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**BOARDERS, BABES AND BAD-ASSES:
THEORIES OF A FEMALE PHYSICAL YOUTH CULTURE**

BY
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BOARDERS, BABES AND BAD-ASSES: THEORIES OF A FEMALE PHYSICAL YOUTH CULTURE

Holly Thorpe, Department of Sport and Leisure Studies, University of Waikato, 2007

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Women's snowboarding, however, is a complicated and multidimensional phenomenon interwoven with numerous political, cultural, social and economic events and processes. In this thesis I set out to capture the complexity of female snowboarding by systematically contextualizing and interrogating the lived experiences of female boarders through drawing upon six critical social theoretical perspectives: Marxist political economy, post-Fordism, feminism, hegemonic masculinity, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of embodiment, and Foucauldian theorizing. In applying these theories, I select key concepts and engage them in conversations with my insider cultural knowledge of snowboarding, numerous periods of fieldwork, and an extensive base of artifacts and sources collected over five years.

In this thesis I extend academic understandings of female youth culture via the case study of women in snowboarding, and offer a valuable critique of contemporary social theories used to explain many different social phenomena that involve tensions and power relationships between the genders. While no single theory or concept proved adequate to deal with the multidimensional phenomenon of the female boarder, each having its shortcomings and offering quite different insights, several reveal important commonalities in relation to some key concepts in critical sociology, viz, structure, agency, culture, the body and embodiment, gender and power. These commonalities, I argue, offer future directions for theorizing about, and advancing our understanding of, young women in popular physical culture.

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January 2003

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A thunder-like boom echoes across the valley, and jolts me from my daydreaming. One of the local guys who is hiking ahead of me stops, turns, and states matter-of-factly, "Oh, that's just an avalanche, don't sweat it." Perhaps noticing the fear in my eyes, he then asks me how I am holding-up. Gulping for air, and desperately trying to swallow the unsavory mix of adrenaline and fear that churns even more violently in my stomach, I manage to smile, "I'm fine, cheers." He

nods, wipes the sweat from his forehead, and continues hiking. Within minutes, another of the locals exclaims loudly: “We are only half an hour from the sweetest powder run of our entire lives guys. Yeahaa, bring it on!” A chorus of hooting and hollering ensues.

At the conclusion of our hike, we gather. I am not alone in my exhaustion. Sweat is trickling down faces, lungs are heaving, and bodies are slumped. I notice one of the locals pull up his shirt to wipe his face. In doing so, he reveals an avalanche transceiver strapped to his chest. A lump forms in my throat as I become very aware that I am out of my league. I am without an avalanche transceiver in avalanche country. I am unprepared and vulnerable in this raw environment. I swear that I will never allow myself to get in such a position again; for a brief moment I consider taking the exit route. But there isn’t one.

Dave defogs his goggles and I can see the anticipation in his face. Not wanting to appear overly anxious, I take a deep breath before casually asking him what I need to do to make it out of here alive. The tone of his reply is a confused mix of caution and exuberance: “Just make sure you keep up with us, and don’t stop, whatever you do. It’s going to be super steep and the snow is going to be really deep. The trees are going to be tight too. Just keep up, or you might get lost out here, ok? It’s going to be insane!” One of the locals interrupts Dave: “I’m going for it,” he declares. Pushing off, he rides into the trees. Plumes of powder engulf his shadowy figure and he quickly disappears from sight.

The foul mixture of fear and adrenaline has crept up into the back of my throat. My heart pounds violently in my chest. I can barely breathe. Dave pats me on the shoulder, and declares, “I’m off too, see you at the bottom,” as he points his board and takes off in the same direction as the others. For a brief moment, I am alone at the top of this Canadian peak, surrounded by majestic beauty. Snowflakes glisten in the day’s last rays of sunlight, and I am momentarily overwhelmed

by the silence and stillness of this environment. It's now or never I tell myself, and forcefully push off into the unknown.

I gather speed and weave in and out of the trees. The snow that whispers beneath my board is light; I feel as if I'm floating, flying, soaring down this mountainside. It's all happening so fast. The trees blur and the snow heaves. The adrenaline rushes through me when I see a small rock drop ahead of me; I grit my teeth and launch off it. I fill with relief as I stomp the landing and then flow out into the endless powder for a few more turns. An uncontrollable holler of exhilaration escapes my lips. The snow flying all around me quickly fills my mouth and I can't help but snort and laugh aloud. I am part of a beautiful surreal moment and I don't want it to end, ever. But, a few more blissful powder slashes later and I see the guys gathered at the bottom; I point my board in their direction. As I ride toward the group, I notice they are all grinning from ear-to-ear. I too cannot stop smiling. Hiking back towards the resort, we chatter excitedly and animatedly describe our every turn.

Upon entering the ski resort bar, we are greeted by another group of locals. Slinging his arm casually over my shoulder, one of my new riding buddies introduces me to this group and proudly declares that I have just been riding "out west" with "the boys." We share knowing looks, and they nod in approval. Another of the local guys buys me a beer and slaps me on the back: "You were awesome out there girl. I could tell you were pretty scared, aye but you put some killer lines in. I could hear you laughing all the way." I am buzzing with pride and joy. Not only did I face my fears and experience the most amazing run of my life, I also proved to myself and my peers that I can keep pace with the locals, and as a result I am now being warmly embraced as "one of the boys."

Later in the year I return to the University of Otago, New Zealand, with the goal of completing an honors degree. Here I immerse myself in critical sport studies research and feminist literature, and reflect back on my Canadian snowboarding experiences with a new sociological consciousness: Why did I have to gain the approval of “the boys” in order to participate in our backcountry expedition? And, why did my sex seem so important one moment, and then, while riding through a wintry fantasyland, seem to disappear completely? How do other women negotiate gender within the male-dominated snowboarding culture, and what do their experiences tell us about the position of young women in contemporary Western society? Driven by an innate sense of curiosity about my immediate world and an observed lack of research on the subject, I set out to gain a deeper understanding of women’s experiences in snowboarding culture, and of young women in contemporary society. This PhD thesis is the result of that journey.

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1. THE SOCIOLOGY OF FEMALE PHYSICAL YOUTH CULTURE

Young women hold unprecedented positions of social importance in contemporary society. The professional ambitions of young women and their educational successes, their practices of cultural consumption, and their participation in sport and leisure all offer evidence of a new position of young women. Unlike even a generation ago, many young women are organizing their lives around careers and thus entering the economy with both enthusiasm and a sense of entitlement (Aapola, Gonick & Harris, 2005). In fact, more young women work today than ever before (More Women, 2004).¹ According to a study completed by the United States government “the shifts in employment among sectors of the economy are consistent with improving job opportunities for female youth along with stagnant or declining opportunities for their male counterparts” (What is Happening, 2004, p. 7). The same study also discusses trends in young male and female education: While the number of young males finishing high school, getting some postsecondary education, and obtaining a bachelor’s degree has leveled off, more young women are finishing high school and completing bachelor’s degrees (What is Happening, 2004, p. 4). Young women in the twenty-first century are, supposedly, more confident and resilient than ever before; they have “the world at their feet” (Deegan, 1997, p. 57).

Many young women have also taken the gains of feminism, such as increased freedoms, choice, assertiveness and economic independence, and applied them to the market (Aapola et al., 2005). In the words of one journalist “girl power is flexing its economic muscles” via the spending

¹ In 2003, 1.1 billion of the world’s 2.8 billion workers, or 40 per cent, were women, representing a worldwide increase of nearly 200 million women in employment in the past 10 years (More Women, 2004, para. 4). This trend is particularly evident in the western world. In New Zealand, for example, between the 1961 and 1986 censuses the Female Labor Force Participation Rate rose steadily from 30.0 to 54.1 per cent (Curtis, 2001). Although it did not change significantly between 1986 and 1992 as the unemployment rate rose, the participation rate increased to 57.0 per cent as unemployment declined between 1992 and 1996; and was 57.5 per cent in the March 1999 quarter (Curtis, 2001, para. 5).

power of “single, professional, independent and confident young women” (Lambert, 2003, cited in Harris, 2004a, p. 166).² Girls are thought to have an enormous amount of control over family purchases, as well as considerable discretionary income of their own. Recently, the spending power of 12-17 year old British girls has been estimated at £1.3 billion (Harris, 2004b). In Australia, 11-17 year olds’ collective income is AUS\$4.6 billion, and in the United States, young women aged 8-18 are deemed to be worth US\$67 billion (Harris, 2004b; also see Aapola et al., 2005; Barwick, 2001; Brown, 2000; Cuneo, 2002; Nikas, 1998). Young women play an important role in the contemporary capitalist system, and advertisers and recruitment agencies alike woo them.

