my thoughts would likely be things I would say to their face. ==This time however, I am going surfing with people who, in various ways, have academic 'capital'.== As I understand it, I am one of the "youngest" of this group, career-wise. All of these women are people who I have got a past, current, or potential professional working relationship with, and many of them could have potential influence over my career in the future. I would not like to make any of them feel uneasy or uncomfortable by what I write. I wouldn't want to make anyone uncomfortable about anything ==really.==

> **Mihi Nemani:**
> This is exactly how I felt too! Totally with you on this one.

> **Rebecca Olive:**
> Yes, this is interesting. It feels tricky, especially when, as you say, it's early in your career. I'm in a similar position I suppose. But I didn't think about that at all, which shows you how clueless I can be!

Mihi:

Wow! Can't believe I've been asked to be part of a group of scholars doing a collaborative ethnographic approach for surfing. Yay! An opportunity to surf and use it as work – I do have to get more involved in research so what a bonus. Some of the names in my email left me feeling quite excited and also a little nervous as I'd used many of these scholars in my thesis. I was excited to meet the people who helped shape my thinking around surf culture. Super excited to meet Belinda as I remember resonating with much of her writing. Hopefully I don't geek out too much when I meet her. Also looking forward to meeting Robert Rinehart, I know I referenced him in relation to alternative sports. Not so nervous about meeting up with Holly, more excited, although feeling bad about not finishing up the chapter for her and Rebecca on time. Definitely looking forward to see how motherhood has been treating her. I bet she's an awesome mum. Bec seems really laid back in her emails so I'm looking forward to meeting her – is it disrespectful to call her Bec? I know I used some of her work in my thesis and I like the way she thinks. ==I'm feeling a little out of depth with my lack of writing experience and never having done any observation type research so feel undercooked in the scholarly department.== Despite this, I feel a responsibility to represent a brown female bodyboarding perspective. After all, that was what my thesis was about and the chapter I wrote for the book Seascapes is all about being a brown bodyboarder. Perhaps my participation is tokenism? I don't really know these people but I trust Holly and know she wouldn't put me in an awkward position. To be honest, I would probably not consider participating if Holly wasn't involved.

> **Holly Thorpe**:
> I think it's interesting that so many of us appeared (in our notes) much more nervous/concerned about how our peers would interpret our surfing abilities, with no one expressing concerns about how others might judge our researcher/ethnographer abilities. Mihi is the first I have seen to openly on this... although I admit that the way I wrote my notes was influenced by my knowledge that my peers would be reading my notes. So for Monday, something I hope we can explore is how so many of us focused our concerns on our surfing abilities and so little on our researcher capabilities, or how our theoretical or paradigmatic assumptions informed our observations.... why did our surfing abilities take priority over our researcher abilities (or at least in how so many of us wrote up our notes)?

Fig. 3.4   A representation of the dialogue in our Google Docs notes

Rebecca's decision to wear only swimmers and a T-shirt. In Australia this would pass as 'normal' without comment, but in the New Zealand and collegial context, there was something more that went with it.

> **Rebecca**: *Because it's colder, it's not usual to wear just swimmers here and I feel a bit self-conscious when I do. Do people think I'm showing off? Trying to get easy waves? I'm not. In Australia, it's the norm and in my one-piece swimsuits, I'm more covered up than most people. But here, I feel like there's an extra element to it.*

These tensions were revealed in field notes, conversations, photos, follow-up comments on field notes. Georgina's comments highlight the layers of meaning making that are attached to what we wear in the surf:

> *Georgina: I respect the fact that [Bec] can surf in a swimsuit. I wouldn't. Because I would get cold, and because I would feel body conscious, and because I feel safer covered in a layer of neoprene. Especially considering the rocks at Manu.*

Since for Rebecca it is 'normal' to wear only swimmers, the 'non-normalness' of her decision in this context was revealed in the comments of others. For example, in the dialogue within the post-fieldwork notes, Mihi, Holly and Rebecca engaged in a discussion about different national and cultural readings of the display of the semi-naked female body, focusing particularly on a comparison between Australia and New Zealand. In latter discussions, Holly and Rebecca further unpacked the different readings of Rebecca's decision to wear her swimmers on this day, and considered how researchers/collaborators responses may have been (implicitly or explicitly) informed by their different feminist perspectives on the athletic female body. Clearly, issues of body image are not only something that we as researchers observe and analyse, but that our presence in the fields of our research silently evokes in ourselves and others (Francombe, Rich, & De Pian, 2014).

Relations between bodies were evoked in multiple ways. This was highlighted in Mihi's notes:

> *Mihi: I do feel exceptionally huge next to these small-framed women though. Damn body shape issues! They still follow me around. I was the biggest girl on the tour when I was competing even though I was considered small among family and friends. I know I don't really fit the mould of being a bodyboarder or surfer in terms of physique but that doesn't stop me from loving it…Belinda is quite tanned, I wonder what her ethnicity is? She could pass as a mix of Maori, or maybe Hispanic?…How do I, a Samoan Maori woman want to present myself to these amazing White female scholars?*

Collaborating with a diverse group of researchers gave us insight into how our subjectivities and behaviours might be perceived by others, insights that are otherwise difficult to access.

While there would be many productive interpretations of this snapshot of surfing culture from our various perspectives, in this case we have

chosen examples that continue with the themes of researcher reflexivity and positionality based on our perspectives. In this case it was hierarchies amongst the researchers, and the effect of our own bodies through the responses of others.

Conclusion: Imagining New Spaces for Collaboration

As an exercise in 'do you see *and experience* what I see' (May & Pattillo-McCoy, 2000, emphasis added) there were clearly different perspectives and positionalities creating dynamic tensions in this project. Exploring these tensions enhanced the ethnographic endeavour, increasing detail about the field and providing a context for consistencies and discrepancies to be analysed. In this small experiment with collaborative ethnographic moments, the capacity for observations was limited by time, familiarity with the space and confidence in surfing ability. With so much focus on our own experiences and relationships in our observations, researcher subjectivity, positionality and reflexivity were highlighted, as were some of the challenges of this kind of collaborative work. However, the examples we offer here illustrate how multiple perspectives held in tension can be productive and help in developing new knowledge, an approach which we would be keen to adopt in future fieldwork projects.

A key finding from this process was the potential to further problematise and extend the limits of researcher subjectivity by establishing diversity through multiple perspectives in the field. In this case, our fieldwork 'moment' allowed us to explore the dynamic tensions in various insider/outsider positions both in terms of doing research and cultural politics. Some of these were unexpected, but the willingness of each researcher to be open and committed to sharing and negotiating these, as well as to doing so in a way that created a collective sense of trust, respect and sincere collaboration resulted in a productive discussion that has only just begun. Such discussions are imperative for pushing feminist research forwards, by allowing multiple gendered experiences to intersect.

The historical development of feminism is, in large part, a story of feminists disrupting feminist conventional thinking and theories, or feminist orthodoxies. Feminists of colour and lesbian and queer feminists have articulated critiques, largely targeting white, liberal, heterosexual feminism, that question who and what feminist theory includes and excludes, how, and to whose benefit. These questions continually challenge feminism's tendency to universalise from specific, often privileged, social positions.

Such dynamic tensions and disruptions are difficult to achieve in subjective and analytical isolation. However, as well as offering new insights into surfing culture and methodological limitations, we were delighted to discover that in making ourselves vulnerable by sharing a research experience—surfing together, notes, uncertainties, and so on—we have opened a potential new space for collaboration amongst ourselves as a group. It is important to emphasise that this was never intended as a self-indulgent team-building exercise, and we are not sure what future projects may arise, but in collaboratively committing to vulnerability we have been able to open awareness about power relations and blind spots in ways that are broad and potentially more far reaching, as well as in ways that move our feminist perspectives forwards.

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Part II

Gender Relations and Negotiations

4

Sporting Gender Relations, Life Course Transitions and Implications for Women Rock Climbers

Victoria Robinson

In 2013 the world press reported that 21-year-old Samina Baig, along with her 29-year-old brother Mirza Ali, had become the first Pakistani woman to set foot on the summit of Mount Everest in Nepal. This chapter focuses on gender relations in rock climbing by charting significant shifts and changes in the practices and experiences of women climbers over time, as illustrated by Baig's and many other women's successes. More specifically, it argues that utilising a life course approach to investigate women's climbing experiences and gendered sporting relations is both an underutilised and a fruitful lens by which one can examine the diversity of women's climbing experiences as they age, and therefore go through different life course stages, such as having a partner, anticipating or becoming a mother, finding employment or experiencing bodily changes. Here, I also argue that utilising my conceptual framework of 'masculinities in transition' (Robinson, 2008; Robinson & Hockey, 2011) when coupled with a life course approach, further allows the current rock climbing terrain to be assessed in relation to gendered

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sporting relations and women's experiences of rock climbing in particular, as they transition across public and private spheres of their lives.

Such an analysis of gendered rock climbing relations needs to be placed within a recognition of all its different elements: traditional climbing, sport climbing, competition climbing, big wall climbing, mountaineering, ice climbing and soloing, for example. It is also important to note that this is a diversifying and rapidly changing sport in that certain climbing styles are more popular or fashionable at different times and countries. Traditional climbing involves the use of ropes and the placement of protection into cracks in the rock to allow an ascent to be made, and is seen the most 'risky' kind of climbing, along with mountaineering and ice climbing. Sport climbing is generally judged to be less hazardous than traditional climbing and, as a consequence, less 'pure'. This aspect of the sport is defined by climbing routes which that have been equipped with bolts (steel rings) drilled into the rock. The lead climber clips one end of a 'quickdraw' to a bolt and clips the rope into the other end. More women are involved in sport climbing rather than traditional climbing, and I look at the issue of risk and assumptions made regarding gender later in the chapter.

Sport climbing has been accompanied by the appearance of artificial crags, known as climbing walls in the UK, or climbing gyms in the USA. These were initially conceived of as a training aid for the 'real thing', but there are now a whole generation of climbers who have learnt to climb indoors, never having been on a rock face. They are also credited with encouraging more women to climb. This creation of an artificial climbing arena was, subsequently, followed by organised, competition climbing, league tables and, eventually, an international competition climbing circuit, seen by some participants as something to be welcomed as it widened the sport's appeal. Others have argued against such developments which are seen to be counter to a perceived notion that climbing is a non-mainstream, even 'maverick', sport, which should not be regulated or institutionalised (see Rinehart & Sydnor, 2003; Robinson, 2013a).

It has been argued that in sports such as climbing, post-modern sporting identities are emerging that are considered to be more self-reflexive, fragmented and fluid (Wheaton, 2000, 2004a). Action sports (also

sometimes referred to as risk, alternative or lifestyle sports) afford greater potential not only for resistance to and disruption of more commercial and traditional sporting relationships (Barkham, 2006), but also for other, more structural reasons. In an earlier study, Midol and Broyer (1995) speculated that such new sports could potentially release participants from traditional gender roles due to the blurred boundaries which often occur in the practices of these activities. Thus, the possibility of more fluid gender identities and relationships and the lack of emphasis on competition have been connected to the potential for women to achieve greater sporting success in these new action sports and have a less negatively 'gendered' experience overall (see Robinson, 2013a). However, as Wheaton (2013) has argued, although 'studies have demonstrated the complex and shifting ways in which different structural, material and ideological factors operate in excluding different groups of women and girls in these activities', there is still a need for further research that examines the 'differences between activities as well as spatial, temporal, and cultural variations' (p. 49). Here I argue that more research is needed that considers women's experiences of climbing, always in relation to masculinities.

A body of work has emerged, both prior to and after the publication of my study on sporting masculinities and the everyday (Robinson, 2008), which has engaged with this assumed progressive shift in climbing, regarding both numbers of women taking part and their experiences of participating in different fields of climbing, (see, for instance, Kiewa, 2001; Robinson, 2007, 2014, 2013a, 2013b; Appleby & Fisher, 2005; Dilley, 2007; Plate, 2007; Summers, 2007; Chisholm, 2010; Coates, 2010, 2012; Dilley & Scraton, 2010; Cayman & Coates, 2014). Much of this work has focused on gendered climbing relations, and has been concerned, for example, with theorising gendered stereotypes, around women's physicality, as well as problematising the idea of a linear progression in terms of women's positive experiences in the still male-dominated climbing world. The research has also analysed women's participation in relation to risk and consumption.

Such studies have also drawn attention to the barriers women climbers still face in participating in the sport at levels ranging from recreational to elite. These constraints have been seen to exist both on personal and structural levels, for instance, in relation to men's ingrained attitudes

about women's embodied capabilities. This can be seen in interactions at the climbing wall or out on the crag and the lack of women in important positions in the climbing world, for example, an absence of female route setters in climbing competitions (Robinson, 2008, 2013a).

It is therefore clear that, if newer action sports have traditionally been viewed as a site in which to actively fight gender oppression as well as where gender relations are contested, then this potential for a shift in such relations is not always apparent in terms of the everyday practices of a specific risk sport such as rock climbing. With this recognition, it could be argued that a pressing question to further inform a feminist critical perspective on action sports is, in what ways should we now continue to theorise the increasingly complex and fluid manifestations of sporting as gendered, and how do we allow some of the contradictions I have just identified in women's embodied experiences to become more apparent? Moreover, what theoretical and conceptual frameworks best enable potential answers to the predicament that sporting women face at ideological, discursive and structural levels, when their participation and achievements in action sports is still increasing, but 'old' issues of inequality remain pressing? This chapter, therefore, argues that studies of women in action sports in general, and rock climbing in particular, still need to be further informed by wider sociological debates and frameworks. It does this through a focus on gender in relation to women and risk, the life course and parenting, and the changing body.

Life Course Transitions, Masculinity and Gendered Relations

As I have identified earlier (Robinson, 2008, 2013a), other alternative sports such as windsurfing have been defined by Wheaton (2004b) as a 'male heterosexual arena'. This is seen through men's attitudes to both female participants and those non-surfers collectively known as 'beach babes', which parallels those women who are non-climbers, and who are sometimes referred to as 'belay bunnies' or 'belay bitches'. Wheaton's (2004b) empirical study revealed diverse viewpoints on women windsurfers, ranging from respect and acceptance to sexism. In an effort to

understand further these diverse viewpoints of male sporting participants, I utilised the idea of 'masculinities in transition', which summed up for me, men's movements across and within different spheres and the impact of growing older and life course events on these shifts (Robinson & Hockey, 2011).

If masculine identities, and the embodied performances of masculinity in sporting sites, are seen as not being fixed (both across the life course, and across and within separate spheres), then it is easier to both recognise and theorise multiple (sporting) masculinities. If men are seen to be 'performing' masculinity across the domestic, paid work and sporting spheres, and these spheres are conceptualised as interrelated, we can then see how men exist in these different spaces, sometimes simultaneously, and at different stages of the life course. The climbers in my previous research negotiated and also re-negotiated their behaviour and various roles and identities as fathers, partners and workers, differently at different stages of the life course. Life course changes such as being unemployed, having children, bodily changes or dealing with aging parents, for instance, affected their own sense of identity as a male climber, as well as how they related to significant others in their life. Sometimes this included, for example, not always recognising the needs of a female partner, who they were in a heterosexual relationship with and who climbed herself, in that the man's climbing needs were usually more accommodated, for instance, if child care issues were involved (see Robinson, 2008, 2013a).

The study of action sports in relationship to masculinity is, as I have argued, vital to allow us to examine gendered sporting relationships in more depth than hitherto (also see Thorpe, 2010). However, Plate's (2007) view that 'Emerging studies of masculinity in sport should be supplemented with research on female climbers and expressions of femininity to give a more holistic understanding to gender dynamics in the community' (p. 13) needs to be borne in mind. A focus on hegemonic masculinity and how it operates in a specific sporting site can mean that women's sporting experiences are overlooked and the relational aspects of sporting identities and relationships ignored. When women climbers' sporting practices and relationship are seen through this lens of transition and the life course, then previously theorised aspects in the field of action

sports in relation to women's experiences, such as risk, parenting and bodily changes can potentially be seen from a different and more nuanced perspective than before.

Risk, Gender and the Life Course

The exploits of women climbers over recent decades have forced some men to rethink gendered and stereotypical assumptions about women's lack of risk taking and emotional strengths, as well as question their essentialist ideas concerning women's lack of physical strength or ability to employ sufficient climbing technicality when required. In 2015, for example, it is evident that the climbing media is increasingly offering evidence and celebration of women's climbing exploits, as they are prepared to take more risks to achieve their sporting goals. In the UK, it was reported that

> Shauna Coxsey is infamous for cruising what others fluff, staying composed and smiling through the flashes and hashtagging—an incredible climber. She became the first British woman to climb 8B+ in July just a few weeks after finishing second in the World Cup circuit, is supported by the biggest name in international sportswear, acts as a trustee of Climbers Against Cancer and is organiser of the Women's Climbing Symposium. (Carter, 2014, para. 1)

When asked what she thought about the UK's Women's Climbing Symposium (an event where women climbers gather to compete, learn skills and discuss their experiences in a safe environment) and, in particular, whether the theme of its 2014 event 'boldness and bravery' could be seen as patronising to women, she replied:

> Yes it could be. But take women out of the equation and would this still be patronising? Boldness and bravery are key aspects of our sport, not just for women. Hazel Findlay is one of our headline speakers. She was the first woman in the World to climb E9, and the first British woman to climb 8c! It seems only fit to celebrate her boldness and bravery! (cited in Carter, 2014, para. 12)

Similarly, such a positive viewpoint can be seen here in the opinion of French climber Caroline Ciavaldini, a World Youth Climbing Champion, winner of a Lead World Cup stage and all-round competition leading climber. When asked what role gender plays in the French climbing scene, she stated:

> I don't think the gender thing is such an important topic in France, or at least I don't feel weaker, or deprived, or anything like that, even if in France too, you will find an idiot willing to downgrade as soon as a girl does a route. But for a start there are way more women climbing, sport climbing of course. (cited in Berry, 2014, para. 18)

However, it is interesting to note here that she seems to accept that women climbers will automatically be judged in relation to sport climbing per se, given, as I have already indicated, that more traditional and thus riskier forms of climbing are associated with male climbers. And it is also telling that femininity as a concept is reflected on in terms of feeling weaker or deprived, rather than strong and capable, or indeed, brave and bold!

Therefore, even amongst leading women climbers who have achieved success, it can be seen that an ambiguity exists surrounding their exploits and relation to risk. This is revealed when being judged by others, for instance, in relation to their routes being downgraded by virtue of their gender, but also by the (gendered) opinions of women climbers themselves, as Ciavaldini reveals in her comments. As well, the fact remains that to date, women have not achieved as much as men in the traditional climbing arena (see Coates, 2010). As illustrated in the following section, such issues are particularly pertinent when women climbers become mothers.

Parenting and Gendered Sporting Relations

Thorpe (2011) found that the women boarders experienced their gender differently in the snowboarding site, depending on other variables, such as if they were a recreational or elite participant, that positions for

women (as for men) in the sporting field are dynamic and can change over time/the life course, as well as their motives for participating shifting. Thorpe's conclusion that 'this examination of the interaction of gender and social group distinction in the snow boarding field supports Bourdieu's claim that gender is a secondary principle of division' (2011, p. 153) would seem to hold true in relation to an individual's capital being seen as gender neutral in this specific sporting field, when based on ability, commitment and lifestyle. However, if we see that capital as shifting across and connected to both the sporting and the private sphere, then the picture of gender relations becomes even more complex (see Thorpe, 2010).

In Thorpe's investigation of snowboarding mothers, they were seen to 'employ an array of creative strategies' (p. 153; see also Spowart, Burrows, & Shaw, 2010) to manage their private sphere responsibilities to allow them to participate. However, in contrast to at least some of the female climbers I interviewed (Robinson, 2008), it was they, and not usually their male climbing and heterosexual partners, who had to negotiate childcare to allow them to climb, organise their child's timetable to accommodate their climbing activities and take the majority share of housework, for instance.

It is of course not a new revelation that the family and work obligations of women affect their involvement in leisure activities (see Green, Hebron, & Woodward, 1990; Scraton, 1994), but more recent work has investigated how private sphere obligations continue to affect gendered sporting relationships, despite women entering risk sports in greater numbers and more of them becoming core or elite performers. As Moscoso-Sánchez (2008) found when looking at the private sphere responsibilities of women mountaineers:

> When the practice of this sport is conducted between spouses or committed couples, the woman finds herself tied to difficulties of another kind: in addition to carrying out traditional roles (domestic, reproductive and occupational), a fourth role is applied to her (the sporting). This obligation to deal with those different roles takes away opportunities to practise mountaineering, or at least the ambition to pursue more serious sporting objectives. (p. 187)

In addition, one of his interviewees recounted: '…another friend of ours has totally abandoned rock climbing. Since she gave birth to her son, she has not gone out climbing. Nevertheless, her husband has not for one moment stopped doing it' (cited in Moscoso-Sánchez, 2008, p. 187).

Dilley and Scraton (2010) argue that contrasting studies exist which reveal both the material constraints on women's access to sporting activities, alongside research which adopts a more post-structuralist understanding of how gendered identities might be challenged to create more subversive sporting identities for women. Their conclusion is that the shift in focus from women's access '*to*' leisure, to women's access '*through*' leisure, which tends to stress women's agency, also often underplays the social constraints that women face. Their conclusion is that the women climbers in their study have to make different choices and engage in negotiations over their personal lives to enable them to climb, for example, if they are a mother or not. And this has connotations for how we study gendered identities and relations in the future, in that an individual's motivation, access, experience and participation needs to be understood in relation to social, cultural and political contexts.

The views of American superstar rock climber Lynn Hill, who became a mother in her forties, puts the issue of risk taking which was introduced in the previous section, in a wider social and cultural context as well as the personal realm. In an interview with American climber, Beth Rodden (2014), Hill was asked how soon she started climbing after the birth of her son, she replied:

> I started climbing just a few days shy of a month after having a c-section (cesarean). I believe they recommended waiting about a month before doing any strenuous physical activities. I did win the Roctrip event in Millau less than a year after giving birth to Owen. I know that I was still breast feeding!! (cited in Rodden, 2014, para. 18)

Thus, at one level, her risk-taking behaviour was not curtailed by motherhood. However, she goes on to concede that the transition to motherhood did affect her climbing in other ways:

> The most significant change was my willingness to spend long periods of time away from home. However I think with a supportive partner, arrangements can be made to help out with the baby while mom is engaged with work. As far as climbing, most mothers (myself included) take far fewer risks for obvious reasons. Even before becoming a mother, I believed in taking calculated risks anyway. (cited in Rodden, 2014, para. 20)

Here, her identity as an elite, sponsored climber and therefore with some economic status may be a partial reason for her male partner accommodating her climbing by providing childcare. At the same time, she challenges the media image of the risk-taking, irresponsible climber by rejecting such a stereotype, in asserting that risk is always calculated. In this way, a recognition of the life course changes inherent in becoming a mother in relation to risky behaviour, allows both the stereotype of the non-parenting male partner to be challenged, as well as enabling the concept of risk itself to be problematised. Hill also illustrates that not all women respond in the same way to risk after having children. As a sponsored and elite climber, she may have to take more calculated risks in relation to her climbing, post-child birth, as her livelihood depends on it. However, women, like men, are not a homogenous group; some may be reckless and take uncalculated risks prior to/after or without children. Moreover, the issue of women who climb who are also mothers can be seen in the context of wider, life course issues than just their attitudes to risk taking.

In examining the strategies that both male and female climbers use to allow them to continue climbing after becoming parents, it is important to look at the practices of climbing itself, alongside the wider social responsibilities that climbers have after such life course changes. Clayton and Coates (2014) acknowledge that though some previous work has existed on how parents maintain their (adventure) sporting lives after the transition of becoming parents (for example, Spowart et al., 2010; Summers, 2007), there has been a lack of consideration in the literature on action sports overall. Coates (2010) considers whether the existence of diverse climbing styles allow for parents' participation. For example, the flexibility of indoor climbing or bouldering rather than more traditional

climbing, which is more time-consuming, entailed that some of her participants managed to continue to climb despite their new responsibilities, so they maintained their independence.

However, for some of the mothers in her study, though the strategy of varying their climbing activities and styles successfully allowed them to climb, this did not usually allow them to question their performances as mothers. The fact remained that it was often that they, as women, who still took parental responsibility for everyday family arrangements to enable them to climb, as well as taking less risks in their own climbing. It was also clear from Coates's study that some of the male participants also supported their female partner's maintenance of leisure, home and work spaces, with both partners engaging in creative strategies to enable this. Yet, as Coates argues (2010), we still need more studies which look at, for instance, non-traditional family forms and how parenting roles are negotiated in these contexts in potentially different or similar ways.

For many women, climbing participation must be considered in relation to their other relationships and work/life balance. For some (particularly mothers), climbing may seem a valued escape from domesticity. However, Coates (2010) argues that we need to be careful not to assume that women with family and/or employment responsibilities either need or want time to climb as an escape from their family responsibilities. Indeed, many variables (e.g., family responsibilities, professional life, relationships, class) can influence how a woman climber conceptualises leisure time One woman climber, aged 25, whom I interviewed for my research on male climbers and masculinities (Robinson, 2008) was very dismissive of the idea that she climbed to escape mundane, everyday activities:

> I mean I really do climb just because I like it, and anything else that comes along with it is a bonus too, but I'm not doing it for you know that purpose, because you know I wanna do something a bit out of the ordinary not because I wanna escape something.

Other female partners that I interviewed and who were at different life course stages, offered insights into imagined future parenting, and other

related aspects of heterosexual relationships. The female, non-climbing partner of an elite male climber, both in their thirties, when asked whether their successful partnership was due to having separate leisure interests, replied:

> …I think, because I like him to have something that's his and I like to have something that's mine, and I like to have my own space and time, and if, I, he would drive me mad, basically, if, if he was around all the time and vice versa. I think, if I was around all the time or, we could never be a couple that, some couples can work together and live together and do everything together, and neither of us are that kind of person… I think when you, particularly when you have quite a stressful job or you know your time's very precious to you and when you've got spare time…
>
> Interviewer: Right, and do you, on the whole do you think you get that balance then?
>
> Yeah, yeah, I think, I think sometimes we have to re-adjust.

Separate interests ensured she 'kept her sanity', however, she had recently become more career focussed, and so had found herself needing to negotiate the parameters of her relationship further, as her spare time became more jealously guarded. Furthermore, other life course events such as her male partner having had a serious accident, as well as anticipating impending motherhood in the future, made her wary about the balance they had managed to achieve at that specific stage in their lives:

> He couldn't be as obsessional about his climbing after the accident and his perspective broadened in terms of surfing which we could do together, erm and other things. I think our life broadened in terms of things we could do together, although I can never do it at the same level as he does, as he's always gonna be one of these people, goes fell racing borrows someone's shoes and comes in the top twenty you know. But then of course, I think with a child that will be difficult because someone, always then got to be left, whereas now if he goes out climbing, I have my own space, then if he goes out climbing I'm with the child.

She therefore anticipated their previously negotiated sport/life balance would become more precarious when they had a child. Moreover, in theory at least, she had also accepted traditional gendered expectations around child rearing whilst her male partner participated in an action sport, allowing for the attendant risks involved for him as an elite male climber.

The Gendered Body and Life Course Changes

Both the individual and diverse risk-taking of women climbers and their experiences of climbing as a parent or partner need to be placed in a wider cultural context, which acknowledges both media discourses and the ways in which such issues in the context of women's sporting participation are currently configured and experienced by women. Indeed, in the UK, the 2015 Sport England campaign 'This Girl Can' has been designed to encourage more women and girls to participate actively in sport. This national campaign acknowledges the absence of females across a diverse range of sports and the fears women have regarding becoming sporting participants. An organiser of the campaign, Jenny Price, in explaining the reason for the campaign's existence said:

> We found out by talking to women of all ages up and down the country that what's stopping them is fear—fear of judgement. Whether that's about how they look, whether they're any good at it, or feeling guilty about spending time on themselves. This Girl Can is a celebration of all the women who are finding their confidence to exercise: it's an attitude, and a call to action for all women to do the same. (Price, 2014, para. 4)

One of the implications of the campaign, therefore, is that women's reluctance to compete in sporting activities is due to the continued prevalence of the 'male gaze', which equates women's sporting performance with a traditional and stereotyped feminine appearance and negatively assesses those who do not 'measure up' to such ideals.

It is therefore still important to examine some of these earlier debates, such as whether women are objectified within sporting media, in the context of new developments and seemingly progression, within the sport of rock climbing and related gender relations. One area that has received attention is representations of women's sporting bodies in the media, especially younger women, who are seen by society to possess more desirable body capital at a particular life course stage (see Booth, 2004; Rinehart, 2005; Robinson, 2008). In relation to this issue, the academic and climber Esther Bott wrote recently:

> I've been similarly troubled by recent representations of women's bodies in the British and US climbing press. On the one hand, young, hard female climbers rule. They dominate the headlines like never before. Yet at the same time there is a bit of an odd new (or resurrected) trend for saucy climbing calendars. Some are made for charity, some for 'art', featuring elite women climbers posing or climbing, often wearing not so much as a chalk bag. And we really do go in for this stuff. (Bott, 2015, paras 10–11)

Bott's view is that such images are often defended on the grounds that women's bodies can be aestheticised and appreciated as art is often seen in a 'vacuum'. However, from a critical feminist perspective, she contends that bodies are always political, being represented and embodied in a social and cultural context. Her impression of the specific cultural milieu of rock climbing is that it is still

> a world where major climbing websites leave casual sexism unchallenged, and where a macho culture still pervades…Why is this not being fully and healthily reflected in the climbing press? Why, oh why, in an era of such unprecedented progress for women climbers do we need and tolerate so uncritically these cultural relics of a bygone era? (Bott, 2015, paras 15–16)

However, the continuing existence of the male gaze in the media which has traditionally objectified the (younger) female climbing body can be further problematised if put in the context of life course changes. For

many women (and men), as they age they may experience bodily changes and, therefore, gain a different conception of an embodied sense of self. One female climber, aged 32, who was interviewed for my earlier research (Robinson, 2008) reflected on her weight gain over the years:

> I've been to a wall a few times up here, erm I've never bothered a bit being in a group of men, but I have thought it's like (laughs), feels like quite out of place with all the girls that do climb. Just, I don't know, (laughs) felt like a great big fat heifer really compared to these climbing wiry women…and then if you go to, I don't know, you went to get some stuff, and I thought 'Oh well I'll just go and have a look while I'm there', and just the fact that you just, everything was just such tiny sizes. I just thought, 'Oh that really does sort of back it up really'.

Thus, in addition to comparing herself to younger and, in her view, thinner and potentially fitter women, who she perceives may judge her for her appearance, her consumption choices are also limited as the sports clothing she seeks to purchase is only available in '*tiny sizes*'. Ironically, it is climbing within groups of men, not other women, that she feels the most secure and therefore safely away from the 'male gaze'. Arguably, further research is needed to examine how different women (at various life stages) make meaning of various mediated, discursive and physical 'gazes' upon their sporting bodies from others in sport and leisure contexts.

Summary

In conclusion, action sports are dynamic spaces with many aspects of these sports in flux, including gender relations. In this chapter, I have discussed whether indeed there have been shifts and changes in respect of women's involvement in the specific sport of rock climbing. Contemporary evidence from female climbers themselves, existing climbing and action sports literature, as well as from my own research, has allowed me to revisit earlier debates, for instance, around media representations of the female climbing body, the stereotype of the risk-

averse sportswoman and parenting expectations. In this way, public sporting performances have been seen in complex interaction with the private sphere, and thus, I have argued, allows for new topics and questions to be raised in the field.

Therefore, exploring the wider social relationships of sporting participants and across the life course, as people age, experience bodily changes, alter their risk-taking behaviour, enter and/or leave long-term relationships and take on parenting roles and/or new responsibilities, expands the theoretical focus of what can and should be investigated from a feminist critical perspective regarding women in action sports. Further, my concept of 'masculinities in transition' (Robinson, 2008; Robinson & Hockey, 2011) can be utilised to incorporate a relational gendered perspective and women's specific experiences as they transition across different spheres, and so both progression and continued inequalities in a range of action sports can be considered anew.

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5

'Don't Be a Douche': An Introduction to Sex-Integrated Roller Derby

Adele Pavlidis and James Connor

Introduction

Michael Cohen, a professor of American Studies and African American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, wrote the following in a blog post reflecting on a class with his students where he asked them to think of a white racial slur. His students found this a difficult task until someone eventually came up with 'douchebag'. He notes,

> The douchebag is someone—overwhelmingly white, rich, heterosexual males—who insists upon, nay, demands his white male privilege in every possible set and setting. The douchebag is equally douchey (that's the adjectival version of the term) in public and in private…There are plausible

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objections to 'douchebag'. It feels like an overused insult. And its origins lie in the male insult culture that identifies women's bodies as the object of contempt…An actual douchebag isn't feminine; it's a quite literally useless, sexist tool. It's alienated from women. (Cohen, 2014)

In the sport of roller derby, the refrain, 'don't be a douche[bag]' is commonly used as a way to mediate/manage the behaviour of men in this previously 'women-only' (Donnelly, 2012) space. In this chapter we provide an introduction to the key issues that have arisen as men have increasingly moved from support roles (referees, coaches, officials, etc.) to active roles (as players on either men-only teams, or sex-integrated teams). The phrase, 'don't be a douche' is used by both men and women, *predominately* towards men. In this chapter, we highlight the various uses of this phrase as a way of illustrating the gendered tensions in roller derby as men's participation increases. The introduction of men into what has so far been a gender-segregated sport provides a rich empirical field that demonstrates key theoretical conundrums and complexities regarding gender relations.

Sport is one domain where gender segregation has remained (for the most part) formally and traditionally unquestioned (Anderson, 2008). It is also one domain, among many, where males are taken as the universal subject. For example, in football the men's world cup is called, 'the world cup', whereas the women's is gendered as 'the women's world cup' (Engh, 2011). Gender segregation has supported the hegemonic position of masculine superiority. For men, research has demonstrated that participation in all male sports enables them to secure their position as the universal subject, as the embodiment of 'sport' as a masculine, competitive, aggressive contest (Anderson, 2008; Woodward, 2009). While for women, segregation has provided a space away from male aggression and violence on the field (Theberge, 1987) as well as greater control of sport more generally (Hargreaves, 1990).

Despite some of the benefits of segregated sport for women, scholars such as Hargreaves (1990) have noted the ways that separatism makes damaging assumptions about biologically determined reasons for male domination and fails to account for the fluid and changing gender relations in sport. More recently, researchers such as Anderson (2008);

Pfister ([2010](#)), and Channon and Jennings ([2013](#)) have written about the benefits of sex integration as a way for people of different genders to learn more about the embodied capacities of all. And so, the introduction of men, as active participants in roller derby, presents an important and potentially productive opportunity for both men and women to learn about each other, and to challenge outdated notions of sex and gender.

The question of gender in contemporary research has developed extensively, particularly since the integration of poststructuralist and inter/transdisciplinary concepts began to influence the field. In a turn away from structuralist notions of depth, the primacy of the mind, and 'reading' gender, feminist research has worked to incorporate corporality (Grosz, [1994](#)) and a conception of 'the body' as processual, fluid and becoming (Deleuze and Guattari, [1987](#)). In the case of roller derby, Pavlidis and Fullagar ([2014](#)) have begun to incorporate these ideas into their analysis, allowing them to theorize the multiple identities of women in derby. Relationships among women have tended to fall into a few categories—friendships, sisterhood, mean girls, and so on (Ringrose, [2006](#)). Pavlidis and Fullagar's ([2014](#)) work drew on feminist conceptualizations of affect to go beyond these narrow categories of what women in sport can be. This current chapter, while acknowledging these theoretical debates, is primarily empirical and focused on the specifics of sex-integrated roller derby. In the following section we present our methods, followed by a background to roller derby (and roller skating) and gender. Then we present an outline of some of the institutional issues related to gender that impact the sport. This leads onto our analysis of key themes that were found through the research, followed by the conclusion.

Collaborative, Reflexive Ethnography in Mixed-Sex/Gender Derby

This chapter is one of the first analyses (see also, Pavlidis & Connor, [2016](#)) of mixed-gender roller derby in the academic field and therefore takes an exploratory and ethnographic approach. Mixed derby has no governing body or rules framework, although most leagues follow

the rule set of the Women's Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA, discussed below). A point of contention within sex-integrated leagues is how to manage the gender mix of skaters on track both during training and bouts, as well as the gender mix in leadership positions. Thus we take mixed derby to be any league/bout that explicitly incorporates a range of genders *on the track* and allows them to skate together. Incorporating 'brief ethnographic visits' (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2002), together with autoethnographic research sustained over longer periods of time, our methodological approach is eclectic[1] (Wheaton, 2013). We use a range of data collection methods common to sport ethnographies, including participant observation (in 'real' and virtual spaces), informal conversations, in-depth interviews and analysis of blog content and official website text.

Mixed-sex/gender roller derby is a contentious issue. A reflexive ethnographic approach, sensitive to the complexities of power and gender in roller derby, has been employed to ensure an ethical and productive analysis. The first author, who self-identifies as cisfemale, is an ex-roller derby participant. The second author self-identifies as cismale and is currently participating in roller derby in a mixed-sex/gender league. Women have written most of the literature about the contemporary revival of roller derby, with the exception being Travis Beaver (2012). This chapter contributes towards collaborative, mixed-sex/gender ethnographic research in action sport. As derby skaters (past and present), we have (varying degrees) of 'intimate insider' (Taylor, 2011) knowledge of roller derby in Australia. Notions of 'insider' and 'outsider' positions in ethnographic research have been problematized over the years, and particularly when it comes to gender, this area is only beginning to be interrogated by researchers (Olive & Thorpe, 2011; Pavlidis and Olive, 2014). In this chapter we argue that 'insider research' can be rigorous while also acknowledging the fluid boundaries of identity and belonging that typify contemporary life. Our collective goal is to sensitively examine the tensions created by mixed-sex/gender roller derby and to argue for mixed-sex/gender derby as an important step forward for the sport.

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[1] See Pavlidis & Connor, 2016.

Roller Derby—Changing Gender Relations

Roller derby is one action sport where women have always had a central role as participants. Indeed, roller *skating* itself has been one leisure pursuit where women have enjoyed themselves since as early as the late seventeenth century. Storms, in her archival research on roller skating in the USA found that,

> During the 1890s, there were rinks with hard maple floors in nearly every town and city and roller skating became a social craze. Young Victorian women had a rare glimpse of freedom as they met and socialized with men during these skating events because their chaperones could not keep up with them on skates. (2008, p. 69)

The sport of roller derby was said to be invented first as a type of marathon on roller skates in the 1920s, and women were able to compete in the early days of the sport's development in mixed-gender races. Storms' found that 'These women athletes were not only competitive, but shocked and astonished the crowds at the race with their skill and previously unforeseen athleticism' (2008, p. 75). By the end of World War II roller derby developed from the marathon style races to incorporate elements of faux fighting and a more developed points system. With the birth of television, derby's popularity grew exponentially, and Storms found evidence to suggest that the female skaters were key to this popularity. A sports reporter in 1949 wrote,

> Actually it is the girls who save roller derby from being a bore. Such worthies as Mary Lou Palermo, Annis 'Red' Jensen, Mary Ciafano, Monta Jean Schall, Georgiana Kemp, Gertie Schall, and the aforementioned 'Toughie' Brasuhn have the temperament and dash to keep the crowds awake. Hair pulling, fist fights, gestures, and plain yells of anguish are in their bag of tricks. (Gould 1949 in Storms, 2008, p. 76)

Women in derby were seen as tough, strong and athletic. Yet, despite the central importance of women in derby, there were still discrepancies in pay—with male players being paid more than the females, despite their

performance. Various iterations of roller derby attempted to enter into the sport landscape in the period between 1970 and 1990, yet none of those survive today.

Early this century the sport of roller derby undertook an 'all-girl revival' (Mabe, 2008). This revived version privileged women's participation, as players and leaders. As a contact sport played on roller skates, where women would often wear sexualized uniforms including short skirts/shorts and fishnet stockings and take on a moniker, for example, Al-pocalypse, or Barilyn Monroe (Two Evils, n.d.), roller derby has been celebrated as a site of empowerment and sporting success for women around the world (Beaver, 2012; Finley, 2010).

So far, there have been several research articles published that examine and explain gender in roller derby. Predominately, and clearly demonstrated through the work of Finley (2010), Carlson (2010) and Donnelly (2012), gender has been understood via Connell's concept of a gender regime—'the pattering of gender relations in [an] institution, and especially the continuing pattern, which provides the structural context of particular relationships and individual practices' (Connell, 2005: 4). This work has focused on types of 'alternative' femininity that roller derby enables. Other researchers, such as Pavlidis (2012) and Breeze (2013), draw on poststructuralist theories, such as those articulated by Law (2004) and Foucault (1980), to understand the gender relations at play. This approach focuses on areas often thought of as 'periphery' in research—such as the question of seriousness at the heart of Breeze's (2013) work, or the privileging of affect and music in some of Pavlidis' work (e.g., 2013). The literature so far on roller derby has focused primarily on women's participation and relations with each other, not on their relations with men or broader structures in society (see Beaver, 2012 for a Marxist account of derby organizations). This focus on women was perhaps inevitable and in keeping with the all-girl revival mantra. While this approach offers a range of insights into female sport, what it misses is the wider context of roller derby and how it operates within a sporting system that is signified as masculine. The sport struggles with its position in regard to the role of men and how it paradoxically embraces traditional sporting mantras (e.g., professionalism, sponsorship, athleticism, centralized control) and revolutionary aspects (the primacy of women over men).

Institutional Gender Relations

As roller derby continues to gain popularity, there remains contestation over issues of national and international governance (Pavlidis & Fullagar, 2014, pp. 111–153). The largest governing body, WFTDA, is, as their name suggests, a majority women-only organization, promoting a majority women-only sport. Yet, as noted above, separatism in sport (as in other areas of life) has not addressed issues of sexism, discrimination and marginalization. And, more importantly, the idea of 'women' as a coherent category has undergone rigorous critique (e.g., Butler, 1990; Grosz, 1994). The idea that any one woman in sport can speak for all women has been contested (Brown, 2011; Pavlidis & Fullagar, 2013; Watson & Scraton, 2012), and it is more widely accepted that women, like men, have multiple and sometimes competing desires, motivations and (sexual) preferences.

This being the case, WFTDA's focus on 'women's roller derby', while also positioning itself as the authority in the development of rules, structure and future directions of the sport, is somewhat problematic. Since the initial revival of roller derby, men have had and continue to have important support roles as coaches, referees and non-skating officials. Men also play roller derby, with a Men's Roller Derby Association (MRDA) recently established (based in the USA). Of primary interest in this chapter is the way that mixed-gender leagues have begun establishing themselves. These men's leagues, and, in particular the mixed-gender leagues, pose a challenge to the mission of WFTDA, and to the notion of 'woman' as a coherent, unified category, which requires a more complex interrogation of the gender dynamics at play (at local and global levels), to which this chapter contributes.

In the early 2000s a revived version of derby, played solely by women, came to the media's attention (Ray, 2008). Since then, with varying levels of organization and structure, the sport has continued to grow and gain popularity around the world. Although there are no 'official' statistics to demonstrate the growth of roller derby, there are several unofficial ways of measuring growth. For example, the international master list of roller derby names, which aims to ensure that each player has a unique

name and 'inactive' skaters are removed, cites 40,542 roller girls as of 9 January 2014 (www.twoevils.org/rollergirls/), compared to 7927 female skaters that were registered in April 2007 (Storms, 2010). In 2014 there are approximately 1515 leagues around the world, as compared with the approximately 50 leagues that were established by 2006 (www.derbyroster.com). There are nine separate associations supporting the sport's governance and development (JRDA = Junior Roller Derby Association; MADE = Modern Athletic Derby Endeavor; MRDA = Men's Roller Derby Association; OSDA = Old School Derby Association; RDAC = Roller Derby Association of Canada; RDCL = Roller Derby Coalition of Leagues; UKRDA = United Kingdom Roller Derby Association; USARS = USA Roller Sports; WFTDA = Women's Flat Track Derby Association); however, only the WFTDA deliberately positions itself as a women's governing body, while also asserting its claim as the 'original' and authoritative body. Yet WFTDA has only 260 Full Member Leagues and 97 Apprentice Leagues (www.wftda.com/leagues); a small proportion of the 1515 leagues around the world. WFTDA's primary claim to universal legitimacy is that (with the exclusion of banked track leagues) a large proportion of leagues and associations use their rules for games.

Problematically the WFTDA reproduces dominant narratives regarding the category of 'woman' as defined against 'man', via biological determinism. To skate in a WFTDA (2014) league a skater must be 'living as a woman and having sex hormones that are within the medically acceptable range for a female'. Conversely, and somewhat non-typically for a 'men's' sporting organization, the MRDA (2014),

> …does not and will not differentiate between members who identify as male and those who identify as a nonbinary gender (including but not limited to genderqueer, transmasculine, transfeminine, and agender) and does not and will not set minimum standards of masculinity for its membership or interfere with the privacy of its members for the purposes of charter eligibility.

In relation to the policy, in our interview with the MRDA president, he noted that 'the essence of what it was designed to achieve was to give skaters who don't identify with a binary gender a place to compete in roller

derby as long as they are committed to playing what we call men's roller derby'.

The history and practice of gender verification in sport is one of invasive medicalization of socially construed gender binaries that have profoundly discriminated against athletes (Henne, 2014). It must be noted that this type of sex verification only occurs in 'women's' sport and is often based around a perception that a person cannot be female because of the way they 'look' (Vannini & Fornssler, 2011). The reliance on hormones and medical verification leads to egregious breaches of a person's rights and privacy as noted by Henne (2014) and Schultz (2011) in other sports with such rules.

Playing Together: Don't Be a Douche, Be a Gentleman

Roller derby is a contact sport, played on roller skates. Players need to be able to skate well, and need to be able to give, and take, full body hits (in 'legal' areas, including hips, backside, shoulders, chest and thighs). The 'jammers' are the point scorers in the game and are often the most skilled and fast skaters. 'Blockers' are focused more on strategy and blocking the other team from scoring points—strength as well as skill is valued in this role. As a contact sport there are co-ed leagues in Australia with informal rules and limits around what men can do against women. This includes the strength of and number of hits, who can make them against whom and restrictions on employing valid derby tactics so as to not 'demoralize' the women skaters. However, the skaters acknowledged that these norms of play were a constant source of tension. In our interview with the president of one such league we asked about the ways these informal rules work.

Participant: Okay it all depends on the league in question. If it's an opposing large male blocker—most co-ed leagues run by what we call the Gentlemen's Code, which is the guys skate 100 per cent impact against each other and they aim for positional blocking or needed force to push a female

opponent down or out, not what we would call excessive. I know the rules don't account for anything such as excessive, but no one likes to see a small 55 kilo woman splayed across the wall by a 90 kilo man on skates.

So we teach skaters from the get-go to apply the force you need as a male skater, rather than what you don't need. When large guys lay smaller girls out intentionally, you'll find the crowd and stuff like that will get quite behind them and be like that's a dick move, not very cool. If we saw that repeatedly happening in [our league] we'd probably crush that out, because that's not part of our culture; we don't allow for that.

Interviewer: You don't have any women who object to that though; because it's basically saying women aren't strong enough to be on the track?

Participant: That's a very good point. It is often the coaches that are raising the issue far more than the skaters. I honestly have actually never had a female say that someone in our league has used excessive force to the point where they're caused serious physical harm against them; I've never had that compliant. I've had that complaint from other leagues from my skaters on opposing skaters from other leagues, but never from within [the league].

Another male skater, from a different league reflected on the problem of being the big, harder-hitting one on the track dealing with less-advanced female skaters:

Interviewee: It's a different type of enjoyment. I have to play differently. If I'm jamming, there are blockers who are half my weight trying to stop me and so I don't want to injure people. I don't want to 'be a douche', as the saying goes.

Interviewer: Don't be a douche?

Interviewee: Which is never actually articulated except at the time when you do something that someone doesn't like and

	they claim that you're breaking this rule. But also I'm trying to extract value from training and just being, like, this blocker is half my weight therefore I win is actually not a useful kind of way for me to train.
Interviewer:	So could you describe, then, playing against other men what that experience is like?
Interviewee:	I guess I get a real sense of the only limitations being the rules. And my own capacity, and there's some kind of liberation in that, that particularly because those rules are articulated, whereas in co-ed play there's always that, yes, that block was legal, but you're probably a bad person for doing it and often you get the everyone says I've signed up for this, I'm here voluntarily, if you follow the rules then that's all right, but then they still get…you still get the impression they believe you've committed an injustice, even where your actions were within the rules.

These responses were typical of many of the male-identified skaters who we engaged with through the research. These kinds of views, about the need for men to 'hold back' and limit themselves when playing against women confirm and reinforce narrowly defined gender norms. Yet, as noted above by one of the participants, these types of informal policies were supported by some female skaters.

Don't Be a Douche and Don't Hold Back

The phrase 'don't be a douche' is commonly used during mixed gender games/training to suggest that men should not be 'mean' or 'hard' about their blocking against women, and should not take advantage of their perceived superior size/weight and hitting power. This assumption of superiority in sport is what is at stake in the deployment of the phrase 'don't be a douche'. In the field of recreational surfing, Olive, McCuaig and Phillips (2012) found male patronage and 'helping' behaviour in the surf—such as pushing a women onto a wave without her request –can

be deeply offensive and sometimes patronizing, indicating as it does that women are weaker and inferior.

We also found that many women feel deeply insulted by the idea of men 'holding back' their hits or not playing properly as highlighted by one of our female participants below.

Interviewer: Do you think men should play 'softer' against women?
Participant: Bullshit, I find it really offensive that some men and women still see us as soft or weak. It's Derby, you get better by being hit hard. That said, sometimes some women will complain and bitch about the guys being too big or strong cause they can't get through [the pack—past the men] or something, and that makes us all [women] look bad. (Female skater, co-ed league).

The MRDA president also acknowledged that 'don't be a douche' wasn't always taken well by players.

I've seen the same ethic cause offense—where its being explained before a co-ed scrimmage, and some skaters like having everyone reminded not to be a douche, and others get offended and say 'I don't want anyone to skate different with me than they would with anyone'.

Further, as Rider, a female skater/blogger (2014) notes: 'And if you don't want to play with men because you think they're too aggressive and hit too hard, then please, for the love of God, make sure you avoid ever playing any high-level women's derby'. This sentiment was repeatedly echoed in informal discussion around the problem of men hitting women—most female skaters characterized it as weakness on the part of the skater. A female participant, mother to two young children, with postgraduate education, gave the following extended response to the specific question about men playing roller derby:

Interviewee: It doesn't bother me, to be honest, I mean, our first bout [match] with [the league] was a co-ed bout…two male bouters [skaters]…were both put on the same team…and

> they absolutely hammered us, you know it was a slaughter, and I realised as well, during the game, that they had been holding back in training, you know, cause they hit so hard, it was like, the first time it was a real shock, like 'oh my god, I've never been hit that hard' you know, so, but it was still fun, and I would still do it again.