Young women and the iconography of young womanhood flood popular culture (Harris, 2004a, 2004b; Hopkins, 2002). The “cute but powerful girl-woman has become a pop culture icon,” claims Susan Hopkins (2002); “she is a heroic overachiever – active, ambitious, sexy and strong” (p. 1). Nowhere are these images more evident than in the promotion of certain pop stars, athletes, comic book heroes, television and film characters, and advertising icons (see Heywood & Dworkin, 2003; Hopkins, 2002). These cultural icons embody “girl power” – “a provocative mix of youth, vitality, sexuality and self-determination” (Hopkins, 1999, p. 95) – and have a significant impact on the way many young women imagine and experience their lives (Hopkins, 2002). Indeed, young women are actively participating in traditionally male-dominated youth cultures (e.g., punk, hip-hop) as well as creating female-specific youth cultures (e.g., Riot Grrrl). They are also participating in sport in record numbers³ and engaging in a wide array of “spectacular leisure

² It is important to note, however, that this is a small middle class core.

³ In 1971, 1 in 27 American girls participated in high school sports. In 2001, that figure was 1 in 2.5, a more than 800 per cent increase over the period. For boys, the figure has remained constant at 1 in 2 (Women’s Sport’s Foundation calculation based on statistics produced by the National Federal of State High School Associations and Department of Education, 2001) (Women’s Sport, 2005, p. 18).

activities” (Valentine, Skelton & Chambers, 1998), of which the participation of young women in so-called ‘extreme’ sports is a good example.

In the 1990s a number of formerly marginalized youth-dominated activities, such as skateboarding, BMX riding, and BASE-jumping, were brought together by culture corporates to create the category of extreme sports. The common thread that united these activities was a “shared investment by the participants of these activities in risk-taking, thrill seeking, individual progression, and a consciously resistive, outsider identity relative to the organized sports establishment” (Kusz, 2007, p. 359). Over the past decade extreme sports have experienced rapid growth. In 2003, for example, five of the top ten “most popular sports” in the United States were so-called extreme sports, with in-line skating ranked first, skateboarding second, snowboarding fourth and wakeboarding ninth (Survey Says, 2005, para. 1). Women have played a major role in this growth.

Extreme sports have a relatively short history. Many of the activities under the umbrella of extreme sports came into existence during the 1960s and 1970s at a critical juncture when increasing female participation challenged organized sports as an exclusive male bastion. Unlike in modern sports, females participated widely in the early forms of many extreme sports. Although fewer in number than men, women often participated alongside men, and thus extreme sports were not as burdened by the years of entrenched sexism that plagues most other sports. Certainly some evidence suggests that growing levels of participation and opportunities for women in extreme sports were brought about by liberal endeavours supporting the development of strong, individual women who are unafraid to challenge their male counterparts. Snowboarding, kayaking and

skateboarding, for example, are among the fastest growing sports for American women.⁴ In 2004 female skateboarders constituted approximately 25.3 per cent (or 2.6 million) of the 10.3 million skateboarders in the United States, up from just 7.5 per cent in 2001 (McLaughlin, 2004; Darrow, 2006), and the number of American women who surf every day grew 280 per cent between 1999 and 2003 (Women a Focus, 2003; Darrow, 2006).⁵ In sum, many young women are enjoying opportunities so long denied them, and are entering traditional and new sports with a sense of enthusiasm and entitlement to participate. In this thesis I set out to better understand the changing roles of young women in contemporary society and popular physical culture. In order to do so, I use a case study approach based on women in snowboarding culture.

The remainder of this introductory chapter comprises four main parts. The first provides a historical narrative of snowboarding. Following this I outline my theoretical and methodological approaches to understanding the phenomenon of female snowboarding, respectively. In the fourth part I provide a brief overview of the structure of this thesis and the forthcoming chapters.

A Story of Snowboarding

The female snowboarder is a recent social phenomenon; she is a good barometer of the nature of contemporary youth and popular culture, of the changes in those cultures, and of the emerging spaces available to women in Western society. Some statistics help illustrate the female

⁴ The rate of female snowboarding participation in the United States grew 68.8 per cent between 2002 and 2003. Kayaking was the second fastest growing sport with 18.9 per cent change. Skateboarding was the sixth fastest growing sport for women with a 5.5 per cent increase in participation (NGSA, 2005a).

⁵ While such statistics help illustrate broad trends in participation, they must be interpreted with caution, against discrepancies in reported participation rates. For example, while the National Sporting Goods Association (NGSA), an Illinois-based research firm that tracks participation numbers in various sports, reported that 25.3 per cent (2.6 million) of the nation's 10.3 million skateboarders were female in 2004, Board Trac, a US-based research firm that studies trends in the global board-sports industry, reported considerably fewer female skateboarders. According to Board Trac, in the same year only 15 per cent of the country's 11.9 million skateboarders were female (see Darrow, 2006). It is also important to note that the majority of these studies are conducted in the United States; similar studies for participation rates in other nationalities are lamentably inadequate at the time of writing. The figures that are available, however, suggest similar trends.

snowboarding phenomenon. More than 18.5 million individuals currently snowboard worldwide (Fastest Growing, 2005) and snowboarding is one of America's fastest growing sports, with the number of participants rising from 1.3 million in 1988 to 9.9 million (participating at least once per year) in 2003 (Select Snow, 2004, para. 3).⁶ More than 75 per cent of snowboarders are aged 24 or younger (Fact sheet, 2004; NGSAs 2005b).⁷ Women have been integral in this growth. In the United States, for example, the female snowboard demographic has more than doubled in the past decade. In 1994 only 20 per cent of snowboarders were female; by 2003 women made up approximately 34.3 per cent (NGSA, 2005a). Statistics also suggest that female snowboarders might be slightly more devoted than males.⁸ Females contributed approximately 37 per cent of the US\$2.2 billion worth of snow-sport purchases in 1997/1998 in the United States (Gasperini, 1997). By 2001, market analysts identified the women's market as the "fastest growing aspect of snowboarding" (Women's Market, 2001, para. 4). Clearly the statistics that I have shown highlight female snowboarders as a visible feature of youth culture.

But how should we interpret these facts? Scholars often historicize facts to show change, growth and development. Certainly, even a sketch of the history of female snowboarding highlights some remarkable changes in the social position of women in contemporary popular physical culture. However, while the following historical narrative of snowboarding delivers an important conclusion – female snowboarding is a contemporary social phenomenon – this approach is far from unproblematic; I discuss my concerns with historical narrative later in this chapter.

⁶ According to one survey, 26.1 per cent of California, Oregon and Washington residents snowboarded at least once in 2003 (Hard Numbers, 2005 October).

⁷ The average age of American snowboarders in 2005 was 19.5 years (Hard Numbers, 2005 September). Interestingly, the 2004 National Sporting and Goods Association (NSGA) found the average age of US female snowboarders to be 26.2 years (NSGA, 2005d).

⁸ In the United States females participated on average 7.6 days in the 2001 season compared to males who participated on average 7.1 days (Fact Sheet, 2004).

The History of Snowboarding: A Realist Tale

Dating the birth of snowboarding is impossible. People have been standing on sleds and trying to slide on snow for hundreds of years; recent ‘discoveries’ include a board dating back to the 1920s, and a 1939 film of a man riding a snowboard-type sled sideways down a small hill in Chicago (see Brisick, 2004). Snowboarding, as we understand the activity today, however, emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s in North America. The popularization of the Malibu surf-board and the escapism and hedonism of surfing, with its anti-establishment counter-cultural values and do-it-yourself philosophies, inspired many snowboarders. In 1964, Sherman Poppen invented the Snurfer when he bolted two skis together and added a rope for stability. Jake Burton Carpenter experimented with foam, fiberglass, steam-bent solid wood and vertically laminated wood with the goal of making a board that was more maneuverable and faster than the Snurfer (Howe, 1998). In 1978, he established Burton Boards. The early Burton boards had a rubber water-ski binding for the front foot which allowed greater control and maneuverability; turns became easier and more stable (Reed, 2005). Thus Burton modified the board and the action.