Some men in our research questioned the universalizing of gendered strength/power/skill, with one male skater noting, 'some women are "far more scary" than the blokes' (usually in reference to more experienced female skaters). As Channon and Jennings (2013, p. 488) note 'feminist scholars have explored mixed-sex participation, suggesting that personal empowerment, along with broader challenges to hierarchal gender discourse, can be strengthened immensely when men and women jointly experience the potentials of differently sexed bodies'. However, exposure may also serve to cement and enforce ideas of gender as the protagonists struggle to negotiate/live the mixed-sporting experience. Some men in our research refused to engage in co-ed scrimmage/contact on the basis of not wanting to 'hurt the girls'. This discourse of 'weakness' is exemplified by the idea that men should 'pull' their hits on women to not hurt them. A number of discussions reflect this masculine/feminine binary, including the idea that men are predisposed to be more aggressive and violent and thus hit harder.

The phrase, 'don't be a douche' had a different, perhaps more productive institutional meaning in the context of the MRDA. When asked whether he was familiar with the refrain, the president of MRDA responded by utilizing a similar term, 'rule zero' (zero indicating that it is not actually a rule, which are all numbered from 1.0 onwards):

> Ahhh yes, the good old 'Rule Zero'. The efficacy depends on the setting. In an all-league practice where we have people of all skill levels from 'I just passed my minimum skills' to 'I just completed by sixth season on a travel team', then it's absolutely necessary. The [US regional league] girls have developed a skating levels system which has been really helpful to identify what each skater should be able to 'handle', and in an effort to make things

as seamless as possible between the leagues, the [male league] have adopted it as well. It spells out skill benchmarks for each level which correspond to a color stripe (red, orange, yellow, none) that's visible to other skaters. So for instance, no one hits someone with a red stripe on their helmet. But no color at all means you're travel team eligible and can take anything, in theory, so it's open game on you. What this means is that you can't claim someone did something wrong if they were within the bounds of the levels system. (male interviewee)

In this way we can see how some leagues are attempting to remove gender (as a restricting qualifier) and replace it with a somewhat quantitative measure of skill and ability. Rather than group skaters according to gender, instead there is a move to group skaters according to skill level. As he says, by skaters wearing colours that represent their skill level, and hence what is the appropriate strength to use on them, then 'you can't claim someone did something wrong if they were within the bounds of the level system'.

Conclusion

Derby is far from a utopian gender space, or perhaps even a neutral one, with this research demonstrating the ongoing sexualization of skaters and the reiteration of weakness and sporting inferiority via being 'soft' on participants sexed as female. As a male observer commented in an opinion piece in a major Australian online news source:

Perhaps what is required is respect of the gender politics in which roller derby is engaged. Men's roller derby is an opportunity for men to move into a woman's space—at the invite, essentially, of women. And in doing so men who play roller derby have the opportunity to show the rest of the world how men can be willing to play on women's terms, accept women as key leaders and allow themselves to play second fiddle to the women's game. (Copland, 2014)

The contested nature of men in roller derby illustrates the construed and performative nature of the tension. As one derby skater put it in a blog post,

I am female, I am a skater in a co-ed league and every time I see or hear a rant bemoaning men playing derby and citing feminism as the reason, I feel like smashing my head against a wall. (Rider, 2014)

The first author's experiences, skating with an all-female league and conducting research with mostly all-female leagues, highlighted the problematic denial of the role of men in derby. Men's involvement, as referees, coaches, partners, supporters and fans, was often not accounted for (Pavlidis & Fullagar, 2014), and in this way, women's position as 'empowered' was sometimes undermined by the lack of transparency and openness to (gendered) differences. Another female skater, commenting on the idea that men should not play noted: 'How can we be feminist and empowering and all that good Derby stuff when we exclude people based on gender?'

The second author's experiences highlighted the challenges in negotiating gender and sexuality in mixed derby. In the masculine space of martial arts, Channon and Jennings (2013) noted the ways women and men were able to 'de-sexualize' themselves (to a greater or lesser extent) in the training environment (it is rare for women to fight men competitively). In roller derby, as a primarily female space where emphasized femininity is the norm (including wearing revealing clothing, heavy make-up, and the adoption of sometimes sexualized monikers as derby names) this is more complex.

Gender is an ongoing area of contention in derby. The position of authority claimed by WFTDA is making it difficult for leagues that wish to be co-ed and/or non-gendered to establish themselves and compete. Especially as WFTDA has created structural constraints, via their rules, on what genders can play derby. Despite its potential, derby does reproduce and reflect dominant gendered discourses about appearance, bodies, strength and power and skaters are sexualized. These interactions occur from the policy level to everyday interactions of skaters and without further interrogation may impede the growth and success of the sport. The imperative and instruction to not 'be a douche[bag]' is deployed in a number of ways, some productive of more inclusive gender relations and some that limit the possibilities inherent in sex-integrated roller derby. Common as the phrase is, its meaning is highly dependent on context and understanding.

Cohen's point at the beginning of this chapter, that the douchebag is the 'white racial slur we have all been waiting for' (Cohen, 2014) fails to account for the ways slurs such as these can work *against* a marginalized group. Of course, Cohen was simply using the example of the douchebag as part of a teaching exercise, but his students' responses and agreements are notable. And in derby, name-calling and the use of the phrase 'don't be a douche' is considered part of the culture. Further research about the gender dynamics in roller derby needs to seriously consider the ways these types of slurs undermine the feminist ethos of roller derby more generally. As Michael Flood notes in relation to the rise of men's movements, 'because men in general are privileged in relation to gender, their collective mobilization involves the danger of enhancing this privilege' (2007, 420). The use of slurs, in what nearly all male participants agree is primarily *a women's space*, is not only unnecessary but could also be damaging for the sport more broadly.

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6

Parkour, Gendered Power and the Politics of Identity

Belinda Wheaton

In this chapter, I explore the politics of gender in the predominantly urban-based but rapidly changing activity of parkour. Parkour derives from the French word *parcours*, meaning 'route' or 'course'. It is inspired by movement which focuses on 'efficient motion' over, under, around or through obstacles including walls, railings and roofs, by running, jumping, vaulting and climbing (Parkour UK, 2011). Some refer to free running;[1] however, the name has never been as important as the 'methods and spirit of practise which remain at its core today' (Parkour UK, 2011). Conducted in the cities' back streets and parks for much of its existence, it was an underground activity, however, by the end of the 1990s, media across many national contexts were documenting parkour's emergence.

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[1] The differences between free running and parkour are discussed in Wheaton (2013) and O'Loughlin (2012).

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The predominantly young male participants are often framed as reckless and antisocial. However like other action sports that involve risk, 'heroic narratives' emphasising male physicality and 'accomplishment' are commonplace, such as chase scenes in feature films like the James Bond film, *Casino Royale* featuring renowned parkour participants (Saville, 2008, p. 892).

Parkour has provoked academic attention from wide-ranging disciplines. Scholars have depicted parkour as a creative spatial practice, transgressing traditional ways of interacting with the urban environment (Atkinson, 2009; Guss, 2011; Thompson, 2008), disrupting and destabilising the city's physical and social landscape. This research builds on a corpus of work examining skateboarding, which emphasises the ways skaters appropriate and rework commercialised and routinised city spaces for purposes of excitement, self-expression and escape (e.g. Borden, 2001; Vivoni, 2009). For example, Ortuzar (2009) describes parkour as an escape 'from the practices of power that govern our movement and regulate our behaviour' (2009, p. 55) and Atkinson (2009) suggests it has the potential to transgress bodily, capitalist and spatial norms producing 'an aesthetic-spiritual reality of the self' (p. 170).

Yet in these commentaries, consideration of the gendered body is largely absent. As Kidder has contended 'researchers have failed to analyse the ways in which while parkour offers "transgressive potential" to some, it may marginalize others' (2013, p. 4). Therefore, in this chapter, I explore gendered power relations, with a particular focus on the inclusion/exclusion of women. First, I introduce parkour, outlining its dominant form of masculinity and unique ethos. I contour the dominant discourses of parkour illustrating how the ethics and practice differ from more traditional expressions of sporting masculinity. I then explore the diverse and contradictory practices within the parkour culture. Finally, I highlight the absence of research on female parkour participants. I explore how the prevailing male rationalities and practices might impact on female participants, their sense of subject formation, and experiences of inclusion and belonging.

First, some disclaimers are necessary. For some practitioners, parkour is not a *sport* (O'Loughlin, 2012), so while I describe parkour as an a*ction sport* I recognise that it is a multifaceted and shifting activity. While *tra-*

ceurs (the name given to those (men) who practise parkour or free running) first learn a set of techniques, it does not have a set of rules or outcomes. Nor does it fit easily into existing categories, being described variously as sport, art and a discipline, with forms that intersect with dance, martial arts and gymnastics. Most recently it is being repackaged for fitness classes and in hybrid activities such as races with obstacles. Second, I am not a participant. My interest in parkour stemmed initially from involvement in youth initiatives in England (from 2009), and subsequent debates about parkour's institutionalisation (see Wheaton & Gilchrist, 2011; Wheaton, 2013). Through these activities I met and engaged in numerous formal and informal conversations and email correspondences with people involved with the discipline as trainers, teachers, commentators, disciples and critics, initially from the UK and subsequently further afield.[2] Additionally, 20 interviews were conducted between 2009 and 2014, which were fully transcribed and analysed thematically. These sources, along with materials from websites, media and blogs, provide the data that inform this chapter.

Parkour, Embodiment and Masculine Identity

Parkour emerged in the 1980s within the multiracial 'Paris suburbs' (*banlieue)* that were home to many immigrants (Mould, 2009), and became the focus of urban deprivation and subsequent unrest.[3] This environment is where a group of young men began training and founded the *Yamakasi* group, from which most of the parkour-inspired movements have originated (Parkour UK, 2011). Online media are widely credited as central to parkour's growing transnational popularity (Angel, 2011; Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2013). While parkour is a self-directed, individualistic practice, participants usually create small groups to practise and train. They periodically meet up with other tra-

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[2] For the purposes of writing this chapter, I would like to particularly thank Mark Cooper for alerting me to Women in Iran, Alister O'Louglin for involvement in 2PK activities, and Julie Angel for generously sharing her interviews and thoughts.

[3] Despite the focus on urban space, from the outset parkour was also practiced in the forests and fitness trail parks around Lisses (Julie Angel, correspondence, 2014).

ceurs, at larger gatherings or 'Jams'. Traceurs have a strong sense of being part of a local and increasingly transnational collective they refer to as 'the community'.

This community however is 'a masculine social world' (Kidder, 2013, p. 6). In Sussex, where I conducted much of my initial research, the participants were almost exclusively teenage or young white men. Female participants were largely invisible. In many street-based parkour groups, women are at most a small minority, and they rarely feature in the mass media's depiction of parkour. These observations point to asking questions about who is materially, spatially and discursively *included* and *excluded* from the 'imagined community' of parkour. Kidder (2013) notes that whereas gender and age were quite homogenous amongst the Chicago parkour community, the community was more diverse with regard to race and class. Parkour does appear to appeal across ethnic groups and social classes. Traceurs in France were from the outset an ethnically diverse group, involving several children of first-generation (African and Asian) immigrants (Guss, 2011). These individuals, the revered 'masters' of the sport, have continued to dominate media coverage and command the most cultural capital. So in contrast to most action sports, black male bodies are prevalent in mainstream imagery (e.g. *Casino Royale*). From my observations and interviews in London it was evident that parkour appealed to youth from wide-ranging cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Parkour shares many characteristics with other informal action sports including its spontaneous nature, the absence of bounded spaces for participation, a lack of person-on-person formal competition, an emphasis on self-expression, and attitudes to freedom and to risk (see Wheaton, 2013). Nonetheless, as this chapter illustrates, the philosophy and meaning of parkour also differ from both traditional and action sports. Here I consider how parkour's ethic of practice informs the ways in which masculinity is understood, experienced and performed within parkour. I discuss how this ethic rejects some of the central aspects of athletic sporting masculinity, including rejecting formal competition and supporting each other rather than solely competing for status, a focus on personal development, and in the valuing of skills that females tend to excel in, such as balance and agility.

Anti-Sports Discourse: Self-Improvements vs. Competition

Many aspects of parkour are sports-like, and participants often adopt demanding and regimented physical training regimes (see also Atkinson, 2009). Yet traceurs reject the label *sport*, centrally because they see parkour as a creative, non-competitive discipline, with its focus on self-improvement. According to Parkour UK's website (2011) it is:

> a discipline of self-improvement on all levels, an art that reveals to the practitioner his or her own physical and mental limits and simultaneously offers a method to surpass them. A practitioner of parkour aims to be self-reliant and physically capable; fit, strong and healthy; honest and sincere; disciplined; focussed; creative and always useful and helpful to others.

Participants challenge themselves physically *and* mentally, and they do not—at least overtly—compete against others. As participants explained, effort and attitude, rather than ability, are rewarded. The prospect of formal competition and forms of competitiveness were a constant source of debate amongst the community and on forums. Quite nuanced views were voiced that recognised the difficulties of developing a non-competitive sporting practice within a dominant culture infused by the values of competition. They also acknowledged that there are some competitive elements to their practice, such as sometimes 'having a race to see who could climb up an item the fastest'. However, the self-improvement narrative, not being the best, was strongly defended:

> When you're training, we're not kind of training to be the best, we are training to do parkour and then we are using our skills which is quite fun. If you put competition to anything it just causes people to try and be the best in the competition and then you lose why you wanted to be good at it (Interview, elite teenager).

In my previous analysis of the windsurfing culture, I argued that the rejection of formal competitiveness and the overt emphasis on winning that is characteristic of the dominant athletic value system challenged

the dominant conception of sporting masculinities (Wheaton, 2004). I illustrated that the windsurfer's dominant masculinity, 'ambivalent masculinity', was less excluding of other men, and women, than the broader culture in which it is embedded. Similarly, many of the male parkour participants emphasised the lack of formal competition and valued different aspects of the performance:

> The difference between parkour I guess and other sports and disciplines is, there is no competition where you have to be the fastest […]. It doesn't really matter how far you can jump or anything like that; it doesn't make you a better practitioner (participant interview).

Parkour's Ethos of Practice: An Ethic of Inclusivity and Care

Parkour UK's definition of parkour (cited earlier) emphasises many of the values seen to be important by the community: 'aims to be self-reliant', 'honest and sincere', 'creative and always useful and helpful to others', disciplined, and focussed. Underpinning this philosophy is the need to train safely. The importance of safety infused my conversations; for example, one interview participant explains that 'safety is the most important aspect; every traceur should understand how to train safely'. Participants require self-discipline, knowledge and responsibility to ensure they do not attempt overly difficult or risky manoeuvres. They also believe it is their responsibility to impart this ethos and knowledge to other less-experienced participants. So 'everyone will take responsibility for training everyone else in what they know' (interviewee).

This desire to include newcomers was also related to participants' fear that outsiders and the media would represent parkour as overly risky or dangerous (see Wheaton, 2013). Nonetheless, traceurs attitudes to inclusion and self-regulation appeared to differ from many other action sport cultures in significant ways. For example, in Australian surfing spaces, non-locals (outsiders) and novice surfers have to *earn* the right to belong, and those who do not follow these informal rules are mocked and even disciplined (Evers, 2009, p. 901). That is, there is an informal hierarchy

through which hegemonic male bodies dominate physically and symbolically, and reproduce 'discourses that pass on expectations and enthusiasms that are about being assertive, hard, strong, bold, competitive, rough' (Evers, 2009, p. 901). While movement styles associated with femininity, such as grace and balance are applauded by *some*, but not all surfers, the emphasis on power and aggression has dominated; male-defined standards demarcate elite surfing and demand the most respect. Similarly, while women are making inroads into *some* forms of skateboarding, such as long boarding and half-pipe, 'male-related qualities of the body remain ascendant' particularly risk taking, physical power and technical prowess (Atencio, Beal, & Wilson, 2009, p. 17).

In contrast, masculine-defined qualities of the body appear to be less dominant in parkour. Many practitioners believe there is a recognition of the *value* of different style and ways of moving to adapt to different physiques. As O'Loughlan writes, '[M]ore important than any one technique is the ability to adapt and combine them; so inventing movements uniquely suited to one's own physique and the situation in question' (2012, p. 197). As a parkour trainer explains:

> The routes are never set as in 'you must do this move', it's 'you must get from here to here' and you're given guidance and improvements on your route. But every-one does it in their own unique way. There's as many ways to move as they are individuals so it doesn't really matter if you're male, female, tall, short, whatever all that matters is that you're doing your best, and moving in your way, and trying hard. That's really what matters.

Traceurs have an ethic of care for the self, others and the environment more broadly. The philosophy of parkour requires traceurs to preserve and respect their environment and community (Atkinson, 2009), and to use architecture in 'new and alternative ways', but 'never to disrupt, change or damage' (Mould, 2009, p. 743). A parkour participant and teacher explained, 'every technique is underplayed with a philosophy and idea of responsibility, a responsibility about the environment one practises parkour in, and the other users of that environment'. This inclusivity and a sense of responsibility are manifest in many ways, including encompassing all levels of ability, including women, and the embracing and

supporting of 'outsiders'. As Guss claims 'traceurs do not forge groups based on exclusion' (2011, p. 81). Tracers describe their community as 'non-hierarchical':

> I kind of find skate culture and BMX-ers culture, they're kind of a bit 'we're BMX's, this is *our* place, no one else's'. Parkour's a bit more, it's got a different kind of background and it's a lot more kind of 'everywhere is kind of yours' (interviewee).

Saville (2008) also observes that in contrast to many other male-defined and -dominated sports, in parkour, emotional engagement is encouraged, not seen solely as a weakness. Participants see fearless not as an 'obstacle, or something to overcome', but as an 'aesthetic experience' (Guss, 2011, p. 81). Parkour masculinity appears, at least discursively to embrace emotional aspects of their physicality, opening up the space for alternative masculinities and femininities.

Contradictory Performances of Masculinity

The previous section illustrated some of the ways in which parkour's ethos of practice challenged the 'jock stereotypes' typical of mainstream sporting practices (Kidder, 2013, p. 3). Nonetheless, men's *performance* of masculine identities was often more contradictory. That is, the discourse about parkour's values often differed from participants' practices. Despite the widespread discourse of anti-competition and safety, willingness to show emotions, and support, at times men *did* compete over status mirroring practices in other 'non-competitive' action sporting contexts such as windsurfing (Wheaton, 2004), skateboarding (Beal, 1996) and snowboarding (Thorpe, 2011), performing masculinity particularly through risk-taking, enduring pain and demonstrating sporting prowess.

Risk-taking has been seen as a defining feature of many action sports, with the emphasis on danger coded as distinctively masculine. Kidder further suggests that control of the (urban) environment is inherently linked to masculinity. He observes that despite the discourse of *being safe,* male traceurs used risk-taking practices as way to bolster masculine

identities, taking 'otherwise safe environments and transforming them into places of risk' (Kidder, 2013 p. 11). Gilchrist and Wheaton (2013) discuss how cultural references to the superheroes of comic books[4] and the male characters in video games influence the traceurs' own visual productions. They reproduce key 'tropes' of the action film genre, such as spectacular chase sequences (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2013 p. 178) 'or reaching someone in distress' (Kidder, 2013 p. 10), as heroic and warrior-esque masculine fantasies are played out. Kidder (2013) notes that the 'talk in parkour is filled with "what-if" scenarios, for which the traceur believes he [sic] is uniquely trained to survive' (p. 10). As I explore later, these narratives have important implications for female participants and their embodied identities.

Another revealing example of the ways men feel the need to *perform* normative masculinity is the widely commented-on practice of men taking their tops off to display their 'chests and pecs', even in cold weather. A trainer/participant describes this practice:

> There's loads of YouTube clips that starts with a guy taking his shirt off slowly, just to show the back, and then he starts to run and does stuff like that, and then starts looking into the distance. And then starts to do parkour. It's horrible.

This practice is not unique to the English parkour scene. Kidder describes how 'at some point during a jam, irrespective of temperature, someone will call out that it is "shirtless o'clock"'. 'It is a chance for the young men with muscular and toned physiques to put their bodies on display' and 'to sort out the individuals too embarrassed or insecure to take part' (Kidder, 2013, p. 8). This practice reaffirms the existence of a hierarchy underpinning masculine identity and status through bodies.

In summary, male traceurs' behaviour was clearly contradictory. As one trainer summarised: 'It's funny because you have this dichotomy between the shirts off, pecs out lads who are competing and a real sensitivity underneath that'. Their ethos and practices challenge many central

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[4] The *Yamakasi* group (of parkour founders), for instance, was avid consumers of Japanese anime, manga and Western comics and graphic novels.

aspects of athletic sporting masculinity, yet simultaneously they perform normative sporting masculinity in ways including engaging in risk-taking behaviour, competing for masculine status, enduring pain and displaying their muscular physiques. Nonetheless, as the next section reveals, these men did not appear to want, or need, to exclude women as symbolic proof of their masculinity (Whitson, 1990). In contrast to many sports, traceurs wanted to and attempted to encourage and promote the participation of women of all abilities.

Masculine Power and the Exclusion of Women?

The participants and trainers I interviewed were all conscious of, and proud of, having a positive attitude towards female participation; they recognised the importance of not excluding female participants from virtual (online) or 'real' sporting spaces. Likewise, Kidder (2013) observes that any exclusion of women was not intentional, and that 'most male traceurs seem flummoxed by the dearth of females within the community' (p. 2). A posting on a parkour forum (2010) was typical in the way a *discourse* of gender inclusivity is promoted:

> The real point in parkour is not to be able to do incredible things, but rather to explore ourselves and to conquer our demons on our way to pure inner peace. I hope to see the female scene express itself and shine ever more among the Parkour world. To all the traceuses [female participant] in the world, I give you my best wishes and hopes!

Traceurs had implemented a number of strategies. For example, chat-room postings encouraged and supported women's involvement, giving potential traceuses information about local jams, and who to approach for help.

> You'll get a group of 15 and 16 year-old guys who don't know any girls and they'll set up their parkour group and put a women-only room [on their website] even though there's no women on there yet. But they'll do it

because they know that it should be there. There is this vacuum there that is ready to be filled […]. It's a very grown-up community in how it views itself in lots of ways (participant/trainer).

Kidder (2013) comments on a similar dynamic in the Chicago community, asserting it is 'a rarity to hear disparaging remarks about the sincerity or dedication of women in parkour' (p. 9) and that 'female traceurs' are quickly integrated (p. 8). In complete contrast to expected practices in nearly all-male sporting worlds, 'talk' involving the objectification of women or sexual exploits are 'strikingly infrequent' (Kidder, 2013, p. 8). That these young men did not *need* to prove their heterosexuality via sexual conquest or the objectification of women suggests a greater respect for women as sporting participants. These 'traceurs are cognizant (and proud) of the fact they were not stereotypical jocks' (Kidder, 2013, p. 8; see also Beal, 1996).

The ethos of gender inclusion also appears to have permeated the discourses around parkour's development, with practitioners seeing the need to centre gender, rather than considering women's and girl's needs and experiences as a postscript. As a representative for the UK Governing body *Parkour UK* explains, historically sport was developed for men first with 'women as an afterthought', whereas 'we're actually doing this right at the fruition of the sport'. Another teacher discusses how once he had recognised some of the difficulties faced by women; his organisation actively promoted parkour for women and helped women train:

> They have to find other ways to do it. It's no less impressive because it's different so, they kind of develop a much more graceful way of moving, they are very balanced, they have better balance than men. Women, they're very kind of fast when they move so fluid, so it's really cool to see that (interviewee).

Despite the essentialist ideas of gender being reproduced in these comments, in practical terms these practitioners recognise that women's bodies are often different, but not inferior, so a range of coaching strategies are required. In the last section of the chapter, I turn to the experiences of these female participants, termed *traceuse*.

Female Participation: Traceuse

Reflecting many other action sports, and the rise of individualistic, mindful body practice like yoga more widely, women are taking to parkour in increasing numbers and becoming committed active participants:

> I believe that many disciplines, including yoga and many martial arts, have the potential to offer us a way to better ourselves both as individuals and as a species. However, no other discipline I know, offers the same level of freedom that parkour does. There is no dogma, no rules, no gurus, no competition. Each individual is free to explore and develop within their own interpretation of parkour and the art of movement. (Girl parkour mission statement)

Parkour's online spaces provide a corollary to women's invisibility in public spaces. A trawl of popular YouTube sites and social media illustrates that the 'virtual' female scene is thriving. Online female-only parkour sites offer networks from the local to transnational, advice on locations, equipment (e.g. running shoes), training tips, and broadly encouraged women to meet, discuss and to develop the social network, to help each other to actually make a difference. As the new media have played such a central role in parkour's development, experience and identity (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2013), it is unsurprising that it is online spaces where women are creating networks, forging their identities and challenging dominant discourses about female embodiment[5] (MacKay & Dallaire, 2014). Across action sports cultures, the niche media have played an important role in providing women, and other margined groups, with spaces to challenge dominant discourses and support alternative subjectivities and resistant practices (MacKay & Dallaire, 2014; Thorpe, 2008). As one female participant claimed (in a blog) 'I wanted to show that parkour didn't have to be big and scary. I wanted to strengthen the parkour community as a whole by bringing more women into the mix' (Miller, 2014). Recognising the power of images to change perceptions, parkour participant/film-maker/researcher Julie Angel started a blog *See and Do*

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[5] See https://www.facebook.com/groups/girlsacross/

that promotes 'images of women who are doing things they love that happen to involve facing fears, being brave, getting strong and taking risks'. For Angel, this is a political project that challenges and normalises 'the presence of "others" (starting with women) in the visual culture of movement—parkour' (discussion, 2014):

> The parkour world I know and personally experience is one of inclusivity but this is rarely shown. I thought it was about time to show it.

Angel discusses the overwhelming response she had received, such as emails from women revealing intimate details about themselves, their training, feelings and their environments. However, feeling invisible was a key theme. Men rarely excluded women deliberately, but parkour's dominant practices contribute to women feeling *different*, as *others* in the parkour culture:

> All of the men I have discussed this with have stated expressly that they never intended to make anyone feel uncomfortable or unwelcome. Most traceurs are horrified to learn that a traceuse has felt intimidated just by being around them. (Miller, 2014)

In these informal sporting spaces, some of the barriers associated with predominantly male-dominated and -defined institutionalised settings are absent, however exclusion often works in different and more subtle ways. Everyday practices tend to marginalise women, especially those who fail to perform more dangerous manoeuvres (Thorpe, 2011). As one female participant observed, 'I loved the physical and mental challenges of parkour […] it can also be quite alienating' (interview Miller, 2014). Despite the dominant discourses of inclusion, practices worked to exclude women, spatially, symbolically and structurally. Shirley Darlington's blog titled 'There's no female or girl parkour, just parkour', reveals the ways in which stereotypes about female physicality are unintentionally reproduced. She discusses the frustration she has experienced when male participants she has trained with *expected* her to find things harder than the men. She writes 'can we raise our expectations of women please guys?'

We need to assume that women can do what men can do. We need to cheer only if it's something that the *person* didn't think they could achieve, not something that we didn't think they could achieve. We're looking for attitude changes.

As has been illustrated across other action sport spaces, while female entry into male-dominated sporting spaces offers possibilities for challenging gendered norms and subjectivities, in many action sports dominant discourses and practices are also reproduced (Wheaton, 2013).

Providing Safe Spaces?

Recognising that girls often lack confidence, particularly in the mixed-sex environments where males tend to dominate, a number of women's only initiatives had been utilised for targeting women and girls. Female coaches have also played an important role, particularly in the introduction phase, offering a safe and welcoming space where women feel more confidence, and 'they didn't have to worry about looking silly' (Angel, 2013):

As one of our participants said, As much as I love hanging out with guys, I enjoy learning new exercises and skills with just women around, I'm personally more comfortable not having to compare myself to guys as I pick up new skills (Parkour coach).

This suggests that despite the rhetoric of inclusivity, some women do feel like there are being judged or scrutinised in male-dominated informal sporting spaces.

Informal meet ups posted online by generally young men do not offer a sense of 'security, expertise and knowledge' that women are looking for when taking up an activity that can be perceived as risky, whereas a 'coach' does […]. I found that training with women was a far more co-operative and supportive environment than the classes or jams that were male in the majority. (Angel)

Angel (2013) suggests that one of the unintended but positive consequences of the institutionalisation of parkour (see Wheaton, 2013) has been increasing numbers of active female communities and professional female coaches internationally, making 'parkour more accessible and welcoming to a range of women'. Indoor spaces and parkour parks or training areas are popular and safe locales for women to learn, away from the gaze of the more experienced men and onlookers. However, Angel suggests once that introduction to the activity has been made the majority of women are happy to train in mixed environments. 'I've never met any women in the UK who will only train exclusively in female environments' (interview with Angel). Indeed, there are now 'female' gatherings that also include and invite men; attracting men who wanted to be part of a very inclusive and supportive environment. Interestingly, some men in the international community have criticised these 'women only' incentives as opposing the inclusivity of parkour (Miller, 2014).

As has been widely explored though liberal and radical feminist debates about sport, while promoting women-only spaces can be a productive strategy for some women, it does little to challenge the prevailing logic, or disrupt the ways in which males define, use and control space. Like other action sports, particularly skateboarding, the informal spaces where participation occurs may seem gender-neutral and open to all, but nonetheless are still dominated and controlled by particular groups of men. Women often experience city streets and plazas as intimidating, or even unsafe. Therefore, formal, regulated and organised spaces are considered safer and more inclusive, even though their formality appear to challenge the ideological basis of action sport participation.

Parkour is increasingly being adopted in more institutionalised settings such as schools, or by leisure providers (e.g. classes in gyms and parkour parks). The parkour teachers I interviewed discuss how girls often excelled, surprising and challenging the gendered assumptions of both boys, who often assumed that had greater physical prowess, and the girls, who often lacked confidence in their physical ability. Parkour's fluidity allows it to be easily moulded into hybrid activities that can be targeted at particular groups. Parkour-style activities are being used in fitness classes (held inside and outside), and as movement classes for a range of nontraditional participants such as retirees (e.g. Parkour for pentioners, 2015).

While these hybrid practices are not 'pure' parkour, they may help to make the activity more accessible and ultimately challenge the masculine domination.

Which Women?

A long-standing but still valid critique about research on women in action sport has been the sustained focus on Western white privileged women. As I consider in some depth in the *Cultural Politics of Lifestyle Sports* (2013), much of our research has neglected to consider other important aspects of embodied power, such as race, sexuality, age and dis/ability, nor the intersectionality of these identities. In particular, the naturalness of whiteness—both for research participants and researchers—has made it hard to understand how 'acting White' was part of the everyday practices that constituted what Chivers-Yochim describes as an 'imagined community of whiteness' (2010, p. 104). Thus, in the final section, I provide a media-based snapshot of parkour's emergence amongst Muslim girls and women in Iran, a cultural location that is very different to the European and North American hubs I have described. This vignette illustrates that parkour participation is not limited to white women in the global North, and reminds us of the importance of challenging our Western white assumptions and perspectives, both in our theorisations of women's experiences, and in the research we do.

Parkour in Iran: A Snapshot

The growth of parkour in Iran amongst women has made media headlines. Initial evidence of this growth come from YouTube films and online postings (in Persian-language forums), sparking interest by Western journalists (Fast-paced parkour, 2014; Headscarves and long tunics, 2014; Martinson, 2014) and parkour practitioners (e.g. Parkour-Generations, 2014).

> We learned about parkour and other street sports through satellite TV [which is illegal, but widespread]. Parkour has become popular in the past

couple of years; I know of boys and girls who do it in my town, but also in many others, […]. It's not organised—we don't have teams, we just do this among friends. (Gilda, aged 20 cited in Headscarves and long tunics, 2014)

It appears that Iran's female practitioners access to parkour, and experiences of parkour differ significantly from other local contexts and from Iranian men. Articles highlight that these Muslim girls and women face a range of difficulties (see also Thorpe & Ahmad, 2015) from lack of access to sports facilities and public space, to the difficulties of practising parkour moves wearing clothing that adheres to Islamic dress code like the headscarf and manto (long tunic). As Thorpe and Ahmad (2015) also observe in their discussion of Muslim girls and women's parkour participation from across the Middle East, 'In some Muslim countries, the street can be a dangerous space if one's behaviour is not deemed to be culturally and socially appropriate' (p. 689).

In a country where mixed activities are banned, women have to practise in more clandestine and therefore creative ways than men. Some claimed to be hassled by police and security officers, and fear being accused of 'following a western fad' (Headscarves and long tunics, 2014, p. 2). Whereas men practise on the street, girls preferred parks and beaches, largely because there are less people around (Headscarves and long tunics, 2014). A teacher interviewed in NY Daily News (online), who trains with a group of 50 girls and women, has a male escort to 'ward off unwelcome company'. For this reason, they train inside sports complexes. As discussed earlier, gyms proved productive in getting women involved in a safe and controlled environment. In Iran, where Islamic laws about gender are adhered to, indoor spaces allow girls to practise without boys, so was central for facilitating Muslim girls involvement (see also Thorpe & Ahmad, 2015). Yet even indoors, Islamic codes prevent men from touching the female student in particular positions, which makes coaching safely difficult (Thorpe & Ahmad, 2015).

Evidently, some Iranian men did not support Iranian women's involvement; one argued (on an online posting) that the sport was not in line with women's 'modesty and chastity' (Martinson, 2014). A teenager recalls how she once had to leave the park during practise after a crowd

of teenage boys 'made fun of us and filmed us with their mobile phones' (Fast-paced parkour, 2014).

> Sometimes people criticize us saying this isn't a sport for girls. They say we're supposed to knit… They can't imagine a girl exercising like a boy (Fast-paced parkour, 2014).

Iran's tracueurs are depicted as 'athletic and purposeful' (Martinson, 2014, p. 1). In these media reports, parkour's popularity is positioned (along with martial arts an activity that is also increasingly popular with Iranian women), as a response to the Islamic government's repression of women, and their 'discriminatory' 'bullying culture and street violence' (Martinson, 2014, p. 2). These claims certainly required further investigation. However, the link between parkour participation and female empowerment is also emphasised, through gaining freedom, confidence and physical power: 'Practicing parkour shows that even if you are a woman, you are not bound to stay at home' (Fast-paced parkour, 2014).

Towards a Research Agenda

Academic commentaries on parkour have focused on the ways in which the activity challenges aspects of contemporary cultural and economic processes, but have not questioned whether parkour also offers potentially more transformational scripts for male and female physicality. In this chapter, I have provided a starting point for exploring the politics of gender. These are however tentative findings that need to be interrogated with detailed qualitative research rooted in the cultures and practices of parkour participants.

This chapter reveals some of the ways traditional sporting masculinities are challenged and reproduced. The male dominance of the parkour community, and the centrality of symbolic capital associated with masculinity, such as risk-taking, enduring pain, physical prowess and controlling physical space, is undeniable. However, like many other action sports in the early phases of their development, parkour's values appear not to embrace important aspects of traditional sporting masculinity such as the win-at-all-cost ethos, aggression and exclusion, which still characterise the

dominant athletic value system (Wheaton, 2004). By rejecting some of these central facets, the 'recognised boundaries' of sporting masculinities are broadened (Wheaton, 2004). As Messner (1992, p. 163) suggested, an 'emergent value system' that 'elevates relationships above competition and winning' inverts and challenges 'the priorities that govern the dominant forms of sport'. Underpinning parkour's ethos, and performance of masculinity, even amongst teenage and younger men is a culture that at least discursively is, and wants to be seen to be, inclusive of female participants. Yet despite this *desire* for inclusivity, and evidence of men's genuine caring attempts to include and encourage women (see also Olive, McCuaig, & Phillips, 2013), for some women parkour spaces are perceived as alienating, and all women environments have provided 'safer' spaces for entry. These women face many contradictions and challenges, which need to be inspected through in-depth research that focuses on female experiences including newcomers and more experienced, young and older, sporting and non-sporting, from different cultural and geographical locations. What are the barriers and challenges they face? How do they negotiate space and identity?

Because action sports are less spatially and temporally bounded than most institutionalised sports, it has been suggested that space is opened up in ways that may allow alternative female subjectivities to emerge. Does parkour offer this disruptive potential where gender norms can be challenged, reworked and reshaped; and if so for *which* women?

Furthermore, parkour is a rapidly changing discipline, and the 'sportisation' of the discipline has been clearly evident over the past few years (see Wheaton, 2013; O'Loughlin, 2012). As the impact of these developments—such as the introduction of formal training structures, coaching certification and formal competition—starts to impact the wider culture, gendered power in parkour will need to be re-assessed. Can the inclusive ethos be preserved, or like many action sports before it, will institutionalisation reinforce the adoption of particular performance styles that reinforce mainstream male white heterosexual values?

While the focus in this chapter and collection has been on gender our research must attend to the myriad ways in which difference and exclusion is manifest in and through action sport cultures and spaces (Wheaton, 2013). As the snapshot of parkour in Iran reminds us, despite parkour's ability to travel across transnational spaces, embodied identi-

ties have 'local specificity'. These insights remind us to look outside of our predominantly white Western perspectives and empirical contexts to map the *differences* in gender and its intersectionality with ethnicity and religion, as well as other markers of identity to expose the complex and contradictory articulations of identity in these informal but increasingly globally widespread spaces and settings in which action sports takes place.

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7

The 'Girl Effect' in Action Sports for Development: The Case of the Female Practitioners of Skateistan

Holly Thorpe and Megan Chawansky

Since the mid- and late-1990s, action sports participants have established non-profit organizations and movements relating to an array of social issues, including health, education, environment, anti-violence and female empowerment. While some of these Action Sports for Development and Peace (ASDP) organizations remain at the grass-roots level and are relatively unknown beyond the local community or outside the action sport culture, others are gaining recognition from mainstream social justice and humanitarian organizations for their innovative efforts and creative strategies to create change in local and global contexts (Thorpe, 2014a, 2014b; see www.action-sportsfordev.org). In this chapter, we focus on ASDP programs targeted at girls and young women as we consider the female action sport participants who serve as practitioners in such organizations. More specifically, we offer

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the case of Skateistan to highlight the efforts employed by this award-winning organization to provide Afghan girls and young women with opportunities to participate in sport, education and employment, and to consider the motivations, struggles and strategies being employed by international female staff who work in Afghanistan in the era of the 'Girl Effect'.

While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to offer a feminist critique of the 'Girl Effect' across all ASDP programs focused on girls' and women's empowerment, we engage with the premise in this instance as it creates space for the voices of international female staff of Skateistan to critically reflect on their work.[1] As Hayhurst (2014) points out, despite the continued growth and scope of the Girl Effect in Sport for Development and Peace (SDP), and more recently in ASDP, the 'perspectives of program staff members responsible for funding and delivering these programs—and the viewpoints of girls targeted by such initiatives—have only recently started to be considered by researchers' (p. 298). Thus, this chapter builds upon the first author's previous research with Skateistan (see Thorpe, 2014a, 2014b ; Thorpe & Rinehart, 2013), with the addition of five semi-structured interviews with Skateistan staff conducted via Skype in early 2015. Each interview was over an hour in duration and focused on both the efforts of the Skateistan organization to cater to the unique needs of Afghan girls, as well as the personal experiences of the international staff working in this high-risk location. Participants included four women in senior management positions, as well as Founder and Executive Director Oliver Percovich. In creating space for the voices of female Skateistan staff, we highlight the ways in which they embrace Wilson's (2014) notion of the 'middle walker' as they demonstrate the ability to be 'sensitive to the problems with and potential of SDP' and actively negotiate the 'very meanings of the terms that are the foundations of SDP the field' (p. 23–24). In so doing, our analysis seeks to contribute unique insights to two bodies of literature: (1) the growing body of critical SDP scholarship and (2) recent critiques of the 'Girl Effect' in development and aid organizations, including SDP initiatives. We argue that the insights offered by Skateistan staff suggest that the project does not succumb to many of the critiques leveled at the 'Girl Effect' in other development projects. Furthermore, we seek to highlight the importance of an organizational culture that cel-

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[1] Of course, the voices of local female staff and participants are also very important, and while they are not the focus of this chapter, they are part of an ongoing project by the first author.

ebrates critical thinking, non-hierarchical relationships between international and local staffs and students, and encourages open conversations about the challenges of creating sustainable long-term change for Afghan children and youth, and particularly girls and young women. We begin our analysis by providing more contextual information on the growth of the 'Girl Effect' in action sports in the next sections.

Empowering Girls Through Action Sports? A Critical Overview

Since the early 2000s, a growing number of initiatives have emerged that utilize action sports with the aim of improving the health and well-being of girls and women. While a number of corporations have been intimately involved in such developments (e.g., The Rip Curl Girls Go Surfing Day), the majority of such initiatives tend to be founded by female action sport participants themselves who are passionate about the potential of their activities to create change in other women's lives. For example, a key volunteer for Skate Like a Girl—a non-profit organization committed to empowering girls and women through skateboarding clinics and classes on the West Coast of the USA—proclaims, 'Skateboarding has empowered me to fight for things that I want, to conquer fear, challenge stereotypes, advocate for underrepresented skaters, and of course, make the change that I want to see in the world' (Marie Baeta, cited in Uy, 2015, para. 24). Similar programs are offered across the One-Third World[2], including 'Ride like a girl' mountain biking camps and clinics for girls and women, and 'The Wahine Project', which provides an array

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[2] There are a range of terms being used to refer to what was previously considered the First and Third Worlds. Some are using the terms Global North and Global South to refer to 'two broad geopolitical groupings with the North representing richer "more advanced" economies and the South referring to the regions that were characterized in the 1970s as "Third World" nations' (Shain, 2013, p. 12). Others are adopting the terms 'One-Third World' and 'Two-Thirds World' to help move away from the geographical nature of such terminology, and also to emphasize the proportion of the world that continues to be less economically developed, and thus with considerably poorer health, educational, employment and other social–economic–political opportunities for residents. In this chapter, we use the terms 'One-Third World' and 'Two-Thirds World' in an attempt to move away from geographical references to systemic poverty and to acknowledge that a large proportion of the world lives in social, political and economic conditions that constrain their life chances.

of curriculum-based programs targeted at girls and women of different age groups and ability levels in four countries, with the aim 'to build up girls to become more confident and increase their self-awareness and to become socially conscious' (The Wahine Project Handbook, 2014, p. 2).

Informal and formal ASDP programs are also increasingly being established in the Two-Thirds World, such as Waves of Freedom and the Bangladesh Surfer Girls Project. Waves of Freedom proclaims to use surfing as 'a tool for gender engagement and gender equity across cultures' and to create 'self-empowered individuals who are active agents of change in their communities and beyond'. Easkey Britton, an Irish professional big-wave surfer, founded this female-focused ASDP after she became the first woman to surf in Iran. In her own words, 'I see surfing as a great leveller, a sport that Iranian women could claim as their own and use to empower themselves' (Britton, 2014, para. 18). The Bangladesh Surfer Girls Project provides scholarships to orphaned and disabled girls selected from women-headed households, and offers 'child friendly quality education and sports and cultural training opportunities' to help 'prepare the girls for a better life as independent women' (Huq, n.d., para. 2). In 2013, the organization offered 54 scholarships, with three surfing trips included in their curriculum.

While these types of ASDP projects often proclaim positive outcomes, a growing number of critical sport scholars question the assumptions underpinning the SDP movement and particularly sporting programs for youth development. Some argue that many of these well-intended initiatives 'may not be serving the ends towards which they are directed, or are even having counterproductive results' (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011, p. 286; also see Darnell, 2009, 2010; Giulianotti, 2011). Sport sociologist Coakley (2011) is concerned that too many sport for youth development programs use sport as a 'hook on which to hang socializing experiences that promote forms of personal development valued by the sponsoring organization and its staff' (p. 314). He argues that the current neoliberal approach to youth development 'uncritically supports[s] the evangelistic promise that sport produces positive development among young people' (p. 306).

Despite the best of intentions, some of these critiques may also be applied to some ASDP initiatives focused on girls and young women.

Indeed, many ASDP programs targeting girls and young women uncritically accept and endorse the notion that activities such as surfing, skateboarding or snowboarding can lead to girls' empowerment and to changes that improve the lives of participants, without considering how their own (typically privileged, Western) assumptions about gender relations, female agency, 'empowerment'[3] and the social value of action sports, may be informing their work. Moreover, some ASDP programs for girls and women adopt a 'deficit model' approach (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011), assuming that poor or disadvantaged girls are in need of the sporting opportunities offered by those from the One-Third World, with little consideration of the creative strategies being employed by the young women to improve their own lives, or how associations with (traditionally) Western sporting practices and/or transnational action sport corporations (i.e., Roxy, Rip Curl, Burton) may be reproducing conditions of their marginalization. Building upon the work of critical SDP scholars such as Coakley (2011) and Hartmann and Kwauk (2011), we believe there is a need to critically revisit the assumptions underpinning the ASDP movement and the implicit assumption that providing access for girls and women to participate in action sports can lead to improved gender relations, female empowerment, and to healthier and happier lives. Similar arguments are being made in the field of Development Studies more broadly in relation to the recent growth of programs and initiatives targeting poor, disadvantaged girls and young women.

The 'Girl Effect' in Development

Since the mid-2000s, there has been a 'turn to girls' and a 'girl powering' of development (Koffman & Gill, 2013). Originally coined by Nike Inc. in 2008, the 'Girl Effect' has become a key development discourse

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[3] While few ASDP initiatives focused on girls and young women define their use of the term 'empowerment', here we draw upon the United Nations definition of women's empowerment as consisting of five components: 'women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally' (Guidelines on Women's Empowerment, United Nations, n.d.).

taken up by a wide range of governmental organizations, charities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Underpinning this movement is the belief—endorsed by an alliance of multinational corporations, charity and NGO leaders and governmental representatives—that 'when given the opportunity, women and girls are more effective at lifting themselves and their families out of poverty, thereby having a multiplier effect within their villages, cities, and nations' (Shain, 2013, p. 2). Put simply, 'girl power' is considered 'the best way to lift the developing world out of poverty' (Koffman & Gill, 2013, p. 83). For example, the Nike Foundation repeatedly deploys the slogan 'invest in a girl and she'll do the rest', while the UN Foundation purports that '[w]here there's a girl, there's a way' (cited in Koffman & Gill, 2013, p. 88).

Adopting a poststructuralist, postcolonial and feminist critique, Koffman and Gill (2013) illustrate the ways in which the Girl Effect discourse 'articulates notions of girlhood, empowerment, development and the Global North/South divide' (p. 84). In so doing, they reveal its 'selective uptake of feminism and how it yokes discourses of girl power, individualism, entrepreneurial subjectivity and consumerism', together with 'rhetorics of "revolution" in a way that—perhaps paradoxically— renders invisible the inequalities, uneven power relations and structural features of neoliberal capitalism that produce the very global injustices that the Girl Effect purports to challenge' (p. 86). Similarly Shain (2013) argues that the Girl Effect movement 'draws on colonial stereotypes of girls as sexually and culturally constrained, but reworks these through the discourses of neoliberal development to construct girls as good investment potential' (p. 1). In so doing, however, it 'reproduces a dominant narrative that highlights the cultural causes of poverty but obscures structural relations of exploitation and privilege' (Shain, 2013, p. 1). In the subtle shift from women to girls, Sensoy and Marshall (2010) refer to the 'newly emergent discursive strategies that construct first world girls as the saviours of their "Third World" sisters' as 'missionary girl power' (p. 296). Another 'striking feature' of the Girl Effect, which can also be observed in many female-focused ASDPs, is the way it 'creates novel alliances between large transnational corporations, national development agencies, charities, and bodies such as the United Nations and the

World Bank' (Koffman & Gill, 2013, p. 89). Other important features include the place of celebrity culture and the role of social media in such campaigns.

It is clear that more SDP initiatives are including girl-focused programs to latch onto this current cultural moment (Chawansky & Hayhurst, 2015) and many of the sensibilities of the Girl Effect are evident in these SDP projects (Chawanksy & Schlenker, 2016; Hayhurst, 2011, 2013, 2014). Such developments are far from unproblematic, with many of the critiques leveled at the Girl Effect in international development contexts also having relevance in relation to girl-focused SDP and ASDP programs. As McDonald (2015) argues, too many of these programs assume a 'taken-for-granted liberatory character' focusing on 'sport's allegedly progressive role in supporting gender equality' without considering the complexities of creating long-term, sustainable changes for the lives of girls and women in local contexts (p. 1). Continuing, she cites the work of Wilson (2011), who suggests that the focus on girls agency and 'women's ability to make decisions and choices' has had the result of 'largely shift[ing] attention away from both material structures of power and gendered ideologies (p. 317)' (McDonald, 2015, p. 9).

Arguably, many of these critiques apply to ASDP initiatives aimed at 'empowering' girls and young women in the Two-Thirds World through surfing, skateboarding, snowboarding and other action sports, often with little consideration of the broader forms of religious, cultural, national and international power relations operating on and through girls' and women's bodies, or local girls' and women's own culturally specific forms of agency. Despite the best of intentions, as Sensoy and Marshall (2010) remind us in their citation from Farrell and McDermott (2005, p. 45), the processes and results of such activism 'can be tangled, complex, and reinforce the very power relations that these groups had meant to challenge' (Sensoy & Marshall, 2010, p. 308).

The politics of girl-focused ASDPs and media coverage of their activities, however, demand a 'close[r] examination of who represents whom, for what purposes and with what results' (Sensoy & Marshall, 2010, p. 309). Some women involved in such projects are highly reflexive of their involvement, and critical of how their initiatives may be inter-

preted, consumed, even co-opted, by the One-Third World. For example, Farhana Huq, co-founder of the Bangladesh Surfer Girls Project and the Brown Girl Surf organization, demonstrates an acute awareness of the problematic tendency for those from the One-Third World to uncritically (re)produce images of girls of the Two-Thirds World participating in action sports that offer culturally complex, and thus somewhat intriguing, images. However, they are essentially presenting these 'brown girls' as the 'exotic other[s]' (Said, 1978) on boards, as Huq notes:

> There's always a lot of hype when people discover girls are surfing in such a poor region. All of a sudden, the western world wants to come in and help everyone. While well intended, sometimes surfing is confused with being an answer to helping people overcome systemic poverty…So it's great there are pictures of under-resourced girls popping up on surfboards, but we have to ask, then what? (cited in Carmel, 2014)

Here Huq demonstrates a critical understanding of the power relations and ethics involved in the representation of girls and young women from the Two-Thirds World and the challenges of creating long-lasting social change in local contexts. However, such a level of awareness is not apparent across all female-focused ASDP initiatives, many of who continue to utilize potent imagery of 'brown' girls 'popping up on surfboards' (or other action sport equipment) to help garner international attention and support for their organizations, while simultaneously raising their own public profiles as passionate activist philanthropists (Wilson, 2011). As Sensoy and Marshall (2010) suggest, if we view such initiatives and representations as 'a political text mired in its social context and tied to historically bound colonial discourses and material power relations, then we can ask a different set of questions around "whom do activists represent and how far the right to represent extends" (Ignatieff, 2001, p. 10)' (p. 309). In the remainder of this chapter, however, we reveal Skateistan staff demonstrating some critical understandings of the complex politics of development and representation as they carefully consider how they represent the needs of, and possibilities for, Afghan girls within their project and how they represent the work that they do to a larger public.

Skateistan: Skateboarding and Educational Programs for Afghan Girls

Skateistan was originally conceived as an 'independent, neutral, Afghan NGO' that provides skateboarding tuition, and art and language education, to 'urban and internally-displaced youth in Afghanistan' (www.skateistan.org). Founded in 2006 by Australian skateboarder Oliver Percovich, Skateistan has continued to grow with two Afghan facilities, one in Kabul and the other in Mazar-e-Sharif (northern Afghanistan), and has recently expanded to offer programs in Cambodia and South Africa. In this chapter, we focus primarily on the two Afghan facilities that provide for more than 1000 Afghan children and youth per week—almost 50 percent of whom are girls—and particularly the efforts by staff to support the development of Afghan girls' and young women's health and well-being.

Skateistan has gained international acclaim for their work, including the 2009 Peace and Sport Non-Governmental Organization Award, for its efforts in educating urban and internally displaced children in Kabul (Afghanistan), as well as the 2012 Innovation Through Sport award at the Beyond Sport Forum. In 2013, Skateistan was also selected as a Top 100 NGO by *The Global Journal*, making it the highest ranking sport-related NGO, and in 2015 it won the Laureus Foundation Sport-for-Good award. Perhaps integral to the successes of Skateistan to date, is the acknowledgement of the difficulties of creating sustainable long-term change, and the importance of cross-cultural conversations between international staff and local youth and families. Percovich is intimately aware of the patience and persistence required at an everyday level, and the need to let local children and youth set their own pace of change. 'It's a constant struggle', he admits, 'You can't just set up a programme and say "we're just going to run this". You've got to work on a daily basis to do the community outreach to get the family support, to get the parents supporting the kids, and that the kids understand what's happening and they're feeding back into what we are doing. It's something that we continuously

need to work on'. Continuing, he acknowledges the risks of offering girls sporting and educational opportunities in Afghanistan and their strategies for minimizing risk to participants and staff:

> The key is that change isn't happening too fast…With Skateistan, we want to be a hub for female empowerment, but at the same time we don't want to attract unnecessary attention to ourselves; it must be a home grown initiative, it has to be a grassroots women's empowerment hub. It can't be something where there are outside values pushed onto young kids…we want them to create something that is also sustainable, something that works over the long run.

The Skateistan staff interviewed for this project are also engaging in 'complex questions about oppression, patriarchy, war, families, displacement, and the role of values (imperialism or faith-based) in these questions' (Sensoy & Marshall, 2010, p. 309), and particularly questions about gender and culturally appropriate approaches to working with Afghan girls. For example, Renee revealed her intimate knowledge of the cultural sensitivities surrounding the development and management of girls' sport and education programs:

> It's definitely a lot more work for us to get girls involved in Afghanistan. We have a student support officer at each location in Afghanistan and part of their job is meeting with families, talking to families, visiting their homes and showing them around the facility when they come to register their kids.
>
> An overall concern parents always have is whether it's a good place for girls to be, is it an appropriate place for them to be so there's not any inappropriate mixing of genders or any chances anything could happen?

In working with local Afghanistan youth and communities, Skateistan staff have tried to develop insights, understanding and respect for the unique value systems, etiquette and practices, which help them in the development of programs that are mostly considered culturally appropriate by families, and thus accessible to many Afghan girls. Despite ongoing efforts to develop innovative approaches towards cultural understanding

and respectful practices within the Afghan context, it is important to keep in mind that the origins of Skateistan are based in some of the same neo-colonial underpinnings of many other SDP programmes operating in the contemporary neoliberal context (Thorpe & Rinehart, 2013; also see Darnell, 2009, 2010; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011).

Female Staff of Skateistan: Middle-Walking with the Girl Effect

In the final section of this chapter, we share a selection of insights from Skateistan staff as 'middle-walkers' (Wilson, 2014, p. 19), who navigate space within a very specific and highly complex ASDP and the ever-present Girl Effect discourse. The four female Skateistan staff interviewed for this project—Renee, Andrea, Tracey and Emily (pseudonyms used throughout)—came to the field with interests and abilities in skateboard-ing and educational degrees in international development or related fields; they are neither the oft-criticized 'sport evangelists' who espouse only positive views of SDP work nor do they adopt extremely critical views. Instead, their ability to tread a reflexive middle ground aligns them with Caudwell (2007), Forde (2013), Hillyer (2010) and Chawansky (2014), all of whom have written about the political complexities of working in SDP spaces, and who acknowledge the challenges in maintaining both critique and optimism in SDP work (also see De Jong, 2011).

Creating Change in the Lives of Afghan Girls: Balancing Hope and Realities

As has been suggested elsewhere, alternative sports such as skateboarding can offer unique opportunities for girls sporting participation in con-texts of development (see Thorpe, 2014a, 2014b; Wheaton, 2013). As Renee explained, most sports in Afghanistan are considered to be for boys and men, but because skateboarding was 'brand new' in Afghanistan, it offered 'a loophole' for girl's participation. Continuing, she adds that another benefit of skateboarding is that 'it's not an organized thing, it

can be seen more as a toy [recreation]' which made it 'easier for (local) people to accept' (Renee). All of the Skateistan staff interviewed believed strongly in the value of skateboarding programs for girls' empowerment. For example, Andrea has observed 'huge transformation' among their female participants: '[T]hey go from being nervous and giggly and afraid, to being really driven and passionate about a sport, really a go-getter… and it happens faster than I would have ever expected'. Similarly, Renee proclaims the value of the non-competitive and expressive physical practice of skateboarding for helping develop children's confidence and creativity, and particularly for giving girls opportunities to experience their moving bodies in new ways and in relatively 'safe' spaces: 'I think for Afghan girls, riding on a skateboard, it's like freedom':

> There are so few opportunities and so few things that girls get to do in Afghanistan. I've seen again and again that girls gain a whole bunch of confidence when they start skateboarding. And it's not just confidence to do a sport…it opens possibilities that I think can help with their lives down the track, with school, within their families, or if they end up working…

However, Renee and other staff were very aware that, despite the richness of their lived experiences and anecdotal observations, this knowledge has limits within the development context in which quantitative measurement of outcomes is highly valued: 'It's all very hard to measure and we don't have data to prove it. I think it's going to be something that becomes apparent 10 years from now'.[4]

All of the female staff interviewed for this project were passionate skateboarders prior to working in Afghanistan, and their past experiences are likely to have informed their understandings of the 'liberatory character' (McDonald, 2015, p. 1) of skateboarding for girls. However, while waxing lyrical about the potential of skateboarding for the empowerment

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[4] Skateistan is currently engaging in various quantitative studies to 'measure' the impact of their programs. However, the organization is also investing in more qualitative Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) methods. For example, in July 2016 the authors of this chapter (with the support of Nida Ahmad) designed and ran a MEL training program with local staff of the Skateistan Johannesburg facility to co-develop culturally-appropriate and useful qualitative methods.

of Afghan girls, they are simultaneously aware of the complexities of creating long-term, sustainable changes for the lives of girls and women in this context. Some of these challenges included negotiating the pressures from international donors, early marriage and its effects on young female Afghan participants and local female staff, and the continuing work with parents and communities to ensure an ongoing dialogue about the cultural and physical 'safety' of female participants. Each of the staff also spoke openly about some of the personal and professional challenges that emerged as Western women, and female development practitioners, in a country with very specific cultural and gender rules and norms. For example, Emily admitted, 'I've really thought about this a lot…is it right to impose our ideas of right or wrong on our participants? We try not to get involved in family matters such as early marriage…but some things [participants hitting one another] do cross the line [of human rights] '. Overall, Skateistan staff did not articulate many of the uncritical assumptions as observed in other 'Girl Effect(ed)' NGOs. This, we suggest, is a result of both their educational backgrounds in development studies, and an organizational culture that supports critical conversations about the cultural complexities of creating change in local contexts.

As previously noted, each of the four female interviewees studied either development or international relations at universities in the One-Third World, and some of these women also had gained relevant work experiences in media and communications or aid organizations during and/or after their studies. For some of these women, their experiences in Afghanistan highlighted the importance of moving from theory to practice in development and for understanding the complexities of change, while maintaining context, perspective and humility:

> When you study development, you learn all of this theory and history, you learn about all of these ideals, and it's like 'this system doesn't work and this system doesn't work'. All of these failures of development have come because people are looking for a really easy solution, a quick fix. It's not that simple, and I think that when you start working in development you see that.I think Skateistan is doing really positive things, but it's also not a quick fix…I also think it has to be a piece of a much bigger puzzle. You

learn that theoretically in development but when you see it firsthand it's a bit more overwhelming but can also be a bit inspiring (Andrea)

Tracey was especially attuned to how her academic training in development allowed her to be a 'middle-walker' (Wilson, 2014):

I had to learn so much on the spot with this job. My degree in development studies was really helpful in terms of a theoretical base for the work to understand the context and the history for development work. I'm really glad I have that lens on things because you can quite easily get into this self-congratulatory 'oh I'm making such a big difference' way of thinking, and to be aware that you can also do a lot of harm if you don't do things well. (Tracey)

As these comments suggest, even those with significant academic and practitioner qualifications in development can struggle with the realities of working in such a high-risk and foreign context, and with the difficulties of creating culturally appropriate and sustainable changes in the lives of local children and youth.

Challenging the Victim Narrative: 'We Don't Use Images of Our Students Looking Tragic'

In addition to adopting a careful understanding of the possibilities and limitations of their work in Afghanistan, the staff was also attuned to stereotypical representations used in development work that potentially 'produce and sustain knowledge of the helpless cultural Other' (Darnell, 2010, p. 399). Skateistan staff challenged commonly held views of Afghan girls and women as victims, instead focusing on their potential for culturally specific forms of agency and reappropriation of skateboarding such that it has meaning in their own lives. For example, Tracey acknowledges the limits of commonly held Western views of Afghan girls sporting participation: 'In fact, for many of them their community is actually quite supportive, and their families can be very supportive too, particularly for our local female staff who are bringing in an income from their sporting activity'. Interestingly, Emily explained how Afghan girl skateboarders are demonstrating agency by 'making skateboarding their

own': 'For them, skateboarding represents opportunity, fun and an ability to imagine a different future for themselves and others. It has nothing to do with the Western associations with skateboarding to do-it-yourself or anti-authoritarianism'. Percovich also expressed caution of treating Skateistan participants as victims: 'We encourage girls, we put more resources into getting girls into our programs, but we don't talk about them needing special attention or special treatment. This could lead them to think they are somehow victims'.

Such an understanding and respect for Afghan girls' everyday agency, creativity and intelligence is also implicit in their media representations and marketing efforts. As Renee states, 'We are always focusing on portraying things positively, putting the kids first and their voices first', and Andrea adds:

> One of the most important policies around the media we produce is that we…don't want to use any images of our students looking tragic. We don't want to exploit them and make you [the reader] feel sorry for them to try to generate interest or revenue, which is what a lot of organisations do.

Feminist critiques of the 'Girl Effect' have argued that representations of girlhood too often rely on the 'monolithic representation of a "Third World girl" who is constrained, uneducated, and poor' (Sensoy & Marshall, 2010, p. 300), thus reinforcing the binary between 'empowered girls in the West and those in need of saving in the East' (Sensoy & Marshall, 2010, p. 301). However, this is not the case in representations of Afghan girls involved in Skateistan's programs, and this is the result of an organizational policy about the media portrayal of their participants. McDonald (2015) made similar observations of SDP programs focusing on girls, noting that 'most of the programme images feature women in physical activity positions, or engaging with fellow participants and friends' and thus 'stand in stark contrast to some poverty reduction campaigns that show the devastation that poverty ravages on the human body in order to play upon sympathies from potential donors and corporate sponsors' (McDonald, 2015, p. 10).

While images of girls and women from the Two-Thirds World in action may seem an improvement, as mentioned previously, the politics

of representation are complex and deserve further consideration, particularly when such images are captured and disseminated by international organizations for those in the One-Third World to consume (Chawansky, 2012; Heywood, 2007). It is important to note, however, that with the Kabul facility now being almost entirely run by local staff, Afghan youth are now making a significant contribution to the documentation of the daily activities of Skateistan and how they want to be represented in marketing materials.

'We're Always Sharing Our Experiences': Organizational Culture of Skateistan

Each of the interviewees talked about the importance of inspirational yet accessible leadership, as well as the mentoring of incoming staff, and their relationships with one another and local staff, for developing an organizational culture that values difference and creates space for individuals to share their experiences, learn from one another, and to communicate their fears, anxieties and struggles. As well as talking about their past experiences and supporting one another in learning about the social challenges and cultural intricacies of working in Afghanistan (and the particular issues facing female staff in this context), some participants mentioned the importance of open discussions about the current levels of risk and threat of terrorism. For example, Tracey explained: 'I think we've done quite a good job of setting up a culture of being honest about our fears and speaking up when we don't feel comfortable. If I was having serious doubts…I wouldn't be the only one and it would be an open conversation'. In locations where the everyday dangers of living and working in an international organization in a context of war, terrorist threat and/or political upheaval, the perceived and real risks must be carefully managed, not only for the local students, and local and international staff, but also for the families of those working so far from home, and for the overall sustainability of the program.

In contrast to the findings of Tania Murray Li's (2007) ethnography of an international development program in the Sulawesi Highlands of Indonesia, that revealed various 'practices of governmentality that produce and sustain boundaries of culture and power between the stewards and

recipients of development initiatives' (in Darnell, 2010, p. 397), the staff of Skateistan value cross-cultural conversations and work to breakdown hierarchies between international staff and local employees and program participants. For example, Tracey believes that 'one of the challenges as a foreigner coming in is to get past that you're a visitor, that you've left your family and everything to come and help out in this *difficult* location, and just be a colleague and a good workmate who can get along in an office with people from a different culture' (emphasis in original). For most of the interviewees, the most rewarding part of their jobs was the opportunity to work with, and build friendships with, local female staff, and to support them in realizing their own hopes and dreams. However, developing and maintaining such relationships was not always easy, and each of the interviewees discussed how they were prompted—at various times throughout their careers (before, during and after their time in Kabul)—to critically reflect on aspects of their own identities, and their roles and responsibilities as female international NGO staff working in Afghanistan.

Final Thoughts

In calling for a postcolonial feminist approach to studying SDP, Hayhurst (2011) has encouraged international staff and volunteers to work together with girls and women in the Two-Thirds World to 'build transnational solidarity, respecting difference and using a more "egalitarian language of alliances, coalitions, and solidarity, instead of salvation"' (Abu-Lughod, 2002, p. 789, cited in Hayhurst, 2011, p. 546). Continuing, she argues that a 'transnational, mutual solidarity needs to start from the embodied subject positions of those driving SGD initiatives' (Hayhurst, 2011, p. 546). The international staff of Skateistan are working together closely with local girls and women to design programs that are both culturally appropriate and meaningful to their lives. The unique organizational culture—that aims to respect local knowledge, and value openness, mentoring and non-hierarchical relationships between local and international staffs—and the high caliber of female (and male) staff—passionate about development, skateboarding and women's rights—make for an ASDP initiative that seems to escape some (though certainly not all) of the cri-

tiques facing the 'Girl Effect' in SDP and development more broadly. Interestingly, only one of the staff interviewed for this project had heard of the 'Girl Effect' in development, but upon sharing a selection of the relevant literature with them, they all empathized with such critiques. In so doing, they were drawing upon their past studies and work experiences, as well as their own lived experiences and observations of other SDP and aid organizations in Afghanistan and beyond. As this chapter demonstrates, there is considerable potential for further research that examines the lived experiences of women involved in ASDP organizations, and the embodied knowledge, ethics and pedagogies they learn, negotiate and contest, within and across various sites, and in relation(ships) with an array of sources, individuals, groups, organizations and communities.

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Part III

Female Action Sport Identities and Lived Experiences

8

Negotiating Moral Terrain: Snowboarding Mothers

Lucy Spowart and Lisette Burrows

Motherhood is largely an invisible concept when it comes to action sports, which are most commonly positioned as sports associated with youth (Donnelly, 2006). That said, action sports, and snowboarding in particular, have expanded to include a diverse range of participants (Spowart, 2010; Spowart, Hughson, & Shaw, 2008; Thorpe, 2012). Despite this shift, tensions exist between the identities of a 'mother' and the risks often associated with participating in action sports. It is these 'tensions' that encapsulate the focus of this chapter. That is, how do mothers who engage in action sports negotiate the moral terrain they inevitably encounter? How do mothers position themselves within

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a discursive environment imbued with discourses of 'care', commitment to family needs (Kay, 1996; Miller & Brown, 2005; Roster, 2007) *and* escalating public concern about risky subjects (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002)? Finally, how does 'becoming' and 'being' pregnant contour the possibilities available to women to participate in action sports? Drawing on semi-structured interviews and diary entries with eight snowboarding mums, aged 25–40 years (Spowart, 2010), we endeavour to address these questions. Whilst our cohort is small, the narratives of these women yield insights about what and whom contours their experience, how broader discourses around risk, motherhood, and citizenship shape what they do and how they regard themselves.

We ground our analysis of the women's narratives in Foucault (1970) understandings of discourse and subjectivity. By discourse we refer to the 'historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories, and beliefs that are embedded in institutions, social relationships and texts' (Scott, 1994, pp. 135–136). Rather than view motherhood as something 'inherent' and 'instinctive', some 'natural' predisposition women are born with, we acknowledge that discourses of motherhood rise and fall over time, geographic context and across cultures. Over the past decade, 'intensive motherhood' remains the normative standard in much of the Western world, with mothers expected to be increasingly present in their children's lives (Bianchi, Sayer, Milkie, & Robinson, 2012; Damaske, 2013; Hays, 1996; Lee, 2008). Despite the rise in women's workforce participation, there has been a drastic increase in the time that mothers spend with children. This would suggest that time for personal leisure has decreased.

We are vitally interested in the interplay of discourses of motherhood, risk, action sports and gender in women snowboarder's lives and how women negotiate the contradictory imperatives arising from each. We understand the term 'subjectivty' to refer to the idea that identity or self is not a fixed disposition, but rather is dynamic and changing, the effect of, contingent upon and productive of, power and knowledge relations (Rail, 2009). We endeavour to illustrate in this chapter that women snowboarders 'live' their subjectivity in diverse ways (Sharara, 2006).

We also regard risk as socially constructed (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982; Green & Singleton, 2006; Lupton, 1999a, 2006). The ways that risk is perceived and experienced are influenced by many things includ-

ing the interactions that we have through sporting subcultures (Howe, 2004; Probert, Palmer, & Leberman, 2007). As Howe (2004) points out: 'Levels of acceptability of risk vary depending on the degree to which it is embodied in the habitus of a given sporting community' (p. 111). In this chapter, we bring together the perspectives of 'risk-taking as pleasure', and Foucauldian versions of 'risk as a technique of governance' to develop our understanding of risk as it pertains to motherhood.

Risk is fundamentally associated with emotion (Booth, 2009; Lupton & Tulloch, 2002). The pleasures of risk-taking include the experience of what Russell (2005) refers to as 'proaffective psychological states' (p. 2), such as happiness, joy, excitement and a sense of achievement. These positive emotional states are well documented in the psychological (Brymer, 2005; Schrader & Wann, 1999) and sociological (Dant & Wheaton, 2007; le Breton, 2000; Stranger, 1999; Wheaton, 1997) literature concerned with action sports.

Foucault himself did not write extensively on risk. That said, he did write about the ways that categorisation, classification and normalisation contribute to the establishment of criteria against which people and practices can be constructed as 'risky'. These ideas have been adopted by writers such as Lupton (1999b), Lupton and Tulloch (2002), Rose (1993) and Castel (1991), and have been used to guide analysis in this chapter.

We begin by briefly assessing the degree to which two women in this study regard snowboarding as 'risky', before elaborating on three predominant tropes evident in all of the women's testimony. These are: (1) the pleasures of voluntary risk-taking, (2) risk and the government of pregnancy and (3) motherhood and the fear of injury. As is evidenced later, conceptions of what constitutes risk in relation to snowboarding practices differ substantially.

Snowboarding as a Risky Pursuit?

The women were each asked whether or not they perceived snowboarding to be 'risky'. Unsurprisingly, they viewed the risks associated with the sport in a variety of ways. Petra, who enjoys 'social snowboarding with her friends' and considers herself to be 'an intermediate rider', responded:

No, I wouldn't call it high risk. I can think of so many other things that are so more risky. Like I stood on a skateboard a couple of weekends ago at my mother-in-laws and, the kids were playing with it and I've never skateboarded in my life and for some reason I had a moment of madness and forgot that and I thought I'd show them something (laughs) and I went up in the air and landed on my elbow and my butt and the bruises were horrendous and I was like, ok, why did you do that? (laughs) That was really stupid, so but yeh, nothing like that has ever happened on the snow so. Yeh, I don't consider it high risk. (37-year-old snowboarder)

Here Petra draws directly on her personal boarding experiences, which are largely performed on-piste,[1] to suggest that she is able to mediate the risk 'others' may suggest the activity possesses. In particular, since Petra has not suffered any injuries whilst boarding, she concludes that it is not a high risk sport.

By contrast, Jess recognises that board sports can be undertaken in numerous ways, and in a variety of conditions, often determined by the weather. In her view, these variables, alongside a participant's perceived and actual boarding ability impact upon the risks associated with participation.

When I was snowboarding in Chamonix there were days when I did fear I could die—going on glaciers is definitely a risk with the threat of going down a crevasse, and going off-piste on deep powder days there is the threat of avalanches…However you can snowboard with practically no risk at all—if you stick to piste and ride within your limits then no I wouldn't say there is any more risk than crossing the road. So I guess if you want a straight answer I suppose I would have to say at the level that I enjoy, snowboarding off-piste in powder then there is some element of risk…yes. I have known a couple of people to die in the mountains due to fairly bad luck rather than judgement so yes I guess there is my answer. (27-year-old snowboarder)

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[1] The piste refers to the area of a snow resort that has been groomed by machinery to form a clear and compacted trail in the snow. It is considered to be far easier than skiing off-piste, where snow depth and quality can be hugely variable, and where natural hazards such as rocks, gullies and trees are not signposted.

Here we see the juxtaposition of individual 'control' and 'luck' or fate. Jess also constructs the risks associated with the sport as an essential part of the activity, conceding that the way that she chooses to snowboard off-piste in powder carries some risks with it. She acknowledges that it is possible to engage in the activity in a 'safer' way, but suggests she gains no personal satisfaction from undertaking the sport in this way. That is, risk is pivotal to her enjoyment of the sport.

'I Rode Straight into the Gunbarrel': The Pleasures of Risk-Taking

As Jess alludes to above, risk is a dual-edged sword (Brymer & Oades, 2009; Green & Singleton, 2006) which can offer positive benefits to the risk-takers, as well as the potential for fear, pain, injury and, as Jess acknowledges, even death. Although risk-taking behaviours have commonly been associated with men and masculinity (Brymer, 2005; Sharara, 2006), Jess's statement above highlights the fissures in this normative understanding. Indeed, for most of the mothers in this study, thrill-seeking, or what many describe as 'risk-taking' was an important aspect of their engagement in snowboarding. As Thorpe (2008) has previously demonstrated in her study of female snowboarders, some women appreciate the physical nature of the sport, and their approach towards risk, danger and injury is similar to that of men.

When writing about her first snowboarding trip since the birth of her daughter, Jess confirms her continued desire for speed and steep slopes. With her five and a half month old baby taken care of by her partner in the resort café, Jess headed out to the snow. She only had a couple of hours until [Sara] would need to be breast fed again. She writes:

> I just love snowboarding, it's so fun. I love that 'it's just me and the mountain' feeling, 'me and the elements'. I love the feeling of going fast and I suppose I love it because I am quite good at it. It's good to be good at something…I went straight into the gunbarrel—an off-piste black run as I knew the snow would be good in there. It was quite good—not as good as I thought it would be but not bad. How did I feel? Well, good—it was

great to get a good run with some fairly good snow. Just riding by myself, having waited for this moment for a long time, not sure if I was even going to get on my board again. I was glad I still had the skill level. I just love snowboarding, it's so fun.

Routes on mountains are graded from green (easy) through to black (difficult). Black runs vary enormously but tend to be narrower routes with steep vertical drops, as is the case with 'The gunbarrel' at Treble Cone. The positive emotions Jess expresses in her diary are clearly connected to her successful achievement of what is undoubtedly a difficult, and therefore risky, route. Two days later, Jess writes:

I did some hard riding which was steep and bumpy and I really enjoyed the challenge. I felt good, back to my old riding and pleased I could still do it. I felt quite empowered actually that I was now a mother and still a good rider. I just really enjoyed riding fast and tackling a good steep slope, and loved my legs burning.

Again, we see the notion of challenge linked to hedonistic pleasure and a sense of achievement. There is also a sense that Jess feels that by challenging herself she is resisting the social stereotype of what women (Stoddart, 2010) and, in particular, a mother should be capable of on the slopes.

The desire to test one's limits is commonly expressed by participants in so-called 'high risk' sports (Russell, 2005; Sharara, 2006). According to Russell (2005):

…dangerous sport invites us to confront and push back the boundaries of the self by creating contexts in which some of the ordinary bounds of our lives can be challenged. Hence, we discover and affirm who we are and what we can be by confronting and attempting to extend these boundaries. (p. 2)

At some point during each of the interviews, all of the participants talked about pushing or challenging themselves. In their diaries and interview talk, the women often wrote about learning specific tricks, such as an ollie. An ollie is when you use the tail of your board as a spring to get you

into the air. This can be done with or without the use of a jump. Take, for example, this section from Lauren's diary:

> Learning to Ollie made me feel better about my snowboarding today—being able to progress to little jumps will be great fun. (35-year-old snowboarder)

For Lauren, snowboarding is something special which has had, and continues to have, a profound impact on her life. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly what it is about snowboarding that yields such visceral pleasures, but for Lauren, and all of the women in this study, snowboarding is rendered a felt reality, and a way of being a different 'self'. These findings mirror those of Wheaton's (1997) study of windsurfers in the UK, where participants demonstrated a 'commitment to the "felt" not "displayed body", a commitment to physical and mental pleasure, or self-actualisation' (p. 299). In the next section, we explore the construction of risk and the moral dilemmas associated with the decision to continue boarding whilst pregnant.

'Even My Mother Didn't Approve': Risk and the Government of Pregnancy

Despite a recent 'shift in attitude towards the physical capabilities of pregnant women' (Jette, 2006a, p. 331), women are still subject to a vast amount of advice from medical 'experts' and the population at large (Longhurst, 2008). Risk is a central discourse, and most of the 'advice' is directed at the containment of risk, with the pregnant body represented as vulnerable (ACOG, 2002). Consequently, pregnant women are encouraged to be 'highly vigilant in their policing of their bodies' (Lupton, 1999a, p. 64), and it is difficult if not impossible, for women to ignore the messages that surround them. Complex networks of discourses circulate encouraging women to surveille, amongst other things: their dietary intake, their lifestyles (Lupton, 1999b) and their participation in exercise (Jette, 2006a; Wang & Apgar, 1998). Such surveillance and regulation is aimed at ensuring that the health of their babies is not

in some way compromised by their own actions. Once again, risk is perceived as being 'controllable' rather than in the hands of fate, with the potential therefore for women to feel guilty if their babies experience health problems.

Given the current focus on healthy lifestyles in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Burrows, Petrie, & Cosgriff, 2013), the risks of not engaging in exercise are also emphasised in both medical discourse and popular culture, presenting an interesting juxtaposition in the context of this study. One could argue that snowboarding presents an opportunity to engage in aerobic physical activity, thereby fulfilling one's moral obligations as a 'healthy' mother-to-be. However, snowboarding is not regularly promoted to pregnant women due to the perceived risks associated with taking part. These competing meanings illustrate just one small aspect of the discursive struggle that engulfs the bodies and minds of these snowboarding mothers.

During five of the interviews the subject of boarding whilst pregnant was discussed. Whilst there were similarities in the ways the women talked about pregnancy and risk, differences also emerged. Andi and Fran, for example, talked about their frustrations at being perceived as selfish and irresponsible for wanting to continue participating during pregnancy. Jess touched on feelings of guilt that she experienced, and Alex drew on discourses of health and well-being to substantiate a position that may be regarded as abhorrent to some.

As several participants testified, the more visible their pregnancy, the more women are rendered the subject of others' advice and appraisal. Andi recounted a story of a snowboarding trip that she had taken with her husband, and a group of people that she barely knew. At the time of the trip, Andi was four-and-a-half-months pregnant.

Andi: It wasn't an issue for me or [Nick], like really, to be honest it obviously crossed our minds and we talked about it, but I'm a pretty careful rider, you know? I don't take falls…or at least not when I'm being sensible. I knew I could stay upright if that was my goal, so we just went with that. Well, you should have heard the after dinner conversations when [Nick] let slip that I was expecting. Shit, it was such

	an issue and became the topic of conversation most nights…Oh my God, they just didn't let up…on and on and bloody on they went about what would happen if I fell over.
Interviewer:	So like what were they saying?
Andi:	Oh you know, how precious a new life was and how I would feel if something happened and ra ra ra. It really got to me in the end, you know?…It's not just what people say…like even my mother didn't approve, like she'd never say (laughs) like she knows better…(laughs) if she'd have tried to stop me I'd have gone anyway (laughs). But it kind of pissed me off that a stranger was having a go…like, yeh, that really got to me. (33-year-old boarder)

Andi's account highlights the interest that the pregnant body generates, and the sense of entitlement others often feel they have to 'educate' women about their responsibilities as expectant mothers. Douglas and Wildavsky (1982) claim that the risks people choose to focus on reflect their beliefs about values, social institutions, nature and moral behaviour. Here, Andi is constructed first and foremost as a mother who must take responsibility for monitoring and facilitating her child's development, growth and health, even before it is born. The unborn child is represented as fragile and highly vulnerable, as something that might break if Andi was to fall on the snow. By conceptualising pregnancy in this way, the risk of injury to the foetus is regarded as a product of the choices that Andi makes, rather than being susceptible to the vagaries of fate.

The emphasis on a mother's personal responsibility for managing risk can also be regarded as characteristic of neo-liberal governance. Neoliberalism calls upon the individual to enter into the process of his or her own self-governance through processes of endless self-examination, self-care and self-improvement (Petersen, 1997). Rather than direct state intervention, this is a far more subtle and effective way of regulating populations (Castel, 1991). As we see from Andi's example earlier, by choosing to go snowboarding, Andi is viewed by others as irresponsible. Not only is she challenged by the 'relative strangers' that she met whilst on holiday, but she also assumes disapproval from her mother. Neoliberal

rationality places the emphasis on the individual to make 'safe' decisions with respect to risk and danger (Rose, 1993; Simon, 2002). As is evident from Andi's account, there is an attempt to regulate her actions, in line with commonly held assumptions about what constitutes 'safe' and 'appropriate' behaviour for expectant mothers. She reflects on the comments, worries about them and reacts to them, by getting 'pissed off'. It is easy to see how the constant reiteration of the 'good', 'careful' mother narrative can begin to penetrate Andi's sense of who she is, what she is, and how she can or should conduct her life (Butler, 1997).

Aside from media and medical discourses, women are constantly bombarded with advice from a number of other sources such as: health promotion pamphlets, family planning clinics, antenatal classes, their own friends and families, and, as is evident in Andi's testimony, even complete strangers. When biomedical, popular and historical knowledge gets recontextualised at the level of the 'everyday' and becomes so ubiquitous, it is challenging for people to step outside of it and see how the very statements they make reproduce and constitute themselves in ways that reinforce the dominant position. The ongoing reiteration of the discourse 'cements' it so that it becomes part of the social fabric, commonsense and 'everyday'.

Take, for example, the following extract from Jess's final interview, when we were discussing her previous season's boarding. She had continued to board until about 20 weeks pregnant:

> I think it just didn't feel real yet. I was careful, I was cautious and I was… and I did stop in the end because it started to feel too dangerous and stuff so you know I wasn't just being completely like oh I don't care or anything but um, it just, I suppose it was just, cause um, [Sara] wasn't there yet. And I knew that it was kind of like oh I have got to do this while I can…and funnily I did meet another girl who was pregnant on the top of the summit of Treble Cone and she was way more pregnant than me and we had a bit of a chat and I said, 'oh you make me feel better you know I am feeling a bit guilty and stuff'. And she was like, 'oh no', and she was the same, going, 'oh I am not sure if I should be doing this'.

Dominant discourses of pregnancy invite and persuade expectant mothers to conform to norms and expectations. In spite of this pressure to

conform, both Andi and Jess chose to continue boarding (for some part of their pregnancy at least), emphasising the complexity of discursive power relations. Whilst simultaneously drawing on dominant discourses of pregnancy and admitting to curtailing her self-confessed 'reckless' riding to a more 'cautious' style, Jess carefully negotiates her position as a pregnant mother and a snowboarder. She is eager to point out that she is not callous, but values her snowboarding and, thus, chose to continue. It is however, very evident that power-knowledge, contexts and discourses still contour the possibilities available to Jess. She 'carves' a fine line between engaging in practices of freedom by continuing to snowboard and being subjected to technologies of power and ceasing to take part. In the end, the strong feelings of guilt became too much for her, and she made the decision to stop riding. This illustrates how easily practices of freedom may be converted into 'disciplinary techniques which subjugate an individual' (Jette, 2006b, p. 264).

The accounts from Andi and Jess show the complex and contradictory ways in which the participants themselves can come to talk about the risks associated with snowboarding. For example, when discussing boarding whilst pregnant Andi mobilises the discourse of 'control' to justify why she should continue boarding. Similarly, both Andi and Jess acknowledge that their decisions to continue boarding whilst pregnant were considered, made after reflecting upon the risks, and in Andi's case, through discussion with her husband. In so doing, the women demonstrate a critically reflective attitude towards their snowboarding and also an awareness of what Foucault (1994) refers to as the 'ethical substance'.

The 'ethical substance' refers to the part of the self-concerned with moral conduct (Foucault, 1994). Whilst neither Andi nor Jess chose to stop boarding altogether they *consciously* and *deliberately* control their self desires, by working on themselves to maintain a 'sensible' and 'safe' attitude whilst they snowboard. In other words, their snowboarding practices are significantly altered so that they ride within (what they regard to be) acceptable limits for the safety of their unborn babies.

The monitoring and controlling of women's bodies in public spaces have been expressed in previous research relating to leisure and constructions of risk (see, e.g., Burgess, 1998; Green & Singleton, 2006). Often tensions arise when there is a desire to participate in an activity that is known

to be 'inappropriate' (Green & Singleton, 2006). This tension is evident in the way that Andi expresses her anger. It is also apparent in the guilt felt and expressed by Jess. Furthermore, there is an obvious sense of relief when Jess meets another pregnant snowboarder. The presence of this other woman on the mountain, who was 'way more pregnant', provides emotional support as Jess wrestles with her feelings of guilt. They immediately connect, talk and discuss their anxieties, despite being strangers. Pringle (2008) argues that 'if individuals wish to re-story their lives or reconstitute their subjectivities they need to have access to suitable discursive resources for doing so' (p. 220). The pregnant stranger offers Jess alternative ways of thinking about pregnancy that do not conform to dominant discourses. She is no longer alone, and in this fleeting moment she may at least feel 'normal'.

The Fear of Falling: 'It's Just That Motherhood at the Back of My Head'

Since all of the participants in this study had been involved in boarding prior to having children, we were keen to find out if their behaviour had changed in any way since becoming parents. Participants were asked: 'Has there been any change in the ways that you board since you've had kids? ' Without exception, all participants acknowledged that they were far more cautious since becoming parents. Petra's response, for example, was fairly typical of all of the women:

> Um, no I definitely don't push too much, I'm definitely probably a little bit more cautious than what I was before, It needs to be quite, very soft, before I even feel like doing any sort of little jumps or anything. And I'm definitely cautious thinking that I CANNOT injure myself. Like that would be just an absolute disaster you know? Having a plaster on your wrist or a twisted knee or something you know, so, yeh that has probably slowed me down a little bit but it's not something that I'm really conscious of either. I can still enjoy myself but somewhere in there, I guess it's just that motherhood at the back of my head that does kind of tell you that it would be really hard and just take it easy.

Despite the strong sense of entitlement to leisure time, the participants talked about being 'cautious' in their riding, which was primarily attributed to their fear of injury. This fear of injury was connected to the powerful 'ethic of care' that each of the women expressed for their dependent children (Henderson & Bialeshki, 1991; Miller & Brown, 2005). For Petra, who had three children under the age of seven, and a husband who was self-employed, even a relatively minor injury such as a broken wrist, was viewed as an 'absolute disaster'. As she pronounced, 'I've got to put family first'. Consequently, Petra compromises her own personal snowboarding goals, sacrificing her riding style and potential enjoyment for the benefit of the whole family. Similarly, in her diary entry Jess declares:

> I think I ride more cautiously now. I used to huck off quite a few jumps—I wouldn't do that at the moment as I know [Sara] needs me too much and I would be no use as an injured mum. I hope I can get my level of riding back again one day though, but at the moment some self-preservation instinct has kicked in. Hurting myself would be like hurting my baby.

In this brief excerpt there is, once again, a recognition that snowboarding carries with it very real risks of injury. The text also points to a shift in Jess's behaviour, 'now that [she is] a mum'. Like Petra, Jess views an injury as having disastrous consequences in relation to her capacity to mother, claiming in fact that an injury would render her useless. In the final interview Jess attributed her current cautious approach to the fact that she was breastfeeding:

> Um, I hope that goes away again cause I would like to, you know I am being really cautious at the moment, but I guess it is natural because I know that, you know I need to feed, I am still breastfeeding and it is like if I break my leg or get carted off to hospital it would be a major hassle you know and not good for her. You know I just, it is like she needs me so I have got to stay quite strong and healthy and so yeah I am definitely quite cautious in my riding.

Here Jess draws on gendered discourses which position motherhood as 'natural' and that assert that a mother is the best provider for her child. In Aotearoa, the Ministry of Public Health advises parents that

'[b]reastfeeding plays an important part in the health and wellbeing of babies, mothers and whanau/families. Breastfeeding gives our children the very best start in life' (Ministry of Health, 2009). Connected with this, authoritative discourses of motherhood also encourage mothers to make childcare their primary responsibility (Harrington, 2002). This motherhood discourse is derived from medical and scientific knowledge, resulting in the 'medicalisation and professionalization of motherhood' (Cole, 1998, p. 50), and is disseminated through antenatal clinics and other health services as well as being circulated in popular literature.

For Jess, her embodied experience of breastfeeding, connected with her gendered sense of responsibility for her daughter, appears to have shifted her desire to take risks in the ways that she has previously described. Despite this, Jess claims that she wishes her new-found cautious self would 'go away again'. Jess's efforts to behave 'responsibly' are contrasted with her earlier yearnings for speed, deep powder and thrills, once again highlighting that subjects are 'dynamic and multiple, always positioned in relation to particular discourses and practices and produced by these' (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, and Walkerdine, 1984, p. 3).

Future Research and Conclusions

The voices of the snowboarding mothers render visible the multiple discursive elements that come into play when discussing the risks associated with boarding. Our analysis reveals that both the social and moral risks of engaging in action sports are exaggerated for mothers, particularly during pregnancy. Despite this, pleasure is frequently derived from deliberately confronting challenges.

The sense of well-being gained through boarding may have a number of positive outcomes for women and their families. With a few exceptions (e.g., Clayton & Coates, 2014; Frohlick, 2006; Roster, 2007), studies of women's engagement in risk-taking behaviours rarely consider the impact of motherhood specifically on women's decisions to take risks. Given the prominence of maternal depression globally (Wachs, Black,

and Engle, 2009), the positive meanings derived from voluntary risk-taking behaviours deserve fuller attention. As Fullagar (2009) points out in her Australian study of family leisure practices:

> Rethinking the meaning of pleasure requires us to move beyond common-place assumptions that assume the 'potentially risky' bodies of individuals are simply biomedical or behavioral problems to be rationally measured and managed. (p. 109)

Healthy lifestyles discourses are circulated in ways that encourage parents to model good exercise habits to their children and to maintain their own physical fitness during and after pregnancy, making physical activity a 'valid concept for women in popular discourse' (Currie, 2004, p. 238). However, it appears that physical activity is only acceptable if it is regarded as 'safe'. For the women in this study, snowboarding is only constructed as 'risky' if undertaken in certain ways. More importantly, snowboarding is something that they are good at, and as such, their participation yields intense feelings of joy. These feelings provide the women with a sense of 'self', and a sense that motherhood alone does not define them. As such, snowboarding is an important aspect of their emotional well-being.

In the current neoliberal climate, risk-takers are often viewed negatively (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002). Based on the accounts from these women, it is our thesis that the social and moral risks of engaging in a 'high risk' sport such as snowboarding are exaggerated for mothers. Gendered discourses including the powerful 'ethic of care' penetrates their sense of selves, and still contours the possibilities and behaviours open to the women, even when they are alone on the mountainside. This is particularly evident when Petra and Jess express their fear of injury.

The deliberations over whether to continue snowboarding during pregnancy highlight the continued surveillance and regulation of women's bodies. In order to be deemed a 'good mother' in the current era of 'intensive motherhood' (Lee, 2008), both pregnant women and new mothers are subject to increasing pressures to carefully manage the risks that they encounter (Jette, 2006b). Exercising 'appropriately' becomes a 'technology of the self' with moral, personal and social implications. Whilst Andi's story demonstrates an attempt at drawing on alternative

discursive positions, we can also see how by not acting 'appropriately', one runs the risk of becoming stigmatised and subjected to moral judgements (Lupton, 2006).

Longitudinal work that attends to the shifting discursive resources that women have access to as their children age (particularly during pregnancy and throughout the early years of motherhood), would fruitfully extend our understanding of the complexities of snowboarding mothers' lives. So too, would research that further interrogates the ways macro-level sociopolitical, cultural and economic shifts over time constrain and/or facilitate the ways mothers who snowboard can imagine and live their selves in diverse geographical and cultural settings.

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9

'No One Wants to Mess with an Angry Mom': Females' Negotiation of Power Technologies Within a Local Skateboarding Culture

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Skateboarding is becoming increasingly influenced by females, both in terms of brand consumption and also participation at various levels and roles (Atencio, Beal, & Wilson, 2009). This view seems to support an emerging trend of female participation within lifestyle sporting cultures, as recently noted by Wheaton (2013). Yet, despite the seeming growth of women and girls within activities such as skateboarding, critiques surrounding the ascendancy of male power still hold purchase given our recent experience. For instance, during one visit to a skate park event held in our local community, we observed that there were no women or girls skateboarding while nearly 50 young men and boys navigated this public skate space. Another visit to a different skate park in our region revealed how only young men and boys actively used this space during a Friday night. Indeed, our third researcher, who is female, felt uncomfortable

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amidst the males' activities and their conversations; she soon left. These compelling examples (and several other similar experiences) suggest that a more nuanced evaluation of women's and girls' participation in skateboarding is required at the micro-level of everyday practice.

We accordingly discuss research findings from a study examining the place of women and girls within a local skateboarding culture in the San Francisco Bay Area. A key element of this study involves interviews with several female parents and their young children (ages 7–10 years) as well as adult women who are experienced skaters. These latter women have taken up mostly unpaid leadership positions in nonprofit groups promoting female participation, such as the Girl Riders Organization (GRO) and Skate Like a Girl (SLAG). We have also interviewed one adult woman who creates and organizes programs at a new skate park where one of these 'girl' skate groups operate. This woman was fundamental in lobbying for this skate park to be built by local city government at a cost of US$2,200,000. Our research team has also conducted over 150 hours of observation at four different skate parks in the Bay Area, making critical notes about skate parks and gendered practices by observing women and girls in skateboarding (See Atencio, Beal, Wright, and McClain, in press, for more details).

The chapter is initially contextualized through the description of female-only skateboarding organizations doing work in the Bay Area that have arisen in the last few years. We continue by illustrating the micro-politics of one specific public skate park that is known to encourage female participation through its own programming and involving female-only groups, GRO and SLAG. We identify the motivations and strategies of the group leaders to include females, specifically examining their unique gender politics. Then, we provide a description of the gender relations at the park and associated practices that help form a unique social space. In particular, we examine how the organizers construct their 'girl-only' sessions, essentially creating a formal governing presence within an informally operated and 'unregulated' space. Simultaneously, we reveal mothers' various roles in confronting and policing 'bad' male behaviors, while also encouraging the formation of a 'family-friendly' culture underpinned by girls who skate.

We engage with the post-structural theories of Michel Foucault in order to discuss the surveillance and governing practices operating within

the skate park. That is, a range of women with diverse roles have enacted practices aimed at disrupting existing power relations that privilege males. In this sense, Foucault's description of dividing practices and surveillance will guide our analysis of how women attempt to reinscribe the prevailing masculine practices found within a skate park. We suggest that these women do not attempt to parlay their involvements with female skateboarding in order to profit financially. Instead, these women appear to have a politicized investment in changing the nature of skateboarding both in their community and at a broader discursive level.

Foucault and a Gendered Analysis of Skate Parks: Dividing Practices and Surveillance Within Social Space

We draw upon Michel Foucault's theories in order to understand how females inhabit and utilize skate spaces that are structured according to particular social logics. Thorpe (2008) notes how 'Michel Foucault has had a major influence on the reconceptualization of power in the social sciences and humanities, including sports studies' (p. 199). Thorpe reminds us that Foucault's description of power is both significant in terms of dominant power relations that constrain individual subjects, and also provides a unique conceptualization of power as 'enabling and productive' (2008, p. 200). She utilizes this framework in relation to the notion of 'dividing practices' to analyze how dominant snowboarding media might engender various discourses of femininity, reflecting a 'fragmentation of female boarders (e.g., core boarders, girlies, or pro-hos)' (2008, p. 207). We similarly invoke a discussion of power operations and associated 'dividing practices' found within one skate park in California to frame how various women utilize space in divergent ways. Foucault's (1983) concept of dividing practices suggests in this regard how particular 'truth' discourses work to construct divisions between certain groups, in order to categorize and objectify particular subjects as normative in relation to the nonnormative 'other'. This line of analysis reveals how skateboarding spaces generally encoded as masculine reproduce dividing

practices, with particular consequences for the various women and girls who participate and indeed seek to change these prevailing conditions.

The concept of dividing practices operating within skate parks relies upon the notion of surveillance. Foucault (1979) speculates how individuals have historically made sense of their own selves and those of 'others' through the implementation of surveillance techniques. Wheaton (2013), for instance, develops this view of surveillance that structures the normative self as relative to an 'other', by illustrating how white male surfers try to maintain power in surfing. Wheaton (2013) demonstrates how 'racialized bodies' are subjected to a form of surveillance practice 'that seeks to oversee, control and regulate the behaviour of black people' (p. 152). We take up this notion of surveillance that underpins particular power relations and codes of behavior, illustrating how various women participating within a skate park enact and negotiate particular forms of surveillance. In doing so, we aver that these diverse stakeholders contribute to the construction of 'normative' practices and gendered identities that emerge within a community skate park. This skate space is considered largely public despite the increased influence of private interests, and thus we suggest that it remains open to contestation by a wide range of skate park users (see Atencio & Beal, 2016).

Gender Dynamics and Groups That Promote Female Skateboarders

In response to the male centeredness of skateboarding, women have organized groups to support and feature females. In the 1990s, a trend of organizations aimed at promoting females in skateboarding started to emerge. In the 2000s, these groups proliferated as this activity became more popular and the industry was starting to target females again (Beal & Wilson, 2004). Not surprisingly, these 'girl groups' emerged in different contexts with varying gender politics. Some of these female-promoting organizations focus not only on developing skilled skaters but also on creating a brand for profit. Many others are focused on creating welcoming spaces for girls to learn skills and are not seeking profit. Whether the emphasis is to create a profitable brand or to encourage females to skateboard, the

gender politics of these groups varies from embracing normative femininity to challenging it.

In the context of our study, SLAG focuses on the discourse of community and social justice: 'We value experiential learning, civic participation and social justice…SLAG strives to build community coalitions with other groups and organizations that are working to challenge oppression through education and dialogue, with the hope of creating better communities for everyone' (Skate Like a Girl, n.d., n.p.). SLAG was founded in 2000 by two women with backgrounds as skaters and snowboarders; the first clinic was held in the state of Washington. This nonprofit organization is currently operating on the West Coast of the USA, with prominent chapters in Portland, Seattle, and San Francisco.

GRO is another nonprofit organization whose mission is directed not at developing professional female skateboarders, nor does it explicitly address gender politics or social justice. Instead, GRO focuses upon developing girls' leadership skills: 'Lessons learned through GRO help girls not only in action sports, but also in all areas of life empowering them to be leaders of positive change' (GRO Girls Riders Organization, 2015, n.p.). GRO was founded in 2006 and is most active on the East Coast of the USA, although it has branches throughout the nation, including the Bay Area.

These 'girl' skate groups interact with each other and with public stakeholders, such as Parks and Recreation Departments, as well as volunteer groups, corporations, and local businesses. We thus examine one skateboarding location to explore how these diverse stakeholders interact in terms of micro-politics. We examine key discourses, surveillance techniques, and the dividing practices that serve to impact gendered social dynamics.

Methodology

The Bay Area Skate Park[1] is compelling because of the concerted efforts stakeholders make to include females. Since 2013, we have interviewed several parents and their children who use the park as well as members of

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[1] The names of this park and the city have been changed to protect the anonymity of local skate participants, and no direct webpage reference is provided for key descriptions.

the volunteer group who help manage the park. We also interviewed key leaders of GRO and SLAG who have been involved there. The people we interviewed reflect the diversity of the city where the park is located. Our participants self-identified as white, white/black, Filipino/a, Indian, and multiracial. We have also attended various community events that gave us a sense of the social networks associated with the park, including a town hall meeting regarding community needs and future directions of the park and a skate art installation (see Atencio et al., in press, for more details). Using this information, we have mapped the different gender politics and surveillance techniques of the women stakeholders.

Findings: Diverse Female Stakeholder Investments and Identities

We will initially describe the more formal organizations and their discourses of gender inclusion. We then reveal the informal 'mom culture' that has developed at the park. Both the formal leaders and the 'skate park moms' use their power to observe and control the space, in ways that work to disrupt male power. These practices are enacted relative to specific views of gender, mothering, and notions of acceptable public behavior.

Formalized Surveillance and Governing Strategies: The Bay Area Skate Park Group, GRO, and SLAG

The Bay Area Skate Park was constructed in the early 2010s and is located in a large, ethnically diverse and predominantly middle-class suburb. The impetus to construct the park came from parents who wanted a safe place for their children to skate. To coordinate lobbying efforts, a community volunteer group was formed in The Bay City Skate Park Group (BCSPG). BCSPG served as the mediator between the municipal government and the residents in the neighborhood where the park was built. One of the key obstacles during this process was the neighbors' concern about rowdy

behavior of potential users of the park. BCSPG thus committed to a governance model that would work toward a 'family-friendly' environment as their mission statement claims: 'The Bay City Skate Park Group is a group of skaters, parents and community members who work with the City… to ensure our free, public skate park is safe, welcoming and inclusive for skaters and their families'. The park was built with municipal funds and is under the auspices of the Parks and Recreation Department, but the BCSPG is still very active in governing this space, although that relationship is typically contested. The organizer of BCSPG, Jane[2], commented that the two parties view the execution of the skate park goals somewhat differently: 'We agreed to an open, free, public, family skate park. We're still working on that'.