Burton was not the only one to experiment with board designs; other pioneers included Dimitrije Milovich (Utah), Tom Sims and Chuck Barefoot (California), Chris and Bev Sanders (California), and Mike Olsen (Washington) who established Winterstick, Sims Snowboards, Avalanche Snowboards, and GNU Snowboards respectively. Olsen’s motivation was “just fun” (cited in Howe, 1998, p. 33) and according to one pioneer, all these early board-makers wanted “an alternative” to the elitist culture associated with skiing (Chris Sanders cited in Howe, 1998, p. 31). While an alternative impulse drove these board makers, their plans for the sport and styles of participation varied. Well into the 1980s boards varied extensively in shape, which in turn influenced the style of snowboarding. It was a period of trial and error, and groups of boarders adopted their own version of snowboarding shaped by local climate and terrain, equipment, and

background (e.g., skiing, skateboarding, surfing, BMX biking or mountaineering). Yet most of these pioneers embodied the idealism of the by-gone counter-culture and, in direct contrast to skiing (which was an expensive and bourgeois sport framed by a strong set of rules of conduct), embraced snowboarding as a free, fun, cooperative and individualistic activity (Humphreys, 1996, 1997). Women were integral members of some groups, such as Bev Sanders and Bonnie Leary (later Zellers) who were key members of the Lake Tahoe (California) ‘Avalanche crew’ (Howe, 1998).

Ski resorts initially banned snowboarders. Owners, managers and their skiing clientele defined the snowboarding cohort as “13-18 year olds with raging hormones” who liked skateboarding and surfing (Hughes, 1988, para. 11). Negative images of surfing and skateboarding from the 1970s contributed to the public dislike and distrust of snowboarding. According to David Schmidt, the national sales manager for Burton Snowboards, “most people visualize snowboarders as a bunch of skate rats who are going to terrorize the mountain” (cited in Nelson, 1989). While bans made participation difficult, they did not stop determined and passionate devotees.

In 1983, Stratton Mountain (Vermont) became the first major ski field to open its piste to snowboarders. Others quickly followed. This newly found access was the result of two major factors. First, a number of snowboarders, including Bev Sanders, actively campaigned for access (Howe, 1998). Second, skiing had reached a growth plateau and snowboarding offered ski-fields a new youth market and ongoing economic prosperity. Hughes (1988) described snowboarding as the “biggest boost to the ski industry since chairlifts” (para. 8). But, as this thesis will demonstrate, even after gaining access to the ski-fields, snowboarders continued to see themselves as ‘different’ to skiers, and tensions between skiers and snowboarders remained throughout the 1980s.

Snowboarding continued to develop in opposition to the dominant ski culture. Skiing was an expensive sport with participants being mostly white, and middle to upper class. Snowboarders

were typically younger, less educated, single, male, earning lower incomes, or students (Williams, Dossa & Fulton, 1994).⁹ Summarizing the cultural differences during this period, Humphreys (1996) wrote that whereas “skiing embodied technical discipline and control,” snowboarding “embodied freedom, hedonism and irresponsibility” (p. 9). Indeed, as part of the new leisure movement, snowboarders subscribed to anti-establishment and do-it-yourself philosophies. Ben, an early snowboarder, recalls the anti-establishment mentality among snowboarders as “ruining all the fixtures at resorts...running into skiers and telling them to screw off...” (cited in Anderson, 1999, p. 62). Jake Blattner recollects the do-it-yourself mentality prevalent in early snowboarding culture: “there were no boards being made for what we wanted to do...so we took matters into our own hands and cut the noses off our boards” (cited in Howe, 1998, p. 86). However, Terje Haakonsen, a snowboarder of legendary status, best captured the counter-cultural ideology among early boarders when he described snowboarding as about making “fresh tracks and carving power and being yourself” rather than “nationalism and politics and big money” (cited in Lidz, 1997, p. 114). The long history and acceptance of skiing as a legitimate pastime and sport bestowed skiers with social authority on the mountain; Snowboarders seriously challenged skiers’ power (Humphreys, 1996). One running joke among skiers went: “What’s the difference between a boarder and a catfish? One is a bottom-dwelling, disgusting, rejected muck sucker and the other is a fish” (cited in Coleman, 2004, p. 206). Physical confrontations and fights between skiers and snowboarders were not unusual as the two groups vied for territory and eminence (Anderson, 1999; Howe, 1998).

⁹ Comparing skiing and snowboarding in North America, an earlier study found that 8.8 per cent of snowboarders versus 42.1 per cent of skiers were university graduates; 85.3 per cent of snowboarders versus 60.7 per cent of skiers were single; 73.5 per cent of snowboarders versus 44.5 per cent of skiers were under 25 years old; and 62.5 per cent of snowboarders versus 46.3 per cent of skiers earned incomes less than Canadian \$35,000 (Williams et al., 1994).

In 1985, only seven per cent of American resorts allowed snowboarders and in 1988 snowboarders still only comprised six per cent of the ski resort population (Crane, 1996). Negative media coverage influenced the mainstream's opinion of snowboarding, and its followers, during this period. For example, *Time Magazine* (January 1988) declared snowboarding "the worst new sport" (no page number). By the early 1990s snowboarding still remained a minority activity. However, participants formed a unified front and, as professional boarder Peter Line recalls, "every other boarder was your buddy" (cited in Coyle, 2004, p. 115). While there were undoubtedly geographical variations in approach, commentators in the early years frequently referred to a pervasive community spirit based on "a fun, non-judgmental scene that valued personal style" (Howe, 1998, p. 23). Although still in the minority, women found space within this scene. As Ste'en Webster, an early New Zealand snowboarder, recalls: "There were really no attitudes towards women snowboarding when I started. Any attitude was leveled at boarders in general" (personal correspondence, May 10, 2003). Similarly, early American snowboarder Jennifer Sherowski (2005) recalls that in the late 1980s and early 1990s, "it didn't seem like gender divisions really mattered. There were so few of us snowboarders, we were all just in it together" (p. 5). Another early American snowboarder Tina Basich (2003) remembers meeting other male and female snowboarders on the mountain and "instantly becoming friends" (p. 36). She also adds that there was "always...support from the guys" (p. 39).

Modern competitive snowboarding began in 1981 with the first American national titles held at Suicide Six (Vermont). The next year the resort hosted the first international snowboard race. Snowboard competitions during the mid to late 1980s embodied an inclusive ideology. Basich (2003) recalls one of the first regional competitions in 1986 in which "everybody," from both genders, competed together. Susanna Howe (1998) describes these events as "cultural hotbeds" that effectively ironed out any notions of social stratification (p. 51). Everyone, she adds,

was “drunk and disorderly” (Howe, 1998, p. 41). Early snowboard competitions were poorly organized and, in keeping with counter-cultural traditions, privileged fun over serious competition and individualism.

Snowboarding also gained popularity among groups of youths wherever there was snow. The Japanese held their first national snowboarding contest in 1982, and in 1986 the Europeans organized regional events such as the Swiss Championships in St. Moritz. More than 100 male and female competitors from 17 nations competed in the World Championships at Livigno (Italy) and St. Moritz (Switzerland) in January 1987. At the end of the 1980s, however, the organization of snowboarding competitions was chaotic. For example, two World Championships were simultaneously held in 1987, one shared between Livigno (Italy) and St. Moritz (Switzerland), the other in Breckenridge, Colorado (USA). However, recognizing the commercial opportunities in developing the sporting side of snowboarding, groups of sporting-inclined snowboarders and manufacturers formed the North American Snowboard Association (NASBA) and Snowboard European Association (SEA) later that year. Their goal was to work together to create a unified World Cup tour, similar to that of skiing. In 1988 devotees formed the United States of America Snowboarding Association (USASA) to standardize rules and organize events in the USA. Similar organizations emerged in snowboarding countries worldwide.