Jane, who is a middle-aged white mother of an adult male skateboarder, has been the organizer of BCSPG for a year. Jane first became interested in creating a skate park after she observed the difficulties her son faced to skate legally and safely; she subsequently took up a range of tasks including developing a group of parents and skateboarders to lobby the city and neighborhood to build the skate park. We found Jane to be dedicated to the BCSPG mission. For example, we have observed her regularly walking throughout the skate park, talking to young children, and handing out coupons for free smoothies to those who are wearing helmets. During this perusing, she will check in with parents, the park ranger, and the skate instructor in attendance to monitor any concerns they have. Jane also runs the BCSPG Facebook website where she frequently posts notifications of any illegal activities and gives advice on intervention. We suggest that these types of consistent surveillance practices within the park align with her view of a multicultural community that could develop within the skate park. That is, her vision to include girls and people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds seems to mirror her personal view of the local community more broadly.

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[2] Names have been changed in some cases to protect anonymity. This practice was enacted on an individual case basis following consultation with the participants.

Jane's commitment to this safe and multiethnic family-friendly environment is therefore reflected in her appreciation of social inclusion and diversity within her city:

> I love that about this place. There's everybody here. Well, that's Bay City. Okay, so this is a good story…Mike (a pro skater who gives lessons) is Muslim. He just came back from his pilgrimage to Mecca last weekend. Sharon, who's the other woman who's helping us, very involved in the Jewish community. She works for a Jewish non-profit. We're recovering Catholics here. We're so Bay City, you know? We really are, and the park is, too. You have girls, that's really important to me, is to have girls and women. We have a pretty high percentage of Asian, Afghan…so I think this just reflects Bay City yeah. You'll see a sort of a mix.

Jane's agenda to include more women and girls in skateboarding is reflected in her recognition and recruitment of GRO to hold monthly girl skate sessions. However, her explicit aim to include more females was not materially supported by Parks and Recreation. Again, she talks about the different priorities the local Parks and Recreation have compared to BCSPG:

> They (Parks and Recreation) want us to do things…the city, they sponsor Mike and then when we approached them to also sponsor Girl Riders Organization, they basically said, 'No, we're doing enough'. It's not that they don't want to; it's that they just don't have the capacity for all this programming. They can't manage it all, so they said 'Why don't you do it, why don't you do that'?

Thus, in relation to a range of monitoring practices, Jane plays a major role as a promoter of girls and women in the park by 'institutionalizing' GRO's presence and maintaining a community dialogue and commitment to an inclusive park. Her practices are imbued with an activist vision, and include directing the parental group's Facebook presence, making regular park visits, and promoting and hosting open town hall meetings.

Like Jane, the other adult women stakeholders in our study expressed how skateboarding and the park were masculine territory and that they

needed to help create opportunities for girls to be involved. In order to challenge the prevailing male discourse underpinning skateboarding, GRO and SLAG work primarily by developing a critical mass to take up space in the park. They are attempting to normalize the presence of females as active participants. Crucially, these groups are supported by females such as Jenny and Mandy who offer free lessons during the 'girl-only' events.

Jenny is the GRO representative who arranges the monthly girl skate sessions at the park. Jenny's practices are reflected in her attempts to help other females find joy in skateboarding as opposed to trying to fit male standards that tend to demean and sexualize female skate-boarders. She once noted, for instance, that 'My philosophy is just to try to be a good role model and help facilitate the girls to have fun, to meet each other, make friends, and have women's skateboarding be something that is healthy and professional, that's not portrayed as that hypersexual image that makes it something cheap'. Jenny often incorporates volunteers of SLAG to help gather more girls at the GRO events.

Mandy, who coordinates some SLAG events, is also a very talented skater and often shows up to the Bay Area Skate Park to support GRO and help out Jenny. In concert with a social justice perspective, Mandy discusses her own practices that involve creating space for girls to skateboard:

> We just make space at skate parks for girls and women to come and like feel like safe to try something and also to empower other girls that's really shy coming to skate parks and when it's your first time stepping into there you're terrified because you don't know like what's happening, who's looking at you, who's judging you, but I feel kind of good to be like this is our space too, like we can be here.

Engendering female support among girls is also an element that Jenny reiterates through the GRO monthly events. She stated: 'Every time, we have new riders, and they all say the same thing. It's all about when you skate with other girls, it's just about having a network of other girlfriends, because it's just hard to find'. In this case, the 'girl riders' events have

emerged as supportive and counter-hegemonic spaces within the context of male-dominated skateboarding, based upon the activist views of Jenny. Thorpe (2005) has similarly highlighted female 'support' mechanisms and a 'sense of community' that have emerged to contest male domination existing in snowboarding, although she makes the case that further investigation of diverse femininities and interests are warranted (p. 83).

In addition to her involvement with the girl-focused groups such as GRO and SLAG, Jane has taken up more formal roles in governing and controlling the skate park space in line with her views of social justice, multiculturalism, and developing a community ethos. Yet, the culture of the park is also heavily monitored and controlled by an informal network of actively engaged parents. Our conversations were mostly with mothers who accompanied their daughters in the skate park, although we did observe and speak with several fathers who also occupied these roles[3]. It seemed that women took up lead roles in many cases, particularly during Saturday mornings when many of the girl-focused events took place and also in terms of monitoring and enforcing other skaters' behaviors. As noted by Thompson (1999), the experiences of sporting youth are often structured by the significant (and often unnoticed) labor contribution of mothers; this certainly seemed to be the case in the Bay City Skate Park.

The mothers who frequented the park could be found skateboarding themselves, acting as 'role models', observing from the margins of the park, encouraging their children, and intervening when they felt other skaters were taking away opportunities for their children's safe involvement. Reflecting key disciplinary practices, this 'mom culture' strongly enacted surveillance of the park's other users, with moms regularly confronting males who they felt were exhibiting nonnormative behaviors. We describe in the next sections how these disciplinary practices of surveillance and control reflected their specific ideals of being 'good moms' and 'role models'. That is, these women were committed to protecting and supporting their daughters in a family-friendly context.

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[3] In subsequent work, we will also develop analytical lines focusing upon the role of fathers more extensively within youth skateboarding.

Constructing Gendered Space: Skater Moms and Girls

Many of the mothers, like the groups mentioned earlier, reiterated that having female role models was a good means of engaging their daughters in this male-dominated skate space. They recounted numerous examples where they engaged in practices to support their daughters and their skateboarding endeavors. For example, Ashley[2], a 43-year-old multiracial mother of both a son and a daughter who skate, spoke about the gender dynamics that dissuade girls from skateboarding. Based on her observations of the park, she noted that girls are only included in male groups as 'girlfriends': 'The only girls that are included are the ones that aren't really skating and they're wearing tight pants or stuff'. She also noted that it is only the girls who are really talented are accepted by the males as legitimate skaters: 'There's one girl. The ones who are really good then they're included. But then they're really good and they pay their dues obviously. There's one girl I tell my daughter about…I did try and point the girls out for her benefit. To let her know, yeah, go out there and do it'. Finally, Ashley commented on the need for more female participation to encourage girls to skate:

> …and that's one thing I tell her. Get out there and do it. You can do it. They have a girls' workshop on Saturday. We're always busy on Saturday but I want to get her to one so she can be out here with a lot of girls. Because she'll connect with…'Oh, I met the girl over there and we talked and I liked her board or she liked my board or whatever'.

Amy, a Filipina mom, told us that her daughter (9 years old) took a bad fall while skating and was hesitant to start again. So Amy decided, at 49 years of age, to learn to skate to model for her daughter that she could do it:

> …because she got nervous when she tried this 'snake' (an element within the skate park) once she fell and hurt herself…she got hurt and she got nervous. She doesn't want to do it again. But after seeing me starting to skateboard, you see her, she started to cruise around. That's my only intention why I do it. I'm a lot older. I had knee surgery and I'm scared of falling and I only did it for my kids.

The comments above signal how several mothers are strongly invested in diverse practices aimed at supporting their daughters and other girls within the context of this skate park. We argue that these practices signal a commitment to improving the state and status of their girls and others that used the local skate park. The moms often worked in concert with each other, to support girls skating in the skate park, and also viewed themselves as role models despite their lack of knowledge about traditional skateboarding culture.

In the next section, we go on to describe how these supportive practices could also be strongly linked with the practice of surveiling 'others' (mostly young teenage boys) for the sake of controlling 'nonnormative' behaviors such as drinking alcohol, bullying, and smoking marijuana. Further, we suggest that this dividing practice was directly associated with a vision of 'family-friendly skateboarding' that is emerging within this local skate scene. Within this developing vision, we suggest that daughters who skated were viewed as needing protection from the masculine elements of skateboarding such as DIY (do-it-yourself), counter-cultural 'cool', and ideals of the 'street' (Atencio & Beal, 2011). We discuss later how the mothers who took up lead roles in controlling the skate park actively participated in the operation of this skate park. Although these mothers were relative outsiders and novices to skateboarding, they wanted to invest in this activity in order to insulate their children from the seemingly negative aspects of traditional or 'core' skateboarding culture.

Surveillance and Dividing Technologies: Constructing a 'Good Mom' Culture in the Park

All the mothers we talked with reiterated how important it was for adults to supervise their young children within the informal conditions of the skate park. Their concern was often that young adult males were participating in behaviors they did not want to expose their children to, including smoking, drinking, swearing, and bullying. Amy, for instance, discussed how the parents at the park could be divided into two camps: 'I see two kinds of people here. One is wild and one is being protected. So we're on the protecting side of it'. In this way, Amy spoke toward a divid-

ing practice whereby some mothers were positioned as 'wild' in comparison to others who were constituted as being more 'protective' of their daughters. Amy's comments suggest that protective mothers were 'good' mothers. This group of mothers was actively involved in promoting a family-friendly atmosphere that would cater toward girls' participation. Gloria[2], a 50-year-old white mother, further discussed the significance of building parent networks to protect children by more systematically regulating park behavior:

> They should have the parents of the skaters out here and have a get-together to where it's just about parents, hanging out and talking in this area. Saying 'Wow, how long has your son been skating,' and 'How long has your daughter been skating,' and doing that and let them skate. I think it would bring that community together. 'Oh, yeah, they've been smoking pot'. It would strike up more conversations about behaviors in the park.

In relation to this notion of heightened parental supervision, Toral, a 43-year-old East Indian, described a 'mom culture' (including members such as Gloria) that is present and active within the park:

> I mean like there's a bunch of us that are here on Saturdays and Sundays. You know, Gloria and Kelly and you know, everybody, and we'll sit over there on the benches or we'll all bring our little chairs, you know, Gloria says, 'Bring some chairs,' you know. And we'll sit there and we'll watch each other's kids, you know, and stuff like that.

This group of mothers has consolidated and now regularly talks with each other and supports more direct intervention to dissuade certain behaviors that seemingly conflict with their daughters' skateboarding. They are also active in social media realms, advocating online to support a 'family-friendly' skate culture where girls are seen as 'normal' participants.

Toral described herself as a 'helicopter mom'[4]; she then described her assertive behaviors to protect her children: 'I'm very candid like, "Look,

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[4] According to Skolnikoff and Engvall (2014), 'helicopter parents' are those that 'hypermanage their children's lives and take great measures to organize all activities involving their children' (p. 137); the authors suggest that this type of parenting style often occurs within the realm of youth sport and physical activity.

I don't really care, but you're smoking in front of my child, you know, I can make a choice and you're taking his choice away. And so do whatever you need to do but do it in the parking lot"'. Mark, her husband, then bluntly followed up with: 'Nobody wants to mess with an angry mother'.

The comments above illustrate the extensive operation of dividing practices within the park. The mothers' practices were integrally linked with discipline and control, through enhanced surveillance of mostly young men who were positioned as the deviant 'other'. They reproduced these types of disciplinary techniques as part of being 'good mothers' promoting their girls' abilities and access to skateboard within the male-dominated space. Indeed, observations revealed how the skate park was overwhelmingly used by males during and outside of the regular 'girl-only' skate sessions. Then, even as there were many mothers who wanted to increase and systematize the use of disciplinary techniques such as surveillance and direct intervention to control the space for their girls, there were further dividing practices operating among women. For instance, a few women directly opposed the creation of a 'family-friendly' environment at the expense of the largely counter-cultural male skate culture that was usually present. During one town hall meeting, Amy and other parents were chastised by a grandmother (a regular park attendee) for seemingly turning the local skate park into a 'country club'. This divergent view further crystallizes how adult women could take up different and even oppositional stances to each other in order to support girls in the skate park.

Discussion: Dividing Practices and Surveillance Within Girls Skateboarding

In his earlier work, Foucault (1973) initially described discourses as prevailing knowledge or 'truths' reproduced through web-like power networks in society. Discourses operate in conjunction with specific forms of disciplinary power as well as surveillance practices that constrain and produce social life. In this regard, we suggest that the women in our study informally or formally tried to monitor and control skate spaces mostly coded as masculine. They drew upon numerous discursive truths of femininity and parenting as part of their desire to transform the skate

park and create a niche space for girls. Indeed, their behaviors sometimes reflected ideals of supportive parenting found in more traditional youth sport contexts (see Friedman, 2013).

Our initial analysis entailed examining a female skate park organizer as well as members of 'girl-only' organizations. We paid close attention to how these women in more formal supervisory roles acted in ways based upon their desire to construct 'girl-only' spaces (albeit temporary) within the shared public space of a skate park. Yet, their motivations reflected different foci—Jane wanted to create a diverse and inclusive skate community that mirrored the city's demographics, while Mandy and Jenny were explicitly aiming to change power relations within the skate culture. Power relations arguably work to discipline and control female bodies within space (Bartky, 1988; Bordo, 1993). Then, it can be argued that male skateboarders have traditionally held power to surveil and objectify the female body, rendering it out of place (Beal, 1996). Taking these views into account, we contend that the 'girl-only' approach aimed to disrupt masculine power relations that served to mark female bodies as deficient and in need of exclusion. In this regard, Thorpe (2005) further reminds us that as women 'carve out' spaces of participation within traditionally male-dominated action sport culture, 'deeper' gendered values and structures must also be addressed (p. 92).

Mothers of daughters in the Bay Area Skate Park also played a key role in demarcating designated 'girl-only' space. Simultaneously, they became involved in skateboarding to role model for their daughters and to encourage their participation. Indeed, many of the mothers we spoke with and observed commented that they were not interested in 'core' skateboarding culture per se; they simply wanted to support their daughters in their chosen physical activity and to be healthy.

We suggest that these mothers often framed their daughters' femininity along the lines of traditional 'family' structures and values. These girls were not positioned by traditional skate culture discourses such as individualism, counter-cultural 'cool', and distinctions of 'risk' (Atencio et al., 2009), but instead they were seen as being vulnerable outsiders. Thus, they seemingly required protection from ascendant male power that was associated with core skate culture. As such, mothers often closely monitored and intervened within the skate park scene. They often joined

together to develop social networks that could control the presence of young males considered 'nonnormative'. As adults with some power, the mothers would occasionally enact disciplinary techniques aimed at constraining young men, in order to render these male bodies and selves more docile and compliant when the girls were present.

To conclude, we propose that the mothers and other adult women involved in skateboarding enacted diverse practices that directly implicated the myriad discourses operating within their local skate park. Their everyday practices were aimed at reconfiguring existing power relations and structures. By taking up and investing in certain discursive values and 'truths' in distinctive ways, the women in our study attempted to foster girls' more prominent participation within skateboarding.

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10

Coming Together and Paddling *Out*: Lesbian Identities and British Surfing Spaces

Georgina Roy

Much of the academic literature around gender relations in surfing recognises the strongly heteronormative nature of surf spaces (cf. Booth, 2001, 2004; Comer, 2004, 2010; Waitt, 2008; Waitt & Warren, 2008), and a number of researchers (cf. Evers, 2006; Henderson, 2001; Stedman, 1997; Waitt, 2008; Waitt & Clifton, 2012; Waitt & Warren, 2008) have acknowledged that 'homophobia is rife in surfing culture' (Evers, 2006, p. 236). Up until very recently however, little attention has been paid to the impact and implications of this heteronormativity and/or homophobia for gay and lesbian surfers. This is perhaps unsurprising, given that much of the academic literature on modern surfing; its history, values and culture comprises mainly of stories told by male surfers,of male surfers and about surfing masculinities (c.f. Booth, 2001, 2008, 2009; Evers, 2005, 2006, 2009). Up until relatively recently, even feminist work in the area focused predominantly on the issues surrounding heteromasculine surf culture (cf. Henderson, 2001; Stedman, 1997).

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In more recent years, however, there has been a flurry of research which directly addresses gender issues as experienced by women surfers (Knijnik, Horton, & Cruz, 2010; Spowart, Burrows, & Shaw, 2010; Waitt, 2008; Wheaton, 2013). In particular, Olive's in-depth ethnographic work with female surfers in Byron Bay, Australia, has made a significant contribution to the field (Olive, 2013; Olive, McCuaig, & Phillips, 2012). Contributions such as these are different from previous research on gender and surfing in the sense that they '[allow] women to speak for themselves' (Olive et al., 2012, p. 5). This is vital because 'it is the everyday experiences and relationships of surfers in the waves'—and, I would argue, out of the waves as well—'that remain the most powerful in how women understand and experience surfing and surfing culture at an individual level' (ibid. 2012, p. 15). For example, in contrast to the textual analyses offered by Stedman (1997) and Henderson (2001) of surfing culture as largely hostile to women, Olive et al. found that the women in their research often felt welcomed and supported by male surfers in the waves. Importantly though, the women acknowledged that oftentimes, this support was felt to be 'patronising', in the sense that they were treated differently because they were women. Subsequently, rather than feeling marginalised, the surfers 'described a sense of community and belonging that was variously local, cultural and female-specific' (Olive et al., 2012, p. 9).

As a researcher, I share the same concern for the 'everyday' experiences of surfers. I focus on the lives and voices of predominantly recreational surfers, women in particular, and seek out spaces where research might 'speak for itself'. My ethnographic research with female surfers in Britain is distinct in the sense that it openly acknowledges the experiences of lesbian and non-heterosexual women[1] in the surf and within surf communities. Up until very recently, the presence of women's marginalised and/or non-normative sexualities in everyday surf spaces, and indeed most other 'action' ('alternative' and 'lifestyle') sport spaces, has received very little academic scrutiny. Subsequently, I aim to offer a unique and under-

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[1] I utilise the term 'lesbian' in this chapter to refer broadly to all of the women in my research who do not conform to, or identify with, heteronormativity. Selecting a single sexual identifier was not a request I made of my participants, but I believe lesbian is a term with which the majority of these participants would feel comfortable. It is important to acknowledge, however, that this is not necessarily the case for all of them.

researched perspective on how female sexual identities are negotiated as part of 'everyday' surf spaces.

Whilst academically the issue of homosexuality in action sports has been largely overlooked, a certain amount of engagement with the issue has slowly begun to emerge within surfing culture more broadly. For instance, 2014 saw the release of the 'award-winning documentary' *OUT in the Line up*, which exposes 'the taboo of homosexuality in surfing' (outinthelineup.com, 2014) through the eyes of those who surf professionally, competitively and recreationally. Three-time world longboarding champion Cori Schumacher, who stars in the documentary, has also written on and campaigned about gender and sexuality issues in surfing culture for a number of years. Schumacher 'came out' as lesbian towards the end of her competitive career and has since then been outspoken about the pressures she experienced to conform with heteronormative standards of professional surfing. Often drawing on her own personal experiences, she writes extensively on the subject of heteronormativity in surfing culture. Her work has appeared in several media outlets, including magazines, newspapers and her own website/blog:

> I could feel the weight of my mother's stare as she warned me that my two oldest friends looked too much like they could be lesbians…[The] message had been drilled into me since I was very young, through surf magazines, stories from other surfers and sponsors themselves…I had done everything that I could to avoid this type of stereotyping. I kept my hair waist length, exercised every day, restricted my diet…I dressed 'girly', flirted with guys… Everyone knew that to be questioned as a lesbian, even by association, meant no sponsors. No sponsors meant no exposure, no media and no ASP World Tour. (Schumacher, 2012)

What these existing cultural contributions make clear is that heterosexualisation and homophobia, whether overt or covert, have felt implications for both professional and recreational surfers alike. Whilst heterosexism and homophobia are not the focus of this chapter, it is important to acknowledge their affective influence on the lives of lesbian surfers, not just in relation to professional surfing and the surfing media, but in terms of how surfing spaces are lived and felt. In this chapter, I begin by acknowledging the felt implications of heteronormative surfing spaces

from the perspective of lesbian surfers. I then move on to explore how the women in my research negotiated these spaces through participation in lesbian-centred social networks. Using Internet networking and surf camps as examples, I suggest that the embodied awareness of difference is activating the creation of lesbian-centred spaces in surfing. In my discussion and conclusion, I critically discuss the potential and possible limitations of such spaces.

Feeling Different in (Hetero)Normative Surfing Spaces

Laura and I spend the afternoon looking at surfboards in various surf shops. Laura and I have a pretty jokey relationship and often give each other a lot of sarcastic banter. In one shop, Laura remembers she needs some surf wax and asks at the counter if she can buy some. There are several options available and the tall blonde guy at the till grabs a popular brand and slaps it down on the counter. I recognise the packet from yesterday, when I had purposely chosen a different brand, because this one had several 'busty' women in bikinis on the front of it. Making an alternative selection had been my small yet deliberate protest against such blatantly heteromasculine branding. Laura, however, appears to be relatively indifferent to the imagery. As she searches her purse for the correct change I remark, flippantly but jokingly, 'And it's got some nice girls on the front for you'. Laura smiles and gives Mr. Surfdude the money, whilst shooting me a death stare. Outside the shop she berates me for being so 'blatant'. Confused, I exclaim, 'What?! I was only joking!'… (Field notes from Newquay, August 2012).

> L – It's just for me personally, I just don't…I don't want people knowing that I am…gay…if that's what I am…because I don't, I don't know…it's really weird, because I've never been judged because I'm gay…but I don't want people *to* judge me by it…G – so, when you bought wax, in surf shop, and I said 'it's got some nice girls on it for you' (laughing) how did you feel?
>
> L – I was mortified.
> (G – laughs, L – smiles)

L – I just don't like it, I don't like people making the assumptions that you're gay. It's not *being* gay, it's just, you don't know what that person thinks about gay people […]

L – […] the surf wax thing, I said that, assuming that, he would assume that, I have no interest in, and I *didn't* have any interest in girls like that on the, on the cover […] so it was, it was like an ironic, it wasn't like either of us would actually *want* surf wax with girls in bikinis on it, but yeah, I think you, you didn't like that (L-shakes head), no, no that's fine

L – if you want to embarrass me…

G – (giggles) but it kind of wasn't, like if we'd both been straight, I still would've said that, do you know what I mean?

L – yeah, I know…I know.

(Extracts from an interview with Laura, August 2012)

Exploring the issues of sexuality in surfing does not just mean paying attention to what happens in the waves, it means paying attention to what happens on the beaches, in car parks, in surf shops, cafes, pubs and many other places besides. When I discuss surfing 'spaces', I refer not just to the 'surf zone' itself, but also to the many other aspects of participating in surfing as a social, cultural and sporting experience. Heteronormativity pervades surfing culture subtly (cf. Roy & Caudwell, 2014). The affects of this 'everyday' normativity can so easily go unnoticed by those who do not perceive their difference. To lesbian and other non-heterosexual surfers however, there emerges an embodied feeling of being 'out of place, awkward, unsettled' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 148). In the earlier example, my words provoke Laura's embodied awareness and bring about feelings of shame and embarrassment which, whilst undetected by Mr. Surfdude, are overtly conveyed to me as a friend and fellow lesbian.

Through my research, it became apparent that experiences of heterosexism and homophobia for lesbian and non-heterosexual female surfers are highly varied. A number of women had experienced a 'bit of name calling', staring or sarcastic banter, but overt homophobia was largely a rarity. Heteronormativity, on the other hand, was something that almost all of the women had an embodied awareness of. For instance, Bethan is a recreational and occasionally competitive female surfer. She identifies as lesbian and her 'tomboy' style means that this identity is easily presumed

by others. Akin to Cori Schumacher's description of the professional side of surfing, Bethan described how she felt ostracised by the sponsored surfers when attending a surfing competition in Britain.

> B – I don't have long blonde hair, didn't look like a surfer, maybe, I just didn't fit. Maybe it's because I'm from [place name], and people don't like people from [place name], I dunno.

Although Bethan has 'the gift of the gab' and rarely struggles to make friends, she found some of the sponsored surfers a 'bit cliquey'. She described how 'they used to like strut about the place with all the boys around them. They'd say hello, but then just walk off'.

Like the majority of surfers I interviewed, Bethan said that she had not experienced any overt homophobia. However, what this example makes clear is her embodied awareness of the heteronormativity of that particular surf space and how her tomboy (read lesbian) identity marked her out as different.

> B – I don't like the [surf branded] girls clothes, I'm a bit of a tomboy…I like the baggy shorts, boys t-shirts, but I'm like that in all clothes, very rarely do I buy girls clothes
>
> G – have you ever experienced any, do you think, I dunno, treated differently cos you don't fit into the girly image of [sponsored surfers]
>
> B – maybe, down in [competition location] like I said, possibly, dress sense maybe just didn't fit in…so they [sponsored surfers] didn't speak to me
>
> G – have you ever gotten that from just like regular surfers, like in the water
>
> B – no, no, erm, the majority of the time I surf with the boys anyway

Regardless of the possible reasons as to why the other surfers did not appear friendly, Bethan's words convey how heteronormativity can make itself felt for lesbians in surfing spaces. What is hopeful about her experiences is the implication that her everyday surfing experiences—in the waves at her local break—are more comfortable ones. When surfing at home Bethan described how she felt accepted as *one of the boys*; a position which hinged primarily on the notion of being a local, as opposed to gender or sexuality alone. And yet, Bethan revealed in her

interview that this status as 'one of the boys' was a particularly unstable one, due to her 'minoritarian' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) status as female:

> G – have you ever had any issues with being the only girl in the water most of the time?
>
>   B – erm, no not really, I think they see me as one of the boys now…erm, I do get some like sly comments, I don't know if they're intended to be sly comments, or just, I've heard the boys saying like, 'oh, look at the girl catching the wave' or…I don't know if its derogatory, just like boys being boys amongst themselves, you know, trying to look cool.

Bethan's contrasting experiences of acceptance and non-acceptance, comfort and discomfort serve to highlight the complexities of how relations of gender and sexuality intertwine with how surfing places and spaces are felt and negotiated by some lesbian surfers. Just as Olive et al. (2012) have pointed out, even when female surfers feel supported in the waves, this is often compromised by the intermittent 'patronising' by some male surfers (p. 9). Similarly, despite Bethan's embodied comfort in the waves of her local break, her status as 'one of the boys' is complicated and fragile. Essentially, Bethan's surfing body is caught in an in-between space. As Probyn (2003) describes,

> being at odds with culture is experienced like a visceral schism. In this case, chances are that your subjectivity will be keenly experienced as different from others…[this] is crucial to the production of another subjectivity, one that may be in the 'spaces-off' of mainstream culture (p. 294).

Amongst both the 'surfer girls' and 'the [local] boys' Bethan is made aware of her embodied difference. What is politically useful about Probyn's description is the way in which she refers to the intuitive experience of 'otherness' as a productive process, wherein 'another subjectivity', is constituted in the spaces-off of the mainstream, or to utilise a Deleuzian term, in 'becoming-other' (Deleuze, 1990, in Probyn, 1993, p. 112). By taking this perspective, the political priority is not in overtly challenging normativity, but in disrupting its felt affects by 'inhabiting norms differently' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 155).

Inhabiting Heteronormative Surf Spaces Differently

Elsewhere I have examined how lesbian and non-heterosexual women negotiate spatial heteronormativity. Writing with Caudwell, we focused particularly on how female surfers, and lesbians specifically, appropriate space in the UK's 'surf capital', Newquay (see Roy & Caudwell, 2014). The research conducted in Newquay formed part of my multi-sited PhD research with women surfers in Britain, on which this chapter is also based. Exploring some of the ways in which the lives of the participants (including myself as a participating researcher) intertwined with one another, and with the surf space, we highlighted 'the potential for some women to choreograph gender and sexuality in non-normative ways… in and through the surf' (Roy & Caudwell, 2014, p. 242). The following comments reveal some participants' various interpretations of Newquay surfing space:

> Newquay doesn't really have a scene, but then there are, it's just that sort of place you know, it's, you can go out, and, yeah, I guess there are quite a few lesbians here, so…(Sarah).
>   G: Do you think there are any lesbian spaces in Newquay?
>   Bella: On the spot I'd say no…Define lesbian space…is the space intentionally designed for lesbians? Is the 'space' a byproduct of lesbians using it? I think 'spaces' are made by the presence of people…five lesbians go for a surf, it's a lesbian space.

The surf space in Newquay (both in and out of the waves) is a 'prime site/sight for these transformative flows' because it is always in motion, shifting and fluid (Roy & Caudwell, 2014, p. 242). As Bella describes, the so-called lesbian community in Newquay coagulates, temporarily, where identities, bodies and spaces intersect. Thus, there are times when lesbian bodies gather, or paddle out together, and these create surfing spaces that can 'momentarily, transiently become re-configured as different spaces, potentially queer spaces' (p. 241). Put simply, embodied difference is mobilised to be 'generative, rather than simply constraining or negative' (Ahmed, ibid.) through the co-creation of comfort in an otherwise heteronormative space.

Building upon these findings, I dedicate the remainder of this chapter to exploring some of the ways in which lesbian surfers in other parts of Britain are negotiating the embodied relations of sexuality in surfing culture. Participants who identified as lesbian represented a third of those I interviewed, and a greater proportion of those who took part in my wider ethnography. Browne (2005) highlights that network and snowball sampling is often used in research into sexualities because of its nature as a 'personal' or 'sensitive' matter. For me, the participation of a significant number of non-heterosexual women was an unintended consequence of the way in which relationship networks developed in the field. This serves as a pertinent example of the significance of social networking amongst lesbian surfers, and lesbian women more widely. As Brown, Browne, and Lim (2010) propose, 'geographies of lesbian space can only be advanced through an attention to women's social networks' (p. 8).

On many occasions, the Internet provided an important starting point. Facebook was a particularly useful means through which to make contact with female surfers in certain locations. Although my primary motivation for exploring these networking avenues was my research, it became apparent that my modes of sampling also reflected how the female surfers in each of my field sites developed their own social surf networks. In Newcastle, Wales and Brighton, Internet networking was central to female surf networking. For example, the *Brighton Board Girls* and *Surf Senioritas* (set up by surfers in South Wales) are Facebook group pages that provide spaces for women to make contact with other women and girls who surf. They also provide a forum for the discussion of various aspects of surf culture. For many of the women who take part in these forums, their motivation for doing so is to make contact with other women who surf.

Interestingly, the Newquay-based surfers in my research did not participate in this type of Internet-based networking. I contend that this is largely related to the greater number of female surfers who live locally to Newquay. I also suggest that the transient nature of Newquay—as a 'surf town', and popular tourist destination—functions to foster more fluid gender relations within the surfing spaces (Roy & Caudwell, 2014). Despite the lack of lesbian and gay visibility in Newquay, lesbian spaces were enabled through interpersonal, rather than Internet, networking

(Roy & Caudwell, 2014). Subsequently, the examples I utilise in the following discussion are drawn primarily from findings gathered in South Wales and Newcastle. I focus on the generation of lesbian-friendly surf spaces via lesbian-centred social networking.

Coming Together and Paddling *Out*: Exploring Lesbian-Centred Spaces

In Newcastle, there was—at the time—no specifically female-centred Internet group, and the number of female surfers was small. Making contact with participants in this location proved difficult, and I rarely came across any other women whilst surfing. My struggle to find other women to surf with was a narrative reflected in the stories of the Newcastle participants themselves: 'yeah, we just haven't met many other women, surfing up here' (Bea). I eventually made contact with participants by utilising my existing sport-related social networks. Similarly, Bea describes how lesbian-centred and sports-centred networking had proven the most useful for her in finding other women to surf with. Again, the Internet emerged as central:

> [I met women] through gaydargirls […] I know people use it for a dating site, but I use it for a hobby site […] So I'd put up what my hobbies were, and say that I was actively looking for people to do stuff with so, I met Hettie and Karen about 8 or 9 years ago, to climb with, and they stayed long term friends, erm, and then I met Jane and Aly through gaydaygirls, erm, to surf with, well, to surf and hang out with, erm, so yeah, it's, actually the gay dating sites are really good for setting up sports crews (chuckles) so…

Launched in 2006, *Gaydargirls* is a dating site with over 325,000 users (Strudwick, 2009). Bea met a number of women through the site—including her partner Jane—who were interested in getting together to go surfing or climbing. For her, the site was not just a dating site, but a way of meeting other non-heterosexual women who shared similar interests. This is interesting because it suggests that, for Bea, identifying as

lesbian was a valued shared experience, and/or a means through which to find women who might be interested in surfing. Thus, when she decided she wanted to get herself 'a crew up and running', she arranged to meet up with Aly through gaydargirls, and 'bullied' her ex-girlfriend Jules (a football player) into giving it a go. She said, stereotypically:

> I've really been aware of, I always knew that as gay girls we tend to be more sporty. You know, it's just a classic. You know, friends like Jules and Cat […] if I've ever been out with them on a footy night out, or a cricket night out, its guaranteed there's over-representative of gay women.

Although stereotypical, the connection Bea makes between sport and lesbian communities is one which has, to a certain extent, been supported within the sports studies literature. As various feminist sports scholars (e.g. Broad, 2001; Caudwell, 2003, 2007, 2011; McDonald, 2002, 2008; Ravel & Rail, 2006, 2007; Travers, 2006) acknowledge, 'lesbian sub-cultures' (Ravel & Rail, 2007, p. 404) are evident in several, traditionally 'male' team sports such as basketball, football and rugby. In such contexts, the team sport environment offers lesbian players the relative 'safety' of a female-only space, where the opportunity to meet other lesbians often arises.

What is interesting about the creation of lesbian networks in surfing is that the spatial dynamics of gender are quite different to traditional sports. The surf space is 'open' and, besides surfing contests, there is no such sex segregation. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, it is the unbounded non-fixity of surfing spaces which holds the potential to effectively disturb the normative power relations connected with gender and sexuality (Roy, 2011; Roy & Caudwell, 2014). Subsequently, the 'gathering together' of lesbian women in surfing represents a kind of theoretical rupture because the notion of a 'fixed' community is at odds with the fluidity of surfing spaces. However, I argue that the gathering together of lesbians in surfing spaces is uniquely different to the so-called lesbian subcultures of more traditional sports. Here, I use the specific examples of two lesbian-centred Internet sites and a lesbian surf camp to explore how a shared awareness of embodied difference can generate community, whilst at the same time remain fluid, mobile and disruptive.

Surfing the Internetworks and Camping OUT

Adventure Dykes and *Scene Nomad* are Internet-based networking sites with a focus on the *creation* rather than *location* of lesbian-friendly spaces in which to meet. For both sites, adventure sports, such as surfing, provide a popular context in which to do so. According to the scenenomad.com website, it aims to:

> replicate the same feeling of solidarity felt in LGBT venues by facilitating the organisation of events in any environment. Expanding our social circle, our activities, the venues we attend; knowing we will be surrounded by like-minded people, celebrating our diversity with our friends, family and partners; promoting integration and exercising our legal rights to be open wherever we are. Let's be seen, be Scene Nomads. (https://www.facebook.com/#!/SceneNomad/info)

Scenenomad and *Adventure dykes* are driven by the mutual participation in, and co-construction of, female-only and/or lesbian-friendly community. At the same time, they are, like Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) notion of the 'nomad', characterised in many ways by mobility and 'open'-ness. Women who join the Internet groups can choose to participate in various offline activities as and when, and wherever, they happen. These gatherings are nomadic, temporary and generative in this sense that they incite lesbian women to 'be open wherever we are'.

The *WomenZone Surf Camp* represents one of the physical manifestations of this kind of lesbian-centred Internet networking. *WomenZone* is a Welsh lesbian internetwork based in Swansea which organises events and has an online forum and newsletter. The *WomenZone Surf Camp* became one of the key ways in which I made contact with participants in Wales when I stumbled across the *WomenZone Surf Camp* Facebook page and attended the camp for the first time in 2009:

> It was a women only space. And almost entirely lesbian. This created what my friend and I agreed was a very comfortable feeling. It was a feeling of belonging… The sense of belonging to something was particularly apparent at the bonfire in the dunes. When everybody gathered together to chill out, drink, mingle, chat, be affectionate. (Field notes, WomenZone Surf Camp, July 2009)

The camp is held over a weekend in July at a popular beach in South Wales. Although many of those who attend do not surf regularly, the majority either own boards or hire boards over the weekend. As I comment earlier, the gathering together of so many lesbian women in one space created a sense of comfort which was consciously *felt* because of its temporary disruption to an otherwise heteronormative space.

Unlike the relative stability of lesbian subcultures in other sports, these temporary [and temporarily] 'lesbian' surf spaces are always only momentary. For example, from time to time, families or people from other parts of the campsite would wander through the field. This immediately dislodged the feeling of comfort. The presence of some individuals, particularly men, appeared to be for purely voyeuristic reasons, and this served as a firm reminder of the power dynamics inherent to heteronormativity. However, I argue that the momentary nature of these lesbian surf spaces serves to create them as imminently generative. This is because, in the words of Ahmed (2004), 'Queer feelings may embrace a sense of discomfort, a lack of ease with the available scripts for living and loving, along with an excitement in the face of the uncertainty of where the discomfort may take us' (p. 155).

I believe this embracing of discomfort and difference, as well as a tentative excitement, is at work in the lesbian negotiation of otherwise heteronormative surf spaces. This was evidenced in my field notes in the form of an ironic humour that hinged on a shared awareness of being 'out of place' in that particular leisure space, and in the words of some of my participants:

> A woman walks back into the field, she is with one of the groups attending the camp, as she passes us she says with a smile, 'this field is full of lesbians! I don't know what's going on!'… (Field notes, WomenZone Surf Camp, July 2009)
>
> As I walk round the campfire, I pass the surf camp organiser, she says, 'shame about all these lesbians spoiling the lovely sunset isn't it?'… (Field notes, WomenZone Surf Camp, July 2009)
>
> [I]t's what men have said, it's good to have girls out there, it's less testosterone, and…little do they know that most girl surfers are gay…but (laugh)… (Jen)

I contend that the significance of researching lesbian surf spaces lies not in asking how they resist heteronormativity, but rather how they generate action, participation and empowerment. For instance, some participants in my research (e.g. Bella, Bethan, Nina and myself) took a very independent approach to surfing. However, even these surfers showed a strong appreciation for the lesbian-friendly surf spaces they participated in. Bethan, for example, often said that generally she liked to surf on her own or with 'the boys', but when I asked her how 'surf camp' had gotten so popular she said:

> It's just been word of mouth, I'm not sure what Womenzone is. Like, to start with, there wasn't that many, but it's just grown and grown […] It's just nice to see so many women in the water. (Bethan)

Similarly, Bella said:

> Yeah, it was nice seeing other girls that surf cos you would have thought… even in Newquay you know, such a town this size and stuff and, being the surfing capital, you'd think they'd have at least a lot more girls in the water and there's just not really.

What is apparent here, is that for the women in my research, the motivation to meet other lesbian surfers wasn't always, or necessarily, driven by a need for 'safety in numbers'. Rather, it was a conscious shared *appreciation* for female togetherness. As suggested earlier, rather than pointing to a discourse of resistance, these lesbians' spaces thrive instead on enthusiasm, excitement and participation.

Concluding Thoughts

> Releasing empowerment from conceptualisations of resistance…suggests that there are different textures and sources of empowerment, some of which are derived from different inter-dependent and intersubjective relations with significant others…and community. (Raisborough & Bhatti, 2007, p. 473)

Watson and Scraton (2013, p. 45) describe leisure as an important social and cultural 'act' where people choose, 'within a context of scarcity (Rojek, 2010), to do or not do active or passive 'things', individually and collectively and where the complexity of social life is continually played out' (p. 45). For the lesbian surfers in my research, the importance of lesbian (and lesbian 'friendly') women coming together in the surf is recognised as something which is important to the surf space as a 'context of scarcity'.

In concluding, I recognise that it is important to remain aware of the limitations of this sort of identity-based networking in surfing. What also emerged from my findings was that although lesbian-centred surf spaces were valued by those who took part in them, the significance of sexuality within surfers surfing lives varied widely. For some, when it came to paddling OUT, surfing ability and level of commitment became the most significant factor, as revealed in Callie's comments:

> Surf camp has grown in size, yeah. I will say it's grown in size but I wouldn't say it's grown in size out back[2] […] erm, there was only me and Bethan who could get out back. Which just shows the kind of level of most of the girls that was in the camp—white water riders, you know, seasonal, got a board but you know, never use it…and then when we seen you out back we were like 'holy shmoly there's a girl out here'…and that's how we met you.

Furthermore, it is also important to be vigilant about the potential of such spaces to become exclusionary. Although none of the examples I have utilised in this chapter are lesbian-*only*, there was evidence that some heterosexual participants were being made aware of their difference in such spaces.

> I think it bothers me when people keep saying 'are you gay?' […] like, I'm comfortable enough—I know I'm not—so its fine, but, I dunno…the jokes are wearing a bit thin now. Erm, it would be nice to get straight girls in with us, surfing. (Lana)

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[2] 'Out back' or 'out the back' refers to the area of the surf where the waves are yet to break. Whilst beginner surfers usually remain amongst the broken waves, or 'whitewater', more experienced surfers always paddle 'out back' to wait for unbroken waves.

Although Bea's intention was not to create a specifically lesbian group of women with whom to surf, her modes of networking were strongly influenced by her lesbian identity. However, Bea had met Lana through Aly (who she met on gaydargirls) and since then their lives have become intertwined through a shared passion for surfing, climbing and mountain biking. Importantly, the dangers of sexuality-based exclusion were not lost on Bea:

> I don't think I'd be tempted to go down to like an exclusively gay event or anything for surfing because automatically that's excluding Lana and actually why would I do that? I'm into celebration and diversity but not to the exclusion of others, so, like I wouldn't go to a women's festival that excluded trans [for instance], you know, it's not my thing at all, politically. (Bea)

Lana and Bea's words, as well as Callie's comments about surf camp provide good examples of the complex ways in which forms of lesbian networking and 'community' can simultaneously both disrupt difference and complicate sameness. Despite the limitations of these surf-related networks, the fact that lesbians are actively participating in them; attending 'meetings', events and going on trips together is evidence of a shared recognition that sexuality in the surf *matters*. Whilst these networks mobilise an LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) sense of community, they are not driven primarily by sexual identity politics, but by a desire to make sporting and leisure spaces more accessible for lesbian women. In the words of Adventure Dykes founder Sparky Shaw, it's 'a great way for active lesbians to meet up' away from the traditional pub and club culture of the 'gay scene'. Furthermore, the multiplicity of ways in which women negotiate these spaces perhaps represents the potential of lesbian networking for what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe as 'a molecular women's politics that slips into molar [identity] confrontations, and passes under or through them' (p. 276). This notion, I argue, certainly allows us to view sexual difference in surfing as 'generative, rather than simply constraining or negative' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 155).

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11

The Experiences of 'Brown' Female Bodyboarders: Negotiating Multiple Axes of Marginality

Mihi Nemani and Holly Thorpe

In contrast to the substantial body of literature on gender in action sport cultures (Atencio, Beal, & Wilson, 2009; Backstrom, 2013; Kelly, Pomerantz, & Currie, 2005; Olive, McCuaig, & Phillips, 2013; Roy, 2013; Thorpe, 2009, 2010, 2011; Wheaton, 2002; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998), race and ethnicity have garnered considerably less attention. Noteworthy exceptions include the work of Kyle Kusz (2001, 2007) who has critically examined the whiteness of extreme sports, and the more recent work of Belinda Wheaton (2013), focusing on the struggles of Black surfers in the USA. To date, however, the experiences of non-white female participants are largely silent in the literature (Knijnik, Horton, & Cruz, 2010). Many of these sports remain dominated by white males, yet the voices of those non-white female participants who

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do participate, albeit in smaller numbers, have the potential to offer valuable insights into the various forms of power operating on and through their bodies, and the strategies these women employ to negotiate space within action sport cultures.

This chapter is based on the research and experiences of the first author, Mihi Nemani, who is a highly experienced Maori–Samoan bodyboarder. As a three-time world champion bodyboarder, Mihi has travelled the world extensively for training and competition, yet has also observed and experienced various forms of marginalisation in the waves and in the surf culture, as a result of her sex, ethnicity and chosen surf craft. During her experiences as a recreational surfer, athlete, coach and judge, Mihi has negotiated and challenged multiple axes of marginalisation. Inspired by these experiences, she commenced her master's research in 2012 with the aim of creating space for the voices of bodyboarders. Her project was in response to two significant gaps in the action sports scholarship: (1) the near complete absence of bodyboarders and (2) the almost non-existence of the experiences of non-white females. She conducted semi-structured interviews with eight bodyboarders living in New Zealand, four of whom were male and four female, and five of whom considered themselves to be 'brown'.

The term 'brown' needs to be contextualised within contemporary New Zealand society. As a multi-ethnic society based on a bicultural history, people living in New Zealand are increasingly faced with difficult choices when asked to identify the ethnic group they belong to, particularly if they have parents of different ethnicities. While skin colour is depicted as a racial term (Hunter, 2002; Klonoff & Landrine, 2000), it continues to be seen and used by many people in New Zealand as a form of recognition when describing others, and even when describing themselves. The word 'brown' has been used in the media (Edmunds, 2013; Neville, 2010), books (Grainger, 2008) and scholarly articles (Fitzpatrick, 2011a; Grainger, Falcous, & Newman, 2012; Kukutai, 2007; McKinley, 2005) to differentiate Maori and Pacific Island people from the dominant ethnic group Pakeha (New Zealand European), who are described as white. As physical education scholar Fitzpatrick (2011b) acknowledges, youth are increasingly referring 'to themselves and other Maori and Pacific peoples as "brown", rather than black, as in the USA' (p. 3). While 'brown'

and 'white' are used flippantly to discuss skin colour and differentiate one ethnic group from the other, they also refer to embodied characteristics related to the ethnic cultures they describe. Thus, the term 'brown' in this project means more than just the colour of skin, it includes particular ways of thinking and understanding.

In this chapter, we share some of the key findings from Mihi's fieldwork (semi-structured interviews with eight New Zealand bodyboarders), particularly relating to the experiences of 'brown' female bodyboarders. Building upon the work of other action sports scholars who have utilised Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual framework to reveal the embodied practices, power relations and dynamics within action sport cultures (i.e. Atencio et al., 2009; Thorpe, 2011), we engage the concepts of habitus (embodied dispositions), field (the physical space where surfing is practised) and capital (facets in the surf field that yield power to those who possess them) to explore the nuances associated with the sport of bodyboarding, and particularly the marginalised position of brown female bodyboarders within the hierarchical surfing field. We begin by providing a brief overview of the history of bodyboarding, before dividing the remainder of the chapter into two main parts: (1) gender and the positions of female bodyboarders in the surf hierarchy and (2) ethnicity and the positions of brown bodyboarders in the New Zealand surf field. In the former, we focus on the strategies female bodyboarders use to gain access and respect within the surf field. In the latter, we examine how brown male and female bodyboarders utilise what Mihi has termed 'brown capital' in the surf (Nemani, 2013). We conclude by arguing for more research that seeks to provide richer understandings of the intersectionality of non-white women's experiences in the surf.

Bodyboarding: A Brief Introduction

The first modern day bodyboard was created in 1971 by Tom Morey, a surfboard shaper who had moved from California to Hawaii. He shaped the first bodyboard out of polyethylene foam and quickly found himself selling thousands. In fact, by 1977, he was producing 80,000 boards a year that were mostly sold in the USA (Warshaw, 2005). The

introduction of the bodyboard and prodigious influx of sales into the surfing fraternity was not necessarily deemed a positive move, as mentioned by Stranger (2011) who described that 'the popularity of bodyboarding…added considerably to overcrowding' (p. 73). Nonetheless, the ease and fun with which a novice to the beach could enjoy catching waves on a bodyboard appealed to the masses. Equally enticing was the low cost associated with purchasing such a board (Barry, 1997; Higdon, 1990; Lebrecht, 1990). With accessibility and cost being taken out of the equation regarding participation in surfing, it was no wonder the number of bodyboarders continued to grow during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. While many continued to enjoy this leisure activity as part of their beach holidays, others became highly committed to the practice of bodyboarding and dedicated considerable time and energy to developing and learning new skills. These 'hard core' participants began pushing the boundaries of what was popularly considered bodyboarding by creating aerial and dynamic manoeuvres that led to the establishment of a competitive bodyboarding scene in the late 1970s and 1980s. Today, the International Bodyboarding Association hosts events at surf breaks all over the world (Taylor, 2012). However, despite the increased participation and formal competitive structure, bodyboarding continues to hold a marginal position within the broader surf culture where shortboard surfing continues to dominate.

Waitt and Clifton (2012) are among the first researchers to examine the experiences of bodyboarders, focusing particularly on the bodyboarding fraternity in Illawarra, New South Wales, Australia, and local male bodyboarders stories of their relations with surfers. One participant states that '[as a bodyboarder] you get less respect than a surfer, especially shortboard surfers' (Waitt & Clifton, 2012, p. 10). In his ethnographic study of surfing culture in Australia, Stranger (2011) states shortboard surfers perspectives when explaining that '[b]odyboarders are derided by surfboard riders as "gut sliders", "shark biscuits" and "speed bumps"' (p. 73). While tension between the two sports has been recorded, more research needs to be conducted to fully understand the implications of the differences between both groups, and the various attempts to reinforce and challenge such hierarchical relations of power. In the following section, we draw upon Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital to

investigate the distribution of capital in the surf field based on sex (male versus female) and craft (bodyboards versus shortboards), and consider female bodyboarders perceptions of themselves in relation to male surfers and bodyboarders, and how they negotiate space in a male-dominated environment.

The Surf Field and the Feminisation of Bodyboarding

According to Waitt and Clifton (2012), 'bodyboarding [is] a rite of passage from "boyhood" to "manhood" [so therefore] bodyboarders (in the eyes of shortboarders) have not yet become men' (p. 9). This point of view resonated with much of the literature relating to masculinity and surfing, and the marginal status of bodyboarders (Stranger, 2011; Waitt & Warren, 2008). When asked where male bodyboarders sit in the generalised social status of surf culture, participants explained:

> Probably surfers would be at the top, males and females. Long boarders would be second, kayakers and stand up paddlers, knee boarders and bodyboarders I think they'd be kind of the same. (James)
>
> Surfing on a short board is…the point of the pyramid…the top. In the water, you're the most successful…if you're riding a short board. Then there's steps down from there like if you're on a mini-mal or you're on a mal you're kind of below that, and then kneeboard, bodyboard and goat boaters. (Jaffa)

It was interesting to note that in the gendered hierarchal status, the females in this study placed male bodyboarders above female stand-up surfers. For example, Ngalia states, 'I don't know where female surfers come in, but I think they're under the male boogieboarders'. On the other hand, the male bodyboarders placed the female stand-up surfers above themselves as depicted by Andrew, who explains, 'On average, the girl surfers would be higher than the guy bodyboarders'. This illustrates that the females in this study conceded to views that males are superior to females in the surf field regardless of the surf craft. On the other hand, the males showed more of a subordinate perspective in the generalised

surfing hierarchy, and based their opinion on the surf craft, the body-board, instead of their sex.

According to generalised perception in the surf field, while it is acceptable for females to bodyboard, males who bodyboard are often marginalised by male stand-up surfers in and out of the surf. This form of 'gender logic' or 'dominant form of gender ideology in the culture as a whole' (Coakley, 1998, p. 9) is consistent with the literature investigating surf culture. James' experience reinforces this ideology when stating that 'the guys [who do stand up surfing] …come across as arrogant and they look down upon me because I'm a bodyboarder'. According to Waitt and Clifton (2012), 'One potential risk of incurring shame for bodyboarders is the shame of not being recognised as masculine enough in the surf. [Male] bodyboarders must constantly negotiate the shame of not being a "legitimate" surfer' (p. 13). The feminisation of bodyboarding has implications for both the masculinities of male bodyboarders and the positions and experiences available to female bodyboarders. Here we focus on female bodyboarders experiences with the male-dominated surf field.

Bodyboarding Femininities

As various scholars have revealed, surfing has traditionally been considered a highly masculine practice (Booth, 2001; Evers, 2009; Waitt & Warren, 2008). Whereas the hypermasculinity celebrated in surfing culture puts many women off, those women who do continue to participate must develop an array of strategies to negotiate space in this male-dominated territory. Olive et al. (2013) offer an interesting analysis of the ways recreational female surfers are differentiated and patronised in the surf, and explain how some women develop unique strategies to support one another and navigate the maleness of the line-up. As various other scholars have discussed, young male shortboard surfers hold the most power to access waves, and as such tend to define and regulate the rules within the surf field at most locations (Evers, 2009; Ford & Brown, 2006; Waitt & Clifton, 2012). Similar to Thorpe's (2011) discussion of the snowboarding fratriarchy, groups of highly committed young men in surfing culture have developed strategies of symbolic, verbal and/or physical violence in

which 'other' men and female participants are marginalised in the waves, on the beach, and the broader culture (e.g. in many niche magazines). As a result, many learn to merely accept the rules of the field, rather than challenge the structure of the field. Here we are interested in exploring how those women who continue to pursue the practice of bodyboarding negotiate space within the surfing field that continues to privilege young, male shortboard surfers.

When asked to comment on the position of female bodyboarders in the surf, Ngailia reveals a tacit understanding of the inequitable power relations when explaining that 'there's the surfers, then there's the boogieboarders, then there's the women boogieboarders, that's like the pecking order'. Jaffa (a male bodyboarder) supports this point and in jest exclaims 'all I can say is that I wouldn't want to be a female bodyboarder'. Here, he is revealing his embodied understanding that female bodyboarders have the least status in the water, and thus last priority in the line-up. He is suggesting that being a female in the surf does not yield many opportunities for access to waves hence, one is doubly marginalised based on their sex and their chosen surf craft.

While generic gendered hierarchies place female bodyboarders at the bottom of the list, opportunities exist to gain respect in the surf field. Much like female stand-up surfers, some female bodyboarders can gain status from their peers for displays of physical prowess and risk-taking. Chica shares her views as a female bodyboarder: '[I]f they [male short board surfers] see you charging, [catching big waves with confidence] I guess there's a little bit of respect there, I think maybe if you're a girl as well [you may get even more respect]'. Here we see that physical capital for female bodyboarders is accessible through demonstrating bravery by catching big waves. Respect for ability is also available to those women who successfully perform technical manoeuvres or can ride deep inside the barrel—a place that is respected by surfers of almost every craft (Fig. 11.1). In these instances, while the power has not shifted from the males to the female bodyboarder, there is instead a mutual respect given from the males in the surf and as a result, access to waves may ensue. What is important to note, however, is that it continues to be stand-up male surfers who define the rules of the field, and thus the allocation of social and cultural capital.

Fig. 11.1 New Zealand female bodyboarder surfing a steep shallow wave on a shore break. Photo courtesy of photographer: Lilly Pollard

Interactions between females in the water were an aspect that this project aimed to investigate due to the number of female bodyboarders and shortboard surfers being relatively small compared to males. The female participants explained that, while they were often the only female bodyboarder in the water, occasionally there was one or more female shortboard surfers present in the line-up. However, the majority of the female bodyboarders time was spent surfing with male stand-up surfers. When asked about how she feels about other shortboard surfer females in the water, Sueanne explains, '[T]hey're the worst ones. If they're really good, they're actually [even] snobbier'. Sueanne elaborates on why she believes the stand-up surfer females act this way;

> Maybe they're used to being the only girls out there, so when there's another girl out there competing for the guys attention they may see it as a threat. And if they're really good, they can tell if you're gummy [incompetent] by the way you sit on the board, so they might look down at you.

This example suggests that females sometimes see each other as a threat for male attention. While Sueanne's comments focus on the challenges posed through physical prowess, she (and others) mentioned elsewhere that tensions between females in the surf can also be fuelled by physical

appearance, or looking 'prettier' (also see Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). Sueanne, who relishes her femininity outside of the surf, indicated that she is always conscious of 'looking good' and not looking like a 'kook' in the water. Here, we can see that she recognises the value of both gender capital (feminine appearance) and physical capital (demonstrations of physical prowess) for helping gaining access to quality waves, as regulated by male surfers. In so doing, however, other female surfers may be threatened, or perhaps frustrated, by the strategies employed by women who embrace their feminine capital as a means to gain access to limited capital in the surf field. This example suggests that females perceive multilayered levels of hierarchies among themselves including physical appearance and ability (see Thorpe, 2009; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998, for similar observations in snowboarding and windsurfing cultures, respectively).

Some of the male bodyboarders in this project proclaimed to be in support of their female peers. In reference to female bodyboarders, for example, Jaffa explained 'the guys are pretty good towards them, I generally think, that the guys try to help them as much as they can'. This comment resonated with some of the females in this project who did not have issues with male shortboard surfers. In fact, some women in this project mentioned that stand-up male surfers were quite friendly and helpful and would even help them catch waves. Sueanne explains, 'If they're cool guys, they sort of tend to look out for you'. A reason for this could relate to the perception that bodyboarding requires less skill, and thus a female on a bodyboard would not threaten a male stand-up shortboarder surfer's masculinity but rather enforce it through needing help. It also reinforces the stereotype that females are frail and weak and requiring male support. So, although some of the women in this project felt that they were being well supported and 'looked after' in the surf by the stand-up shortboard surfers, it is possible that they were being looked down on in a condescending manner and pitied for their inability to surf on a surf board. In their study of recreational female surfers, Olive et al. (2013) also revealed female surfers' experiences of being 'patronised' by men trying to help, but in so doing, continues to make women feel 'different'. Ford and Brown (2006) describe this type of behaviour as a form of complicity which can be interpreted as an act of symbolic violence as both males and females see this type of interaction as normal. Taking this

into consideration, while some females might use the chivalry of males to their advantage in getting waves in the surf, it actually reinforces the hierarchal order and as a result the females ultimately receive less respect in the surf.

It was interesting to note that the male participants in this study believed that more females should participate in bodyboarding as it was easier to learn than surfing. With this assumption, it could be implied that women might not have the physical ability to learn how to stand-up surf, so should therefore bodyboard instead. Jaffa provides evidence of male assumptions about female physical inability when sharing an example of a friend whose girlfriend had been trying to stand-up surf for over eight years;

> She's kind of just got nowhere over the whole time that she's been surfing, like I don't think I've ever seen her get a decent wave. She's always just kind of struggling, and I've said to them fifty times, get her out on a bodyboard. She'll probably enjoy being out in the waves more and she'll catch more waves. Even if it just gives her a bit of wave knowledge of where she should be sitting, or how to paddle out, and how to paddle into and catch waves. (Edited for clarity)

While it would be unreasonable to assume all females find learning to stand-up surf difficult, this particular example emphasises the value of bodyboarding for not only females, but males who find the initial steps of catching waves difficult. The supposition that bodyboarding is a transition to stand-up surfing is shared by some stand-up male surfers. For example, Mihi recalls an experience when she was bodyboarding at Piha (a world class surf break in New Zealand) and was approached by a male stand-up surfer who said, 'You're pretty good on that thing, when are you going to get a surfboard?' Unbeknown to him she had just won her second World Amateur bodyboarding title. Her reply was, 'I don't want to surf on a surfboard, I love bodyboarding'. The surprised look on his face suggested that he had never thought that anyone would only want to bodyboard.

It is important to note that the majority of females in this project do not consider themselves as highly proficient or 'hard core' bodyboard-

ers, and so their reasons to participate influence the strategies they are willing and able to employ in the surf. Olive et al. (2013) support this concept and state that 'it is the everyday experiences and relationships of surfers in the waves that remain the most powerful in how women understand and experience surfing and surfing culture at an individual level' (p. 15). Chica, who is probably the most committed and proficient of the female participants and who also competes in surf lifesaving, explains what she enjoys about bodyboarding: 'I just kind of like the freeness of it. Like, if you think about other sports they've got all these rules, whereas bodyboarding is more fun. Even when you're competing, it's more fun'. For some of the other less competitive participants they explain, 'I enjoy bodyboarding because you've got more chance to actually enjoy being in the elements' (Sueanne). 'I just like the natural elements. I like the beauty of the beach, and the waves and the sun, and then I just like going down the wave and it's just beautiful. I like the connection to nature' (Ngailia). So for most of the female participants, the feeling of being in nature was a key reason they enjoyed bodyboarding. As such their participation did not revolve around seeking out high-risk situations to demonstrate their skills and commitment and thus gain social status and cultural capital from their peers. For example, Charley shares an experience where she was surfing in a competition: 'So [the surfers would] see a set coming and they'd be like "go, go, go" and I'd be like "nah, it's too big"'. For many of the female participants in this study, the fear of being hurt or injured prevented them from pushing themselves physically and mentally in larger and more powerful waves. Of course, this is not the case for all female bodyboarders, and thus an area that remains to be investigated are experiences of bodyboarding females who enjoy pushing physical and social boundaries through seeking the type of extreme surf sought after by some of their male counterparts.

Brown Surfing Bodies

> I've never felt out of place in water…It's probably because I am Pakeha… and most of the people out there are Pakeha…so I didn't even think about it (Charley, female body boarder).

> I've felt out of place in the water because of my ethnicity many times. Yeah, definitely many times. I think that's why I would drag myself away, get away from the crowd, just find my own little peak and just enjoy it (James).

As a Maori–Samoan bodyboarder, one of the aspects of identity that Mihi was eager to explore in her research was ethnicity and how it affects the participants' experiences in the New Zealand surf field. She was particularly interested in understanding the meanings that Maori and Pacific Island people associated with bodyboarding. Although in a very different context, it is interesting to note that experiences similar to those expressed by her 'brown' participants were shared by the black African-American surfers in the US documentary *Whitewash* (Woods, 2011). In this film, African-American surfers discuss the social struggles it took for them to participate in surfing. Despite being taunted by other African-Americans who believe that surfing is a 'white persons sport', some persevered and participated in the sport because they enjoyed it; others discussed the joy of disrupting such stereotypes (also see Wheaton, 2013). In this film, both white and non-white surfers are asked to comment on race relations in US surfing and beach culture. In her research, however, Mihi privileged the views her Maori and Pacific Island participants have of themselves in terms of their ethnicity (rather than others reading of their participation), as she believed this would assist in providing an important perspective particularly from the non-white bodyboarders experiences. In the following section, the opinions of both male and female 'brown' participants are presented as there were more similarities than differences in their interpretations of ethnicity in the New Zealand surf field. We then conclude with a brief discussion of the experiences of 'brown' female bodyboarders in the surfing field.

The Experiences of 'Brown' Bodyboarders in New Zealand

Since pre-colonialism, the people of Polynesia have used the ocean for diverse purposes. For example, the ocean was used as water ways where the people of the Pacific would voyage from one island to another, as

well as a rich source of food. Various surfing histories have illustrated the significance of early forms of surfing among Hawaiian Polynesians, with some more recent documentaries, such as *Busting Down the Door* (2008), revealing the conflicts that developed between Hawaiian Polynesian surfers and Haole white Americans (as well as Australians and South Africans) who challenged the Hawaiian Polynesian identity in surfing when they came to Hawaii in the 1960s and early 1970s. Despite some academic and popular cultural examinations of the significance of the Hawaiian Polynesian identity in surfing, little consideration has been given to other Polynesian appropriations of surfing. In the remainder of this chapter, we focus on the experiences of Maori and Pacific Island bodyboarders in the context of New Zealand.

It is clear from historical accounts and contemporary issues surrounding water rights for Maori that the ocean and sea has been, and continues to be, viewed as a sacred place in the lives of Polynesian and Maori (Beattie, 1919; Best, 1924; Matsuda, 2012; O'Regan, 1991). In relation to ancient Pacific mythology, O'Regan (1991) explains that 'Tangaroa [the God of the ocean] appears in different forms within the diverse but connected cultures of Polynesia as a figure who cannot be escaped and must always be accommodated' (p. 28). Tangaroa has a very sacred meaning for both Maori and Pacific Island people and it is entrenched into the legends surrounding these cultures (Best, 1924). Some of the earliest recorded accounts of wave riding in New Zealand included stories about Maori men, women and children riding waves using a variety of objects such as, boards (referred to as kopapa), logs, canoes and even bags of kelp during the early 1900s (Beattie, 1919; Best, 1924). Despite such a rich historical relationship with the ocean, Maori and Pacific Islander surfers and bodyboarders remain the minority in New Zealand. Reflecting on over 16 years bodyboarding and surfing in New Zealand and the USA, Jaffa has observed very little ethnic diversity, 'As far as what I've seen, like maybe all European, and male. And as far as female Maori or Pacific Island surfers or bodyboarders, on a regular surf, I'd see zero'. Unfortunately it is beyond the scope of this chapter to offer a detailed examination of the various ideologies associated with Maori and Pacific Islanders in New Zealand that contribute to ongoing social, cultural and economic barriers to participation in the surf. However, it is important to

note that stereotypes relating to Pacific Islanders lack of swimming abilities, and their so-called 'natural' abilities in contact teams sports such as rugby league and touch rugby, continue to influence their choice of sport and leisure activities (Hokowhitu, 2008; Schaaf, 2011).

Some of the participants in this project described their frustrations of such stereotypes and the public response to their participation in bodyboarding. For example, James explains:

> Yeah, it's annoying when they [surf lifesavers] come up and tell you that the surf is dangerous, but they're just doing their job…It just goes to prove my point that there's not many Polynesians out here and the ones that are here, are [encouraged by the lifesavers to swim] between the flags or [they're] getting rescued.

Bolo, on the other hand, is not so forgiving when approached by lifeguards. He shares his experience: '[T]he IRB came out and told me to get out, and I go, "Oh what are you gonna do?" Then the lifeguards circled around, took off, went back to shore, and didn't do anything [laughs]' (revised for clarity). These two approaches highlight ways that Polynesian bodyboarders navigate their way around stereotypes that brown people cannot swim and are 'out of place' in the ocean. Where James accepted the ideology and justified the approaches by the lifeguards, Bolo directly disregarded what he thought were unreasonable and racist requests of the lifeguards and thus maintained his position in the surf.

Brown Capital: Other Ways of Knowing and Valuing Surfing

To date, much of the existing literature and the mainstream perspectives of surfers and bodyboarders focus on forms of capital in the surf field that are viewed through Western perspectives. While the European perspective of capital in the surf relates to physical capital (Ford & Brown, 2006), the form of capital valued in the surf field by Pacific Island and Maori people is cultural capital, or what Mihi refers to as 'brown capital', which relates to a culturally specific understanding of respect, courtesy and fairness (Nemani, 2013).

One of the values that came across strongly from the 'brown' participants in this study is the Maori saying 'Aroha ki te tangata—respect for people' (Smith, 2012, p. 124). In Talanoa, Pasifika research methodology, this value is called 'Faka'apa'apa' which means being respectful, humble and considerate (Vaioleti, 2006). According to Ngailia, respect, humility and considerate behaviour should be prioritised in the surf field;

> I get annoyed with cocky people that come out and think they know everything. You know, people that don't sit back and watch to see how to fit in properly. They come in and just think they know everything and take over. You're just like [makes a face]. 'hello egg'. I think people should just sit back and just observe for a while and see how they can fit in.

Similarly, James advocates the importance of being courteous and fair in the surf field and adds his perspective on Pacific Island behaviours: 'It's such a Pacific Island thing like, a lot of the Pacific people are brought up where you respect everyone and everything is fair'. Continuing, James offers his reading of how Pakeha surfers operate differently in the surf and society more broadly: 'In the white man's world, it's all about being tough and making the most of the day, and proving yourself to everyone' (James). According to James, Bolo and Ngailia, (a mixture of Samoan, Fijiian, Niuea, Tongan, Rarotongan, Maori, Pakeha ethnicities), the 'white' way in the surf is to demonstrate that you are the best, which includes catching all the good waves regardless of anyone else who might be in the surf field or how good one might be at catching waves. Their preferred approach, however, is informed by their cultural habitus and value system, which included taking turns catching waves and being respectful of other wave users. James sums up what he believes would make the surf field more enjoyable when stating, 'Probably the big thing is just respect aye. If everyone respects each other, makes it fair, and doesn't try to take too much then it's a better experience for everyone in the surf'. Hence, respect and the way you treat others awards one more capital in the eyes of Pacific Island and Maori bodyboarders rather than performing radical manoeuvres and having the best physical skills in the surf. The key issue here, however, is that the rules of the surf field in New Zealand mainstream society and the forms of capital that are most valued based on current surf culture literature, continue to be defined

by young, white, male stand-up surfers. While other forms of capital and other value systems exist within surfing, they remain on the margins of the surfing field.

Importantly, the participants in this project also suggested that the cultural demographics and dynamics of a place can strongly influence the power relations in the surf. Arguably, the dominant ethnicity at a surf break can affect the social rules that operate in that space. For example, it is suggested that 'brown capital' is strongly valued at surf breaks where the dominant ethnic group of the local community is Maori and/or Pacific Island, such as Port Waikato that has a large Maori bodyboarding contingent. Comparatively, Piha, which has a large number of New Zealand European surfers, operates through the rules as depicted by white male researchers such as Ford and Brown (2006) and Stranger (2011). Thus, according to the participants in this study, the ethnic groupings at some breaks influence the social space in terms of how the rules of the surf operate. A deeper understanding would be gained through further research into the dominant ethnic groups at various surf breaks and investigations of how the rules in the surf field are influenced by the sociocultural demographics of the surrounding community.

Looking Forward: Brown Female Bodyboarders Experiences of Marginality

It is important to note that Mihi did not originally set out to explore the experiences of brown female bodyboarders. Rather she was interested in how bodyboarders negotiate space in the New Zealand surf field. Yet the female participants in this study of Maori, Pacific Island and mixed ethnicities presented some interesting experiences that reveal how gender and ethnicity intersect in the surf. For example, Sueanne explains, 'I think the Maori and PI [Pacific Island] guys give me support in the water maybe cos I'm a chick, yeah, probably cos I'm a brown chick out [in the lineup] and that's also a bit of a minority as well'. Sueanne is acknowledging that as a 'brown' and female bodyboarder, she represents two minority groups in the surf field. As a result of occupying a position in two minority groups, she therefore feels that this could be the reason the Maori

and Pacific Island men support her in the water. In regard to minorities, Jaffa shares his views and states, 'A brown female bodyboarder…If you're getting realistic about it, if you were wanting to take every minority faction you possibly could, yeah, it's about as far down [the hierarchy] as you can get'. Here, Jaffa is eluding to the intersectional hierarchies in the surf field, taking into account how gender, ethnicity and surf craft influence others readings of, and responses to, particular bodies in the line-up, which in turn can influence how particular participants position themselves within the surf field. From his experiences of being discriminated for riding a bodyboard, Jaffa acknowledges how difficult it must be for individuals who have three minority statuses (such as Sueanne and Mihi) to negotiate space and get respect in the surf field. The situation of occupying more than one minority status also presents an opportunity for further research in the surf field. In contrast to Sueanne and Mihi, both Charley and Ngailia acknowledge that they do not feel stigmatised in the surf field because they are also Pakeha. Ngailia shares how she negotiates space in the line-up;

> Because I look white, I feel I can merge into both worlds. I feel I can just go wherever I please. I do affiliate to the Maori side more, but I don't have the language so I just don't feel like I'm totally there. But because of my skin colour it is easier to do a lot of stuff because you don't get that stigma [of being brown].

Therefore, Ngalia feels that having white skin can sometimes benefit her in some situations, including the surf field. This resonates with Long and Hylton (2002), who state that for white people, 'associations are more positive, less open to question, and to a certain extent, taken for granted' (p. 90). In regard to feeling 'out of place', Ngailia states, 'I think I feel out of place more because I'm a woman than because of my ethnicity [edited for clarity]'. From these comments we can see that Ngailia's experiences differ from Sueanne's, with Ngailia acknowledging that a form of discrimination exists with having brown skin in the surf. Based on her own experiences as a Maori–Samoan woman, Mihi has often felt very 'out of place' in the surf as a brown, female bodyboarder, particularly if the majority of people in the water are white. Therefore, Ngalias' experiences

compared to Mihi's are very different. We acknowledge that individuals may have quite different experiences despite having the same sex and/or ethnicity, and women are going to have very different understandings of femininity and cultural identity. Although the multidimensionality of female bodyboarders identities were not fully developed in this project, we believe these insights reveal some of the complexities of understanding the multiple axes of identity, and thus provide the foundation for valuable research in the future.

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Part IV

Action Sports in Transition: Consumption, Technology, Risk and Desire

12

Technology, Equipment and the Mountain Biker's Taskscape

Kath Bicknell

I walked the track, looking for the smoothest lines through the lumpy terrain. 'Just aim for that rock there', yelled Rosie from below, my friend and fellow competitor. 'If you aim for that, you'll hit the right stuff going in and it will give you the good line out'.

Rosie and I were scoping the second of the more technical sections of this course: Croc's Teeth. This downhill rock garden was part of the UCI Mountain Bike World Cup cross-country race earlier this year.

As I rode, I got the first real understanding of the capabilities of the new bike I was using. It soaked up bumps with more buttery smoothness than I'd experienced before. The brakes provided excellent, graduated control and the levers worked well with the shape of my hands. The feeling of balance was the best bit. I didn't have to force my position, or compensate for the bigness of the bike by exaggerating my movements. I felt like I was exactly where I needed to be.

I launched into the next obstacle, Croc Slide, sight unseen. A longer, steeper, (mostly) smoother chute. I grazed my shorts on the rear tyre, counter balancing

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the angle of the bike on the slope. I realised I didn't need to get that far back after all.

   In that short run I learned enough about the feel and handling of the bike that I confidently attacked each new obstacle from then on.

   (Field notes, Australian Gravity Enduro Series, Round six, Smithfield, Cairns, October 9–12, 2014)[1]

One of the biggest thrills of mountain biking is the satisfaction riders get from mastering technical terrain. Changes in bike-related technology not only allow more choice in the ways different types of terrain are experienced, but in how riders perceive them in relation to ideas about risk, pleasure and a constantly developing 'I can' (see Fig. 12.1).

   The opening text demonstrates the ongoing development of embodied action as a sophisticated process of attunement between equipment, terrain, past experiences, future plans and present particularities. To riders, these observations, reflections and decisions are common sense. This is how mountain bikers learn the limits of a new piece of equipment, take advantage of the performance experiences provided by new technology or refine an approach to a specific section of trail. Yet not all riders are able to translate the perceptions they have while riding in ways that help them to manipulate their equipment; ways that help to elicit their desired, experiential aims, particularly at a novice level. And the cognitive and sport sciences struggle to come up with models for skill acquisition and execution for expert performance that reflects these experiences in their phenomenological thickness (McIlwain & Sutton, 2015; Ravn & Christensen, 2013; Sutton, McIlwain, Christensen, & Geeves, 2011; Uehara, Button, Falcous, & Davids, 2014). The full impact of the per-

Fig. 12.1 The author attempting Croc's Teeth for the first time. The body position is still a little far back, holding on more than pushing through (Photo: Rosemary Barnes)

formance context, with its myriad variabilities is, after all, impossible to test in a lab.

In this chapter, I explore the variable ways technology mediates experiences between body and world, action and perception. I do this by investigating recent technological developments aimed at improving the ride experiences of female mountain bikers. This foregrounds the role technology and equipment can have on the development of confident 'I cans', demonstrating the impact equipment has not just on performance, but on behaviour and embodied perceptions of risk.

Research exploring risk in sport tends to focus on the relationship between behaviour and action from a psychological or subcultural standpoint. These include studies in psychology and sport and exercise science on athletes' attitudes to (or predictors of) injury, or investigations into arousal seeking and 'risk-taking' behaviour (Castanier, Le Scanff, & Woodman, 2010; Deroche, Stephan, Woodman, & Le Scanff, 2012; Woodman et al., 2013), and 'cultures of risk' (Howe, 2004; Nixon, 1992; Safai, 2011). I ask how technology and sports equipment mediates participants' embodied *perception* of risk; how relationships between

bike, body and terrain can produce increased, or decreased, sensations of agency and control.[2] Better understanding the role of technology in mediating embodied action allows for more informed arguments about behaviour and decision-making, particularly in action sports where activities may appear to contain a higher level of risk or sensation-seeking to outsiders than they do to insiders.

This chapter draws on some key concepts from phenomenology and anthropology to allow for an experiential conceptualisation of the relations between equipment, place and skilled action. For phenomenologists, a body is not something I 'have', it is something I 'am' or in Elizabeth Behnke's view, a body is something I 'do' (Behnke's 1997, p. 198). While 'pure' phenomenology is concerned with a very primal experience of the world, lengthy reductions of corporeal experience can produce more sensory and descriptive data than can be articulated in the time it takes people to make sense of these data and experience new or overlapping phenomena. Despite this detail, such breakdowns, or phenomenological reductions, tend to miss the impact of cultural, historical and social happenings on our perceptive processes. Chris Shilling (2005) describes phenomenology in relation to other types of 'body theory', a cluster of paradigms dealing in different ways with the question of what it is to be a body in the world. This offers a broad number of alternative views on, and modes of investigating, the relationship between sociality and embodiment. My intention is to draw upon phenomenological observation for the way it prioritises perception in relation to dynamic action schemas and as an ongoing process of attunement between bodies, places and tools. This allows me to foreground the influence of embodied and perceptive experiences when exploring the ties between risk, place, equipment and perception, rather than viewing these experiences through social, political or cultural frameworks from the outset.

The ensuing discussion will demonstrate the contribution of recent shifts in equipment design to the embodied experiences of advanced female cyclists, women who are new to cycling and the impact this, too, has on behaviour, enjoyment and social experiences on the trails. I argue

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[2] Grant (2014) provides a phenomenological description of risk in performative acts but in relation to time.

that recent changes to equipment design positively influence senses of agency and control in relation to the rocky landscape (see Christensen, Bicknell, McIlwain, & Sutton, 2015; Gallagher, 2012). Further, it enables these terrains to be more confidently perceived as a playful, pleasurable taskscape, a term I borrow from Ingold (2011). Through careful analysis of the impact equipment has on women's participation in site-specific practices I then reflect on social and behavioural experiences within alternate action sport cultures, and the ways we, as human beings, incorporate and manipulate technology in other areas of our lives.

Technology and Embodied Action

The equipment we select for a task can radically impact performance, dexterity, enjoyment and control. As new equipment, materials and insights into technologically mediated performance become available they can impact the experience of sport for participants with increasingly diverse goals, motivations and body types.

Jackson (2013), a phenomenological anthropologist, points to a gaping hole in the literature on technology: that which explores the human experience of technology as opposed to debates on efficacy, value or regulation. If we are to consider technological use in experiential terms, or how it is incorporated, manipulated and perceived by a lived body, we need to consider how it is assimilated into a living subject's 'I can'. An individual's 'I can' is a concept synonymous with phenomenology, one that is central to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (2002) conceptualisation of embodied action. As a self, within my lived body, I have a repertoire of skills 'I can' enact or, with practice, can build toward.

For those mountain bikers who are driven by a desire to build their skills or performance capabilities, they are constantly pushing the reach of their 'I can'. Wayne Christensen et al. (2015) discuss this in relation to an expanding performance envelope. Where the contents of the envelope become particularly interesting is in the ways they relate to a dynamic system of movement, technology, psychology and the context of the performance itself. I might be able to ride that steep rocky descent on a bike with lots of suspension (which absorbs lumps and bumps without jolting

the rider), but I might not have the skills to do this on a rigid bike (with no suspension), or if the terrain immediately following the obstacle is slippery due to rain. Actions are, therefore, context sensitive and we take a number of variables to account in when coordinating their execution. Each action we perform is never entirely old and never entirely new; it is in a constant process of making (Bartlett, 1932; Behnke, 1997; Casey, 1996; Sutton et al., 2011).

Contextual Influences on the Ongoing Development of Skilled Action

Following Judith Butler's (1990) position that through performance of gender we are always in a process of 'becoming' gendered subjects, Edward Casey (1996) argues our bodies are not (ready)made, rather we are in a continual process of making them.[3] In comparison to years spent racing a light and nimble cross-country bike for instance, I perceived the extra suspension and longer wheelbase of the new trail bike I was riding as making it feel 'bigger'.[4] During the 12 months following this field note my upper body redeveloped in response to riding (comparatively heavier) trail bikes more often and through learning the static trapeze. This has allowed me to move, perceive and act into the world in new ways. Consequently, the way I manoeuvre a bike and understand my own bodily characteristics in relation to the very motions of riding have changed too.

Tim Ingold uses the term 'taskscape' to describe the activities people perform on, or in relation to, the landscape. He uses the concept to describe work, as part of an argument relating to an anthropological concept of dwelling. 'Whereas both the landscape and the taskscape presup-

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[3] Considering the impact equipment has on the way we 'do' or perceive our bodies is interesting to consider in relation to Butler's work, especially given the capacity for different tools to facilitate, shape and limit our performance of self, the impact this has on our embodied capacities and dispositions, and the role of marketing agendas and equipment manufacturers in suggesting some equipment suits the doing of gendered bodies better than others. As noted earlier, I have chosen other theoretical frameworks here for the alternate, and complementary, analytical perspectives they provide.

[4] The wheelbase is the distance between the contact points of the two wheels with the ground.

pose the presence of an agent who watches and listens', writes Ingold, 'the taskscape must be populated with beings who are themselves agents, and who reciprocally "act back" in the process of their own dwelling. In other words, the taskscape exists not just as activity but as interactivity' (2011, p. 199). The landscape is something that can be perceived through visual observation, whereas the taskscape, as a concept, reveals itself through movement and sociality. It is something that we understand through action, time and relationships with other people.[5] This is why, when I looked at Croc's Teeth for the first time, in the context of a mountain bike competition, I saw it with a particular type of 'doing' in mind.

Justin Spinney (2006) extends Ingold's work to encompass the mediating role of the bicycle in determining the emplaced subject's relationship to the landscape. He argues technology 'reshapes the affordances of an environment by allowing new possibilities for the body whilst closing down others' (Michael, 2000, p. 112 as cited in Spinney, 2006, p. 715). Technology, in this sense, allows us to perceive the environment in relation to specific ways of moving; ways that would not be possible without these objects as something we act through.

Cultural geographer Paul Barratt (2011) also considers the impact of technology and equipment on bodily capabilities and experiences. He discusses how the climbing assemblage (a human body in conjunction with shoes, chalk, harness and so on) extends the abilities of a body alone. He argues climbers choose their equipment through careful considerations about the degree to which it enhances some skills but not to the extent where sensory feedback becomes too dull, or the element of risk involved in the activity disappears. Shoes provide more grip on the rock, but too much grip reduces the climber's need to enhance stability through technique. '…[T]here are a number of stark paradoxes present in the climbing assemblage', writes Barratt:

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[5] While Ingold uses the term 'taskscape' to 'denote a pattern of dwelling activities' after 'considering how taskscape relates to landscape the distinction between them is ultimately dissolved, and the landscape itself is shown to be fundamentally temporal' (Ingold, 2011, p. 154). I use the term taskscape here to foreground attention to the conceptions of 'doing' in relation to the temporal qualities of particular landscapes, a use of the term Ingold continues to employ as well.

> [T]echnology both enables and disables, it dulls and enhances the senses, it helps provide achievement and it lessens achievement, in practice in en-skills and de-skills–and despite this, notwithstanding innovation, climbers continue to align themselves with technology so that risk remains integral to the experience. (2011, p. 409)

While climbing forms an interesting case study on the ways equipment can mediate experiences of risk and skilled action, it is still possible to perform the task of climbing on some features of the landscape without any equipment at all.[6] Cycling, by comparison, cannot be performed at all without a bike. The word, 'cycling', implies technological intervention as part of the activity, something true of other action sports in this volume such as surfing, snowboarding and skateboarding. Like Barratt, the analysis in this chapter moves beyond considering the mere fact that technology and equipment impacts and enables performance, and examines how this negotiation between body and taskscape can be better understood.

My own experiences as a mountain biker and equipment tester support a method that draws on phenomenological experiences of riding, explored within an autoethnographic framework, in response to the theory outlined earlier. I am interested in what technological innovations mean in terms of subjective experience and how this can be used to generate more nuanced research that grapples with the body–technology–sociality interface. My discussion of these innovations will draw on my experiences of shifts in mountain bike technology from over 15 years in the sport, the last eight of which include working for cycling magazines and websites as an equipment tester. There are obvious limits to my expertise as both a rider and reviewer; however, these dual job roles place me in the useful and unique (as far as mountain biking is concerned) position as a participant–researcher. This constant back-and-forth between theory and practice provides a useful stepping stone for interrogating existing theories of skilled action, and developing new directions for empirical studies. Each mode of enquiry informs, and asks questions of, the other

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[6] Although, in cases such as climbing, running or some martial arts or yoga traditions for example, the use of equipment alters our physiological development. Participants would still carry traces of this mediation even when they operate without equipment.

and enables me to describe expert performance processes with and for an academic readership (McIlwain & Sutton, 2015).

My phenomenological experience of cycling and its associated equipment is through a gendered body, the implications of which are insightfully explored in Dianne Chisholm's (2008) feminist phenomenological analysis of rock climber Lynn Hill. This body enables insights into the differences technological shifts have made on the 'I can' for (some) women in cycling as opposed to all bodies of all types. Obviously body shapes between people who identify as female vary, as do the personalities, proficiencies, motivations and dispositions different people bring with them to the trails. Some seek extra stability or comfort from a bike, others prefer a design that allows for a faster, more aggressive 'ride feel'. For this reason, I begin with some general trends that distinguish a bike aimed at female riders (and, sometimes, shorter men) from the unisex designs and technological trends of the past. This allows space to open out the conversation in the conclusion to reflect on the growing range of equipment for different types of bodies and attitudes.

Bigger Wheels Bring Smaller Riders into the Design Discussion

One of the most hyped developments in mountain bike design over the last ten years is the shift from 26″ wheels to 29″ wheels, or the 'mid-sized' 650B/27.5″ wheels. While mountain bikes have been designed around one wheel size since the 1980s when the sport began, there has been a recent move toward dissecting the pros and cons of bikes built around wheels of a larger circumference. Debate heats up when a new product line is released and when riders want to choose or justify the ideal bike for their riding ambitions. It quickly becomes tiresome as there is no one bike for all trail types and riding *any* bike is more fun than standing around talking about it.

John Hardwick (2012, 2013), one of Australia's most respected technical writers in mountain bike media, explains the pros and cons of the three wheel sizes in relation to facts rather than felt experiences or industry hype. In brief, the larger circumference of a 29″ wheel means a shal-

lower angle of attack when riding over bumps in the trail. This means it takes less momentum and skill to get over bumps such as small rock step ups, logs or tree roots. One of the trade-offs for running bigger wheels is that they are slower to change direction when cornering, leading to a less agile ride feel. Different choices encourage different riding experiences on the same section of terrain.

Trying to build a small-sized bike frame around this larger wheel size posed challenges for bike manufacturers. Most companies offering 29″ wheels initially did so in frame sizes down to a men's (or 'unisex') medium. A woman of average height would typically ride a unisex small-sized frame. If she wanted to experience the different ride feel provided by larger wheels she had to do so on an ill-fitting bike.

Over the past five years, modifications in bike design have been the focus of much innovation in order to better accommodate larger wheels and to make these ride experiences available to a growing number of cyclists. This has seen an increasing number of companies offering designs aimed at, what the cycling industry calls, 'shorter riders' (or short compared to your average Western European male) and more considered designs for women.[7]

Designing Bikes for a Female Market

Just as there is no such thing as a pair of jeans, running shoes or brassiere that fits a generic category of 'women', there is no one bike design that fits every woman. Still, some bike companies have come up with designs that cater for different types of female rider more successfully than others. As far as mountain bikes are concerned, some are aimed at riders who seek stability and comfort, others at women who want a fast and aggressive racing position, and others for women who seek precise and absorbent handling when riding steep, gnarly trails and tackling jumps at speed (Bicknell, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a; Prior, 2014; Smith, 2013, 2014a, 2014b).

Designs aimed at women typically feature a frame geometry and part selection that has more likelihood of fitting many female riders without a

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[7] While this shift would have happened independently of the wheel size debate, the limitations of big wheels for shorter riders has had a notable influence on innovation regarding bike fit for riders of any gender.

series of expensive, after-market customisations. This includes handlebars better suited to the width of women's shoulders at a given height, a lower standover height, a saddle that supports a female anatomy and, depending on the size and intended use of the bike, slightly easier gearing and/or a shorter crank length. These features change the fit and reach to the key contact points: the pedals, the seat and the grips. Suspension tuned to reflect the average weight range of the intended rider further increases handling, pleasure and performance from the first ride.

The fact that women's bikes sometimes fit shorter-than-average men better than unisex bikes, and that many women still prefer unisex bikes (often due to increased range, spec and brand preferences), points to the ambiguity and inconsistency with which the term 'women' or 'women's specific' is used in this community.[8] While debate continues about which wheel size and bike design provides the better ride experience, the end point for consumers is a more visible dialogue about fit and a great deal more choice. I argue this prioritisation on fit, led by brands that have invested heavily in 'women's-specific' designs, means newer unisex designs fit a wider variety of body shapes than they used to, and bike shop staff are better at adjusting the fit of any bike to suit a given rider.

The design features of bikes for different body types and riding styles will undergo constant refinement and innovation. In comparison to bikes of the past, three important transitions stand out. First, the different body shapes and ride experiences of female riders have become foregrounded in the bike industry. Second, a woman can now walk into a bike shop, see images of other females riding bikes and be directed to a selection of bikes designed for riders like her. Third, a female rider can test ride a bike that has more likelihood of fitting her body shape without needing to be aware of a series of customisations that will make a unisex bike fit better. Straight away, the experiences of female riders entering the sport for the first time position them as more welcome and integrated within the cycling subculture than ever before. In regards to shifts in bike design across the board, female riders also have more choice in the ride experience they seek from the array of bikes available.

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[8] For more detailed articles investigating the research and reasoning behind products aimed at women, and why some women prefer unisex designs, see Bicknell (2015b) and Spence and Flickinger (2015).

Viewing these bikes as a collective whole, not just through the size of the wheels or the intended riding style in isolation, I now discuss what these innovations mean in relation to theories of embodied action and technology.

Context Sensitive Reinvention

In the field note at the beginning of this chapter I described the experience of piloting an unfamiliar trail bike down unfamiliar terrain. It was a women's 29″ wheeled bike that I was testing for the website *flowmountainbike.com* (Bicknell, 2014b). My experience riding similar trail features meant I felt riding Croc's Teeth was within my capabilities as a rider. I was not certain about my ability to carry this out without a finer-tuned awareness of this *particular* bike, especially given how quickly designs and technology keep changing. If we view skilled action as something that is in a constant process of making, in this scenario there were a series of contextual factors that had me second-guessing my ability to reinvent the technique at that exact moment, in that specific place.

As I rode, the sensations I received from the trail and the bike allowed me to make a series of confirmations and decisions in regard to this and other obstacles. Mentally, I knew that 29″ wheels would even out the 'feel' of the rocks and I had a fairly good idea of how this would make the bike move having ridden other bikes with 29″ wheels down rock gardens in the past. Riding Croc's Teeth confirmed this; nothing stood out in my awareness that indicated the wheels did not roll the way I expected them to. The ergonomics of the brakes confirmed they were set up well for the length of my fingers and the position of my hands when descending. They provided a nicer, more even feeling stopping power compared to a different brand of brakes I used on the last bike I rode. This confirmed I could rely on them in difficult situations. The 'buttery smoothness' of the suspension confirmed I was getting full travel and could rely on it to absorb the bumps. It did not give a harsh feeling of bottoming out (not enough air pressure in the front and/or rear shocks) or a stiffer sensation (too much air) when I wanted it to depress. Adding to this was the sensation that my centre of gravity, and my weight over the front wheel, felt exactly where they needed to be to provide a feeling of control during

that particular approach to movement. This was due to the frame geometry, handlebar width and the stem length (the piece that attaches the bars to the bike). The extra stability of the bike as a whole made it more forgiving of rider error than I was accustomed to. This is something I would continue to learn about as I took imprecise or risky lines into other obstacles and appeared to ride them beyond my perceived skill level, at least in relation to several other bikes I had used previously. The low standover height of the frame made it easier to put a foot down if I needed to, without the added effort of trying to avoid hitting my groin on the frame. I could manoeuver the bike more easily while on board without feeling like the frame was getting in the way.

In a previous article (Bicknell, 2010), I discussed the different ways a rider's 'I can' develops. I argued this happens not just through practising the small components of a movement and stitching them together for a more fluid execution, but this process can also come through observation, emulation and belief. I used the example of riding down a staircase to demonstrate these ideas: a person cannot half ride the staircase and learn the execution of the movement bit by bit. They control their speed and body position as they enter the obstacle, look toward the exit, and rely on embodied ability and the motion of the bike to fill in the gaps. This example further demonstrates the ways an 'I can' is incorporated through, and attuned to, a sensing of place as well as equipment.

These are things that cannot be tested when the bike is stationary. For the most part, they can only be learned through the sensory feedback provided when the bike is in motion; how it moves (or does not move) along a desired line, how a rider feels on board, how the sensations it elicits line up against expectations for performance. In short, as I rode this obstacle for the first time, the feedback I received from and through the bike over a few rocky metres, confirmed that not only did it function as I expected it to, but it was better. I would not have to compensate for the bike's limits through the ways I approached each obstacle, instead it could compensate for mine.[9]

Choices in line and speed from the outset reflected questions I had about my tools. They reflected different options I could draw on for

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[9] See Bicknell (2014a) for an example of an equipment-testing experience where it was necessary to change a line into a corner due to brakes that were not very powerful.

adjusting movement and line choice during the first attempt at the obstacle. The capabilities of equipment mediated the way I *perceived* the taskscape and gave me new options for manipulating that equipment *in response* to the taskscape. This reduced my subjective assessment of the level of risk this obstacle held compared to the way I perceived riding it on a bike that was less stable, predictable or plush. In terms of embodied action and cognitive control, this scenario reveals an intricate interaction between past experiences, the present moment and future courses of action. Cognitive ideas about relations between equipment, movement and speed were matched to embodied perception and control to facilitate very quick decision-making during a complex action sequence.[10]

A quick glance at Croc Slide, matched to confirmation about this bike's performance and my own embodied understanding of trail types that lie comfortably within my performance envelope, gave me the confidence to try the next section of the course immediately. Again, information sensed through the bike informed the reinvention of my embodied approach to other steep obstacles, constantly adding to my understanding of how this particular piece of equipment responded to very particular trail features. Given I felt this type of terrain was already within my bodily 'I can', riding each section for the first time was more about exploring the contents of my performance envelope in relation to new equipment. As it turned out, the edges of the envelope felt thicker; more cushioned, more room for error.

The reinvention of technique occurs not only in response to equipment, terrain and time, but also through observing and communicating with other people. As Ingold (2011) writes, the taskscape is formed not just through activity, but interactivity. Following Casey (1996), the constant refinement of my mountain bike schema is partly natural, partly cultural, a relationship between what my body can physically do, and how I conceptualise this based on social, rather than purely individual, experiences.

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[10] See Christensen et al. (2015) for a more thorough analysis on this in relation to the senses of agency and control.

Rosie's advice to aim at one particular rock assisted me in the way I approached this initial obstacle. She was right, if I directed the bike toward that rock I would take a smooth line into the long, rocky path before it, and it would set me up for a smooth line out. Watching some of the more advanced riders on the same obstacle allowed me to sight different lines and observe the more relaxed yet aggressive body position that comes with increased confidence, speed and better technique (see Fig. 12.2). Each attempt at Croc's Teeth accommodated additional information about body, bike, performance objectives, terrain.

Fig. 12.2 Ben Randall was one of the next riders to practise this obstacle. He took a more direct line into this section of Croc's Teeth. Seeing his body position, further forward over the front wheel, reminded me to do the same (Photo: Kath Bicknell). (Given the potential for this image to be (over)interpreted within a gendered framework, I want to emphasise here that Randall was one of the next *bodies* I saw ride this section of track. These observations reflect basic information mountain bikers look for in skilled action, not a need to see male experts to model correct technique. Reviewing images from the Cairns World Cup cross-country round (such as Flow, 2014) shows several women riding the tricky Smithfield trails even more aggressively than Randall as he practised this section, as one would expect given additional practice time and the high level at which they compete. The fact that these women raced this track on 'less forgiving' cross-country race bikes, was never far from our minds as we practised it on 'more forgiving' trail bikes.)

Imagine, now, how new bike designs might impact women who are new to mountain biking; women who do not have an embodied history that confirms a particular task lies within their performance envelope. What if they did not need to worry so much about how the bike felt and moved either? Instead of sensations that facilitate or indicate a lack of control, what if more novice riders received a greater number of feedback signals indicating they were riding pretty well?

Becoming Biker

Changes in equipment design not only have implications for how we move, but how we feel. The more this equipment reflects the ways women perceive the taskscape, the more they begin to sense the terrain through the equipment as opposed to fighting its limitations. This increases senses of balance and control, and affirms the movement experience is more in line with the one they are seeking. Michael Jackson writes,

> Rather like the body in Cartesian thought, technologies are sometimes seen as extensions of ourselves–and as such, subject to our will. But at other times they are felt to be alien, invasive forms of non-being that subjugate us, undermining our very notion of who and what we are. (2013, p. 194)

Jackson is interested in times when technology feels like an extension of our own body, and times when it becomes othered. He considers these experiences in relation to ideas about agency. Sometimes we feel agency is located in the person, sometimes somewhere in between the person and the machine. At times when this relationship breaks down, we sometimes see the agency as lying within the object (Jackson, 2013, p. 196). Think of the times when you blame a computer or a shopping trolley for having a mind of its own. In this view, we can consider shifts in bike design, particularly those aimed at women, as seeking to provide a more integrated riding experience 'out of the box', or without the rider needing to modify the bike before her first ride so the equipment has a more instinctual ride feel. This increases the chances of the feeling of agency being located in the person, or somewhere in between the more integrated 'assemblage' of body and bike.

Shaun Gallagher (2012) seeks to understand what philosophers refer to as the *sense* of agency: 'The sense of agency is the experience that I am the one who is causing or generating the action' (p. 18). This brings the experience of agency back into the phenomenological realm. Remember how Barratt (2011) discusses the ways climbers make specific choices in equipment to cultivate a desired embodied experience during the activity—one that carries a preferred level of risk? Advances in women's bike designs aimed at a more recreational market, such as bigger wheels, frame geometries and an ergonomic component package, are adding sensations of stability, confidence and 'roll-over ability'; reducing some sensations of risk, while allowing riders to combat others. The phenomenological experience of riding these bikes reduces the fear of tackling some features of the terrain *for the first time*. Many women entering the sport riding this type of bike are unlikely to notice this with the level of detailed, analytical understanding of a more experienced rider. But that's the point. The more that prohibitive features of this assemblage are absent from conscious awareness, the more the bike itself disappears and the rider focuses on the experiences offered by the taskscape instead. As equipment makes some taskscape specific 'I cans' more achievable, the sense that a rider is in control increases. As they learn more about how to manipulate elements of this control—alter speed with pedalling or brakes, pump the suspension, look to the exit, hold a particular body position—their sense of agency increases.

If there is so much to be gained from these recent shifts in bike design then why do debates around wheel size and bike design remain so contentious in the mountain bike community? As Barratt (2011) notes, some technology can dull the sensations of the body-landscape experience. As Spinney suggests, citing Michael (2000, p. 112), the role of technology enables 'new possibilities for the body whilst closing down on others' (Spinney, 2006, p. 715). Hardwick's comments, in his article 'Wheel Wars', also reflect these views on technology:

> New riders and those with an average skillset can find that the stability and roll-over ability gives them the confidence edge that they've been looking for, and with more confidence you'll always ride above your perceived ability. Some say that 29ers dull your riding skills, but if you gain confidence

you'll attempt harder obstacles and develop into a better rider as a result. A little extra confidence can go a long way. (2012, p. 69)

Fear, low confidence, or a feeling of skillful incapability at a log rollover or moderately technical descent tends to arouse negative feelings in novices (regardless of gender). This changes the social experience of the ride as they have to get off the bike and walk it down an obstacle as more skilled riders disappear down the trail. They lose sight of riders in front of them to emulate as they tackle the trails, meaning they end up riding on their own. This means they end up riding at slower speeds, choosing their own lines and guessing at techniques as they invent their approach to each section of the trail. Maintaining contact with other riders, even for just a fraction of a second longer, helps dramatically during this developmental phase. As my own experience of practising Croc's Teeth demonstrates, the social element of skill development and refinement continues at expert levels.

One of the joys of riding is choosing different bikes, offering different riding experiences throughout the life course. This keeps the riding fresh and reminds us that becoming biker is an ongoing project. In terms of the myriad choices of bike design, and the number of better-understood body types they are designed for, the key thing to emphasise is more riders can choose equipment that suits their own experiential goals. While there are an overwhelming number of people who do not have the financial or social freedom to engage in mountain biking, the increasing amount of choice for racers and recreational mountain bikers is still important to note. It reflects the different desires, ambitions, skill levels, values and body shapes of a growing global diversity of riders.

The Pleasure of Participation

People are constantly manipulating equipment to carry out highly embodied tasks. We regularly adjust our actions in response to new technology or performance scenarios, in context specific ways, without explicitly knowing how we do it. Investigating embodied action through

examples of sports know-how or expertise provides opportunities to discuss body–world relationships in their phenomenological thickness, providing clear insights into the different constituents of the experience itself. These include the relationship between equipment design and bodies in motion, social influences on skill acquisition and execution, the impacts of the performance context on goals, strategies and behaviour, and our senses of agency and control.

Articulating variable elements of the performance process for experts in one skill domain helps us to better conceptualise how similar processes might operate in others. It does not require much imagination to consider alternative technological experiences in similar ways to those discussed here: the ease of use of in-car GPS reduces our need to navigate, remember route directions and estimate travel time. This alters our experience of driving and our attentional capacity before and during the task. Ongoing developments in medical treatments and procedures not only increase the 'I can' of doctors and surgeons but of the patients they treat. The board I might learn to surf on enables me to learn the basics without the nuanced (twitchier) control a more advanced surfer craves of a design that better reflects their desires and skills. As ability increases, people respond in increasingly fine-tuned ways to taskscapes and equipment (and the relationship between them), demonstrating the growing boundaries of unique performance envelopes; actions and thoughts responding to more confident, dexterous 'I cans'.