Significant change occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The convergence of several factors contributed to the escalating number of board-sport participants. More ski resorts opened their pistes to snowboarders, the mainstream media started reporting favorably on snowboarding culture, and snowboarding magazines (e.g., *Absolutely Radical* [1985] renamed *International Snowboarder Magazine* six months later, *Transworld Snowboarding* [1987], *Snowboarder* [1988], *Blunt* [1993]) and films (e.g., *The Western Front* [1988], *Totally Board* [1989], *Snowboarders in Exile* [1990], *Critical Condition* [1991]) communicated images, attitudes and styles to

snowboarding cultures around the world. Technological advances and an increasingly competitive market also provided participants with a cheaper and wider variety of equipment. During this period, women took active roles in the sport (as coaches, instructors and professionals), culture (as filmmakers, journalists and photographers) and snowboarding industry (as CEOs and manufacturers).

Economic growth and further institutionalization accompanied higher levels of participation in the mid 1990s. Yet, institutionalization angered many snowboarders: Some overtly resisted the process. Debates over the institutionalization process in snowboarding came to the fore in the lead-up to the 1998 winter olympics.¹⁰ Certainly, the inclusion of snowboarding into the 1998 winter olympics signified a defining moment in snowboarding's short history and boarders were divided as to their opinion on this topic. The loudest voice of opposition came from Terje Haakonsen who refused to enter the games because he believed, quite correctly in the eyes of many (see e.g., Bale & Krogh-Christensen, 2004), that the International Olympic Committee comprised a group of Mafia-like officials and that the event was tantamount to joining the army. Haakonsen refused to be turned into a "uniform-wearing, flag-bearing, walking logo" (Mellegren, 1998, para. 8). Other snowboarders expressed similar sentiments. "The Olympics will change the sport altogether. I didn't get into snowboarding to go to the Olympics. I don't think it sounds so great. Snowboarding is great because it's so different from other sports. Now it will get too serious, training, competing, working out in gyms. There's nothing wrong with that but snowboarding isn't like that, and it'll be sad when it becomes like that" (Cara Beth Burnside, cited

¹⁰ I concur with Booth's (2001) argument that, "the olympics do not warrant the veneration of a capital letter. The ancient games were held at Olympia, hence the use of the upper case as a recognized geographical name. Any resemblance that the modern sports pageant may have to the ancient version or to the place called Olympia is remote and allusive – hence the lower case 'o.' Nor does the philosophy of olympism have a great claim to a capital letter than liberalism, humanitarianism, authoritarianism, utopianism, or fascism" (p. 91). Thus, throughout this thesis I spell 'olympics' using a lower-case 'o,' except in direct quotes in which a capital was used in the original.

in Howe, 1998, p. 151); “I think the Olympics are way too big and are going to change snowboarding. They are going to make us fit their mold. They aren’t fitting into our mold... it will create a reality for snowboarding that millions will swallow and accept” (Morgan Lafonte, cited in Howe, 1998, p. 151). Other boarders, however, embraced these changes; “I want to go to the Olympics...be the first snowboarder to win a gold medal and be written into the history books” (Jimi Scott, cited in Howe, 1998, p. 151). Early professional snowboarder Todd Richards (2003) explained that while “half of the companies and riders were looking forward to the Olympics as the ultimate forum that would legitimize the sport,” the other half “didn’t give a damn about the Olympics because it reeked of skiing – a stuffy by-the-books sport with an attitude that was the kiss of death for snowboarding’s irreverent spirit” (p. 135). Debates among snowboarders over the institutionalization process, and the 1998 winter olympics more specifically, are illustrative of the growing divisions and cultural fragmentation within snowboarding culture during this period.

Inevitably, incorporation continued regardless of boarders’ contrasting viewpoints. By the late 1990s television and corporate sponsors had identified the huge potential in extreme sports as a way to tap into the young-male market, and mainstream companies began appropriating the alternative, hedonistic, and youthful image of the snowboarder to sell products ranging from chewing gum to vehicles. During this period snowboarding increasingly became controlled and defined by transnational media corporations like ESPN and NBC via events such as the X-Games and Gravity Games. According to Todd Richards (2003):

The X-Games marked the end of one era but simultaneously gave birth to a whole new world of possibilities. It was sort of sad to say good-bye to being a bunch of misunderstood outcasts. A lot of joy was derived from the punk-rock-spirit, and once the masses join your ranks...it’s over. The image had already begun to change but the X-Games put the icing on the mainstream cake. (p. 182)

In 1998, ESPN’s different sport channels beamed the X-Games to 198 countries in 21 languages (Rinehart, 2000). The incorporation of snowboarding into the 1998, 2002 and 2006 winter

olympics, video games including Playstation's Cool Boarders and Shaun Palmer Pro-Snowboarder, and blockbuster movies such as *First Descent* (2005) helped further expose the sport to the mainstream. According to a Leisure Trends survey, 32 percent (nearly 92 million people) of the United States population watched the 2002 olympic snowboarding half-pipe competition in which Americans won gold (Ross Powers), silver (Danny Kass), and bronze (J. J. Thomas) in the men's event (this was the first US winter olympic medal sweep since 1956) and gold (Kelly Clark) in the women's event. Of those viewers 18.6 million Americans said they wanted to try snowboarding (Snowboarding And, 2004). The inclusion of females in globally televised events including the X-Games and olympics, and the inclusion of female boarders into the mainstream media (e.g., *Seventeen*, *Glamour*), added to the visibility and legitimization of female snowboarding. The mainstream's embrace of snowboarding, and female boarders per se, had a significant influence on cultural demographics; snowboarding attracted an influx of participants from around the world, and from different social classes and age groups, as well as females and minority groups.

The influx of new participants during the late 1990s and early 2000s fueled struggles within the snowboarding culture between insiders and newcomers, and various sub-groups. In this thesis core participants are defined as including males and females whose commitment to the activity is such that it organizes their whole lives (see Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). Various identities, and preferred styles of participation (e.g., freeriding, freestyling), exist within this core group. Freeriders prefer to hike or ride a snowmobile or helicopter to remote backcountry terrain where they might drop off rocks or cliffs, ride down chutes, and snowboard in powder and among trees. Others, including freestyle boarders, prefer to ride the more accessible, yet typically

crowded, ski resort slopes.¹¹ Freestyle riding, which includes snowboarding on artificial features such as half-pipes and terrain parks, is currently among the most popular forms of participation. This style rests on creative and technical maneuvers (e.g., spins, grabs, inverts), many of which have their roots in skateboarding. In response to the popularity of freestyle snowboarding, the typical ski resort invests in equipment and personnel to create and maintain features such as terrain parks and half-pipes to attract snowboarding patrons. Some core snowboarders also enjoy ‘jibbing;’ a sub-style of freestyle snowboarding that involves performing various skateboard-inspired maneuvers on obstacles including trees, stumps, and rails. Jibbing in urban environments has also become a popular activity among core boarders; jibbers locate a handrail (e.g., down a flight of stairs outside a school, hospital, mall etc.), shovel snow at the top and bottom of the rail (to create a run-in and landing), and then perform technical maneuvers while jumping onto, sliding down, and jumping off the rail. As I explain in this thesis, in adopting these styles, many women have won recognition from, and credibility among, both male and female peers.

It is important to note that, within contemporary boarding culture, female snowboarders do not constitute a homogeneous category; Women experience snowboarding in diverse ways. For some women, snowboarding is a gratifying experience and a key site for the creation and negotiation of cultural identity. Alternatively, ‘weekend-warriors,’ ‘fashion seekers,’ and ‘poseurs’ and ‘pro hos’ (snowboarding’s equivalent of groupies) (field notes, 2004-2006) are often less committed and, in the words of one male instructor, “use their snowboards as a fashion statement” (Scott Alkinburgh, cited in Hatfield, 1990, para. 20).