The case study in this chapter, on recent developments in mountain bike design, demonstrates some of the ways human experiences are mediated by technology. If we seek to better understand what this means, innovation in equipment design can continue to increase the chances of success, enjoyment and participation for a broader number of users. This analysis is not meant to suggest that people did not have enabling experiences using previous generations of equipment. It simply demonstrates that as more variability is offered, or accounted for, the relationship of the 'I cans' of different bodies and dispositions alters too. For the rapidly increasing number of female riders hitting the trails, this is perhaps the biggest win yet.

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13

The Changing Face of Ultimate Frisbee and the Politics of Inclusion

Hamish Crocket

Ultimate Frisbee (Ultimate) is a dynamic, team-based invasion sport played with a flying disc (Griggs, 2009; Robbins, 2004; Thornton, 2004). It is distinguished from more traditional team sports due to its system of player officiated games and its code of fair play, Spirit of the Game. Yet, like other action sports (cf., Rinehart, 2000), there is not so much a consensus amongst Ultimate players as to the key tenets of its culture, as there are a series of debates regarding the meaning and direction of the sport. As an example, players tend to espouse strong support for Spirit of the Game, yet vary significantly in terms of how they understand, define and practise this code (Crocket, 2015b, 2015c; Robbins, 2004; Thornton, 2004).

Recently two developments, predominantly, but not exclusively, located within North America have lead to an intensification of debates about the positioning of women within Ultimate. These developments largely took place from 2010 to 2013 and were dependent on digital

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and social media. The first development was the founding of numerous Ultimate-specific niche media, namely Skyd Magazine (Skyd), Ultiworld, RiseUp and NexGen Network (NGN). The second development was the emergence of two men's semi-professional Ultimate leagues, namely the Major League Ultimate (MLU) and the American Ultimate Disc League (AUDL). In this chapter, then, I will focus on the contestation of gender inequities within Ultimate, using these two developments as a focal point.

Contextualizing Ultimate

Although disc-based games played with early versions of Frisbees had existed for a number of years, the development of Ultimate as a distinct, codified sport occurred in 1968 in the midst of the counterculture (Leonardo & Zagoria, 2005). Ultimate retains links to its countercultural origins through its code of fair play, Spirit of the Game and its system of self-officiation.[1] Although Ultimate is distinctive insofar as its rule set has been written and refined with self-refereeing in mind and that even highly competitive games are self-refereed, many similarities exist between Ultimate and informal, self-officiated versions of other invasion games (cf., Jimerson, 1996).

Ultimate offers committed participants a distinctive lifestyle, largely predicted on weekend-long social and competitive tournaments featuring multiple games of Ultimate, a range of clothing for both on-field and off-field performances consisting of 'a mèlange of whimsical, ironic, and athletic styles' (Crocket, 2015a, p. 184, see also Crocket, 2016), shared meals, accommodation and travel, a distinctive sense of humour and irony (Crocket, 2015c), and themed tournament parties featuring high levels of determined drunkenness (Crocket, 2014).

Much of my research on Ultimate has focused on possibilities for both male and female players to actively develop ethical athletic subjectivities

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[1] However, there are two semi-professional leagues that have set their own rules and use referees. Many elite tournaments in North America use observers, officials who resolve disputes between players and make a small number of active calls.

through both ascetic (Crocket, 2015a, 2015b) and hedonistic practices of self (Crocket, 2014, 2015c), which contrast with many problematic discourses associated with achievement sport. Yet, despite the prevalence of these forms of ethical self-cultivation within Ultimate, I have found that gender and gender relations often play out in problematic ways (Crocket, 2013; Pringle & Crocket, 2013). In this chapter, then, I extend my analysis of gender within Ultimate.

Methodologically, this chapter is primarily based on textual analysis of digital Ultimate media which I have been archiving since 2008. My textual analysis has been supplemented with fieldwork and interview data which I undertook from 2008 to 2012. Writing this chapter as a profeminist male scholar, I have sought to prioritize the voices of those who I am studying, that is, the voices of female and male Ultimate players raising gender equity issues within digital media. Subsequently, I have refrained from imposing an extensive theoretical analysis on this text. My choice to do so was informed by the eloquence, coherence and complexity of voices that was readily apparent as I reviewed my primary sources. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that in choosing sources, selecting quotes and ordering topics I am imposing my own proclivities and readings upon this debate.

Gender in Ultimate

Ultimate is played within three gendered divisions, open, women's and mixed. Open has no formal gender restrictions on who may take the field. At the elite level, it functions as a men's grade, with a small number of women participating below the elite level. Women's grade is restricted to women-only and mixed grade specifies a gender split which both teams must field each point, usually this is played as four men and three women. Informal games of Ultimate, or pick-up, tend to vary between open and mixed format.

Mixed Ultimate is the dominant form of social Ultimate and is also played competitively through to national and world championship level. Yet, a number of trends are evident. Firstly, most elite players, both male and female, prefer playing gender-segregated Ultimate. Nevertheless,

as most elite players also play some social Ultimate, almost all players participate in mixed Ultimate. Secondly, as Thornton (2004) described, it is common for social players of mixed Ultimate to interpret their play as gender inclusive. Yet, the presence of both men and women on the field does not mean there is gender equity in terms of involvement in the game. As Thornton observed, men typically dominate the key playing positions on field and 'look off' open passes to women on their team, opting instead for marginal passes to other men regardless of ability or success rate. Marking, particularly at a social level, is typically player-to-player marking, with marks almost always assigned by gender rather than athleticism. Below the elite level, men regularly cut into space that female team mates are better positioned to attack and position themselves in ways that limit women's throws to less than ten metres.

Competitive Ultimate also suffers similar problems, particularly in relation to on-field roles being defined primarily by gender. Yet, because competitive teams are more organized, marginalization of women is less often due to a lack of field awareness, or raw ignorance, than a matter of inequitable strategy which, wittingly or unwittingly, marginalizes women. Reflecting on these problems in the context of my own participation, I realized many competitive male players implement the same strategies playing on mixed teams as they do on open teams. Such strategies typically emphasize the players who are the tallest and fastest and with the longest throws (cf., Crocket, 2013). On most mixed teams, this style of play reduces opportunities for women to play an active role. Working with Richard Pringle, I have analysed my engagement with this problem and my strategic responses as a player/coach of a mixed Ultimate team (Pringle & Crocket, 2013). In this chapter, however, I focus on the use of digital media as a site of debate over gender and equity within Ultimate.

Gender and Digital Media

According to Wilson (2008), early studies focusing on the growth of digital media such as bulletin boards and blogs, 'glamorised, the impact and potential of the Internet on society' (p. 139). Relatedly, Hardin (2011) observed that although early feminist scholarship shared such optimism,

this has more recently been tempered by recognition that 'sites such as *Deadspin* and *the Big Lead*, where sexist discourse is run-of-the-mill fare, dominate the sports blogosphere' (p. 40). Within action sport digital media, 'women and non-White men are pushed to the peripheries as playful White masculinities are recurrently represented in mediated spaces' (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2013, p. 182).

Nevertheless, Hardin (2011) suggested transformative possibilities exist within online media as it offers an unmatched platform for niche producers such as bloggers to develop empowering accounts of female athletes and fans which are marginalized, within mainstream media. A key example of this is MacKay and Dallaire's (2013a, 2013b, 2014) extensive scholarship on the Skirtboarders, an all-female Canadian skateboard crew who blog about their skating. Mackay and Dallaire (2014) argued, 'the Skirtboarders generally resist the dominant discursive constructions of sportswomen circulating in mainstream and alternative media (re)presentations through their different (and potentially "polygendered" [or gender neutral]) self-(re)presentations' (p. 549).

An important aspect of the transformative potential of digital media is that it offers unparalleled opportunities for subcultural groups to communicate on a transnational scale. Wilson (2008), for example, argued:

> Perhaps the most extraordinary impact of the Internet medium in this context—an impact that fundamentally alters how we think about subcultural life—is that it offers new possibilities for subcultural groups to communicate and connect on a global level. (p. 141)

Indeed, a growing number of scholars have identified transnational action sport subcultures making extensive use of digital media (e.g., Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2013; Olive, 2015; Thorpe, 2014; Thorpe & Ahmad, 2013). As Thorpe (2014) observed although, 'action sport participants have always been actively involved in the consumption *and* production of niche and micro media' (p. 69, emphasis in original), interactive digital technologies 'have opened new channels for communication beyond the local' (p. 70). Gilchrist and Wheaton (2013), for example, noted in their study of UK-based Parkour practitioners, 'it soon became apparent

that digital media were an important means of communication, connecting participants translocally and transnationally (for some)' (p. 174). Relatedly, Thorpe and Ahmad (2013) highlighted the role of digital media in young Palestinian men discovering parkour, connecting to a global parkour community and then engaging in forms of political activism through these global connections.

Whereas early studies of the Internet tended to isolate life online, Wilson (2008) argued that more nuanced accounts should consider '*relationships between online and offline cultural life*' (p. 140, emphasis in original). Indeed, this has been a notable feature of the studies I reviewed earlier. Such considerations lend weight to the transformative possibilities of niche digital media by asking scholars to consider how online activism might link to offline experiences. For marginal and emerging sports such as Ultimate, online communities might achieve a critical mass for awareness and activism that is hard to achieve solely in offline life.

Ultimate and Digital Media

Ultimate has only a marginal presence within mainstream media. What is notable, however, is Ultimate's increasing use of new digital media technologies. Through the early to mid-2000s, there were a few scattered blogs (e.g., Parinella's blog, ultimatejournal) and email listserves (e.g., britdisc and eurodisc), along with a Google group, rec.sport.disc, which was rendered unusable by spam and trolls. Two digital video producers, Pushpass Productions and Ultivillage, filmed DVDs of select tournaments in the UK and USA, respectively. Reviewing my archives of these sources, the quality of this content is poor. Nevertheless, much like niche media in other action sports (cf., Thorpe, 2014), many of these DVDs were widely circulated and gained cult status amongst sections of the global Ultimate playing community. The NGN, launched in 2011, revolutionized the filming of games by introducing elevated camera angles, HD technology, expert commentators and livestreaming.

Two niche online magazines have been launched, Skyd in 2010 and Ultiworld in 2012. Skyd aims to be a lifestyle magazine, reflective of

the 'spirited', inclusive and progressive values which many players associate with Ultimate. Ultiworld focuses more on reporting on tournaments and is openly in favour of the 'mainstreaming' of Ultimate. Also in 2012, RiseUp, an Ultimate coaching business offering a combination of digital and face-to-face coaching was launched. When I began studying Ultimate in 2008, careful searching might have revealed one or two blogposts in a good week. Over the past year or two, multiple daily posts have become normal.

Two semi-professional men's leagues were also set up in the early 2010s. The AUDL began in 2012 (Earley, 2012) and the MLU started in 2013 ('About MLU—Major League Ultimate', n.d.). Both the MLU and the AUDL have combined local nondigital marketing with a pronounced online presence, offering livestreams of many games, postmatch analysis and fantasy leagues.[2] In 2013, the United States of America Ultimate Association (USAUA), the national organizing body for Ultimate in the USA, signed a deal with ESPN-3, the digital-only channel of the biggest sports broadcaster in the world (USAUA Board of Directors, 2013). This deal broadcasts a number of elite club and college tournaments across all three divisions.

These developments, individually and collectively, have heightened a number of tensions which were already being debated amongst Ultimate players. In particular, Skyd and Ultiworld have played a prominent role in reporting issues, writing editorials and, crucially, through allowing readers to post comments at the end of columns. Three key tensions have remained ever-present in relation to these developments, namely the role of Spirit of the Game and its relationship to observers and referees, the desirability and sustainability of Ultimate being played professionally, and gender equity within Ultimate. In this chapter, I will focus on the third tension, although as I will demonstrate, these tensions overlap considerably.

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[2] Currently, there is no relationship between the USAUA and the professional leagues, primarily due to the USAUA's concerns at the leagues' use of referees and lack of gender equity (USAUA Board of Directors, 2014).

Women, Ultimate and Digital Media: Making Up the Numbers?

The pattern of on-field marginalization which I described earlier has long been something of an open secret within Ultimate, widely acknowledged by women, less often acknowledged by men, but only rarely a topic of ongoing discussion. In recent years, however, the growth of digital media focused on Ultimate has provided a platform for this—and other forms of marginalization—to be publically debated.

Ziv (2011, para. 1) summarized the problem, 'it's often said (joked?) that Mixed Club is like 4 on 4 with obstacles'. This phrasing has similarities to how female adventure racers have been labelled as 'mandatory equipment' (Kay & Laberge, 2004). Such phrases imply that on a mixed gender team it is the men who possess the most valued attributes for team success. Jim Parinella, widely renowned as the best male player of his generation, suggested the issue is a question of strategy rather than equity (Parinella, 2005). Noting that a lot of competitive mixed teams tended to predominantly throw to their men, he posed the question as to whether this was a more effective strategy than designing plays which focus on the women in the team. Drawing on notable teams of the day, he labelled these strategies Hang Time and Red Fish Blue Fish, respectively.

While Parinella (2005) showed a degree of male privilege in defining the marginalization of women in purely strategic or instrumental terms, critics of the Hang Time strategy also typically relied on instrumental arguments for replacing Hang Time with Red Fish Blue Fish as a playing strategy. Ziv, for example, argued:

> Teams that integrate their women, utilize each player for his or her individual talents as opposed to considering the player's gender, and let their girls take over when appropriate due to mismatches will be successful. (2011, para. 2)

In this respect, Ziv's argument matches one of the strategies discussed by Pringle and Crocket (2013), namely emphasizing individual matchups,

rather than automatically running plays through the fastest or tallest players on a team. However, Parinella (2005) posing the problem solely in terms of strategy and Ziv (2011) posing the solution in relation to strategy arguably miss the complexity of the issue. Should playing strategies on mixed gender teams be defined in instrumental terms? The weakness of this approach is that it accepts that teams should adopt whatever strategy will increase their chances of success regardless of inequities that this might cause.

In contrast, Wiley (2014) argued that the point of playing mixed Ultimate is not simply to win, but rather to be inclusive of all team members. He stated, 'If you don't want to throw to women, play for a men's team. If you want to play mixed, then *play mixed*. And if you play pickup, throw to open people' (Wiley, 2014, para. 12, emphasis in original). Whereas Ziv (2011) and Parinella (2005) were focused on competitive Ultimate in particular, Wiley's concern with gender inequities crosses all levels of the game. As Stevia (2013) suggested, the problem Wiley describes is widespread, 'when it comes to playing in coed pickup or rec league, I've always had one big problem that's never changed—the challenge as a woman to be accepted as athlete [sic] by men whenever I play on a new team' (para. 1). The question that Stevia and Wiley so aptly raise is, what is the point of playing a mixed gender sport if a team's strategy, or an individual player's preference deliberately or accidentally excludes one gender from the game?

It is significant to note the increase in the number of posts regarding gender discrimination in Ultimate and the increasing number of comments being made under such posts. Whereas Parinella's (2005) blog appears to have only been commented on by a few players who knew him personally and Ziv's (2011) post in Skyd received nine comments arguing for and against her article, Wiley's (2014) appeal was posted on his blog, reddit and Skyd receiving 66, 164 and 136 responses, respectively. Articles on Skyd and Ultiworld regularly register thousands of page views and readers' comments reveal an international audience. Moreover, posts such as Stevia's (2013) and comments posted by readers clearly describe on-field experiences of gender inequities, highlighting the articulation between online and on-field cultural practices (cf., Wilson, 2008). It

is clear that issues such as gender discrimination in Ultimate are being made more visible through use of digital media.

Who Is Seen Playing Ultimate? Pro Leagues and Visibility

The recent development of the semi-professional leagues, the AUDL and the MLU, has added a new dimension to gender equity debates in Ultimate. These leagues are made up of exclusively male players. Digital media articles, op-eds and comments from readers all indicate that the advent of these leagues has been controversial within Ultimate playing communities (e.g., Rosen, 2013; Van Heuvelen, 2013). Van Heuvelen, for example, argued that professional Ultimate had revealed 'a poverty of imagination' (para. 17) by adopting a number of changes which appeal to the lowest common denominator. Instead, Van Heuvelen asked, 'what if, instead of changing Ultimate in order to sell it to the world, we use our sport to change the way the world thinks about competition' (para. 23)?

Yet, Van Heuvelen's (2013) passionately worded address drew responses from players who, while supportive, felt his message was incomplete. Commenting under Van Heuvelen, Gwen Ambler, suggested, 'I would add to his arguments that another crucial aspect to the community and respect that Ultimate currently has developed is the emphasis on gender equity in the sport. No, it's not perfect, but women's Ultimate has been supported and valued in ways that many other sports have not'. Ambler's critique, then, was of the exclusionary nature of men-only semi-professional leagues. Samir offered a more strongly worded response:

> I was 100 % with you and nodding my head the whole way until I read 'We have the balls to be ourselves'. Way to completely cut out non-male identifying players from the conversation and consequently [the] wonderfully inclusive and loving nature of Ultimate. (Comment posted under Van Heuvelen, 2013)

Semi-professional men's Ultimate, then, has heightened debates amongst Ultimate players about the importance of gender equity within the sport.

Writing about the potential risks of men-only semi-professional leagues, Kanemori (2013), explained, 'my fear is that if either league becomes popular in the ways that they are intended to, women's frisbee [sic] will become a footnote in the Ultimate community, relegated to the shabby fields and without any substantial coverage' (para. 13). More scathingly, Salvia (2013) critiqued the decision of one MLU franchise, the Philadelphia Spinners, deploying an all-female cheerleading squad, the Flygirls. She argued the use of the Flygirls, 'demeans women in general, and it demeans this sport—our sport—by sending a clear message that there is no room for women in Ultimate except as scantily-clad sideline dancers' (Salvia, 2013, para. 3). Thus, the nexus of semi-professional Ultimate, and niche digital media reveals multiple gender inequities.

Conservative, Hypermasculine Responses

While digital media has also been the focus for a considerable—conservative, hypermasculine—backlash against those players who have raised issues of gender equity. Commenting on this backlash, Tiina Booth (2014) explained, 'people with power do not willingly give it up to the group that they consider The Other and it is naïve to think that Ultimate is any different' (para. 17). Indeed, these conservative responses highlight Gilchrist and Wheaton's (2013) observation, 'many of the power inequalities chronicled in the traditional sports media are also reproduced in digital media settings' (p. 182).

Conservative responses took two approaches. Firstly, commenters, such as Bob, made arguments that selection was simply meritocratic:

> The MLU and AUDL are not 'Men's' leagues. They are 'Best 25 players we can put on a roster' leagues. No women are barred from joining. No women are the best 25 players they can put on the roster [sic]. (Comment posted under Kanemori, 2013)

The meritocratic response relies on biological essentialism, or sexual dimorphism; the notion that men are biologically more athletic than

women. For example, Some Guy commented on a report (Eisenhood, 2013) of an elite woman player, Emily Baecher, trialling for the Boston-based MLU team, 'everything else being equal, a woman's body just isn't built to have the same strength or speed as a man's'.

The second conservative response argued that the market demand was for male-only professional sports and that the privately owned, semi-professional leagues were entitled to respond to this market demand. As an example, Guest posted a comment in response to Kanemori (2013), arguing:

> The guys who went out, sold a product and found investors to launch pro leagues didn't sit around and wait for a conversation. The players who started going to tryouts in January didn't have a conversation. They went out and made it happen with REAL money that other people gave them.

An extension of this argument was the suggestion that those advocating women's or mixed semi-professional league should either fund this league themselves or stop complaining. Collectively, these two strategies have been used hundreds of times as conservative responses to articles and op-eds on gender equity on Skyd and Ultiworld.

Rebutting Hypermasculinity

Rebuttals of these conservative arguments have differed substantially. Markenson (2014) critiqued the economic rationale for men's only leagues. Drawing on research from Cooky, Messner, and Hextrum (2013) and the Tucker Centre for Research on Girls and Women in Sport, she argued that preferences for viewing male sports are socially constructed with significant scope for change. In other words, an unsatisfactory status quo is not sufficient justification for ongoing gender inequities.

Biological essentialism has rarely been challenged by commenters on digital media. Instead, two alternative approaches have been taken to challenge the use of sexual dimorphism to justify gender inequities within Ultimate, and, more specifically, professional Ultimate being men-only.

The first approach, most strongly advocated for by Kyle Weisbrod (e.g., comments posted under Baecher, 2014; Markenson, 2014), who has been heavily involved as a player, director and coach, is that mixed gender professional Ultimate would be more compelling and in-line with the values of the Ultimate community. In its current form, Weisbrod argues, semi-professional teams are unable to field elite male players in every position. Subsequently, by shifting to a mixed format, the sub-elite men could be replaced by elite-level women, with each team running lines of four men and three women. Weisbrod argues that replacing 'no-name' male role fillers with the most storied female athletes in the game would be a more compelling spectacle. Simply put, this argument rejects the notion that sexual dimorphism necessarily implies that a men-only league is the best showcase for Ultimate. This argument in favour of mixed semi-professional Ultimate, then, has parallels to the understanding held by adventure race competitors that mixed gender teams were favoured by organizers due to the belief that this would make more compelling viewing (Kay & Laberge, 2004).

The second approach to challenging the use of sexual dimorphism to justify gender inequities within Ultimate redeploys biological essentialism as a reason why comparisons between men's and women's sport are harmful. Baecher (2014), responding to comments comparing men's and women's athletic abilities within previous articles, argues:

> Women's sports are an entity in their own right…I don't believe the future of women's sports should rely on direct comparisons between female and male athletes…I hope that we can elevate the level of coverage and respect for women's Ultimate so that young women can dream of being the greatest in the women's game and be held in the same regard as the best in the men's.

Similar arguments have been made by a number of others, including Skyd columnists Jen Pashley (2014a, 2014b) and Bryan Jones (see Eisenhood, 2014a), Ultiworld columnist Keith Raynor (2014), Markenson (2014), and former and current elite women's players Judy Jarvis (2014), Gwen Ambler (comments posted under Baecher, 2014), and Akina Younge (comments posted under Baecher, 2014). It is significant that a num-

ber of those critiquing gender inequities are prominent members within the North American Ultimate community, who have clearly identified themselves in their posts and comments. By making themselves identifiable, these participants made themselves visible and so personally subject to the conservative, hypermasculine response.

In contrast, those involved in the conservative, hypermasculine response have tended to remain anonymous, posting as guests or using handles that do not clearly identify them. Such tactics mimic wider patterns of online misogyny, or trolling, in which masculine aggressors remain anonymous. This debate, as it has played out through niche digital media, has involved both women and men writing articles and comments advocating for greater recognition of gender inequities within Ultimate with a hypermasculine (presumably male) response being made through anonymous comments. The role of both women and men advocating that gender inequities be addressed is indicative of the broader values of fairness and inclusivity which many Ultimate players espouse in relation to Spirit of the Game. Concomitantly, the hypermasculine response indicates that these values are not uniformly held by all players.

Alongside these debates, in 2014 the USAUA launched a task force, Girls Ultimate Movement (GUM), whose role was to develop policies and programmes to lift girls participation in Ultimate (Eisenhood, 2014b). GUM is leveraging existing social media (e.g., Caldwell, 2014; Childers, 2014) and developing its own website in addition to targeted offline activities. The development of a GUM website is a significant move. Although GUM is also utilizing Skyd and Ultiworld, this offers the potential to create a safer space for young female Ultimate players than currently exists within digital niche media. In this regard, although both Skyd and Ultiworld have played an important role in the raising awareness of gender inequities within Ultimate, the conservative, hypermasculine response of many comments posted on these sites limits the transformative potential of these sites. Emily Baecher, posting under her nickname, Ebae, responded to one of these comments:

> Words cannot express how disappointing it is that this sort of comment still appears on message boards when we talk about women in sports, Ultimate included. People like you and posts like this are what make online

Ultimate forums and sports as a whole unwelcoming environments for women. I would like nothing more than to ignore your ignorant comment, but I feel a responsibility to speak up for the young, female Ultimate players who might unfortunately stumble upon your words and feel discouraged in their efforts to better their game. (Comment posted under Eisenhood, 2013)

The establishment of a GUM website, then, might afford a transformative space, where empowering accounts of young female Ultimate players can be developed, free from conservative, hypermasculine responses.

Conclusion

In this chapter, following a number of scholars who have recognized the increasing role of digital media in actions sports (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2013; MacKay & Dallaire, 2013a, 2013b, 2014; Olive, 2015; Thorpe, 2014; Thorpe & Ahmad, 2013), I have examined intersections between digital media, emergent semi-professional leagues and debates over gender inequities within Ultimate. While gender inequities at all levels of the sport have been apparent within Ultimate for many years, the growth of niche media has provided a platform for these to be given a voice and debated. Moreover, the advent of men-only semi-professional leagues has provided further fuel for this debate.

As Hardin (2011) has argued, digital media has the potential to provide space for feminist analysis of sport. This can be seen in the decision of both Skyd and Ultiworld to dedicate articles and op-eds to gender issues, particularly during 2013 and 2014. This must be tempered with recognition that commenters, usually posting anonymously, have provided a hypermasculine response to the raising of gender issues, making these sites challenging spaces for many women players. As Gilchrist and Wheaton (2013) and Thorpe (2014) have argued, digital media is not an inherently liberatory development within action sports. Nevertheless, the prominence these debates have gained might offer benefits, namely evidence for female Ultimate players that they are not alone in being marginalized by male team mates, dissemination of ideas for productively

challenging such marginalization, and the increasing implausibility of male players being able to claim ignorance of how their actions marginalize their female team mates.

As Wilson (2008) has noted, the Internet has facilitated the globalization of cultures such as Ultimate. While the niche media and semi-professional leagues I have focused on in this chapter are North American, the gender inequities which have been debated have resonated with readers across the world, and certainly resonate with my own experiences of playing Ultimate in Europe and Australasia.

This chapter has only just begun to scratch the surface of issues relating to women in Ultimate. Future research might focus on women's experiences of playing women-only Ultimate and both men's and women's experiences of adopting strategies for greater gender equity in mixed Ultimate.

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14

Girl Power Figures, Mythic Amazons, and Neoliberal Risk Performers: Discursively Situating Women Who Participate in Mixed Martial Arts

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The world's largest mixed martial arts (MMA) promotion, the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) broadcasts to 145 countries, attracting over 800-million households to spectacles in which combatants draw on skills that range from sumo wrestling to kick boxing (Fightnews, 2014). Despite his January 2011 claim that women would "never" fight in the UFC (TMZ, 2011), in November 2012, UFC President Dana White signed to the ranks the first member of what was to become a women's division. She was Ronda "Rowdy" Rousey, a 2008 Olympic bronze medallist in judo, who had previous MMA experience in the Strikeforce Company.

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Rousey's inclusion in the UFC has resonated not only with viewers, but also in the academy, where feminist researchers (Fuller, 2006; Messner, 2007; Messner & Sabo, 1990) have been asking what it means to women to enter into sports that have often defined desirable enactments of masculinity. We propose something of a shift in gaze, informed by the Butlerian conception of performativity (Butler, 1993). That is, we understand that acts such as women's MMA bouts—perhaps especially because they are mass-mediated and orchestrated spectacles—are neither performed nor given meaning by lone individuals. Rather, they are encoded and constrained by the cultural relations of power that both enable and regulate individuals' capacity for action and their self-perceptions.

Our method is to look to the meanings conveyed in media about MMA, including advertisements, newspaper articles, and sports website articles, as well as in the spirited comments posted by readers of such articles. In so doing, we concentrated our attention on the pair of women being positioned in 2014 as opponents in a potential UFC title bout that generated considerable attention among media and fans. The two are Rousey, the women's division's bantamweight titleholder, and Gina Carano, the Muay Thai fighter-turned-Hollywood action star being touted as a contender. We chose to focus on these women because their potential bout seemed to be generating the biggest debate ongoing about women in the UFC at the time we were writing. Although we initially observed that the trash-talking Rousey and the more elegant Carano appeared to perform femininity in vastly different, and potentially class-linked ways, our emphasis here is on the surprising unity of the discourses by which their and other women's inclusion in MMA is understood and given meaning.

Our analysis aims to bring to light the three discourses that we discerned: (1) a celebratory late twentieth and early twenty-first century Girl Power discourse, (2) a longer-standing discourse in which the Amazons of Greek myth are the forebears of women in MMA, and (3) a discourse in which the UFC and other MMA companies' practices, and women's participation in them, are understood as neoliberal risk performances (Beck, 1992). Our aim is not to quantify these discourses, so much as to delineate their presence, to use them to explore some of the politically distinctive ways in which we can understand contemporary gender relations of power, and specifically to inquire into some of the political possibilities that flow from these readings.

MMA Women as Figures of Girl Power

The traditional masculine ideal has been well established to be heterosexual, tough, powerful, dominant, competitive, aggressive, violent, and a taker of risks (Kimmel, 1999). Through rituals of gender performance (Butler, 1993), sporting culture aligns men in a collective endorsement of these ideals (Kimmel, 1994; Lipsyte, 2004; Young and White, 2000). MMA is unusual for embracing this ideal so completely. Its introduction into the USA in 1993 was met with loud resistance from legislators and medical professionals who took issue with the lack of rules and time limits on matches—a point we will return to later in the chapter.

The recent inclusion of women into this "extreme"[1] sport thus begs certain sociological questions. Among them is how the popular construction of women, including women athletes, as passive, weak, incompetent, sexualized, and fearful (Butler, 1993; Connell, 1987; Kimmel, 1994; Olstead, 2011; Weaving, 2014) is understood in relation to their involvement in this kind of sport. In fact, a growing number of women participate in combat sports, and in doing so, are challenging traditional assumptions about women's physical and emotional capabilities, as well as their relationship to violence. Research has documented, for instance, how women's membership in boxing (Hargreaves, 1997), martial arts (Guthrie, 1995), mixed-Judo training (Guérandel & Mennesson, 2007), roller derby (Giesler, 2012), and the UFC (Velija, Mierzwinski, & Fortune, 2012) has the potential to subvert patriarchal norms. For instance, Lökman (2011) claims that Aikido participation permits women to reclaim their corporality and have the potential to empower women who are appropriating male symbols of physical capital.

One possible explanation for the new popular cultural image of women as warriors is that it has resulted from an affirmative discourse of "Girl

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[1] Throughout the sport literature, various terms have been used such as alternative sports (Laviolette, 2007), edgework (Lyng, 2005), and extreme sports (Rinehart & Sydnor, 2003). Some resist using 'extreme' as a way to describe a sport, as they see the term as a ploy by popular media and industry to advance a feeling of excitement in fans, ultimately to be resolved through consuming. We have decided to employ the term 'extreme' as it is arguably the most recognizable to people less familiar with the culture of the sport. We also consider 'extreme' an appropriate label for MMA simply due to way it uniquely endorses violence, but also how for many participants of MMA, this culture of violence is a "way of life" (Spencer, 2012, p. 8).

Power" that emerged in the 1990s and early 2000s (Early & Kennedy, 2003). Music personalities such as the Spice Girls were challenging familiar representations of femininity by affirming female agency, determination, public visibility and physicality (Hopkins, 2002). Depictions of Girl Power flourished in popular films from *Girlfight* (2000), *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002), *Whale Rider* (2002), and *Million Dollar Baby* (2004) and in television programmes such as *Xena: Warrior Princess* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. As Buffy herself put it, "Great thing about being the Slayer: kicking ass is comfort food" (Buffy, 1999, cited in Pender 2004, p. 164). Thus, one interpretation of women's MMA is that it flouts the norms of masculinity in celebrating the combatants' power.

However genuinely this may reflect how individual combatants experience their subjectivities, when we turn to MMA practices, their popular representations, and their reception, the fanfares about Girl Power quickly strike what, for feminists, are sour notes. First, though women are newly participating in the UFC as combatants, they have long been present in the role of "ring girls", scantily clad cheerleaders who hold up large placards announcing the rounds of a fight. Ring girls are readily denigrated: for example, one was dubbed "IQ Card Girl" for managing to count up to five rounds, and mocked by a male fighter for imagining that walking around the ring while wearing a bikini constituted talent (St. Martin, 2014). When Ronda Rousey was characterized in one MMA fan site article as the UFC's new "leading lady", her predecessor being a ring girl (St. Martin, 2014), the message was that although Rousey's prowess might signal expanded opportunities for women to express physicality and toughness, these do not meaningfully threaten the UFC's prevailing gender order.

The masculinity ensconced in the UFC requires that women and girls be beautiful and stupid, and ready to be mocked. A Girl Power figure accordingly becomes a contradiction in terms. This is illustrated by how Rousey has disparaged other female UFC combatants in gender-specific ways, for instance, by claiming that a combatant whose nickname is "Cupcake" is "too girly" (Hess, 2014). It is also evident in this statement, drawn from a female blogger's analysis of Rousey's course to her championship:

> Ronda embodies a particular brand of feminism by not actualizing the ingratiating and conciliatory woman idealized in our culture. She isn't following the recommendations of Emily Post or the storyline of a heroine in a chick flick. Instead, she follows the narrative of the bad-boy athlete. (Jennings, 2013)

In these three sentences, we see that Rousey slides from being characterized as feminist to becoming a "bad-boy athlete"; her Girl Power, in this understanding, being stripped of whatever might constitute its "Girl" component. Though Jennings acknowledges Rousey's individual transgression into the male-dominated sphere of MMA, she also trivializes the feminine, and so constitutes Rousey's accomplishment as an exception, not a norm (Owen, Vande Berg, & Stein, 2007, p. 193; note that, along the way, the female audiences for "chick flick" movies are also derided.) Even as Jennings appears to praise feminism, she appears to privilege a script about how to perform "boy" as inherently better than any script that could be written for performing "girl".

Conundrums—or cultural traps—involving how to perform masculinity and femininity have, of course, been observed elsewhere. Paechter (2006), for instance, has found that performances by women that are "masculine"—with butch being one example—are problematically constructed in opposition to the feminine. Hirose and Pih's (2010) study of men's MMA demonstrates, alongside masculine ideals are contradictory gendered and racialized discourses that complicate even men's gender performances. While hegemonic forms of masculinity take precedence, they still interact with, rather than oppose marginal positions. As Hirose and Pih (2010) explain, dominant performances in fact, selectively endorse and incorporate aspects that are marginal. As one good example, the researchers point to the relationship between hegemonic masculinities associated with striking as a main technique, and those that employ submission strategies, such as grappling (Hirose and Pih, 2010, p. 194). While both striking and grappling each require great skill, finesse, speed, agility, and strength, striking is considered dominant while grappling is feminized and exoticized. The hegemonic position of striking, however, relies upon strikers' selective appropriation of submission techniques—a practice that the researchers note, curiously mirrors the

process of Orientalism described by Said (1978). To this extent, gendered and racialized MMA performances are not straightforward and have thus led to debates about which athletes most successfully exhibit dominant forms of masculinity.

The complexities of MMA gender performances are furthered by their intersection with other bases of identity, such a class and nationality. Abramson and Modzelewski (2011) through an ethnographic analysis, argue that unlike inner-city boxing, MMA participants tend to be college educated and middle class. Moreover, they discuss the complex and unique subculture of MMA and believe that participation involves opportunities to share American ideals. Furthermore, Channon and Jennings (2014) examined the empirical literature of embodiment through martial arts and combat sports. They found that many studies highlighted how women's participation in combat sports, like MMA, can challenge patriarchal norms, but also that many researchers noted traditional sexual hierarchies do remain evident within these settings.

Within the realm of "extreme" sports, Mennesonn's (2000) study of mixed-sex boxing found that men violently battered women considered "butch", but seldom challenged "attractive" women. The aim of protecting beautiful women's faces meant that they were not challenged in ways suited to their skill levels. All these contradictory demands means that even skilled women MMA fighters must signal to their audience that their "bad-boy athlete" performances are, in effect, pure dramaturgy, and that their essence is desirably feminine (see Heinecken, 2004). Their power must be contained by bodily gestures and techniques that signal their adherence to what hegemonic masculinity defines as feminine ways of being (Butler, 2004; Kimmel, 1999). These dual expectations are evident in an advertisement for the clothing company, *Under Armour*, in which fighter Gina Carano is shown holding a yoga pose, with the slogan "Beauty and Power in Perfect Balance", written beside her (Coppermine Gallery, 2013). The ad brings to mind McClure's (2004) doubts about a Girl Power movement that is disempoweringly rooted in consumerism and beauty ideals. The ad proposes that Carano's power is managed—kept in balance—by her feminine desirability.

In sum, if a Girl Power discourse operates within women's MMA culture, its overarching political message has become: "Even if some women can pretend to do what men do, the patriarchy is alive and well" (see Heinecken, 2004; Weaving, 2014). The promise of a feminist gender politic is bounded by the way in which Girl Power, as it is recognizable in women's MMA, takes a highly regulatory turn. The privileging of dominant gender performances and binaries in a context of commercial imperatives requires women combatants to flip flop between criticizing and embodying what is understood to be feminine.

Or, Are They Amazons?

The claim that "violence is often the single most evident marker of manhood" (Kimmel, 1994, p. 132) is reinforced by the popular view that women do not ordinarily, or respectably, engage in violence and aggression. Nor are they thought to be skilled, or otherwise willing combatants. The first alternative we consider to a Girl Power reading of women's UFC participation takes a *longue durée* perspective, that is, one in which the deeply structured continuities of history are emphasized rather than the blips of recent events. This reading connects women UFC fighters to the Amazon: the woman warrior of Greek myth and legend.

Perhaps the most important characteristic of the Amazon is that she is understood to be mythic, for "Amazon" serves as a category into which a rich history of powerful women have been thrust, with the effect of morally regulating them as unruly anomalies or "aberrations of nature" (Wheelwright, 1987, p. 489). The category has been applied to women who wielded clubs in the fifteenth century against Spanish conquistadors on what is now the "Amazon" River (Livi-Bacci, 2010, p. 25), who dressed as men in order to join the eighteenth century British military (Wheelwright, 1987), who participated in gang violence in nineteenth-century Manchester, England (Davis, 1999), and who partook in peace protests at a cruise missile base in the UK in the 1980s (Hardwick, 1990). Sandberg (2004) proposes that the factuality of histories of powerful women should require us "to rethink the association of femininity with

'vulnerability' and the objectification of women as mute victims of organized violence and oppression, incapable of agency" (p. 654).

However, the discursive effect of the Amazon category is to constitute powerful women as not only contradictory (an idea that we began to raise in the Girl Power section, above), but as so implausible as to verge upon unreal. Take, for instance, discussion of the potential UFC bout between Ronda Rousey and Gina Carano. This bout has been dubbed "the battle of the true Amazons" by a commentator on an article that touts a nude and heavily air-brushed Rousey as the actor who ought rightfully to be cast as *Wonder Woman* (Wilding, 2014). No matter how material Rousey's body may be and no matter how hard her punches, she and other women combatants are easily displaced into the realm of the fantastical.

We want to pause here to note that one might argue that male participants in MMA are also constituted in ways that seem dramatically "unreal". However, as a category, male combatants performances strive towards an ideal that is naturalized as masculine, and that is understood to be the highest expression of a "real man's" essence—one that they already contain. By becoming combatants, however, women are understood to be transgressing their essence, and thus doing the impossible. This may become clearer by reference to Olstead's (2011) work on gender and participation in high-risk sports. Whereas the men she interviewed claimed that their risk performances were the realization of an authentic self, the women engaged in risk-taking activities to demonstrate that they were not bound by gendered expectations, and that they were not the gendered person others thought they were.

What is the content of the fantasy? To what desires, repressed, or conscious, does it speak? The mythic Amazons were renowned for their military prowess, for shunning the company of men, and for burning off their daughters' right breasts so that they could draw their arrows across their chests more easily (Grimal, 1965). In the photograph of Rousey that accompanies Wilding's (2014) article, she uses her left hand to cover her left breast, while using her right arm to squash her right breast out of view. Likewise, Gina Carano is shown posing in the same way on the cover of the 2009 ESPN Body Issue (see Haas, 2012). In both cases, that breast matters because in the Amazon myth, for women to be powerful inexorably alters their femininity and their sexuality. The myth proposes

that to achieve masculine power entails removal of a breast that would otherwise be "too much woman"; it is an image that reinforces a gender binary that Amazons are crossing, rather than bringing to dissolution.

Amazons are thought to have lived without the need for men—though purportedly keeping some on hand as mutilated slaves (Blok, 1995). Such representations speak to a cultural anxiety about women's power and its capacity to render men socially, politically, economically, physically, and sexually irrelevant. One male blogger asks:

> So what's the deal? Are we scared these ladies are going to be more popular than our male legends, our heroes? Is the boys' club getting intruded on? Is it that we just don't want to see these young women fight?…if Mayweather one day decided to try out the Octagon…I'd put my dollars on Rowdy (Brauning, 2014).

The writer's longing to see a woman temporarily displace men as heroes, psychoanalytically references this anxiety. The comment also references a fantasy in which men's violence against women is no longer a social problem inasmuch as women are now enthusiastic participants in a sport noted, correctly or not, for its unmitigated violence.

Sexual currents run deep in the Amazon fantasy, and the Amazons' purported lesbian physicality, in particular, is of great cultural fascination. Significant profits are generated by the pornography industry's marketing of "girl-on-girl" films produced from the perspective of a hetero-male voyeur (Jenefsky & Miller, 1998; Morrison & Tallack, 2005). A multimillion dollar niche within the porn industry features women combatants, most often fighting one another, in styles that include topless wrestling, catfighting to melodramatic plots, and erotic combat that can culminate in one woman straddling another's face (Scambler & Jennings, 1998). Media reports that Ronda Rousey likes to have "lots of sex" with a boyfriend before a fight (Chase, 2012) permits her to be understood as a woman who grapples with other women but does so with a viewership of heterosexual men in mind.

Media representations of Ronda Rousey and other women MMA fighters, reinforce the idea that their fighting skills may not be as essential to their popularity with a largely male heterosexual audience, as is their

sexual appeal (Weaving, 2014). This is readily apparent in web discussion of an August 2014 article about the potential UFC bantamweight title bout between Rousey and Carano (McCarter, 2014). Carano, who has been out of the MMA cage for five years while pursuing her Hollywood career, is arguably rusty, yet some three-quarters of readers who participated in the web poll associated with McCarter (2014) voted that they were interested in her taking Rousey on. The disgruntled minority believe this statistic to be based on Carano's looks. Some describe her as a "totally unprepared for slaughter sexy little lamb", while others suggest, "she should come back as a ring girl", or propose that Carano and Rousey "should make a movie together instead, you know, one of those kinds that they show late at night on Cinemax" (McCarter, 2014). The commentary indicates that while women fighters are expected to be powerful and agentic Amazons, some viewers also expect them to demonstrate a sexual desirability that renders them what Young (2005) has called "the inessential correlate to man, as mere object and immanence" (p. 31).

The persistence of a discourse that slots powerful women, such as MMA fighters, into the category of mythic Amazons has the effect of upholding the norm of dominant masculinity, just as the Girl Power discourse had earlier. Yet, the discourse of the mythic Amazon also exposes heterosexual male fantasies that eroticize violence by and against women; if a slogan about the balance between beauty and power can sell exercise garb to women, the prospect of a woman sitting on another woman's face can sell UFC viewings to heterosexual men, and has had like effects for millennia—a disheartening conclusion for feminists. What straws of hope we find in the reception of women's participation in the UFC is the topic of our next section.

MMA Women as Risk Performers

A third reading of women's MMA performances sees them as primarily about risk. The risk society is a concept describing how the process of modernization has produced a collection of human-made risks, the consequence of which is that individuals, "whether they know it or not, […] start thinking more and more in terms of risk. They have to con-

front personal futures that are much more open than in the past, with all the opportunities and hazards this brings" (Giddens, 1999, p. 28). The UFC grips the attention of our risk society because the potential harms, level of skill, fitness, degree of self-control, and discipline are very high: "it could be quite dangerous to throw someone in a fight with the best 135er [female bantamweight] in the world", warns one comment on McCarter's (2014) article on the potential Carano–Rousey title fight.

Since World War II, Lyng argues (2005), we have increasingly recognized the cultural desirability of risk performances, with growing numbers of people participating in high-stakes risk-taking, such as BASE jumping, mountain climbing, and sports like MMA. Notably, most of these risk contexts are highly rationalized and consumer oriented (Olstead, 2011). What this reflects is a growing popular interest in engaging with an institutionalized form of risk in ways that reflects a bodily aesthetic, a set of demonstrable techniques and emotional strategies that address normative standards of a sport or activity. Importantly, fans of UFC are not hoping for a no-holds-barred, bar brawl. Early advertisements for the UFC boasted that, "There are no rules", yet, as we noted earlier, this claim to lawless violence was unpalatable to many. Senator John McCain, for instance, condemned the sport as "human cockfighting" (Bledsoe, 2009). Wertheim (2007) explains that from 1997 to 2001, the UFC achieved little success due to such negative public perceptions and its being banned in all but two states. It was only in 2001, when new owners of the franchise implemented rules such as no biting and no eye gouging, as well as instituting weight classes, time limits, and rounds, that interest in the sport began to grow.

In a Durkheim (1897[1951]) sense, we can interpret resistance to an MMA *sans* rules as a popular desire for a moral structure, necessary in order that the "civilizing code"—or more accurately, the moral conditions of the performance—could be recognized. Specifically, participants or consumers of performances want to see reflected back to them actions and attitudes grounded in culturally valued regimens of self-training and discipline (Lyng, 2005, pp. 9–10; O'Malley & Mugford, 1994, p. 197). MMA fighters engage in rigorous exercise schedules, strictly monitor their diets and weight, and often incorporate psychological and emotional preparation, such as through meditation. Ultimate fighting offers

an arena wherein individuals can demonstrate their moral dedication to self-practices and specifically, how successful they have been in mobilizing resources to effect the regulation of their bodies, minds, and *souls* through restraint, control, and self-regulation. For risk-spectators, pleasure is taken in how MMA fighting endorses not only their own adherence to risk-values, but also legitimizes their own "everyday" risk-subjectivities as, fundamentally, moral ones. Both men and women MMA combatants illustrate subjective possibilities of transformation, self-determination, and self-reliance through sweat and will power.

Examining online fan comments on McCarter's (2014) article about the potential Rousey–Carano championship fight, we can see how spectators of women's MMA communicate risk as a system of values consistent with late modern life. One fan claims, "Fighting at that level in and of itself takes an amount of hard work, discipline, and courage the vast majority of people will never experience". The values listed underpin the modern significance of the individual, for whom accomplishments and failures result directly from expressions of merit in a context of high risk-taking. Another fan, named Theo, writes:

> What a slap in the face for women's MMA. A pretty face [Carano] from the past with 5 years of ring rust can leapfrog over everyone else for a title shot. How f*** up is that; What ever happened to meritocracy? The women fighters would lose all respect for Dana for setting up this farce. [Carano] will NOT sign a contract to fight Rhonda [sic] in Dec 2014 & embarr#$%$ herself by taking a 'serious' #$%$ whupping & risk serious injury—solely for a few pieces of silver.

In his comments, Theo establishes a binary between what he sees as an authentic fight: one which is merit based versus one that is based on Carano's attractiveness and its profit potential. Indeed, certain fans of women's UFC discursively protect what they see as a sacred risk performance by actively rejecting beauty norms—or, at least, by expecting women fighters to reject these norms.

Our use of "sacred" here is not coincidental. By saying that Carano will not risk her safety or self-regard for a "few pieces of silver", Theo is refuting the possibility that Carano will be a betrayer on the scale of the

Biblical Judas, who sold for 30 pieces of silver the information that would lead to Christ's crucifixion. The notion of the "sacred" is again referenced by a fan named Biz Kid, who comments:

> Fair enough. Rousey and Carano are babes. We all know that. But how about we forget that shit in the cage. The cage is sacred. That other stuff is stupid and irrelevant and it disrespects the whole point of MMA. You want that shit, buy a wank mag. MMA is about how to survive and look after yourself by anticipating your opponent and that's about skill, not how good your ass looks. (McCarter, 2014)

As articulated by Biz Kid, the cage is a sacred space in which valued enactments of risk, identified by him as the proficiency to "survive […] by anticipating your opponent", reflect a set of skills that are prized in the risk society. Accordingly, "the whole point of MMA", as Biz Kid implies, is about accessing an authentic performance of risk, to which gender and sex are subordinate. Importantly, Biz Kid, like Theo, above, is not precisely putting forth a feminist reading of women's UFC that resists the patriarchal objectification of women. Rather, through a risk lens, these fans see gender and its politics as irrelevant to their understanding of women's UFC/MMA.

In one sense, technologies and the values of self-preparation, self-governance, and self-reliance are old, in the West informing the Roman and Greek philosophy that segued into Christian asceticism (Foucault, 1988), and embodied in earliest Olympic Games and in the ancient figure of the hero. But, the argument we are developing now is not purely of the *longue durée* variety. When UFC fighters mobilize themselves and their resources, they are expressing the capacity to adapt to change that is required for success as a subject in the risk society. In this sense, the contemporary UFC fighter strives for dominance and abides by a logic of survival (Boudreau and de Alba, 2011; Innerarity, 2008), unlike the hero, who had stood for good against evil, and who could hope against hope in the cause of justice (White & Arp, 2008; Barthes, 2010). Where women's UFC/MMA is constituted as a risk text, gender politics and feminist aspirations for change are absent. In its place is a celebration

of any fighter's capacity to "look after yourself" when confronting the potential dangers of the cage.

In the contemporary context, entrepreneurial expressions of self by what Lebrun (2007; see also Rose, 1999) has termed the "neoliberal subject" are desired because they demonstrate self-reliance and responsibility. But, whither gender? Beck's (1992) risk society is described as one in which social stratification according to class, race, gender, and other variables are insignificant, leaving one's capacity to calculate risk as the paramount source of stratification; indeed, as another fan commenting on McCarter's (2014) article put it, great physical force is "needed to dominate in any fight whether its men or women. Doesn't matter". That is, risk discourse implies that we no longer are required to talk about gender or its power relations. Instead, individual merit in the form of skilful risk management displaces gender politics. As the best prospect for a feminist reading of women's MMA participation, this is a slim one. Risk discourse may appear to invite a more politically nuanced view of women's MMA by suggesting gender does not matter, but in doing so, neutralizes the more common, historical reality of women's experience of violence by men. While some online fans responding to McCarter's (2014) article may couch their talk about women's fighting performances in MMA in a "gender neutral" discourse about the skills required to meet the moral conditions of late modern life, others bid for a male–female match in violent and gendered terms:

> Now here's an issue in UFC I KNOW Joe Rogan and Dana White [UFC leaders] would have some disagreement on…Man V. Woman Match. however fuck up her looks and piss off a lot of fans :> All I can say please don't let it be Rhonda [sic] Rousey. get one of the ugly chicks. (Pryal, 2014)

Conclusion

Butler (2004) argued that "the future symbolic will be one in which femininity has multiple possibilities, where it is…released from the demand to be one thing, or to comply with a singular norm, the norm devised for it by phallogocentric means" (pp. 196–197). The opening of MMA

to women suggests newly realized opportunities for women to explore, express, and enact alternate gender performances (Butler, 1993, 2004) and especially those, like fighting, that have traditionally signalled masculine ways of being. Our question, at the start of this chapter, had to do with recognizing how certain cultural narratives could be read alongside women's MMA performances and how these might signal different political impressions of women's inclusion in the sport.

In this first discourse we examined, Girl Power, and in so doing determined that the overarching political message is one that claims that women have power and can move easily into realms "owned and operated" by men. We analysed the broad political limits of this discourse, not least because of the way it focuses on consumption and beauty ideals, rather than on challenging the patriarchy. In the second reading, we looked at how the myth of the Amazons illuminated women's legitimate engagement in institutionalized violence as an extension of a long-held hetero-male fantasy. Considering the apparent ease by which Carano, and now Rousey, have moved into Hollywood roles, we can see how readily the "realness" of their skills can be parlayed into a more recognizable cultural fantasy. Lastly, we offered a risk interpretation to show how women's UFC/MMA is one that suggests that we no longer are required to talk about gender or its power relations. Instead, individual merit in the form of skilful risk management displaces gender politics as a display of moral fortitude in the risk society.

Across each of the discourses we encountered, we did not find women's UFC performances to be signalling political change. While each in its own way celebrates women's capacities as cage fighters, they all neutralize criticism of the more common, historical reality of women's experience of violence by men. They do not, as such, invite critical inquiry into the gender systems that deny power to women *as a group*. Our findings indicate that despite the circulation of alternative discourses that appear to signal gender transgression, the inclusion and participation of women in MMA has not challenged gender norms. Regardless of women's relative success in this male-dominated sport, it remains a difficult site in which to produce meaningful shifts in gendered relations of power. Such findings raise the question of the real political influence of women's inclusion into the world(s) of men.

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Part V

Media, Politics and Pedagogies

15

Carving Out Space in the Action Sports Media Landscape: The Skirtboarders' Blog as a 'Skatefeminist' Project

Steph MacKay

Scholarly research has explored media representations of female action sports participants extensively (e.g., Atencio, Beal, & Wilson, 2009; Comer, 2010; Donnelly, 2008; Henderson, 2001; Heywood, 2008; Porter, 2003; Rinehart, 2005; Stedman, 1997; Thorpe, 2005, 2008). The majority of these analyses examine mainstream and/or niche media and follow a 'second-wave' feminist outlook on power, that is, 'locatable in the hands of men and the institutions they control and expressed through the structures and practices of sports' (Hardin & Whiteside, 2014, "Hegemonic Masculinity", para. 3) to argue that the marginalisation, (hetero)sexualisation and trivialisation of women within mainstream and niche action sports media reinforces ideologies of gender difference and perpetuates the positioning of women as outsiders in these cultures. To quote scholar Leanne Stedman (1997, p. 78), women are thus denied 'the symbolic resources' needed to identify them as action sports participants, despite idealistic views of action

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sports as subcultures inclusive to all regardless of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, ability or age. In response to this gloomy conclusion, what are action sports feminists to do? In this chapter, I address this question by relating and assessing the efforts of scholars and activists, including a crew of female skateboarders from Montreal, the Skirtboarders. First, I describe two strategies that action sports scholars have recently used to understand representations of female actions sports participants circulating in the current media landscape, including (a) applying a poststructuralist feminist perspective to their research and (b) analysing and promoting female action sports participants' engagement with digital community media. Second, I discuss whether action sportswomen's community media productions can challenge the power structures of the male-dominated action sports media industry. Third, I use my research exploring the Skirtboarders' blog to advocate for both the use of poststructuralist sensibility in future scholarship investigating representations of female action sports participants and deeper examinations of community media that look at media texts, producers' intentions and users' 'readings' of texts. I conclude by reiterating that action sportswomen are not a homogenous group. Therefore, I suggest that a combined effort by action sports feminists and female action sports participants who do not identify as feminists as well as the action sports media industry will be required in order to carve out more space (in which diverse femininities are represented) for women in the action sports media landscape.

Constructions of Femininity in Women's Action Sports

Two strategies scholars are currently using to address issues of marginalised, sexualised and trivialised action sportswomen are as follows. First, they use different theoretical perspectives, such as Foucauldian theory associated with poststructuralist feminism, to explore media representations of female action sports participants (e.g., Thorpe, 2008). In the Foucauldian sense, power is not locatable in the hands of men. Rather, it is productive: it produces identities, practices, ideas and ways of being. In her seminal piece exploring female snowboarders' media consumption,

Thorpe (2008) showed how snowboarding women challenge the discursive constructions of femininity transmitted through niche media by subverting their messages to create reverse discourses. She noted that not all audience members consume media uncritically and are therefore not necessarily the docile subjects they are often assumed to be.

Second, while scholars are only starting to explore women-generated community action sports media products, including blogs[1] and websites (see MacKay & Dallaire, 2013a, 2013b, 2014; Olive, 2013; Pavlidis & Fullagar, 2012, 2014), they have been suggesting for over a decade that action sportswomen must become media producers in order to engage in the politics of representation (e.g., Beal & Wilson, 2004; Comer, 2010; MacKay, in press; Ojala, 2014 and Thorpe, 2008). Along with action sports community insiders (e.g., Cori Schumacher and Emma Shoesmith),[2] these scholars claim that women must reject any complicity with action sports media industries and instead generate their own community media, especially digital media. Community media are created to be not-for-profit, small in scale and distributed to and shared among community members rather than a mass audience, often using digital media platforms. They aim to challenge existing power structures, to represent marginalised groups and/or to foster horizontal linkages among communities of interest (Downing, 2001). Many see the potential in digital media for such purposes. LaVoi and Calhoun (2014) define digital media as 'forms of media content that combine and integrate data, text, sound and images of all kinds, are stored in digital formats; and are increasingly distributed through networks' (Defining digital media, para. 2). Examples of digital media platforms include websites, blogs and social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Myspace, YouTube, Vimeo and other networked media. As illustrated in this chapter, many

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[1] Blogs (or weblogs) allow bloggers (blog writers) to post regularly dated entries, often including opinions, journal entries or commentary.

[2] Cori Schumacher is a former professional surfer who publishes a blog discussing social issues, such as persistent gender disparity in and around surfing. Kim Woozy is a skateboarder and founder of Mahfia.tv, an online video hub for women in action sports and Emma Shoesmith is a board sport athlete and Founder and Creative Director at Board of Media, a social movement celebrating gender equality in action sports.

feminist-inspired women in action sports are using such media to challenge gender assumptions and build community.

While Thorpe (2005, 2008) commends action sportswomen for circulating reverse discourses through community media, she also cautions that a philosophy based on a separatist and arguably radical feminist approach is not without limitations. For example, a reliance on for-women-by-women endeavours actually relieves mainstream and niche media organisations of the obligation to adequately represent women (in terms of quantity and quality) and strengthens the male domination of institutions in action sport cultures. Furthermore, cyberfeminists[3] claim that although the Web may afford women certain opportunities (particularly in Westernised and first-world locations), the impact of digital media on improving the material and political positions of women is questionable, as the social, economic and political power relations reflect those offline (Gajjala, 2009; Paasonen, 2005). Additionally, action sports scholars, including Gilchrist and Wheaton (2013) and Thorpe (2014), express scepticism as to the extent to which the use of digital media will change the action sports media landscape. Given the calls for women to produce action sports media and the critiques of these endeavours, scholars must answer the critical question: Does the production of digital media challenge the power structures of the male-dominated action sports media industry in any significant way?

Social Media and Representations of Women in Action Sports

A growing number of scholars are exploring how action sports participants are engaging with social media, with some considering whether such practices are challenging norms (e.g., Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2013; MacKay & Dallaire, 2013a; Ojala, 2014; Thorpe, 2014; Thorpe & Ahmad, 2015). Others have created online spaces where they challenge their own assumptions about gender (e.g., Olive, 2013). While work in

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[3] Cyberfeminists are feminists critically examining cyberspace, the Internet and digital technologies.

this area is still limited, existing research suggests that although disciplinary (e.g., unchallenged power structures) and constraining (e.g., economic and geographical) mechanisms may come into play, engagement with digital media platforms 'provide[s] opportunities for the subaltern voice and experience, and the possibility for scripts that challenge the dominant discourses of gender…' (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2013, p. 182).

The production of for-women-by-women media is not a new feminist strategy. Women and girls have been using various forms of cultural production for self-expression and to explore nonconformist identities (mostly) outside economic markets for decades (see Kearney, 2006, for a detailed discussion of 'girl-made' media). Within action sport cultures, the outcomes of for-women-by-women media productions have varied. Interestingly, for-women-by-women niche media that attempt to represent action sportswomen without (hetero)sexualising or trivialising them has had limited success. For example, in surfing culture, Comer (2010) noted that attempts to produce for-women-by-women niche media products (particularly magazines) have repeatedly failed after corporate giants and high-profile stores in the action sports community refused to commit advertising dollars to the producers of these publications. In another recent example, Melissa Larsen (currently the general editor for snowboarding at Espn.com/XGames.com) attempted to reform SG Surf|Snow|Skate|Girl* Magazine, an action sports monthly magazine launched in 2002 for females in their late teens to early 1920s, to:

> (…) see if it would be possible to take fashion spreads and beauty tips out of an established sports magazine, and not lose advertiser support. Alas the answer to that question is still a resounding NO. It was fun while it lasted, though. (Larsen, n.d.)

Larsen (2014) explained that SG failed because:

> (…) they [executives in the action sport industry] said there was too much skateboarding in it, that female skateboarders were too gritty, too unfeminine and too alienating to the teenage girl jeans-buying demographic advertisers were paying to attract. And anyway, the number of females who actually participate in action sports was too small to care about. To keep it

alive would be an act of charity, and publishing was a business, not a passion project.

Claims from experienced editors, such as Larsen, that for-women-by-women niche media products are not viable in the current media climate suggest that community (and in particular, social) media might be action sports feminists' best way forward.

Committed female participants appear to have had more success in producing and distributing community media with little economic investment or return required. In so doing, they are attracting girls and women to their sport and challenging what they perceive as sexist media representations using digital technologies, outside of markets. For example, in the skateboarding world, successful productions include social media sites such as Skate Like A Girl and Girls Skate Network in the USA, No Limit in Sweden, Girls Assault in Argentina, Poseuz Crew in France, Pink Spot in Mexico and the Skirtboarders in Canada (specifically Montreal). Women involved in these kinds of productions adopt many of the same feminist strategies as their predecessors (e.g., Grrrl zinesters, see Kearney, 2006) and appear to exhibit 'critical perspectives not just to norms of femininity but to understandings of the material places in which counterfemininities are enacted' (Comer, 2010, p. 18). In other words, they understand that by applying old feminist strategies to digital community media productions circulated on the Internet (a relatively new space), they can both access and exert considerable control[4] over action sports cultural products, contrary to custom in the niche action sports media landscape. Importantly, Olive (2015) distinguishes between 'interactive' sites, including social media such as Facebook and Twitter, and 'semi-interactive' sites, such as websites and blogs (p. 160). 'Semi-interactive' sites are arguably more manageable for feminist-inspired action sports participants because of the inherent content control. Thus, supporters of the more 'interactive' social media, who expect a high level of user participation in creating content, may find it more difficult to challenge the status quo than others with greater production control.

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[4] However, the Internet remains a male-dominated and -controlled system (Logan, 2010).

On the surface, the 'more localized and less coordinated approaches focused on the connections between discourse and subjectivity' (Pringle, 2005, p. 271) that characterise these kinds of online projects appear to help empower only individuals and small groups (e.g., users of these sites) and, as Thorpe (2008) suggests, do little to challenge the power structures of mainstream and niche media organisations. However, action sportswomen's blogs and other digital media productions arguably do challenge these structures and, as Kearney (2006) suggests, serve as 'a disruptive force' (p. 13) as some women choose to consume digital media products rather than for-profit media (MacKay & Dallaire, 2013b), and champion their ways of representing women.

In an interview for *Cooler Magazine*,[5] Lisa Whitaker, founder of the Girls Skate Network (formerly known as 'The Side Project')—a website and associated YouTube channel featuring women skateboarders, stated that 'the Internet and social media have had the biggest impact on visibility for girls skating over the last decade' (Haddad, 2014). She claimed that the skateboarding media industry has failed women skateboarders and it is therefore female skateboarders' responsibility to proactively make the changes they want by creating and managing their own separatist, online spaces. However, she also feels that once enough women engage with these media to affect markets, companies will be economically driven to include representations of action sportswomen that deviate from the 'rules' of the current discursive landscape (i.e., deploying dominant discursive constructions of sportswomen). She believes that women should continue to produce their own media, but that work with industry giants will eventually be unavoidable if the women's' action sports scene is to grow and create sustainable careers and income opportunities for women, a reality currently limited to the occasional contest payout.

Thus, while the production of digital community media products responds to Cori Schumacher's (2014) claim that women must create their own media in order 'to foster our growing understanding of ourselves as female surfers [and other action sports participants] in a

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[5] *Cooler Magazine*, a European publication peddling snow, surf, bikes, skate and style for young women, debuted in 2005 and ran in print for 44 issues (a total of 9 years). Unfortunately, it succumbed to the same fate as other for-women-by-women endeavours, ultimately ending its print operations due to financial challenges (a website continues in operation).

neoliberal,[6] globalized world', the admission by action sports feminists such as Whitaker that women will have to work with the media industry to engender real change says something about the emancipatory potential (or lack thereof) of digital media. Ultimately, in order to challenge gender power relations, media producers such as Whitaker might have to occupy a 'signal-crossed space' where, as Heywood (2008) suggests, alternative ideas about femininity collide with the dominant values of the global economy and culture.

Towards Poststructuralist Scholarship

The occupation of this 'signal-crossed space' suggests that present-day activism is both limited and enabled by the emergence of digital media and technologies and the co-option of resistance movements by markets. As Gill (2007) rightly stated, in an increasingly diverse media culture saturated by information and communication technologies (and community produced action sports media), 'the obviousness of what it means to do feminist work breaks down and we are left with a messy contradictoriness' (p. 2). Indeed, in order to produce gender representations that differ from the mainstream and niche media norm, action sports feminists may have to adjust their strategies of challenging the action sports media industry and instead work with them. As action sports activism evolves alongside ever-changing digital media technologies, research projects exploring gender issues in action sports media must also change. Traditional 'second-wave' approaches based on a Gramscian understanding of power and resistance and 'generally assuming monolithic interests in relationship to women and the sports/media complex', although still essential,[7] must allow the possibility, as Hardin and Whiteside (2014)

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[6] Neoliberalism shifts responsibilities from the state to the individual; the core strategy of neoliberalism is self-responsibility; it 'encourages individuals to give their lives a specific entrepreneurial form' (Lemke, 2001). A neoliberal subject is thus a subject that is essentialised, universal and unhistorical believes that she/he is creating her/himself and is blind to the constitutive effects of discourse.

[7] Hardin and Whiteside (2014) claimed that 'the notion of masculine hegemony in understanding and explaining the nature of sport and its mediated representations is essential for sports feminists

wrote, that 'a poststructuralist approach may ultimately be more satisfying and useful in reconciling the contradictions [that researchers] will inevitably encounter' (Conclusion, para. 2). Furthermore, research projects examining digital community action sports media productions must recognise that women's (and men's) desires, understandings and experiences are not homogenous. Ultimately, by approaching research projects from the standpoint of poststructuralist sensibilities, scholars are in a much better position to grasp what Hardin and Whiteside (2014) call the '(contextual) truths' of action sports digital media producers and users because they resist universal explanations or binary models (e.g., powerful/powerless), and instead consider specific contexts.

The Skirtboarders' Blog: A 'Skatefeminist' Project

Employing a poststructuralist approach will allow researchers to gain deeper, more contextual understandings of what we 'see' in digital media texts as well as how women and girls 'read' media representations[8]. Building upon Thorpe's (2008) work, I explored a women's skateboarding blog titled Skirtboarders.com. Using Foucault's discourse theory (1969, 1971) and Weedon's (1997) understanding of the fluidity, complexity and multiplicity of gender identities constructed through discourse, I (with co-author Christine Dallaire) determined that female skateboarders are 'talking back' (as bell hooks, 1989, would say) to mainstream and niche skateboarding media industries and women are 'reading' this blog as such.

Established in 2002, Skirtboarders is a women's skateboarding collective comprising women from across Canada (but mainly Montreal) and aims to promote the female skate scene. Its membership consists of 15 primarily white women aged 21–36, who are profiled on the website. Their primary activities are identified as travelling, skateboarding, making

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and, in fact, for any scholar who is serious about critically studying the relationship between sports and culture' (Conclusion, para. 1).

[8] Also see Wheaton (2013) for further calls for audience reception research.

videos (they produced the first Canadian all-female skateboarding film in 2007) and meeting like-minded girls and women. They also use this site to share stories, photos and videos on their blog and on other social networking sites (including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) or video sharing sites (including Vimeo and YouTube). Their skateboarding activities range from exclusive crew member gatherings to larger, open-invitation events organised online and held in Montreal, in other Canadian cities or on international tours. They sometimes compete, but usually skateboard for pleasure. Some have official sponsorships (e.g., Sitka, Volcom, Spy Optics and Hurley) that help fund their travel, clothing and equipment costs, but most pay their sporting and travel expenses out of pocket.

We examined the Skirtboarders' blog from three angles: (a) a textual analysis of the discursive constructions of gender circulated on the blog; (b) an analysis of production processes, that is, the Skirtboarders' reflexive use of blogging to challenge discursive constructions of women; and (c) an analysis of user responses, i.e., the ways in which users construe Skirtboarders.com.[9] Two types of materials were analysed: (a) Skirtboarder blog posts[10] in their entirety, including English and French texts, photos, videos, links to other sites and comments by users and (b) transcripts from 12 semi-structured interviews (eight 'core' skirtboarders and four site users).[11]

Findings indicate that the Skirtboarders' representations of fluid gender performances depart significantly from representations of female skateboarders in mainstream and niche media, as described by 'second-wave' research projects. As shown by their photos, videos and written self-portrayals on their blog, the Skirtboarders embrace multiple femininities while simultaneously rejecting male/female binaries, exemplifying what Daniels (2009) terms 'polygenderedness'. This did not occur by accident. All of the Skirtboarders interviewed felt a need to produce their own media to offset the paucity of female skateboarder

[9] Each of these approaches is explored in more depth in MacKay and Dallaire (2013a, 2013b, 2014).

[10] A total of 262 blog posts were analysed (including photos, videos and 1128 user comments) from March 2007 to May 2010.

[11] Digitally recorded interview material with 12 women (eight 'core' Skirtboarders and four users) was gathered between August 2010 and September 2011 and included in the analysis.

representations in mainstream and niche media texts and to challenge media representations centred on physical attractiveness and that trivialise women's performances. They understood the constitutive effects of gender discourse, exhibited deep insight into their gendered skateboarding experiences and threaded this reflexivity through their blog posts. Blog users have suggested that the female skateboarding movement promoted through Skirtboarders.com incites girls and women to get out and skateboard and, in so doing, are expressing, a kind of 'polygenderedness'. They believe that the Skirtboarders' blog also helps expand the (arguably diverse) international female skateboarding community [along the same lines, Pavlidis and Fullagar (2014) found that digital communication technologies have enabled the formation of diverse roller derby communities]. Both the Skirtboarders and blog users ultimately feel that Skirtboarders.com has led to the construction of a (nonhomogeneous) collective female skateboarding identity among girls and women, which may ultimately affect power relations in skateboarding culture. As more girls and women take up this collective female skateboarding identity and perform it on their skateboards, the maleness of skateboarding culture is challenged in numerous ways. For example, the Skirtboarders discussed how the boys and men at their local skate park had to share the space with them as the group expanded. Eventually, the act of sharing skateboarding space with the women was accepted by the boys and men and became the norm. Blog users also described the impacts women skateboarding had on the perceived maleness of physical space.

When asked whether they thought their popular blog might become economically viable, the Skirtboarders suggested that they had no desire to make profits and were therefore under no constraint to offer 'marketable' representations. In fact, they once refused a proposal involving outsider management to avoid compromising the authenticity[12] of their image. The Skirtboarders were thus rejecting the subject position of the 'third-wave' feminist, described by Heywood (2008) as a 'self-determined' wage earner and consumer (p. 64) who has become complicit with neoliberalism. Although 'aware of their commodity value' (Thorpe, 2008), the

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[12] See Beal and Weidman (2003) and Wheaton and Beal (2003) for discussions on the importance of authenticity in action sports.

Skirtboarders are reluctant to adopt a 'third-wave' subjectivity because they have 'qualms about marketing their sexuality to boost their public profile and image' and choose not to 'reap the financial benefits' from self-commodification (p. 211). At the same time, their 'do it yourself' (DIY) subjectivity and rejection of male-centric media suggest a feminism that complicates the contradiction between increased opportunities for women (particularly economic) and persistent sexism, which fits the description advanced by some sports scholars (e.g., see Harris, 2008; Heywood, 2008; Thorpe, 2008) of 'third-wave' feminists. Arguably, the Skirtboarders sit at the intersection between 'second-wave' radical feminists who view media representations of skateboarding women as oppressive and thus feel obliged to 'talk back' by taking matters into their own hands (without becoming complicit in the economic game) and 'third-wave' feminists who believe that gender is fluid.

That the Skirtboarders have some 'second-wave' and some 'third-wave' sensibilities suggests a different label altogether. Heywood (2008) proposes 'stealth feminism', while Cori Schumacher aptly coined the term 'Surfeminism'. She:

> (…) find[s] it elegant to think of Surfeminism as an assemblage, a breathing kind of coalescing, a riding upon, within and through all imaginings and possibilities of the waves of feminism, past, present and future, in an environment where diverse women share a singular enjoyment, a *jouissance* [emphasis in original] (pleasure). [She contends] we are not united through a shared idea of femininity (and all the problematic essentialism this entails for both women and men), nor are we bound by a common cause, yet we are together. This is a profoundly moving and deeply meaningful connectivity and shared collective subjectivity.

Following Schumacher, 'Skatefeminism' may be an appropriate term for the Skirtboarders' project (and the projects of other twenty-first century skateboarding women). Skatefeminism disrupts the attempt to set temporal boundaries and incremental linear development demands on the forms of feminism (see Caudwell, 2011) employed by female skateboarders who challenge mainstream and niche representations. It gives all generations of skateboarding women permission to negotiate and to resist dominant discursive constructions of embodiment and femininity as they see fit.

Conclusions

Action sport cultures are spaces of citizenship where many participants construct a politic of identity by numerous means, one of which is the media. As action sports scholars embark on projects exploring mainstream, niche and community media representations of action sports participants, digital media are a crucial consideration, particularly because they 'are expanding the boundaries of action sport' (Thorpe, 2014). Furthermore, I suggest, like Hardin and Whiteside (2014), that feminist scholars consider using a poststructuralist approach in their studies of digital media, especially given the complex ways girls and women are 'reading' contemporary representations of sportswomen.

Action sports media scholars and activists encourage action sportswomen to 'talk back' to mainstream and niche media by producing digital community media. These productions, such as Skirtboarders.com, appear to provide action sports feminists with some optimism as they certainly can and do challenge dominant discourses about action sportswomen (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2013; MacKay & Dallaire, 2013a; Porter, 2003). Some feminists also resist 'playing in the economic game' (e.g., the Skirtboarders), which allows them control over their productions. However, it remains questionable as to whether these productions challenge the power structures of the male-dominated action sports media industry. Indeed, as Thorpe (2005) found in snowboarding culture, 'when women congregate around female specific alternatives, male dominated institutions remain unchallenged; they stand above gender and assume a naturally superior position' (p. 94).

As Kim Woozy notes in Larsen's piece (2014), exposing the changing nature of coverage surrounding the world of women's skateboarding, action sportswomen may one day become complicit in the action sports media industry since 'working with them will be the key to the future of growing this'. Once the action sports industry perceives a significant economic opportunity, it may look to community media producers like the Skirtboarders to attempt to commodify their online presence. If such developments take place, it is hoped that this type of commodification could allow for more frequent, less (hetero)sexualised and trivialised representations of action sportswomen, thus challenging male-dominated

institutions. However, given the Skirtboarders' refusal to let an out-
sider manage their image (along with other groups of 'Skatefeminists'
and 'action sports feminists'), some action sportswomen (including the
Skirtboarders) will continue to produce their own community media
rather than engage in capitalist ventures in partnership with the actions
sports media industry. Some women will opt to consume these com-
munity media productions over industry-produced media, as well. Like
the teenage girls and young women who produce distros (zine[13] distribu-
tion services) in Kearney's (2006) seminal book *Girls Make Media,* these
women arguably contribute to 'a different economy, one that utilises the
skills, technologies and even design practices of [the skateboarding and
digital media] industr[ies] but values communication, community, and
disenfranchised individuals over traditional commercial and patriarchal
objectives' (p. 289).

While the goal, for some action sportswomen might be to focus on
growing this 'different economy', importantly, it is not the (sole) goal
for all women involved in action sports communities. Action sports-
women are neither a homogenous group nor can they be neatly situated
within either 'second-wave' or 'third-wave' feminist sensibilities, as evi-
denced by the Skirtboarders' case. For example, while the Skirtboarders
were proud of their community produced blog and vocal about their
choice to avoid consuming mainstream and niche skateboarding media
(because of their distaste for how women were represented and/or their
preference for skateboarding over interacting with media), they generally
expressed excitement about highly commercialised skateboarding events
(such as the X-Games), the community (including male skateboard-
ers) and the ways in which the sport and the culture have shaped their
identities. Therefore, the Skirtboarders are supportive of both their (and
other women's') attempts to carve out space in the digital action sports
media landscape as well as the skateboarding industry, in general. Other
women, like Kim Woozy and Lisa Whitaker, are calling for future part-
nerships between women who produce community media products and

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[13] Zines are part of a long tradition of counterhegemonic print media and are typically created by
one person or a small group of people in a home and produced and sold as independently of mar-
kets as possible (Kearney, 2006). Well-known zines include those produced by the Riot Grrrls,
young feminist women associated with the punk music movement.

the action sports media industry while continuing to champion the community websites and blogs. Still others may, in the future, make renewed attempts to produce for-profit women's only niche media products while at the same time advocating for digital community media products. Those who choose not be involved with the production of media products, but instead to consume a variety of action sports media, might also support community media initiatives, feminist-inspired niche media endeavours and industry media products all at the same time. All of this suggests that action sports feminists looking to challenge existing power structures, female action sports participants who do not identify as feminists and the action sports media industry itself, will inevitably impact future representations of female participants in the action sports media landscape. With any luck, all of these parties will work together to carve out more space for action sportswomen in the action sports media landscape.

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16

Becoming Visible: Visual Narratives of 'Female' as a Political Position in Surfing: The History, Perpetuation, and Disruption of Patriocolonial Pedagogies?

lisahunter

World champion surfer and critic of surf media, Cori Schumacher (2012) notes, 'The *image* of female surfers that emerges is not the surfer's *view* of herself…but a tailored *image* that neatly fits into the androcentric values and expectations of the surfing world' (emphasis added, http://www.genderacrossborders.com/2012/02/07/women-in-the-sub-culture-of-surfing/ accessed 03 February 2015). From Schumacher's observations and experience, 'image' and imagery of females in surfing is highly significant. She argues, 'Instead of accepting the current *image* of female surfers as empowered simply because they are wearing bikinis and say they want to,…and [because they can excel at] shredding…we should keep analyzing behind the scenes and pushing for more institutional change from the bottom-up' (emphasis added, http://www.genderacrossborders.com/2012/02/07/women-in-the-sub-culture-of-surfing/ accessed 03 February 2015). Schumacher's points echo recent critique that for over a hundred years, females have largely been absented or removed from visions of surfing, from the narratives that paint word pictures or visual representations (art, cartoons, photography, and

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film) acting as artefacts that record and constitute surfing history. Where they have been present, they have mostly been represented as passive, as adornments based on their appearance, rather than as athletic and equally deserving of access to riding the waves.

Visual quantity, the *number* of females surfing and represented as surfing, and quality in the *nature* of female representation who are athletic or as a passive subject of (sexualized) gaze are pivotal to practices of recognition, legitimation, social positioning, and field construction (lisahunter & Austin, 2008). How is sex/gender/sexuality (sgs) employed through practices of recognition, legitimation, and positioning in surfing to constitute learning one's body, one's habitus[1], and one's positioning as particular bodies in a social field such as surfing? How does visuality, in the form of presence, perceived presence, and visual imagery (art, cartoons, photography, and film), act as a pedagogical device of possibility, mediated by the pedagogical work of surfing and its media, to facilitate learning *who* one is and *where* one is positioned in relation to others in the field? I argue that qualities that constitute the pedagogical force of who/ what could be recognized and legitimated as 'surfer' are embedded in politics of sgs based upon the taken-for-granted presuppositions, or doxa[2], of patriocolonial[3] (hetero)normative supremacy and hegemony. Not only does this pedagogical force circumscribe what narratives we have to live by but also acts as an instrument of censorship against new narrative visions of surfing, different ways of knowing surfing, re-membering who and what constitutes/ed surfing, and recognizing those who contest surfing through their non-normative surfing bodies. This chapter discusses the

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[1] Habitus is a concept used by Pierre Bourdieu that includes one's dispositions, gestures, physicality, essentially one's history that is inscribed in their very way of being. This works dialectically with the social fields in which one participates. One's practices constitute the social field one is in at the same time that the social field constitutes one's habitus. This is done through a system of various forms of capital (power) accrual where one's connections (social capital), wealth (economic capital), or cultural goods, institutional background or embodiment (cultural capital). See lisahunter, Smith and Emerald (2015) and lisahunter (2015b) for further explanation of any Bourdieuian terms in this chapter.

[2] Doxa is another Bourdieuian term about practices and relationships that are orthodox, taken for granted, normalized, or naturalized, and therefore not necessarily questioned for the power that might be operating to position someone more strongly than another.

[3] I use this term to include hegemonic Euro-American capitalistic colonializing forces that are mostly also white heterosexual male but in the case of surfing, and due to the temporally affected schism in surfing's ontological history, may include white Euro-American colonizing females who were complicit in the manifestation of the surfing field we have today.

pedagogy of visibility, including that contained in artefacts; of the image as a powerful mechanism for controlling female access to the waves, as a way for legitimating her as an athletic participant, and through recognition as a valued contributor constituting the surfing field. For females to be present in the surfing imaginary of the past like they were prior to patriocolonialism, to fully *see* themselves as surfers, and be seen by other sexes and genders (or beyond gender) as surfers, alternative practices of (re)presentations are pedagogically important in creating, recognizing, and supporting communities of female participation. So what images from the past can we draw on?

Pedagogy of the 'Imag(e/inary)': Female Absence and Passivity

Visual (re)presentations have been pivotal in creating particular visions of surfing's past. Like all nostalgia, this vision is 'likely to be at variance with aspects of the lived experience they purport to celebrate' (Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 25). Prior to photography and film, oral stories, chants, sketches, and writing created a record of visibility in the past. Famous in the surfing field are sketches depicting precolonial surfing where women and men rode the waves prone, sitting, and standing, such as Wallace Mackay's 'Maids on the Wave'—Box 16.1.[4] In the late 1800s and early 1900s photographs in travel brochures and postcards were used to attract Westerners initially to Hawai'i (see Fig. 16.1) but then to other beach destinations around the world. Today, these visions evoke freedom, with surfing commodified to sell products as extensive as watches, clothing, health products, cars, and even houses. The commodification and sportization of surfing (Stranger, 2011) have strong roots in visual

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[4] 'Boxes' are included with 'Images' in several places in this chapter to depict instances where an image could not be shown. This was due to either the publisher rules and owner permissions being incompatible or to the publisher regarding the image and its critique not putting subjects in a positive light. Given that I can describe and critique these images and point you to another online space where you can view them, their absence acts as further illustration of the power of the image. It would seem an important time to revise the use of images given their current ubiqutous presence online.

Can be viewed at http://welcome-to-arugambay.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/hawaiiansurfers.jpg

Box 16.1   Maids on the wave by Wallace Mackay 1874

culture, acting as a pedagogical device for sedimenting a vision of the past and therefore in imaginations of futures.

In the past hundred years, initially in Hawai'i but then also in the USA, Australia, South Africa, and the UK, photographs were central in disseminating and communicating surfing via brochures and magazines—a practice still popular today, in print and digital genres. Magazines such as Surfer (1960–ongoing), Australia's Surfing World (1962–ongoing), and Tracks (1970–ongoing) were heavy with images providing imaginaries for those wishing to extend their surfing experiences and knowledge of the surfing world (Ford & Brown, 2006). Surfing photography (still and moving) is today a flourishing art form and perhaps the primary dissemination medium for and of the qualities of surfing, at least outside one's act of surfing. The recent participant-generated media and online publication sites add a very interesting new dimension to the politics of production and representation. Modes of visibility have important implications for who is seen and recognized, and how they are positioned within surfing culture.

Given its importance, Ford and Brown (2006) explore the nature and genre of surf photography noting manipulation of images and more importantly their selection according to capturing critical moments associated with skill and in the portrayal of 'classic' images 'evoking beauty and power' (p. 36), speed and timelessness, the athletic and the aesthetic. They note the power of surfing images that 'engage the body and senses with powerful mythologies (for instance, the search for the perfect wave, adventure, and wanderlust)…the primacy of surf photography within the mediatization of surfing culture, rest[ing] on its propensity to elicit

Fig. 16.1 1938 Magazine cover of 'Paradise of the Pacific' 1938. Permission granted by Pacific Basin Communications

powerful aesthetic, contemplative experience' (pp. 41–42). Since the framing of 'modern' surfing in the early 1900s in Hawai'i, the visuality of surfing has continued to be predominantly framed, perceived, and

produced by those who dominate Western public life—patriocolonial (heteronormative) males. And, until very recent shifts, those who were legitimated within the field of surfing, early and successful photographers and writers, surf photographers, film-makers, magazine editors, acknowledged artists, historians, museum curators, and remembered surfers have been marked as masculine, capitalist, colonial, and Western.

Surfing images are pedagogical devices that carry messages about who is to be recognized, acknowledged, and remembered. 'One of the significant aspects of the mediatisation of surfing is the reduction of depictions of surfers in major surfing books to a core of named, "star" surfers' (Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 42). Many subnarratives of surfing's heritage and validation of its members consolidated as 'history's evidence' are often-repeated images collected as surf magazines, books, museum exhibitions, collections, films, photographic, and art exhibitions. For example, the lone male surfer, board under his arm, silhouetted against the sunrise/set, standing gazing at the waves (see Fig. 16.2); or manoeuvring a giant wave or the inside curl of a wave. Support for the leading male role has famously been that of the female beach babe, looking 'good' on the beach for heterosexual male gaze. These images pedagogically reify the nostalgia of the modern surfing myth, as hegemonically active masculinity with absent or passive and subservient femininity, at least until recently. Where are the surfers who were female?

(Re)viewing the Surfer

This chapter is concerned with the visibility and visual representation of the female surfer—the constructed artefact, itself a pedagogical device, viewed and consumed by audiences after the act itself. The consumption of visual media, epiphenomena associated with surfing (art, cartoons, photography, and film), acts to constitute a cultural imaginary. This imaginary frames perceptions of what (vision) and who (members) constitutes surfing and the surfing field, and what is valued or even remembered within and about the field (Booth, 2008). The surfing imag(in)ary is consumed cognitively, made recognizable as an artefact of culture, as a

Fig. 16.2   Repeated images—poster for the *Endless Summer* film. Permission and copyright 1964 Bruce Brown Films, llc

memory that is reified in the surfing history that is constituted by those positioned to legitimate what is to be valued or not, with images acting as evidence and validation (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2013). Audiences 'buy in to' the symbolic capital of these legitimated and valued surfing presence and styles, the 'look' or the image and the imagined lifestyles associated with surfing.

Surfing, an ancient Polynesian cultural activity, was part of the framework of Hawaiian culture and society. One version of history identifies surfing's decline in the late 1800s, 'the damage wrought by the coming of Europeans with their diseases, weapons, consumer goods, institutions, and ideologies' (Finney & Houston, 1996, p. 51). Surfing was then appropriated nearly a hundred years later, as 'new, fresh elements in a changed Hawai'i fanned the spark and brought surfing back to life' (p. 57). A different perspective by Kānaka Maoli (native Hawaiian) Isaiah Helekunihi Walker (2011), cautions us to recognize the historical lens and habitus of Finney's sources and portrayal, reminding us that the makers of 'received history' have largely been those inhabiting a patriocolonial habitus. Such forms of 'evidence' legitimated and legitimating a history are increasingly being challenged by those erased from that past. Walker (2011) argues surfing's popularity was maintained among Hawaiians after colonization because 'the surf offered escape and autonomy for Kānaka Maoli in an unsettling time' (p. 57). 'He'e nalu [surfboard riding]was witnessed by visitors, written about in newspapers, captured in photos, and performed by chiefs and chiefesses…around the island chain during this time' (pp. 30–31). Princess Ka'iulani (1875–1899) was not only an active surfer but was reportedly the instigator of surfing in Europe. She, like other female surfers, seems to have been 'wiped out' of surfing history.

The power of the image, both physically and in framing a cognitive awareness of what/who constituted surfing, was evident even in this early 'revival'—'modern' surfing. Picture Finney and Houston's image with the caption '1911, Alexander Hume Ford founded the magazine *The Paradise of the Pacific*. Its lead article described the revived sport of surf-riding, and this picture, one of the earliest published surfing photographs, decorated its back cover' (p. 62). The photograph shows two men vertical on surfboards on a wave, which is highly significant because, as

one of the earliest published surfing photographs, it neatly illustrates the revived modern surfing doxa. Western notions of sgs redefined Hawaiian society and surfing, resulting in the erasure of *wahine* (native Hawaiian females) from the waves and in visual records, and the erasure, absenting or re-relegation of white females to a subservient position to white males. 'Modern' surfing, situated within this larger political negotiation of space in Hawai'i, provided the frame for a (re)defining of masculinity along racial lines, represented as effeminate in the orthodoxy of patriocolonial capitalism, where kane (native Hawaiian males) were subservient to haole colonizers (non-native), in particular to males (Walker, 2011).

With increasing presence of photography and mass media, photographs documented a highly visual history of (modern) surfing. *Surfing: Historic images from Bishop Museum archives* (Brown, 2006) includes a photograph of a 1905 *Hawaiian Gazette* article titled 'Sled of a Chiefess' with a large image of 'a papa hōlua (land toboggan) and papa he'e nalu (surfboard)' (p. 14). Believed to be boards of the High Chiefess Kaneamuna living in the early 1600s, this evidence, and a wealth of examples in the form of oral legends, positioned females as prevalent, revered, competent, and strong surfers. Such evidence and oral histories challenge the normalized image of the ('modern' read male) surfer, firmly constructed along patriocolonial sgs lines.

Photographers of images in the archive book: Frank Davey, Alfred Mitchell, Ray Baker, and anonymous photographers for the Hawaii & South Seas Curio Company, and *Honolulu Advertiser* were patriocolonial males. Professional photographer Ray Baker, for example, made a living from the saleable subject of surfing (Brown, 2006), fashioning 'modern' surfing. British and Americans were enticed to Hawai'i for the sun, beach, sea, and carefree life or exotic rejuvenation (Finney & Houston, 1996) illustrated, for example, by the 'most popular of Hawaiian pastimes [of] surf swimming or heenalu' (Brown, 2006, p. 33). Framing the 'modern surfing' imag(in)ary emerged when the precolonial Hawaiian ontology was co-opted and refigured by patriocolonialism, shifting surfing from a central cultural practice to tourism and recreation, (re) claimed as 'modern'. Haoles gained economic capital through money injected from tourism associated with surfing. Prior identities of surf-

ing (Hawaiian wahine and kane) were replaced by Beachboys (Hawaiian males) employed to escort and entertain female haole tourists, 'pioneers' (Hawaiian and haole males) developing 'modern' surfing (Ishiwata, 2002; Walker, 2011).

Photographs from the early 1900s onwards witness this shift. Kānaka maoli wahine are absent from photographs of surfing and the white female (haole/Euro-American) was captured as something to view, linked to fashion, and often represented as dependent upon males. Females were present visually in passive poses and beauty shots, or under the control of Beachboys, the surfboard acting as 'everybody's favorite prop in the teens and twenties' (Brown, 2006, p. 55). Possibly more reflective of Brown (ibid.) or the photographer (Ray Jerome Baker c1920) than the sentiment of the time, the caption accompanying a photo of a haole female sitting on a surfboard at the water's edge reads:

> Perky young Gertrude McQueen shows off fashionable beachwear on Waikiki between 1915 and 1920, including lace-up boots. Considering the weight of the surfboard she's seated on, she probably was not able to make much use of it—or even lift it'. (Ibid., p. 40)

Regardless of the 'reality', assumptions of passivity, fashion, and appearance are more available for the male author of this caption than an assumption that, say, the female is preparing to surf, or would seek cooperation to carry the heavy board to the water, and hence surf. These assumptions illustrate a history.

As American/European movie stars and elite visited and 'stole' (Walker, 2011) or acquired land in Hawai'i, documentation of surfing became more evident in photos, magazines, postcards, and the developing film industry. A notable Waikīkī Beachboy, Duke Paoa Kahanamoku, became the image for Hawai'i abroad, in photographic advertisements and in the flesh, arguably[5] taking surfing to Australia, Aotearoa, New Zealand, and

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[5] The story of Duke and Isabel Letham riding tandem as being the origins of Australian surfing remains a popular image of history that illustrates the patriocolonial lens of surfing for nearly a hundred years. This 'history' was further memorialized this year in centenial celebrations of Duke and Isabel. See http://www.freshwaterslsc.com/events/dukes_day/. A different woman, Isma Amor, was riding before Letham (corresspondence with Gary Osmond, 2007. See also Murray G. Phillips

the East Coast of the USA. Simultaneously, racial segregation occurred: the whites-only membership of Honolulu's new political elite in the Outrigger Canoe Club (1908) encroaching on the Hui Nalu club (1905) who 'directed their attention to preserving Hawaiian control in the surf' (Walker, 2011, p. 57). In all this, the patriocolonial doxa of sex/gender was maintained, 'ka po'ina nalu (the surf zone) was a predominantly male space' (ibid., p. 39), albeit still also demarcated by lines of race.

Over time and into the present profits have flowed from the economic capital exchanged through the commodification of 'modern' surfing by entrepreneurial surfers who instigated a surfing diaspora, a surfing industry, a globalized sport, and now, arguably, a mainstream culture within sport. So too has economic capital come about through prior social capital amongst surfing and non-surfing entrepreneurs who have used their 'insider' connections and symbolic capital as surfers from the 1960s/1970s to legitimate capitalist endeavours—ironically counter to the myth of 1960s/1970s surfing culture as anti-establishment, anti-capitalist, and anti-mainstream society (see Comer, 2010; Stranger, 2011; Lawler, 2011 for counterculture development, the commodification and neoliberal responses in and for surfing into contemporary times).

Surfing's diaspora continued to be popularized through surfers travelling to shores where surfing was not yet visible or imagined. Southern California and Australia had embraced surfing from the early twentieth century, but expanded in popularity from the 1950s (Booth, 1996; Ormrod, 2008). Films like *The Endless Summer* (1966) fuelled imaginations at least for those without responsibility to children or home and who had some form of capital (economic or social) to travel. In Southern California, paradoxically, the surfing experiences of Kathy Kohner, captured as a novel by her father (Kohner, 2001[1957]), gave a new vision (see Fig. 16.3) to the masses. From the book, the 'Gidget legacy' (Comer, 2010) manifested as visual culture—the 1959 hit film, novel, and film series—leaving 'her most lasting cultural imprint' (p. 40). Comer argues that Gidget

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and Gary Osmond, "Australia's women surfers: history, methodology and the digital humanities". *Australian Historical Studies*, in press (2015).

Fig. 16.3 Front cover of the novel that stimulated a Gidget legacy (Photo by Ernst Lenart, permission by copyright holder Kathy Kohner)

has won the battle to establish a female presence in very male social spaces on terms that concern her physical and mental abilities, not how she looks in a bikini. Girl localism is taking root. Gidget now owns a part of herself that women are routinely encouraged to underestimate or give up. (p. 45)

Not only did Kathy Kohner appear in a full piece, as opposed to the increasingly fashionable bikini, she provided an image of female as surfer, as athletic, albeit more so in the words and Hollywood reproductions than on the cover of her father's book.

Comer argued that rather than the 1950s surfing subculture serving 'as an everyday locus for struggles over the expectation that male coming-of-age meant lives organized around breadwinning for a nuclear family' (2010, p. 37), subcultural revisions of male gender roles made possible through a visual presence of 'surfer girls' meant there was an expansion of gender norms related to femininity and therefore an enablement of counter-masculinities (ibid.). While counterculture in some respects, I would argue it re-established patriocolonial doxa. So what of the current visual pedagogies of 'the female' in surfing?

Revisioning 'Female' Surfer

Sex, gender, and sexuality have been exposed as affecting one's access to the waves and the resources available in the field of surfing (Adcock, 2012; Booth, 2001; Franklin, 2013; Henderson, 2001; lisahunter, 2015b; lisahunter & Austin, 2008; Olive, 2013a; Stedman, 1997). Hawaiian history shows precolonial femaleness as legitimate active surfer participants, erased with the patriocolonial invasion of the field. There are multiple negotiations for legitimation and accrual of capital not just in surfing but also in fields of sport and society. Far from being counterculture, surfing reflects many aspects of mainstream sport and society by absenting the habitus of female-as-active participant and valuing a particular femininity that upholds patriocolonial doxa, a femininity captured as the 'babe' (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003; Rinehart, 2005; Thorpe, 2007) or in the problematic binary captured by one blogger as the 'Damsel or Dyke' (Rea, 2012). In visual culture, the patriocolonial frame is legitimated by the habitus of those framing the image, those whose I/eye mediates through perception, cognition, selection, and creation. In a very real way, images act as potent pedagogical devices of the patriocolonial frame, through which audiences learn to see and imagine participation in surfing. Whether the heroic patriocolonial images of white male supremacy

in modern surfing, or the complimentary passive beach babe captured by white male photographers, alongside the visual erasure of female surfers in precolonial or postcolonial times, audiences have more limited opportunities to imagine the female surfer athlete.

How surfing illuminates sgs results in particular forms of capital that may be fruitful, or not, to surfing sporting careers (see, e.g., Franklin, 2013). The intelligibility, legitimation, and positioning of 'female' in the surfing field have served patriocolonial heteronormativity and hyperfemininity. Below, I examine possibilities for alternative femininities available in public visual pedagogies, demonstrating the complexity of offerings on the one hand, but the (disappointing) driving patriocolonial conservatism on the other.

The Patriocolonial Female

Until very recently, surfing females were not represented in media or public audiences as athletic but as normative or 'emphasized femininity' (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 848) supporting patriocolonial masculinity. This femininity is pivotal to the enunciation, stabilization, and enduring dominance of patriocolonial masculinity. Long-standing inequality in the volume and nature of female representation in sport and mainstream sportsmedia (Cooky, Messner, & Hextrum, 2013; Kane & Maxwell, 2011) is significant in determining who and what we recognize and value as participants/participation. The paucity of coverage of female sport 'despite the tremendous increased participation of girls and women in sport at the high school, collegiate, and professional level, conveys a message to audiences that sport continues to be by, for, and about men' (Wolter, 2013, p. 1).

Sexualized images of females have significantly increased during the most recent decades in the media, particularly online (Peter & Valkenburg, 2007), with females being shown with a '"pornified" sexuality' (Paul, 2005, p. 126). Paralleling the general depiction of females in the media, the stereotyped, sexualized, infantilized, hyperfeminization of female athletes (Petca, Bivolaru, & Graf, 2012), with more attention given to physical appearance than to their athletic performances (Kane,

LaVoi, & Fink, 2013; Licˇen & Billings, 2013) is also reflected in surfing. Journalists, by means of framing and labelling and producing storylines that support traditional gender stereotypes, construct an image of sporting women's sexuality that is 'highly influenced by the heterosexual man's perspective, and sexual attractiveness is connected with physical beauty' (Hellborg & Hedenborg, 2015, p. 2).

The 'framer' of visual epiphenomena acts as patriocolonial gatekeeper, mediating what is seen, valued, and legitimated through (re)production of images, perpetuating patriocolonial norms, whether the framer be male or female. Power is maintained via framing that values, showcases, or highlights femininity, with its attendant problems (some words needed to introduce the quote):

> Attractiveness, emotionality, femininity, and heterosexuality are a few traditional markers of gender representation; through an emphasis on these attributes via media coverage of female athletes, the effect on viewers could be that female athletes are noted for these characteristics over their athleticism. (Smith & Bissell, 2014, p. 50)

The symbiotic relationship between sportsmedia and hegemonic masculinity (Kane, 2013) influences gatekeeping. This has occurred through hegemonic masculinity creating then legitimizing particular (read same) gatekeeper habitus, their social network, journalistic norms and routines; organizational factors such as ownership and corporate culture; and social institutional influences such as the impact of advertisers and sponsors on decision-making (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Marginalization of female sports journalists (Lapchick, Brenden, & Wright, 2006) also occurs with a culture of institutional sexism where women 'hold a marginal position within its ranks' (Hardin, Whiteside, & Ash, 2014, p. 45). Even giving tacit approval to sexism is seen as a valid way by women to negotiate institutional sexism (Whiteside & Hardin, 2012).

Booth (2004) recognizes that despite more women surfing 'the lines between athleticism, sexuality and eroticism are extremely fine and even finer in the context of a male-dominated culture where any presentation of the female body as a sexual object merely reinforces negative stereotypes of women' (p. 102). Females are denied 'the symbolic resources

neededto identify as surfers' (Stedman, 1997, p. 77). Reliance on one particular body type, one representation of female as hyperfeminine and exposed, posed for heterosexual availability, or for fashion clothing (Boxes 16.2 and 16.3), has been criticized heavily for some time. 'Skewed and contradictory messages to young girls' (Booth, 2004, p. 102) even in women's surfing magazines, and complaints about this, have been captured time and time again[6], illustrating the enduring influence of patriocolonial ontology that ties an imag(in)ary to performing surfing.

Wheaton (2004) suggests that within lifestyle sports, including surfing, there is more room to challenge the doxa as 'embodied sporting identities are less tied to the reproduction of white male power than in many traditional sports' (p. 49). I would be more tentative given the strong evidence (e.g., Box 16.1, Brown, 2006) that is growing (e.g., Clark, 2011; Walker, 2011) suggesting it is neither a recent sport, nor one with a successful record of challenge to patriocolonial doxa. Females had little visibility in 'modern' surfing media in the 1900s (magazines, photographs, and films), with the exception of Gidget, and a relatively marginal space within the field. In the past ten years this invisibility and erasure has increasingly had significant challenge, but as the early mediatization and sportification were driven by those with economic, social, and symbolic capital (patriocolonial entrepreneurs) it was made quite clear that surfing was a 'white man's world'[7]. Visions of counterculture were viewed only from the worlds of those already dominating the field, many who went on to advance and profit from the commodification and mainstreaming of surfing and therefore positioned to gain the most from the exchange of symbolic and social capital. Counterculture visions, originally embracing anti-capitalism and anti-war, paradoxically dismissed the mainstream recognition of social justice movements and what they stood for, for example, women's rights, racial and sexual equity.

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[6] See, for example, '13 Year Old Girl Perfectly Blasts Surf Mag for How They Depict Woman http://jezebel.com/13-year-old-girl-perfectly-blasts-surf-mag-for-how-they-1554990275' (http://jezebel.com/13-year-old-girl-perfectly-blasts-surf-mag-for-how-they-1554990275?utm_campaign=socialfow_jezebel_twitter&utm_source=jezebel_twitter&utm_medium=socialflow

[7] See the extensive and sometimes counter versions of a 'history' of surfing captured in texts such as Clarke, 2011; Comer, 2010; DeLaVega, 2004; Finney & Houston, 1996; Ford & Brown, 2006; Kampion & Brown, 2003; McNeice, 1998; Moser, 2008; Stranger, 2011; Walding, 2008; Walker, 2011; Warshaw, 2004, and while you are there, pay attention to author sex!