Despite some resistance from earlier participants, snowboarding has assumed many of the trappings of other modern sports including corporate sponsorship, large prize monies, “rationalized

¹¹ Alpine, another style of participation, privileges speed and carving over jumping or jibbing but it is the least popular style among core snowboarders who tend to dismiss participants as skiers on boards (see Chapter Six: Bourdieu and ‘Boarding Bodies).

systems of rules,” hierarchical and individualistic star systems, win-at-all costs values, and the creation of heroes, heroines and ‘rebel’ athletes who look like “walking corporate billboards” (Messner, 2002, p. 82). With significant sponsorships on offer, many current boarders are embracing commercial approaches, or, in the more colorful words of professional snowboarder Todd Richards (2003), they have decided to “milk it while it’s lactating” (p. 178). Professional female snowboarders, including Tara Dakides, Gretchen Bleiler, Hannah Teter, Torah Bright, Lindsey Jacobellis and Kelly Clark, have benefited from commercialized snowboarding. These women have achieved superstar status within the culture, attracting corporate sponsors including Nike, Mountain Dew, Campbell’s Soup, Visa, and Boost Mobile. Some earn seven figure salaries. Women also increasingly receive their share of the substantial prize monies.¹² But seasoned veteran Gretchen Bleiler decries a younger generation of girls who, in their hunger to win, are “changing the overall feel at the top of the half-pipe” (cited in Sherowski, November 2003, p. 146). This group of female boarders, comprised of current ‘up and comers’ such as Jamie Anderson, Abi Bright, Kendall Brown and Elena Hight, participate in different ways to women from the past; they train under the guidance of coaches in highly organized structures in which snowboarding is not only an olympic sport but also a highly profitable career. However, despite resistance from some older female snowboarders, this approach appears to represent the future of women’s snowboarding. In sum, the story of snowboarding began a little over three decades ago with a new piece of equipment that appealed to the hedonistic desires of a new generation and the activity quickly underwent massive growth; women have played a major role in this growth.

¹² For example, at the 2004 US Open held at Stratton Mountain (Vermont) male and female winners of the Half-Pipe, Rail-Jam and Slope-Style events each received US\$20,000, US\$6,000 and US\$20,000 respectively.

A story of snowboarding: Virtue or vice?

Historical narratives such as the story of snowboarding told above have explanatory virtues. As Appleby, Hunt and Jacob (1994) note, “the human intellect demands accuracy while the soul craves meaning. History ministers to both with stories” (pp. 262-263). Yet, paradoxically, the story format is precisely the Achilles’ heel of the historical narrative. The explanation that appears to emerge ‘naturally’ from the raw data is in fact the result of my mediation of the past, of my arranging ideas and sorting evidence. The range and volume of evidence bearing on women’s snowboarding is so large that I could not avoid selecting evidence to compose this narrative. Moreover, the numerous political, cultural, social and economic events and processes inherent in the story of women in the snowboarding culture unfold simultaneously and interactively, and complicate the narrative account of female snowboarding. Thus, this short history of snowboarding is merely one interpretation of the past.

Of course, the ‘context’ helped me select the evidence. However, like the facts, context too is a matter of judgement; in short, scholars make judgements about which context to include and exclude. Indeed the act of contextualization is as difficult as the act of selecting the facts (Berkhofer, 1995). The key question then is how do scholars deal with the problems of choosing facts and context? For sociologists the answer is theory.

Malcolm Waters (2000) describes theory as the heart and soul of sociology and central to the discipline’s contribution to “the development of self-knowledge and the guidance of human society” (p. 1). John Wilson (1983) similarly says that “good sociological research without theory is unthinkable” (p. xi), while Margaret Ann Hall (1996) believes that theory can better “help us understand our culture” (p. 30). Thus social theory is a “tool” (Mouzelis, 1995, p. 3), a “heuristic device” (Blaikie, 2000, p. 141) and a “framework for interpretation” (Tosh, 2000, p. 134) which sets out questions, directs practitioners to particular sources, organizes evidence and shapes

explanation, and thereby gives “impetus to an inquiry and influences its outcomes” (Munslow, 1997, p. 46). Theory helps scholars understand society, critique society, and point to new directions and perhaps reform. Therefore, in this thesis, following in the sociological tradition I employ social theory to understand the phenomenon of female snowboarding.

Theoretical Approaches

Sociology hosts a wide variety of theories and theoretical perspectives, each drawing on different sets of assumptions about social reality and how it should be explained. The tendency in social theory has been to pick one primary theorist and regard the rest as secondary (Connell, 1987). There is often a sense, particularly strong among young scholars, that they should align themselves with one theoretical school, or even one theorist. In the process of drawing from this work, the scholar defines him or herself as a particular type of researcher. Thus, using a theoretical work is not just a question of being interested in particular ideas but also how one represents him or herself to others (Mills, 2003). However, scholars must be cautious about confining themselves to one theory or one theoretical tradition. As David Andrews (2002) reminds us, there is a very real danger of being lulled into a “false sense of conceptual security” (p. 116), in which individuals see only what fits into their pre-existing schema and ignore conflicting evidence. Indeed Michele Barrett (1999) argues that theoretical disciplines offer a “license to ignore,” since disciplinary boundaries create “an informal division of labor in which certain questions are assigned to one subject and can thus legitimately be ignored” by others (cited in McDonald & Birrell, 1999, p. 285). Despite each theory claiming to best interpret the facts it identifies as significant, no single theory is adequate to deal with the wide range of phenomena studied by sociologists (Wilson, 1983). The search for an “exact theoretical fit” is futile (Slack, 1996, cited in Andrews, 2002, p.

116). All theories have strengths and shortcomings and, because they are a matter of perspective, are always open to debate.

A good example of a limited application of theory is the Birmingham University's Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) subcultural studies approach. Early subcultural theorists associated with the CCCS focused on youth style as symbolic resistance to mainstream or 'hegemonic' society. They examined symbolic cultural aspects of youth subcultures, such as music, language, and especially dress. Dick Hebdige (1979), for example, argued that subcultural youths engage in "semiotic guerrilla warfare" through their construction of style (p. 105). Early subcultural theorists described subcultures emerging in resistance to dominant culture, and reacting against blocked economic opportunities, lack of social mobility, alienation, adult authority, and the "banality of suburban life" (Wooden & Blazak, 2001, p. 20). A variety of spectacular postwar subcultures such as Teddy boys, Mods, punks and skinheads, provided CCCS theorists with evidence of youth styles as challenging the dominant order. They turned to Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony to give their evidence theoretical expression, proposing that subordinate classes operate by 'winning space' through their modes of presentation and apparently anti-social behaviors. Yet, while the CCCS emphasized that subcultural style was a form of resistance to domination, ultimately the actions of subcultural members reinforced class relations because their efforts were focused on stylistic resistance rather than political organization, employment or education (see Cohen, 1980; Willis, 1977). Therefore, any such resistance was illusory; subcultural participation gave members a feeling of resistance while leaving existing social and political relations firmly in place (Clarke, Hall, Jefferson & Roberts, 1975).

In recent years hegemony theory, as advocated by the CCCS subcultural studies theorists, has drawn substantial criticism for ignoring participants' subjectivity, failing to empirically study subcultural groups, focusing too much on Marxist / class-based explanation and grand theories,

reifying the concept of subculture, overemphasizing style, and overlooking the dynamic quality of youth cultures (Blackman, 1995; Clarke, 1997[1981]; Gelder & Thornton, 1997; Haenfler, 2004; Muggleton, 2000; Osgerby, 1998; Widdicombe & Woofitt, 1995). It has also been argued that the Birmingham tradition both “over-politicizes youthful leisure” and at the same time “ignores the subtle relations of power play within it” (Thornton, 1996, p. 7). Furthermore, subculturalists typically pay very little systematic attention to the relations between media and commerce and youths’ cultural formations, and rarely provide an explanation of what occurs “after the subculture has surfaced and become publicized” (Hebdige, 1979, p. 122). For Giulianotti (2005), the CCCS approach is insufficient for “explaining ‘resistant’ subcultures that actively *embrace* commodification, to function as niche businesses within the sport industry” (p. 56). As this example illustrates, subcultural theory, like all theory, has its strengths and limitations.¹³

Wide ranges of opinions exist as to the prime concerns of social theory. Some argue for a microanalysis of behaviors and interaction in specific contexts; some advocate macro approaches that examine structures and processes. Others strive to reconcile micro and macro analyses. Some see the multiplicity of approaches as problematic (Turner, 1991), or the source of endless disputes and conflicts (Cuff, Sharrock & Francis, 1990). Others find virtue in diversity. Merton (1981) said that diverse theoretical orientations simply help the field deal with “diverse kinds of, and aspects of, sociological and social problems” (p. 1), and Wallace and Wolf (1991) believe that “different perspectives offer different and often complementary insights” (cited in Waters, 2000, p. 345). As will become apparent in this thesis, it is the latter perspective that I most strongly support.

Despite the disparate strands of social theorizing, some important commonalities emerge (Giddens & Turner, 1988). One reason why theory in sociology has a common, albeit broad,

¹³ Because the CCCS operated within a specific historical conjuncture (the 1970s and 1980s) their theoretical concepts also became limited by the material conditions of their times. This notion is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Five (Hegemonic Masculinity and the Snowboarding Culture).

agenda is because of its relatively (though not absolutely) unified theoretical heritage. Most topics in and approaches to sociology derive from the work of three major nineteenth century figures: Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. They are arguably “indispensable” to contemporary thinking (Turner, 1996, p. 4). While sociology constantly undergoes reformulation, a number of “interweaving strands or themes” (Waters, 2000, p. 5) remain which can be traced back to “classical antecedents in the work of Marx, Weber, Durkheim and others” (Waters, 2000, p. 6). For Malcolm Waters (2000), these interweaving strands are the key concepts of agency, rationality, structure, and system, which theory must always address. These concepts constitute the “foci of theoretical debate” and they are “always mobilized in seeking to theorize such substantive phenomena as power or gender” argues Waters (2000, p. xi).

Rejecting the notion that critical sociological theory can be understood as a series of discrete schools or compartmentalized individual theorists, Waters (2000) argues that theory is a “developing set of arguments and debates, which focuses on common questions” (p. xi). Attempting to make sense of the “theoretical maze,” Waters (2000, p. 5) simplifies a schema developed by Jeffrey Alexander (1982) based on the main presupposition or assumptions of theory. This schema identifies a number of the interweaving themes in the development of critical sociological theory. Waters’ schema juxtaposes two sets of distinctions to produce four types of theorizing (see Figure 1.0). The first distinction relates to what the theorist believes are the elements that constitute the social world. The theorist will often adopt either a ‘subjective’ or ‘objective’ view. A subjective perspective conceptualizes the social world as consisting of the relations, “interpretations, meanings, and ideas of thinking and acting subjects;” an objective viewpoint perceives the human condition as characterized by an unassailable and “common set of constraints in which there is no opportunity for choice or intention” (Waters, 2000, p. 5). The second distinction relates to the type of explanation offered by the theorist who typically provides

either an ‘individualistic’ or ‘holistic’ explanation. The former reduces the social world to the “characteristics of each of its individual participants, to their isolated meanings or interests” (Waters, 2000, p. 5). The latter makes reference to wholes, either to “collective systems of ideas or to shared material conditions” (Waters, 2000, p. 5).

Figure 1.0 Waters’ (2000) *Typology of Sociological Theorizing* (p. 6)

		NATURE OF CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS	
		Subjective	Objective
TERMS OF EXPLANATION	Individualistic	Constructionism	Utilitarianism
	Holistic	Functionalism	Critical structuralism

At the risk of simplifying a series of complex histories and debates, this scheme yields four types of theorizing: constructionism, utilitarianism, functionalism and critical structuralism. According to Waters (2000), the constructionist theorist (subjective/individualistic) seeks to understand individual and inter-subjective meanings and motives and views human beings as active agents in the creation or construction of social reality. Utilitarians (objective/individualistic) regard human beings as calculating and maximizing. Thus a utilitarian theorist explains behavior with respect to individuals’ calculated interests and the means of realizing these. The functionalist theorist (holistic/subjective) examines social arrangements and attempts to explain how a shared consciousness works to integrate the parts of society into a whole. For the functionalist, all social action contributes to an overarching system of shared norms. From this theoretical perspective

human beings are conformists who need social and moral support. Theorists adopting a critical structuralist perspective (holistic/objective) trace the development of underlying, material structures and their effects on individuals, societies and cultures. Critical structuralists regard human beings as subjects of their socio-economic and historical location that “manipulates and twists them into distortions of their true selves” (Waters, 2000, p. 6). In short, critical structuralists see material history reshaping both general ideas and the individual consciousness.

Waters’ fourfold typology simplifies the numerous interweaving strands or themes of contemporary critical social theory, and helps structure this thesis. Utilizing the theoretical approaches of constructionism, utilitarianism, functionalism and critical structuralism facilitates the exploration of a number of conceptual topics, including agency, rationality, system, structure, culture and ideology, power, gender, and differentiation and stratification.¹⁴ In this thesis I employ six social theories (Marxist political economy, post-Fordism, feminism, hegemonic masculinity, Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of embodiment and Foucauldian theorizing); all have influenced sports studies over the last quarter century. While these theories vary considerably in range and scope,¹⁵

¹⁴ In seeking to identify the main conceptual topics of sociological theory, Waters (2000) identifies two groups. The first four of these topics – agency, rationality, system and structuralism – are identified as foundational within each of the four theoretical approaches identified above; that is, constructionism, utilitarianism, functionalism, and critical structuralism respectively. Waters (2000) admits that the second set of four conceptual topics – culture and ideology, power and the state, gender and feminism, and differentiation and stratification – is “much more controversial,” because they are “substantive rather than formal” (p. 12). Waters (2000) justifies his selection of the latter group on the basis that they are: “general” – they are an aspect of every element of social life; “pervasive” – they must be accounted for in any theory which claims to be complete; “controversial” – they are the focus of current debates; and “central” – they are pivotal in analyzing any substantive arena of social life (p. 12).

¹⁵ Waters (2000) identifies three types of theory – positivistic, formal, and substantive. Positivistic theory explains empirical relationships between variables by showing that they can be deduced from more abstract theoretical statements. Positivistic theory has had little influence on critical sociological theorists and is not canvassed in this thesis. Formal theory employs concepts and statements in order to explain society and human interaction in its entirety. Marxism, feminism, Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of embodiment, and Foucauldian theorizing are formal theories, because they offer theoretical and conceptual schemas that can be applied to various historical conjunctures. Substantive theory is much less inclusive. It seeks to explain specific social events and processes in particular historical conjunctures. Post-Fordism, third-wave feminism, and hegemonic masculinity are substantive theories. They are context-specific extensions of more formal theories. As I explain in the forthcoming chapters, post-Fordism is a context-specific extension of Marxism, third-wave feminism a context-specific variant of feminism, and hegemonic masculinity a context-specific expansion of both feminism and hegemony.

they deal, to varying degrees, with each of these ‘guiding concepts,’ particularly the key concepts of structure, agency, culture, the body and embodiment, gender and power. Because none of the baseline concepts identified by Waters are the exclusive property of one theoretical approach, they offer an effective means of bringing these six social theories into conversation and exploring the contributions of the various theoretical perspectives for revealing the complexities of social life and the phenomenon of female snowboarding per se. Of course, I am conscious that some scholars might argue that appropriating different theoretical lenses that reflect different ontological takes on reality is a contradictory, and perhaps impossible, task. It is important to note here, however, that most of the theories adopted in this thesis derive from Waters’ category of critical structuralism and, thus, broadly share similar assumptions about the nature of constitutive elements (objective) and terms of explanation (holistic). In particular, the theories adopted in this thesis broadly share similar understandings of society as fundamentally organized around power.