Honolulu magazine with a bikini topped female in the water leaning onto the deck of a surfboard http://honolulumagazine-images.dashdigital.com/images/cache/cache_3/cache_a/cache_c/decCvrResize-b5a9eca3.jpeg?ver=1417673122&aspectratio=0.74626865671642	World champion surfer Stephanie Gilmore lying in a sexualized pose and modelling a swimwear for Roxy Pop https://encrypted-tbn3.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQzJEh4Sc7jGbsb-K-OnHoi8s0YELG8WN_M8GEH5qkqOBHQmKkf	Roxy Home page with passively posed models wearing bikinis, hats or thongs/flip flops/jandals, no surfing. Roxy.com

Box 16.2   Passive 'feminine' surfers.

Ellie-Jean Coffey is pictured lifting her sunglasses with lips pouting as though kissing in the direction of the photographer. She arches her back in a bikini on the beach http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2577975/Ellie-Jean-Coffey-says-Instagram-bikini-shots-little-bit-sexy-just-athletic-lifestyle.html

Box 16.3   Ellie-Jean Coffey promoting the sexy image

Stedman (1997) and Henderson (2001) suggest sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and the marginalization of females, as illustrated by and in the surfing media, acted as a backlash to larger society's response. Despite the growth in surfing magazines and the presence of females surfing, post-Gidget images of females were still under-represented, often infantalized or sexualized for heteronormative male gaze, used for fashion, or presented in passive poses rather than active (lisahunter, 2006a, 2006b; lisahunter & Austin, 2007). Unlike the polygendered possibilities afforded to snowboarding or skateboarding (MacKay & Dallaire, 2012), until now surfing has provided fewer opportunities to dismantle the sexual and gendered gaze.

New Waves of Female Visibility?

Opportunities to (re)vision females who surf through dismantling or decoupling (hetero)femininity from masculinity are just waiting, but some are already disrupting, destabilizing, or rejecting patriocolonial femininity in surfing. Whether through the 'recognition' and imaging of female surfers identifying as same-sex partnered, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, or even moving away from fixed identities to fluid subject spaces (see lisahunter, forthcoming), it is also within the grassroots, local, diffused spaces of participants' lived and recorded representations (e.g., locale and blogs) where mainstream sportsmedia practices are being challenged (MacKay & Dallaire, 2014; Thorpe, 2008; Olive, 2015). Sportsmedia stereotypes are not fully accurate nor 'an accurate reflection of the dynamic and diverse surfing lifestyles that are lived in communities around the vast coastline of Australia and beyond' (Stranger, 2011, p. 83). Denigration and exclusion of females in magazines, for instance, is regarded by some as 'petulant responses to political correctness; a reaffirmation of surfing culture as oppositional, and an example of the surfing industry pandering to its young "protest male" market' (ibid.). However, a weight of evidence and concern from scholars, critically conscious media, and surfer biographies about the positioning of females in surfing by the media, industry, and competitive surfing is persistent (Booth, 2001; Comer, 2004; Ford & Brown, 2006; Franklin, 2013; Gordon & Beachley, 2008; Henderson, 2001; Stedman, 1997; Stell & Burridge, 1992; Wheaton, 2004). Surfing still exhibits a patrocolonizing picture whether illustrated by experience in the water (lisahunter, 2015c), in the industry and associated competitions (lisahunter, 2015a, under review), or in the images from an expanding media (lisahunter, forthcoming). Visual culture associated with surfing acts as an immediate and powerful pedagogy and litmus test about where/how females are positioned.

Local formations and non-competitive surfing have made visible ways to counteract the oppressions seen within the competitive and mass-mediated spaces of the field, both acknowledging the visibility and positive spaces inhabited by females, 'images of surfer girls in U.S. popular culture have gone from being occasional and exotic visual anomalies to

having become mainstay figures of desirable, global twenty-first-century womanhood' (Comer, 2010, p. 8). While the recent work of Olive identifies such a difference between the local and non-competitive spaces to the sporticized and mass media spaces noting that the existing literature about surfing culture 'seemed to be a focus on professional, commercial and media contexts of surfing, which are often far removed from the more common recreational and "everyday" experiences in the water' (2013a, p. ii), I would argue that this difference is not yet discernable within the public imag(in)ary. She nevertheless offers 'space to think outside of simple resistance and reproduction, instead considering a complex space where women and men negotiate power in a range of ways from contextual, subjective positions' (Olive, McCuaig, & Phillips, 2013. As more participants reflexively encounter (reframe/analyse/interpret?) their interactions with the field to 'access and engage with the complexities, contradictions and messiness of women's surfing cultural understandings and experiences in a culturally contextual way' (Olive, 2013a, p. ii), I sense that multiple habitus are becoming recognized and legitimated to inhabit surfing to continue to challenge the doxa of the field.

Certainly, counterimages of the surfing female subject exist as pedagogical devices to reimagine femaleness and female as active surfer. Moves such as the 'Girl Effect' (Shain, 2013), the destabilization of identity, and disruptions in and of the media have potential to recognize and position females for their participation/athleticism. Girl Effect plays out in neoliberal feminism as an image of women promoting 'self-reliance, personal transformation, individualism, and economic efficiency' (Rottenberg, 2014, p. 3). Females who compete at the highest levels of surfing embody this self-reliance and empowerment and, as a result, their attitudes and values are influential (Meân & Kassing, 2008). This takes females off the beach as spectators and places them on the waves as athletes and 'in control' of their own positioning within the field.

Disruption of femininity portrayed by media narratives that 'endorse feminine appearance and behaviour' acts to challenge 'heteronormativity through creating a sex-positive and fluid, "in your face" and gender-transgressive environment' (Hardy, 2015, p. 157). This has recently been highlighted in boxing (Paradis, 2015), rugby (Hardy, 2015), skateboarding (MacKay & Dallaire, 2014), in lesbian sociality in recreational surfing

(Roy, 2013), and in competitive surfing.[8] As Wheaton (2013) notes: 'Research needs to continue to illustrate the competing and contradictory messages disseminating through popular forms of (lifestyle) sporting cultures…[mapping] articulations of gender, sexuality, "race" class, age, nation and (neoliberal) democracy' (p. 185).

Image mediation of surfing, until recently the realm of powerful mass sportsmedia institutions including magazines, film, and television, effective tools for preserving patriocolonial power and privilege, has rendered female athletes invisible or on the sideline. Intertwined with the media, the surfing industry and competition structures cluster to form multi-institutional players in the field keeping patriocolonial doxa alive. Illustrating where and when female surfing athletes become visible, as well as put in their patriocolonial place, Layne Beachley, a previous world champion, explains: 'if the waves are shit, send the girls out…[Male counterparts] still resent it if we are able to score better waves then they do…It's just disappointing given we are in 2012 and we still have to deal with that chauvinistic attitude' (Adcock, 2012). This is also illustrated in the recent Air New Zealand Safety video,[9] where a sexualized model, who is also a surfer, represents 'female' while a world champion and other high-performance surfers represent 'male'.

Increasing numbers of females are surfing and competing but also mediating surfing, as photographers, film-makers, reporters, bloggers, and magazine editors. The highly visible portrayal of female surfing (World Surfing League competitions) via mass media online and through television also has increasing visual presence of females in mediating roles. Rosie Hodge, a former professional surfer, represents female insertion into commentary space of professional surfing, interviewing competitors or spectators of interest. Jessi Miley-Dyer, once a world tour professional, is now a visible World Surf League (WSL) institutional member representing female professionals as the World Tour Women's Commissioner. She understands the importance of visuality: 'You can't be what you can't

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[8] http://www.dailylife.com.au/health-and-fitness/dl-sport/rip-curl-pro-at-bells-beach-finally-realises-sexism-is-bad-for-business-20140423-373km.html accessed 23 May 2015.

[9] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADqb6ovsasE&feature=youtu.be&gclid=Cj0KEQjw18-rBRDogrTg4Lusuu0BEiQACs8YQnA5Dav_OhplDgpEzvip-z8FAjMHDJE1kjQDX13KNdkaAlEi8P8HAQ

15 out of the 20 images in the screenshot I took were of females active and
surfing while only 5 were passive and modelling
https://www.google.co.nz/search?q=roxy+surf&num=20&espv=2&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0CAcQ_AU
oAWoVChMI4e7MqLuLxwIVQ5SmCh1_NALs&biw=706&bih=634 31 July 2015

Box 16.4 Roxy Surf Google Image search

see. We need greater visibility and representation at the executive levels
of traditionally male dominated sports' (Priestley, 2015). Even a Google
image search of Roxy Surf now positions females more often than in the
past as athletes and not just as fashion items (Box 16.4).

Grassroots social media has also disrupted the doxa. Visual exposure
and intelligent debate are present in the proliferating user-generated
media that imag(in)e female as surfer. Schumacher, a surfing world tour
professional and champion, comments (http://www.corischumacher.
com/), contributes to other sites (Women in the subculture of surf-
ing), and recently co-launched the Inspire Initiative (http://www.thein-
spireinitiative.org/) to capture more of past and present female surfing.
Arguably a more democratic platform, the Internet affords more connec-
tions through and related to pro-female surfing (see, e.g., Olive, 2013b).
Yet while social media loosens the oligopoly so the gatekeeper frame can
potentially be re-visioned, this new pedagogical device also replicates
mainstream media in the amount and nature of female athlete portrayal
(Eagleman, 2015).

Complexities of Disruption

Sexualization of female athletes is by no means straightforward (Kane,
2013). A tension for some surfers is that sexualized 'appearance' attracts
physical capital tradable for economic capital where few economic
resources exist for travel and competition. The question becomes: 'What
can I afford to be?' While some surfers resist the 'babe' or 'Damsel' imag-
ery, others, like Ellie-Jean Coffey and Alana Blanchard, are exploiting it.
Even Stephanie Gilmore has gained more exposure through fashion and
naked images than through her six world championship titles. The sexed/
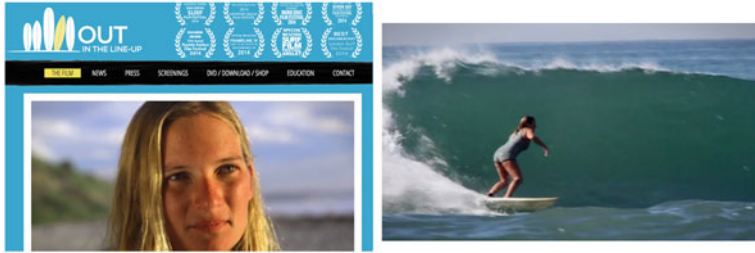
Fig. 16.4 Krista Coppedge interview and surfing in the film '*Out in the Line Up*: Uncovering the taboo of homosexuality in surfing' (http://outinthel-ineup.com/). Permission by Krista Coppedge and Thomas Castets

gendering of surfing by those exploiting heterosexualized hyperfeminin-ity for their own economic capital or commercial benefit is caught in a double bind associated with sponsorship, sustained by and sustaining the patriocolonial ontology. Symbolic violence results from misrecognizing their positioning. Picture the two images of the current world champion Stephanie Gilmore: one crouched on her board in the barrel of a wave, the other an overhead shot of her lying naked on a towel.[10] Does her male counterpart have this privilege/necessity?

Female surfers resist and reproduce dominant discourses of sex (Kayoung, 2014), heterosexuality being the organizing principle where maintaining a heterosexual, feminine appearance has been a survival strategy for female athletes (Kolnes, 1995) or an act of embracing their sexuality (Thorpe, 2008). Sexualization through heteronormative femi-ninity reinforces heterosexism and indirectly suggests that lesbian ath-letes are less worthy of attention and emulation (Weber & Carini, 2013). Recently though, there have been some previously unseen, hidden, or unrecognized sgs manifesting in public media. *Out in the Line Up* (see Fig. 16.4) makes visible a focus on gay and lesbian surfers including international profiled surfers.

With extensive online and television images screening professional female surfing (WSL), high-quality athletic performance is now also vis-ible. While a big leap from the past century, three concerns remain. The first is sport and society's ability to make 'female-as-active participant'

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[10] Permission to show these two images was denied.

intelligible—for females who surf and the mediators of this imaginary to see and be seen, valued and positioned strongly to mark the category female as competent participants. This acts as a pedagogical space to (re)learn females' place as active participants in the constitution of riding waves and the production of epiphenomena as part of the broader field of surfing. While local spaces have nurtured this possibility more successfully (Comer, 2010; Olive, 2013a), these are not yet prevalent in the larger sport and societal imaginary, or in all wavespaces.

The second concern is the sexed and gendered work done by females who surf in the name of postfeminism, where the maintenance of the patriocolonial spectre hides at least the neoliberal, heteronormative, and white supremacy agendas. Images of female surfers made intelligible through fashion, sex, and appearance discourses, claimed as sponsorship opportunities, speak strongly to what is taken for granted and what is and is not available in the imaginary. That elite female surfers are rarely portrayed (and sponsored) purely for their surfing or as non-hyperfeminine heterosexual means an ongoing tension over seeking other ways of being that interfere with their ultimate goal of performance success. This maintains the idea that females have to do more than non-females for recognition as surfer, employing tactics that close down alternative ways of being female, instead reinforcing narrow stereotypes and ultimately patriocolonialism.

The third concern draws on the first two, that an imaginary for 'ways of being' in surfing is not only trapped within discourses of sgs but that there has been an invisibility or delegitimation of those who trouble such discourses. While new media and grassroots social media are heralded as major disruptions to the narrow visioning of females in and by hegemonic mass media, we cannot forget that those who wish to maintain and/or re-establish narratives of white supremacy, heteronormative gender binaries, and cisgender hegemony as the vision of the past also populate and use new/social media. Their strong positioning within the field of surfing enables their world view to dominate and be legitimated through mechanisms of the field.

The 'powerful heterosexual code' (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 165) still maintains narrow definitions of femininity and sexuality, and marginalizes or masks alternatives. Female surfers are constrained as much by their social

appearance performance as their athletic performance. The sgs of surfing by those exploiting the heterosexualized hyperfemininity arguably maintain the patriocolonial ontology for their own economic capital or commercial benefit. At the same time, they are caught in a double bind associated with sponsorship that sustains, and is sustained by, the patriocolonial ontology.

As I paddle out through the break now, I recognize more females, as surfing competitors, magazine writers, photographers, bloggers, philanthropists, judges, coaches, travellers, researchers, and pedagogues. Their presence teaches a new and visible story. I sense a critical mass that is shifting visibility and power dynamics to challenge orthodoxy established in the past century: surfing is no longer the exclusive domain of the patriarchy but still a battlefield for sgs politics. Like others though, I wait to see whether females and other non-dominant selves are afforded greater presence in the waves, exploiting new mediums to express a presence, demanding recognition and legitimation. Or are the latest visibilities just reimaginations of a particular femininity that upholds patriocolonialism? What visions, imaginings, and visual narratives of the political position 'female' are to be offered beyond Schumacher's 'tailored image' in the pedagogical spaces of surfing's future, and what part will I embody?

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17

Cultural Pedagogies—Action Sports

Synthia Sydnor

Endless Summer: Case Study and *Sport and Modern Society*—16-week undergraduate courses that I teach at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign out of my home department Kinesiology and Community Health—originate this essay about action sports media in the classroom. The reader will learn a bit about the courses—their textualization and circulation around distinctive tropes, and there will be threads about how gender and race frame and permeate the courses. I wish for readers of this chapter to also be inspired to think about the phenomenological nature and origin(s) of sport itself, aspects that we rarely consider in our pedagogical interventions. Indeed from the first day of class (and hopefully onward through their lives), I ask students to contemplate, "What is sport?" (Signor, 2005, p. 540). Earlier valuable works that probe sports' nature (e.g., Barthes, 2007; Caillois, 1958/2001; Guttmann, 1978; James, 1963; Lowe, 1977; Loy, 1968; Suits, 1978) can be explored beyond their

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original theses in our twenty-first century courses (e.g., Sydnor, 2015, p. 216).

Physical culture and action sports express intertanglings with art, dance (e.g., Streb, 2015), music, ecstasy, fasting (e.g., Liu, 2010; Maxwell, 2015), fashion, architecture, design, celebrity, communication, pharmaceuticals, urbanism, neuro-cultures, human machine technology interactions (e.g., Vanhemert, 2014), ecology, and space exploration, to name some of which I am fascinated with. Contest and competition may not be central to these blended endeavors, so we attune not only to form, historicity, and criticism, but to futures (Fortun, p. xix) of action sports not yet imagined.

Along with critical analysis and teaching the conflicts (as we have rightly fetishized in our sport-related courses), the corporeal nature of action sports demands that things like sensuality, dream, wonder, performance, beauty, and the melding of vast realms of culture (e.g., Hawhee, 2009; Lowe, 1977; Mittel, 2015; Wolfe, 1931/2006; Zimmer, 2015) with sport also be integral to classrooms (e.g., Thorpe, 2011, pp. 218–247; Behar, 2015; Pringle et al., 2015).

I do not reproduce my syllabi here as the creation of that is exclusive to the pedagogue, ongoing in redesign to meet her inimitable milieu. I do make some explicit pedagogical recommendations in this chapter. For example, before students can help to eradicate racism and sexism, they have to understand that ideologies and practices of racial and gender inequality exist and are institutionalized and historically embedded in society. Introduction to vocabularies and paradigms that aid in this understanding are crucial as are theoretical/critical understandings of power. The realization that micro/subtle racism and sexism (such as homophobia) exist everywhere and are wrong/hurtful also has to occur before students can begin to transform their lives and communities. Imani Perry, a leading public intellectual whom I quote in class, describes:

> I feel confident in saying that race is everywhere and it is a many-headed beast. Cut off a head, another lashes out, while the previously amputated spontaneously regenerates. This makes it rather hard to write about, not to say anything of actually addressing, the politics and practices of race in day to day life. (Perry, 2011, p. xiii)

My students, influenced as many are by the neoliberal corporate militarized framework of twenty-first-century America, commonly believe that practices of gender and racial subjugation have transcended our times and that things are "better now." Even with #BlackLivesMatter, academic inquiries, and immense social media that theorize and shame instances of racial inequality and sexism, students are not easily disposed to troubling these. Some adamantly argue that discussing such is part of the university professors' "political correctness" (PC) agenda of which the students are not in agreement; thinking about social justice is seen to be irrelevant to job training for which they entered the university (e.g., Giroux, 2003).

I strive to raise issues related to gender during every class meeting. For example, the first day of class, I screen "In Memorium, 2014 Passings" created by *The Surfer's Journal* (2014), a four-minute piece that shows photos of 38 surfers who died in 2014. Inevitably, the students notice that none of the portraits are of women, and all except one depict white men. Women's absence/lack of cultural space is as imperative a kind of evidence as are flagrant instances of sexism. A student shared a three-minute O'Neill Girls Surf Team clip of which only a few seconds were devoted to the women actually surfing: when students themselves voluntarily find such evidence, I think that their cohort are more affected than if I simply lecture on this.

I also attempt to find media/readings of which female action sport athletes are central but more complex than simply about physical performance and execution of actions/moves. The documentary *Women and the Waves: A Female Surfing Experience*, for instance, is touted on its cover as "inspiring…combines archival footage and candid interviews of female surfers that have defined a sport and sheds light on what it's like to truly 'surf like a girl'" (Hudson, 2011). My students and I discover, however, that the film also reproduces some old stereotypes—the women are shown with their husbands or they speak of them, and sometimes the women's husbands speak for the female surfers themselves; also the surfers discuss things like "laundry not getting done." I had high hopes for *Salted, A Surf Magazine for Women* but it tends to discuss romances (how women surfers should always date men who surf better than them so as not to embarrass their boyfriends) and "bottoms" (Hill, 2012, p. 18; Prodanovich, 2012, p. 20). Still, these were used in class because they

are vivid examples of the "female apologetic" (e.g., Birrell & Theberge, 1994). I try to emphasize to students that we are concerned with fine nuances of representations and actions, that human empowerment and oppression differs according to personhood and deep varied cultural context. Sport scholars tend to continue to teach that female/feminine gender identity is oppressed in modern sport. As the chapters in this book have accomplished, in our pedagogies of queering the curriculum and in our fights for emancipation/equality for all in political and economic life, we action sport scholars can reject this modern dualism and commit that femininity and specific female charisms (in their constantly changing forms across all genders and times) are truths of sport as much as our projects that disrupt masculine hegemony have been in our past teachings/learnings.

I use Pirkko Markula-Denison and Michael Silk's concepts of "mapping," "critique," and "social change" as touchstones throughout the semester and students apply these concepts in various classroom activities. "Mapping" takes into account the landscapes, behaviors, histories, social changes of phenomena such as sports; "critique" includes in-depth (not necessarily negative) commentary or identification of a problematic and/or unique facet of the phenomena; and "social change" means that we attempt to change or transform, for example, gender or racial ideologies in meaningful ways (Markula-Denison & Silk, 2011, p. 8). In conjunction with this guiding frame (mapping, critique, and social change), in class I approach paradigms of hegemony and culture as found in Charles Springwood's foundational 1995 work:

> Hegemony…signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies that come to be taken for granted as the natural and received shape of the world and everything that inhabits it. It consists of things that go without saying…things that are normally not the subject of explication or argument. This is why power has so often been seen to lie in what it silences, what it prevents people from thinking and saying, what it puts beyond the limits of the rational and the credible. (Paraphrased from Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991, p. 23, from Gramsci, 1971, p. 328, 348, as quoted by Springwood, 1995, p. 158)

I explain to students that to enroll in my course is to join a disciplinary community for a semester within the bounds of which they will learn (and are expected) to perform as culturalists to the highest of their ability in all course requirements, however tiny some of those requirements might be (as in introducing themselves at the first class meeting). Students can have opinions that go against the sensibilities of the course, but I ask that those be ample, not simplistic; they are incited to articulate logical explanations of their disagreement. Influenced by a seminar on the idea of the "flipped classroom," I stopped expecting undergraduate students to read complex lengthy works in preparation for class. Instead, I reduced reading and used the class before the assigned reading to explain its main ideas and rationale for inclusion in the course. I use Springwood's idea of culture to help students to notice fine distinctions:

> Culture: a semantic terrain where people represent themselves and their histories to themselves and others. An unfolding process, always politically situated, conflictual, potentially empowering. Characterized for its dynamic capability of flow, its penetration of the fields of space and time. Culture is slippery, pulses seductively; a site of creativity, but at the same time, this creativity is situated within the strictures of history and power. (Paraphrased from Springwood, 1995, pp. 11–12)

Students are asked to identify and mull over the main points of readings, and synthesize purposefully disparate readings with visual media (e.g., Moore, 2012; Cutri, 2006; Klein, 2011; Laird et al., 2004; Nalius and McMillan, 2013; Olpin et al, 2006; Scarritt and Graim, 2009; Swartz and Rothman, 1967). We read genres that play between fiction, academic, and popular styles of writing. For example, when we explore art–design–sport, we read Roland Barthes (1957) on "Plastic," and recent articles about crafting surfboards from *The Surfer's Journal* (Beamish, 2013; Kenvin, 2014). These are linked with a Jean Paul Sartre essay and a *New York Times* article (Browne, 2007). In class that day, students search the Internet for related street-art samples. Chris Cutri's *Hanging Five* (2009) (about intersections of art, artists, surfing) is viewed in entirety. Ordinarily, I screen short clips of filmic media, and varying mash-ups of my selection ensue each semester. In the open-ended comment section of required end-of-semester course evaluations, students frequently recall Cutri's *Hanging Five* as epiphanic:

I have been in pre-med…this movie made me see my priorities. I'm going to try to make a living in art.

I crafted the *Endless Summer: Case Study* course about surfing films and culture during a semester's sabbatical, part of which I resided in Raglan, New Zealand, one of the destinations highlighted in the classic film *Endless Summer* (1964). A lifetime of vacationing and body surfing at Ocean City, New Jersey; attendance at the North American Society for Sport Sociology's premier of *Hanging Five* (Cutri, 2009), and subsequent trips to New Zealand (in which surfers and locals shared ideas of films to include in my course—*Big Wednesday* [Rose et al., 1978] was frequently offered) helped me frame my syllabus. My university (like most) asks faculty to address in their research and teaching "Health and Wellness; Economic Development; Education; Information and Technology; Energy and Environment; and Social Equality and Cultural Understanding" (The Department of Kinesiology: Visioning future excellence, 2012) I felt that my completed syllabus spoke to all of these initiatives.

Working on my syllabus, I discovered Ted Woods' visceral documentary *White Wash* (2011), a film that I screen in full and that greatly resonates with students. It is the single best vehicle that I have found in my long teaching career to convince students that racial and sexual inequities/oppression still exist, so we view this early in the semester. *White Wash* encourages surfers' movement to be seen as dance; uses interviews with scholars to document histories of female and Black exclusion from surfing; and presents archival footage to show brutality against Blacks in America when they tried to recreate in public pools and beaches. Along with screening *White Wash*, I read in class to the students from *Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America*:

A little league baseball team had won the…championship and decided to celebrate at the local pool…but not all were admitted. One player, Al Bright, was denied entrance because he was black. The lifeguards forced him to sit…outside the fence as everyone else played in the pool…parents pleaded with the guards to let Al into the pool for at least a couple of minutes. Finally the supervisor relented; Al could "enter" the pool as long as everyone else got out and he sat inside a rubber raft. As his teammates and other bystanders looked on, a lifeguard pushed him once around the pool. "Just

don't touch the water," the lifeguard constantly reminded him, "whatever you do, don't touch the water." (Wiltse, 2007, p. 2, quoting Watkins, 1998, pp. 127–129).

My students have intense reactions to these works (*White Wash; Contested Waters*):

> Initially I was just shocked. I never knew about segregation in America.
>
> As a swim instructor…I can't believe I never truly thought about the real reason as to why blacks didn't know how to swim: effects of slavery, followed by segregation.
>
> During my high school years I became a youth swim coach and lifeguard…Our boss explained to us that we would be having an inner-city group coming to swim and that we would need extra lifeguards at the pool because they were likely not good swimmers and not as buoyant as whites. Films like White Wash would encourage minorities to be more involved in water sports and would spread the word that "buoyancy" is a myth.
>
> I grew up living by a lake, but thought I couldn't swim because I was Black. After watching this video, I really want to learn how to swim and maybe even go surfing one day.

Along with *White Wash*, documentaries by University of Minnesota Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport (2013); films like *Wrestling with Manhood* (Ridberg & Jhally, 2003); and *Race, Power, Sports with Dave Ziron* (2013); as well as collections of intellectual material like the curated African American Intellectual History Society's Charleston Syllabus (2015) galvanize insight about gender and race in part because their purpose seems current and heartfelt, and originators and narrators evoke genuineness. These sources show that "language, power, gender, sexuality, and race work and entwine in history…" (Fortun, 2010, p, vi).

It is important to me that students walk out of my class with more than rote historical knowledge or awe of action sports. For example, the popular film *Dogtown and Z-Boys* (Friedman et al., 2001) is typically used by teachers to showcase the history of skateboarding and its confluence with surfing. Instead of presenting the film as so, I unabashedly pair it with Kyle Kusz's (2007) work on white power. Kusz dedicates a chapter to criticizing *Dogtown and Z- Boys*:

[I]t is precisely because these narratives do not appear to be about race that they work so effectively as instruments and effects of a new cultural racism…whose goal is not necessarily to perpetuate racial inequalities but to re-secure and center a normative position for whites. (Kusz, 2007, p. 110)

Kusz considerably influences students, so that when we screen *Gum for My Boat* (Brownley, 2009; gum = wax; boat = surfboard in Bangladesh), students are apt to decry romanticized notions like "surfing liberates people and it changes nations" that are spoken in the film by Tom Bauer, CEO of the humanitarian Surfing the Nations organization. Can something like surfing change the world? The students are encouraged to discuss and debate such potentials.

Along with pondering sport-for-development notions like the above, influenced by Norman Denzin and Holly Thorpe, I want to help students become "bricoleurs"[1] to use theoretical tool boxes (e.g., Thorpe, 2011, p. 16; Denzin, 2010, pp. 9–10; 46). We also concentrate on troubling "authenticity" using Edward Bruner's conception as our benchmark:

What is the process by which any item of culture or practice achieves an aura of being authentic? What are the processes of production of authenticity? Authenticity is something sought, fought over and reinvented…Rather than ask "what is authentic?" ask how authenticity is achieved, produced and made believable. (Bruner, 1989, p. 113; also Wheaton & Beal, 2003)

At the end of the first few semesters, instead of a final exam (e.g., Crider, 2015), I asked students to write about the *Endless Summer* course and how they might use it in their future careers (which at Illinois are predominantly medicine and physical/occupational therapy). Interspersed throughout this chapter are some of the student comments that I liked from that assignment. Note that perhaps because the students received (minimal) credit for the assignment, there were no negative writings. These are nice esteem boosters for me; but the positive remarks demonstrate too, the centrality that cultural sport studies can take in our curricula and strate-

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[1] "A bricoleur…makes do with whatever is at hand…the bricoleur's method is a poetic making do, a construction, making something new that was not there before" (Weinstein & Weinstein, 1991, p. 161 as quoted by Denzin, 2010, p. 33).

gic plans. I have benefitted much from David Andrews' cohesive assemblage of cultural studies writings over the past three decades that of late call for a "slowing" of pedagogy, an attention to "human needs, civic and moral responsibilities, and public values" (Silk et al., 2014, p. 1266). "Our students need time to read and think and…collectively we need time to step back and reflect on 'sport'" (Silk et al., 2014, p. 1268; also p. 1275; Andrews et al., 2013). I strive to answer Andrews and his associates' call and believe that my students profit:

> I have to say that I got more out of this class than most classes in my kinesiology curriculum…While most classes are cut and dry with what you are supposed to learn, KIN 494 made me really think about life outside of school…I had no idea…that I would be exploring aspects of life that ranged from race to religion, and everything in between.
>
> We were asked to look deep into our minds and think about things that often aren't asked of undergraduates, especially in a science field like kinesiology. In basically every other class that I've taken…we were given the bare minimum of what was going to be asked on the test and that's all that I bothered to look at. During the course of this class, I found myself surfing the web to find other information about the topics that we were discussing in class. Google searches led me to websites, videos, and pictures that corresponded to things that we were discussing in class, and I couldn't help but continue my search for more information on it all.

My university declares faculty freedom in curricular matters, doing so particularly through their support of interdisciplinary, experimental courses. Experimental courses become permanent if and when the instructor forwards a course proposal that passes successively through educational policy committees at the department, college, and campus levels.

In constructing the many courses that I have created over the years, I always remember a lecture by Roland Barthes in which he described

> "phantasmic teaching," one based on the comings and goings of desire which [the teacher] endlessly presents and represents…at the origins of teaching such as this we must always locate a fantasy which can vary from year to year. (Barthes, 1979, p. 5 as quoted by Barthes, 2005, p. 3)

As I designed and then taught through my first semester of the *Endless Summer: Case Study*, I believed that I had fulfilled Barthes beckoning.

"Phantasmic teaching," like C. Wright Mill's "sociological imagination" (e.g., Denzin, 2010, pp. 9–10; 46) is a beautiful vision. However, I (and most of my cohort faculty whose teaching sustains higher education in the humanities and interpretive social sciences) would not dare inscribe tenure/promotion papers or syllabi, with a teaching philosophy as wild as that. We know the backlash against subjective and reflexive forms of intellectualizing; we faculty experience the pressures of the neoconservative, neoscientific higher education's "complex amalgam of bureaucratic, military, and corporate interests" (Andrews, 2008, p. 48), interests of which surf film criticism is clearly remote.

> Going into physical therapy as my profession, I will be working with people from all different backgrounds, ethnicities, genders and functional abilities. This class has allowed me the ability to work with a much broader range of patients because it has helped amend my way of thinking and understanding others…This class has taught me the skill of dissecting other's passions and activities in order to be able to relate to them better and give them the best personal care they deserve…
>
> I am walking away from this class with a new outlook on culture and life in general…what I have learned is that this class is not as much about the physical aspect of surfing itself, yet, the cultural aspects that surround those who are involved in the sport.

When I initially forwarded my experimental course syllabus about surf culture to be approved as a permanent course, it passed through my department education policy committee, in part owing to the backing of my department head at the time, Wojtek Chodzko-Zajko, a strong advocate for the humanities. However, as the course proceeded through approval committees, it met with backlash which I discuss here not so much to expose finicky persons but in order to illuminate epistemological–ontological matters that are consistent concerns of others teaching action pursuits through film and academic learning.

My campus educational policy committee requested, "Explain what is the course's connection to kinesiology? Please revise syllabus to explain that." My syllabi thenceforward included the lines:

The 1966 classic film—*The Endless Summer*—and related films and literature are used as lens for the historical-cultural study of human movement in the form of riding waves of water. Surf culture and films are global phenomena and by using such as unique case studies, students gain mastery in cultural-interpretive theories, themes, and vocabulary, and in articulating perspectives on social roles, knowledge, and power.

A sympathetic committee member emailed me "I think you're getting push-back because the title is the name of a movie, and not about body movement." After a few back and forth emails addressing the committee's concerns, I texted a committee member,

We are told to make courses exciting…thus the unusual, "jazzy" title… students in the previous semesters…resoundingly advised to keep as it is… if the title is to be changed it could be revised to "History-Anthropology of Surf Culture."

For the next few weeks, I received more questions about the course content that I was required to address. Here are two of my responses (from which the reader can assume my correspondents' concerns).

It's quite disheartening to spend so much of my whole being on this course in an attempt to be creative, excite the students to learn, teach complex social theory to kinesiology undergrads in an accessible way, only to have evaluators want a typical kinesiology movement course? It's as if they have no idea of the cultural-interpretive perspective of our department?

I'm about to give up, get an introductory book from Human Kinetics that includes power points and multiple choice exam questions and use that for a new course! We are asked to be creative, use active learning, etc., and when I do, it is not approved? Very sad.

Eventually my department head intervened to help the course approval process and miraculously it was cross-listed in addition to Kinesiology & Community Health, with Media & Cinema Studies; and Recreation, Sport & Tourism departments.

In a later semester of teaching the *Endless Summer* course, I perused Barthes again about teaching (as the comings and goings of desire, of

discovering a new fantasy). Biographical sketches of thinkers in far-flung fields whose work has enduring influence on cultural study of action sports helps students "hear the body" (Cixous, 1975). In this case, I wanted to use the phantasmic teaching quote with my students as part of the process of exposing the seams of my pedagogy ("how the work of cultural analysis is itself designed and staged" [Fortun, 2010, p. viii]); how the history of the knowledge content of a discipline itself is subject to oppression and hegemonic effects.

As I reread Barthes, I newly discerned that he meant not that the subject matter be necessarily novel and exciting (as I had years earlier taken his words), but that the fantasy came from "mature commitment to a domain," "holding steady" over a lifelong intellectual "trajectory" (paraphrased from Barthes, Translator's Introduction, 2005, pp. 3–6).

In that new light, I now saw my *Endless Summer* course as successful because I never left my core intellectual endeavors.

A few years after I commenced the surf course, to continue my good fortune, I revised another course, Sport and Modern Society, to follow Holly Thorpe's book *Snowboarding Bodies in Theory and Practice* (2011). Originally the course was of typical introductory sport-related sociological-issues content, but nowadays, students can easily acquire this kind of knowledge through good blogs and a multitude of easily accessible erudite information—the Internet and digital–virtual culture engages people everywhere. So I turned to material such as Thorpe's that would provide the students with substantial intellectual reflection collected in a single tome; near impossible to acquire through surfing the World Wide Web on their own. I paired Thorpe's book with media predominantly associated with snowboarding. Some of the media were discussed in Thorpe's book, but I also did much daily research to unearth new pieces, such as Tweets, YouTube videos, and Facebook posts.

In *Snowboarding Bodies in Theory and Practice* (2011), Thorpe explicates ideas from thinkers like Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. I was not sure that beginning undergraduate students would take to challenging intellectual work like that but ongoing discussion; great group and individual work on assignments; and enthusiastic final course evaluations, highlighted that the pairing of a little known sport (outside of the canon of American sport to these particular students) with media that

they could not easily access from mainstream sports media, riveted them. I am indebted to doctoral candidates Matthew Adamson and Caitlin Clarke who helped with the courses and whom I consider co-teachers. They model in their ongoing contributions to the courses devotion to learning about the deeper layers of sport and they demonstrate to the undergraduates advanced cultural studies in action, which I deem helps set the tone of the course and build its continuing good repute.

To teach about sport from the perspectives of the humanities is tricky as my earlier troubles to get my course approved demonstrate. Sport sociologist Jay Coakley explains that the difficulty lies in a "myth" which comprehends sport to be "pure and good." Those who believe this myth hold that "there is no need to study and evaluate sports for the purpose of transforming or making them better, because they are already what they should be" (Coakley, 2015, p. 11). *Sport, Power & Culture* by John Hargreaves (1986) articulates that sport–power relationships are constituted precisely because elements of play—inherent to sport of any form—make sport seem innocent and frivolous (pp. 10–13). Hand-in-hand with sports,' uncritical acceptance, physical cultural studies are often considered by academe and popular culture to be epistemologically less valuable, for they are qualitative, not positivist and empirical (e.g., Andrews, 2008) as touched on above.

Obviously, even in science-dominated programs such as pre-medicine, students can learn to use theoretical tools from the humanities that will enable them over their lifetime to engage with culture. Even when cultural scholarship on sport is acknowledged as worthy though, it is my experience that it remains challenging for female faculty, especially older females (no matter their proficiency and knowledge; e.g., Freedman & Holmes, 2003) to be considered experts on sport—unless perchance they are current coaches or superlative athletes. We think of Marcel Mauss' (1934/1992) techniques of the body: the university professor's body that presumes to teach about sports such as surfing or snowboarding is always bound by societal ideas and prevailing orientations about physical and intellectual acumen.

Nevertheless, there has been a huge culture-wide positive transformation regarding sports, ableism, and aging, so perhaps it is no longer strange to have an older, nonathletic-looking female as a teacher of sport studies. Since the 1990s, in the USA, "the number of girls playing high

school sports increased more than 1000 percent" (Coakley, 2015, p. 196). Revising my courses to center specifically on surfing and snowboarding also might have dissolved the negatively perceived corporeality surrounding an older female professor of sport, for surfing and snowboarding are perhaps perceived to be equitable, coed, and trendy. Also, both sports are little practiced by local Midwestern American students, so feasibly, students do not attach strong historical–cultural gendered attributes to the subject matter, and concomitantly, the teacher:

> Countless classes that I've taken have touched upon the great strides that our culture has made to incorporate women into sport, but never once have I had a class that touched upon the fact that there are still miles to go.
> The class really taught me how to engage in conversation on an intellectual level with others…it was refreshing to be able to discuss subject matter that was outside of my everyday gossip.

Andrew McGregor (2015) describes in his nice blog about teaching sport studies that he uses "familiar characters to tell unfamiliar stories." Nonetheless, for me the opposite also holds: the unfamiliar can tell us about the familiar, and it is that familiar telling in which humans have always engaged (e.g., Boyd, 2009). Thus, in my action sports humanities courses, year by year I "locate a fantasy" (recently surfing and snowboarding) but at the same time my pedagogy "holds steady" (to use Barthes' idea introduced earlier). I struggle to inspire students to think about difference, about universality. There are the endless wonderings about sport's essential nature; there is a constant return to interpretive frames about the workings of power and culture.

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18

Afterword

Simone Fullagar

Each of the chapters in this book have offered a thought provoking exploration of the gender assumptions that shape sporting bodies, capacities, and relations of inclusion/exclusion. Importantly, the collection as a whole has made visible women's influence on contesting and transforming action sport as a 'generative' cultural practice (Ahmed, 2004, p. 155), while historical omissions have also been given critical attention. In this closing chapter, I reflect upon how the various action sport feminisms in this collection articulate a set of concerns about embodied experience, new media representations and contested notions of 'empowerment' within the context of contemporary cultural and feminist debates.

While the low participation rates of women and girls in traditional sports is often cited as problematic in a range of sport policies (Australian Sports Commission, 2015; Department of Media, Culture and Sport, 2015), there is increasing recognition of the appeal that action sports and

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physical cultures have had for women and girls in recent years. Action sports offer different challenges, an ethos of embodied experimentation and creative mobility that plays out through individual–collective and human–non-human relations (technology, nature, and urban spaces). Learning to skateboard, roller skate, ride horses, Bicycle Motocross (BMX), and surf as a girl in 1970s Australia meant taking embodied risks and mastering moves that produced an expansive corporeal confidence—a freedom in mobility that was always bound up with the dangers of transgressing masculine sportscapes. With few other women participants there were never simply waves for the taking or half pipes to be shared, these action zones had to be contested, challenged, and reconfigured as spaces for women to become. Spat on, sworn at, dropped in on, shut out, laughed at and reprimanded for being too risky (by parents, teachers, or other girls) or not risky enough (by male peers). Action sports generated embodied affects of pleasure, fear, and shame that, for girls like me, involved multiple negotiations of shifting gender power relations.

We have seen these issues resonating through the range of chapters in this collection as authors contextualised women's entry into particular action sports scapes with desires to be afforded the same respect as men, to be valued as skilful participants or competitors, and also to change the culture or rules that were largely created for 'universal' man (Braidotti, 2013). Regardless of their intentions (feminist or not), women's embodied presence in action sports is 'disruptive' of the gender order as it invokes sexual difference and unearths the powerful effects of gendered dualisms on commonsense world views and sport knowledge. While structural inequalities still persist and differ markedly between women, it has become vitally important to understand how gendered power relations work to sustain and transform normalising practices and moral codes about what women can and cannot do, should or should not do. When situated within the broader context of women's work (paid and unpaid), family, leisure, health, and everyday lives, action sports that are played or watched make gendered norms visible well beyond the subcultural context.

I vividly remember when Pam Burridge began to win world surfing championships and the Australian feminist film *Puberty Blues* was released, there was a sea of unease about the universalised 'beach babe' changing

as women began entering the water to claim their waves (Wheaton, 2003 and chapters by Olive et al., Roy, Nemani & Thorpe, lisahunter). Greater visibility brings with it greater opportunities to transform and disrupt the gender order (as it intersects with race, sexuality, class, disability, and age) in multiple ways (and with it the risk of inciting a range of overt and covert sexist responses, and even violence). Although greater visibility of women's action sport is vitality important, we have also seen how power relations move in complex ways with dominant notions of femininity reasserted for the purpose of profit maximisation or masculine privilege asserted in the name of winning (see Crocket's chapter). To paraphrase Lauren Berlant (2011, p. 3), the promise of freedom for women through action sports is also bound up in a form of 'cruel optimism'. The more action sports become part of a mainstream fantasy of living 'the good life' (optimising one's agentic selfhood) the greater the inequality between those who can and cannot engage, between the flourishing self and the one who fails (to be happy, healthy, thin, desirable, successful, etc.) within the global conditions of advanced liberalism.

The entanglement of women's action sports in complex global and local sport 'industries' with masculine histories mean that they can never simply be conceptualised as a straightforward site of empowerment. On the one hand, action sport has afforded women great 'success' and visibility in relation to the dominance of masculine bodies and capacities. We now have highly paid professional athletes, such as American professional surfer and model Alana Blanchard, whose value is created through the global flows of feminised sport commodities. Such normalised aesethic and athletic bodies are privileged in terms of whiteness, heteronormativity, and able-bodied capacities—action sports in this context are far removed from resistant, radical, and non-normative histories and different cultural contexts. Together the chapters in this collection articulate a counter narrative about action sport that makes visible the multiplicity of experiences that characterise different gendered identities and embodied performances. Speaking through the interconnections of the local and global, physical and digital cultures, normative subjectivities and otherness, the contradictory conditions of possibility for women are evident in nuanced accounts of the challenges of the 'politics' inherent in the 'play' of action sports.

Even with the rise of more recent sport cultures that have been cre-ated by women (roller derby) the question of gendered power relations is ever present with respect to differences between women (and in relation to negotiations over transgender participants; see Pavlidis and Connor's chapter). Yet, unlike other mixed-gender sports documented in this book (surfing, skating, Frisbee, rock climbing, martial arts, parkour, snowboarding, and mountain biking), derby offers a sportspace where men began to participate on terms that were created by women. Other sports like parkour also offer the promise of a more inclusive aesthetic that values embodied forms of expression and movement that contest the dominant masculine sport logic of 'higher, faster, longer' (see Wheaton's chapter). Action sport feminisms offer a unique contribution to broader feminist debates because they continually invoke the question of becom-ing (Braidotti, 2013) *as a corporeal concern*—what can the female body do? And in the spirit of greater reflexivity about the changing gendered ideas of womanhood and girlhood (as cis, non-conforming, or transgen-der) how are differences (race, class, disAbility, age, sexuality, and reli-gion) between women performed through action sports?

Action sports push the gendered boundaries of how we understand the changing material and discursive contexts that open up/close down possibilities for everyday, extreme and elite forms of participation. What is particularly important for the growing field of inquiry is the ability to move between registers of meaning to articulate individual and collec-tive gendered experiences as social, political, economic, biological, and geographical formations. Action sport feminisms have tended to privi-lege active embodiment as inherently agentic and historically defined against the ongoing cultural positioning of women as biologically inferior (weaker, risk adverse, and less masterful). This positioning has been important in creating a discursive space for feminist articulations (images, texts, and experiences) about how women can participate and compete on their own terms and thus questioning the binary logic that underpins the normalised gender order of sport. Broader feminist debates have also sought to question more deeply the contradictions of 'empow-erment' that play out in the individualised framing of women's and girl's choice, self-control and entrepreneurial success that are bound up with

new media practices and post-feminist ideals of autonomous selfhood (Harris & Dobson, 2015; Keller, 2015; McRobbie, 2007).

Dobson and Harris (2015) offer an analysis of the social conditions that shape contemporary girlhood in the post-feminist/post-girl power era that has particular resonance for the emergence of action sport feminisms. They argue that there has been a shift within advanced liberalism from the assumption that girls are desiring or demanding empowerment to an assumption that *girls are already empowered* and hence will perform as self-actualising subjects in media, consumption, and education. In this sense, girls (typically white and middle class) are positioned within popular culture as agentic subjects speaking up, voicing their opinions, expressing their bodies and sexual identities, and actively resisting through blogs, tweets, and related feminist social media actions (in the broader context of feminist activism such as the HeforShe campaign and Everyday Sexism website).

Dobson and Harris' (2015) critique of how agency is assumed within much of the youth studies literature is also relevant to action sports in terms of how thinking can become stuck within the parameters of structural determinism or voluntarist notions of individual freedom. The empowering aspects of action sport have been conventionally understood in terms of how women and girls enact and resist gendered identities that are socially prescribed. Often there is an assumption within feminist accounts of sport that a voluntaristic subject acts on or in the world as a rational, unified self—rather than being constituted through those actions and experiencing uncertainty, multiplicity, and a contingent sense of agency. Dobson and Harris (2015) argue that the assumption of agentic selfhood leaves little room for women to articulate their experiences of victimisation, exclusion, and suffering that are produced within patriarchal power relations—to be positioned as a victim of violence, harassment, or sexism is to have failed to be an empowered, entrepreneurial self in control of one's life. Contributors to this collection have wrestled with these tensions around gendered agency and importantly have mapped out the cultural conditions of possibility that produce, normalise, and disrupt the gendered performance of an 'action sport self'. Many feminists (Atencio et al.; Chisholm et al.; Spowart & Burrows) have usefully drawn upon Foucauldian ideas that recast questions of agency through a

focus on the process of subjectification where 'agency is produced in the course of practices under a whole variety of…relations of force. Our own "agency" is then resultant of the ontology we have folded into ourselves in the course of our history and our practices' (Rose, 1996, p. 189). Arguing against the desire to universalise the empowering benefits of action sport for women and girls, Thorpe & Chawansky (along with lisahunter; Nemani and Thorpe; Wheaton) make the strong case in their chapter for 'consideration of the broader forms of religious, cultural, national, and international power relations operating on and through girls and women's bodies, or local girls and women's own culturally-specific forms of agency and resilience'.

Others have developed their analysis through a Deleuzian trajectory that explores the ways in which power works through affects that are produced in the flows of everyday sport relations and practices (chapters by Roy; Pavlidis and Connor). In relation to the broader posthumanist turn in cultural and feminist theory, the exploration of sport technologies and new media opens the door to further consideration of how subjectivities are produced in relation to objects and non-human nature (chapters by Bicknell on bikes; McKay on feminist skate blogs; Olive et al. on surfing). While few contributors draw explicitly on critical posthumanist or 'new' materialist feminist perspectives there are considerable overlaps and shared concerns about how bodies matter, the entanglement of subjectivity in a host of human/non-human relations and the affective workings of power that are significant in thinking ahead about the nexus of action–sport–feminism (see Braidotti, 2013; Ringrose & Rawlings, 2015). One very promising area of inquiry that has political relevance for the social change agenda of action sports is the exploration of human–digital data assemblages from The Internet of Things, social media networks that enable collective women's visibility through to wearable technologies. Lupton (2016, p. 3) writes about how new ontologies emphasise the entanglement with lively data 'that are configured by human users' interactions with digital technologies are different versions of people's identities and bodies that have material effects on their ways of living and conceptualizing themselves'. Action sport feminisms are now very much entangled digital and physical cultures where technology is inseparable from the experience in many ways. As Wheaton comments in her chapter

'parkour participant/film-maker/researcher Julie Angel started a blog *See and Do* that promotes 'images of women who are doing things they love that happen to involve facing fears, being brave, getting strong and taking risks." The multiple stories, images, counter-narratives, and accounts of diverse cultural contexts conjure a feminist politics of imagination that connects diverse publics including participants, activists, academics, and organisations (see chapters by Wheaton, Thorpe and Chawansky, and McKay, for example; Latimer & Skeggs, 2011). Through digital engagement women effectively produce action sports as sites of knowledge and affiliation in ways that can open up new possibilities for shaping sport practices, rules, and engagements beyond (see Pavlidis and Connor's chapter on roller derby leagues; Dobson, 2015; Thorpe, 2016).

In terms of these and other future research directions, there is a need to continue to expand the analysis of gendered experiences of action sports beyond white, middle class, able bodies, young cis-women to consider who is not visible and why, as well as explore the cultural logics that shape different practices and identities. As Sydnor argues in the final chapter of the collection, pedagogic spaces and practices provide a key cultural site for creating reflexive and creative action sport feminisms that put the body and critique into play simultaneously. Also in related fields, such as education, colleagues are engaged in challenging stereotypes of British Muslim femininity through transformative dance and film projects, 'building on a feminist investment in the agency of materiality, we think through the problem of the body as a site of learning, raising questions about how diverse bodies might fit in those environments that have traditionally suspended the body altogether, such as the university' (Hickey-Moody, Palmer, & Sayers, 2016, p. 214). In thinking about the multiplicity of feminist perspectives and forms of activism (inadequately captured by the notion of a third wave) that inform the changing landscape of action sports MacCormack's (2009, p. 92) insights emphasise the value of pursuing a 'fleshy politics' that is 'not which position is right or more important, and which positions are most alike and therefore most capable of effectuating change, but which becoming intensities align us with certain groups for tactical events of thought that can activate change'.

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