Power

Power is a fundamental item on the theoretical agenda and “no theorist of any stature can avoid the issue” (Waters, 2000, p. 218). Yet there is widespread disagreement about the meaning of power and its sources.¹⁶ According to Waters, there are three sources for the founding arguments in

¹⁶ Lukes (1978) asks a series of pertinent questions about power: “Is power a property or a relationship? Is it potential or actual, a capacity or the exercise of a capacity? By whom, or what, is it possessed or exercised: by agents (individual or collective?) or structures or systems? Over whom or upon what is it exercised: agents (individual or collective?) or structures or systems? Is it, by definition, intentional, or can its exercise be partly intended or unintended? Must it be (wholly or partly) effective? What kinds of outcome does it produce: does it modify interests, opinions, preferences, policies, or behavior? Is it a relation which is reflective or irreflective, transitive or intransitive, complete or incomplete? Is it asymmetrical? Does exercising power by some reduce the power of others? (Is it a zero-sum concept?) Or can its exercise maintain or increase the total of power? Is it demonic or benign? Must it rest on or employ force or coercion, or the threat of sanctions or deprivations? (And, if so, what balance of costs and rewards must there be between the parties for power to exist?) Does the concept only apply where there is conflict of some kind, or resistance? If so, must the conflict be manifest, or may it be latent; must it be between revealed preferences or can it involve real interests (however defined)? Is it a behavioral concept, and, if so, in what sense? Is it a causal concept?” (pp. 633-634).

sociological theories of power. The first is broadly utilitarian in its orientation: power structures emerge from the conflicts and compromises achieved by individuals seeking to realize their individual interests. The second draws on functionalist and constructionist themes: a political elite manages and rules society with the consent of the governed. The third is the critical structuralist position: power differences emanate from a structural pattern (distribution) of material resources. Critical structuralists view society as fundamentally organized around power; this perspective is the dominant approach underpinning my analysis of female snowboarding, which is ultimately a search for the inherent power relations within the culture.

The majority of social theories treat power as a unitary concept grounded in either structure or agency. The problem is that critics can always find instances where an application of power sits outside the proposed explanation. By “locating power in only one source or another, or confusing the consequences of power (for instance domination) with power per se,” many social analyses tend towards over-simplification or incompleteness (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2002, p. 5; also see Tomlinson, 1998). Lukes (1974) deems existing discussions of power inadequate because no single theory covers all the identifiable aspects of power. As he explains,

in our ordinary unreflective judgments and comparisons of power, we normally know what we mean and have little difficulty in understanding one another, yet every attempt at a single general answer to the question has failed and seems likely to fail. (Lukes, 1986, p. 17)

Power shapes female snowboarders in numerous ways. For example, the economy influences the opportunities available to professional female snowboarders; patriarchal structures support the maleness of snowboarding culture; and individual female snowboarders actively negotiate gender boundaries by creating their own spaces within the culture. Some of these forms of power are contradictory; “power is repressive and coercive, while also productive and enabling” (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 2000, p. 276). Yet no single theory can adequately explain the multiple sources of power inherent in the phenomenon of female snowboarding. Thus, I set out to

construct a holistic view of the various and numerous power relations in snowboarding by systematically contextualizing, exploring and interrogating the lived experiences of female snowboarders through six critical social theories. By employing multiple theories I hope to extract the different ways that power emerges and is articulated in snowboarding and, in so doing, provide a more nuanced understanding of the cultural phenomenon of female snowboarding.

As discussed, most of the theories can be located in Waters’ category of critical structuralism. This is because they prioritize power. Marxist political economy, for example, would attribute the female snowboarder phenomenon to underlying material structures; capitalist conditions and the significance of her economic contribution determine her cultural acceptance (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 *Marxist Political Economy in Waters’ Typology of Sociological Theorizing*

		NATURE OF CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS	
		Subjective	Objective
TERMS OF EXPLANATION	Individualistic	Constructionism	Utilitarianism
	Holistic	Functionalism	Critical structuralism

However, a number of these theories share constructionist and utilitarian theoretical precepts in examining the construction of ideologies as dominant forms of consciousness, and the ways in which women resist their economic and patriarchal subordination. Feminism and hegemonic masculinity employ critical structuralist forms of theorizing. Yet, feminism also examines individual agents and thus draws on constructionist theorizing (see Figure 1.2). For example, although feminism points to the underlying power of patriarchal structures within snowboarding

culture, it also incorporates the voices of individual women and sees female snowboarders as active agents with the potential to construct and change their social reality through ventures such as women-only events and organizations.

Figure 1.2 *Feminism in Waters' Typology of Sociological Theorizing*

		NATURE OF CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS	
		Subjective	Objective
TERMS OF EXPLANATION	Individualistic	Constructionism	Utilitarianism
	Holistic	Functionalism	Critical structuralism

Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of embodiment primarily resides within the critical structuralist paradigm but draws on constructionist and utilitarian forms of theorizing (see Figure 1.3). Pierre Bourdieu's theory of embodiment, for example, helps explain the risk-taking behaviors engaged in by many male and female snowboarders in pursuit of prestige and cultural status. Thus, this study works with theories that incorporate three of Waters' four types of theorizing: constructionism, utilitarianism and critical structuralism.

Figure 1.3 *Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Embodiment in Waters' Typology of Sociological Theorizing*

		NATURE OF CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS	
		Subjective	Objective
TERMS OF EXPLANATION	Individualistic	Constructionism	Utilitarianism
	Holistic	Functionalism	Critical structuralism

The fourth strand, functionalism, does not feature. Some theorists, such as neo-functionalists Jeffrey Alexander (1995), argue that functionalism has passed its historical use-by-date. Alexander (1995) argues that functionalism “died” sometime in the mid-1960s, and he attributes the destruction of functionalism’s ideological, discursive and methodological core to a younger generation of intellectuals who no longer “believed” (p. 76). Moreover, functionalism is inadequate for explaining snowboarding culture because it “neglects the meanings that individuals give to their actions by concentrating simply on the consequences of actions” (Abercrombie et al., 2000, p. 144).

Of central concern to the majority of the theories selected for examination in this thesis are forms of domination, more specifically economic, gender and cultural domination.¹⁷ Whether it is the power of production, the power of patriarchal domination or hegemonic power, the source of power and the context within which power relations are lived out are a central issue (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2002). Thus by examining numerous social theories, I attempt to understand the multiple sources of power – economy, culture, gender, body, discourse, media – in snowboarding culture and, furthermore, the struggles and confrontations that affect the power relations by transforming, strengthening, or reversing them. In so doing, I embrace Giulianotti’s (2005) challenge “to deploy qualitative research that reveals the cultural values, meanings and motives of specific social actors and groups” and to “relate those findings to particular frameworks of power” (p. 59). The concept of power has a temporal dimension which, of course, returns us to history and social change.

¹⁷ The terms power, domination and resistance are used in a connotative sense at this point and will be explored (denoted and defined) in subsequent chapters. Indeed, as I will illustrate, many of the theoretical perspectives adopted in this thesis deploy very different understandings of these concepts.

Social Change and the Structure/Agency Debate

History and social change are paramount in all social theory. C. Wright Mills (1959) for example, described history as the “shank of social study” and critical to grasping the “problems of our time” (p. 143), while Larry Griffin (1995) subscribes to the view that it is important to “get the history right” not only for its own sake but also for that of sociology (p. 1274). Griffin (1995) also proclaims “by taking history more seriously we also take ‘time’ more seriously” (p. 1247). According to Elias (1982), there is no such thing as “timeless science” (p. 27), and he argued that social science must be seen as “*inextricably interwoven and interdependent*” with its historical and political development (cited in Newton, 2003, p. 452, original emphasis). Whether we realize it or not, time is central to all things sociological. Time is an

inescapable part of the structural and cultural context in which people exist, think, and act. It is part of the context in which societal arrangements have personal and collective meaning and causal efficacy, and it is the medium through which action occurs, social relations institutionalized, and cultural definitions developed. (Griffin, 1995, p. 1248)¹⁸

Similarly, Bryant (1994) describes time as a “determinant feature” of “all facets of social life,” extending from the “personal or micro level up to that of institutions and macro structures” (p. 11).¹⁹ He adds, “these points, though obvious, need continual restating, because sociology as a discipline has long cultivated a systematic disregard for temporality” (Bryant, 1994, p. 17).²⁰ More

¹⁸ Some theories of postmodernism make claims of radical socio-historical rupture, yet such claims have been neither substantiated nor theorized. They “ignore patterns and relations of social structures,” and have been accused of excessive abstraction and reductionism (Best & Kellner, 1991, cited in Booth, 2003, p. 118). I discuss postmodernism in more depth in Chapter Three: Post-Fordism and the Women’s Niche Market.

¹⁹ According to Bryant (1994), theoretical attention to the “temporal structure of everyday life” is one of the virtues of Berger and Luckmann’s *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967). As Berger and Luckmann (1967) note: “Temporality is an intrinsic property of consciousness. The stream of consciousness is always ordered temporally... All of my existence in this world is continuously ordered by its time, is indeed enveloped by it” (pp. 26-27). In other words, human agency is “fundamentally time-referential, with the consequence that social actions are to be understood not as episodic events or discrete occurrences but as complex durational processes, constitutively informed by past, present, and future temporal considerations” (Bryant, 1994, p. 18).

²⁰ This very “exclusion of time on the level of the *durée* of human agency” and the “repression of the temporality of social institutions in social theory” underpins Giddens’ theory of ‘structuration,’ a theory built around the idea of the “fundamentally recursive nature of social life” and designed precisely to express “the mutual dependence of structure and agency” in terms of process in time (Giddens, 1979, cited in Abrams, 1980, p. 14). It should also be noted that other scholars do give serious consideration to time. David Harvey (1990) is one example. His account

Footnote continued on the next page

recently, Newton (2003) argues, “temporal pace is particularly significant to the way we comprehend natural and social processes” (p. 433). Indeed, temporal pace has particular value for this discussion of social theory and social change.

When dealing with social change two important questions arise. First, what is it that actually changes? And second, how do these changes occur? In the case of female snowboarders, for example, how do we explain the rapid growth in female participation rates? Theorists typically present a range of answers. These differing perspectives and explanations depend entirely upon “the scholar’s conceptualization of structure and their understanding of the relationship between structure and agency” (Booth, 2003, p. 126). The relationship between individuals and social structure has always been an important debate in sociological theory. The debate revolves round the problem of “how structures determine what individuals do, how structures are created, and what are the limits, if any, on individuals’ capacities to act independently of structural constraints; what are the limits, in other words, on human agency” (Abercrombie et al., 2000, p. 9). In light of recent conceptualizations of time, however, a number of prominent scholars have questioned the relevance of the structure and agency debate, with possibly interesting consequences for the future directions of sociology.

Social structures are traditionally seen as “mechanisms that withstand the march of time” (Braudel, 1972, p. 353). Newton (2003), however, argues that the sociological centrality of structure, and structure/agency debates, is lessened in a rapidly changing world, where fewer and fewer “social structures sufficiently endur[e] for their examination to be feasible and worthwhile” (Outhwaite, 1987, cited in Newton, 2003, p. 446). Similarly, Urry (2000) argues that earlier

of space and time in social life highlights the material links between political-economic and cultural processes. Sports-specific examples include Bale (2004), Borden (2001), Brohm (1978), and Smith (2002). In their studies of running culture, Bale (2004) and Smith (2002) consider the importance of speed and records, and the temporal organization of running, respectively, while Borden’s (2001) study of skateboarding culture examines the changes in skate photography and cultural representations over time.

debates over structure and agency, methodological individualism or holism “are unhelpful” in this period of rapid change, and insists that we need a “new agenda for sociology” (p. 15; also cited in Newton, 2003, p. 440). According to Urry (2000), this new sociology needs to focus on networks rather than social structures and stress “mobilities for the twenty-first century” (book sub-title) rather than the static sociological concepts employed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Continuing, Newton (2003) argues that although

some writers may regret the increasing dominance of “the terrain of the socio-cultural rather than the social structural” (Howson & Inglis, 2001, p. 314)... such dominance needs to be seen within the *temporal* context of seemingly accelerating human plasticity. If we are moving toward a changing world, the socio-cultural may advance, and the social structural may wane. (p. 446)

Newton (2003) advocates a “social constructionist” theoretical perspective here, because it is “better suited to an accelerating pace” of life and change in modern times (p. 448).

Of course, it is easy to overlay the metaphors of instability, chaos and flux. As Newton (2003) proclaims, “all is not flux, and some natural processes seem to show remarkable stability and longevity” (p. 450). It is unlikely that all social stabilities will disappear in the maelstrom of the contemporary era. According to Newton (2003):

Firstly, the social is likely to continue to be conditioned, if not determined, by biological stabilities, such as those associated with gender, ethnicity, parenthood or human maturation. Secondly, there remain a number of social stabilities that appear resistant to rapid change, such as that of social class. Thirdly, the seeming stability of many natural processes constrains our ability to socially reconstruct our world. (p. 448)

However, if acceleration of life and change does continue to proceed apace, the debate between those who defend ‘old’ sociologies, such as that of social structure or even social laws, and those who proclaim a new sociology that either draws on social constructionism, or stresses “diverse mobilities,” is likely to intensify (Urry, 2000, p. 15; also cited in Newton, 2003, p. 448). Many scholars frustrated with the grand narratives of traditional sociology are turning to cultural studies

because it offers a new agenda for analyzing socio-cultural practices, experiences and institutions in a rapidly changing world.

In the past two decades the ‘cultural turn’ – a recognition that “cultural practices are as constitutive of the ‘real world’ as the political and economic processes” that formerly occupied the attention of sociologists (du Gay, Janes, Mackay & Negus, 1997, p. 1) – has contributed to the emergence of new modes of analysis and interpretation. Under the impetus of the cultural turn, researchers have increasingly foregrounded the analysis of “symbols, rituals, discourse, and cultural practices” as opposed to “social structure or social class” (Bonnell & Hunt, 1999, p. 8).²¹ In particular the cultural turn has contributed to revising approaches to the relationships between identity and power, race and class, ideology and representation (Rojek & Turner, 2000) and is especially pronounced in the explosion of intellectual interest in the cultural studies discipline. For cultural studies practitioners, including those working in sport (e.g., McDonald & Andrews, 2001; Andrews, 1993, 1996, 1999), concepts (e.g., symbolic resistance) and theories (e.g., subculture theory) are always context-specific. To paraphrase Grossberg (1997a), concepts are measured, their truth and validity judged, by their ability to give a better understanding of the context (p. 262). In that sense, scholars cannot apply a theory or concept developed in one context (or time) – for example, subculture theory and the concept of symbolic resistance developed in Britain in the 1970s to explain spectacular postwar youth cultures such as Teddy boys and punks, or Stuart Hall’s theory of Thatcherism as a hegemonic formation developed in the 1980s – to a different context (and time) because in cultural studies, concepts and context “determine each other” (Grossberg, 1997a, p. 263). David Andrews (1993) highlights the power of specific concepts and

²¹ Bonnell and Hunt (1999) identify several lines of convergence with respect to the cultural turn in sociology and historical analysis: (1) questions about the status of ‘the social;’ (2) concerns raised by the depiction of culture as a symbolic, linguistic, and representational system; (3) seemingly inevitable methodological and epistemological dilemmas; (4) a resulting or perhaps precipitating collapse of explanatory paradigms; and (5) a consequent realignment of the disciplines (including the rise of cultural studies).

theories in cultural studies. He advocates the “constant re-appraisal of its major philosophical positions in the light of historical developments” as cultural studies’ “greatest asset” (Andrews, 1993, p. 19). Only through this “continual process of re-evaluation and partial rejection of particular positions is it possible to further the interpretive understanding of changing socio-cultural conditions” (Andrews, 1993, p. 20). Thus, it might be argued that cultural studies can more “happily embrace acceleration” than traditional sociology (Newton, 2003, p. 448).

Yet, “all is not rosy in the cultural studies garden” (Andrews, 2002, p. 110). Under the sway of the cultural turn, with its emphasis on literary interpretation and the “aestheticization of life” (Rojek & Turner, 2000, p. 629), many sociologists have distanced themselves from their methodological roots grounded in history and context. Among some critics this shift is tantamount to a betrayal of sociological tradition and has transformed the discipline into what Rojek and Turner (2000) damningly dismiss as “decorative sociology” (p. 629). Of particular concern to Rojek and Turner (2000) is the “remarkable absence of historical depth” in cultural studies (p. 633). Maguire (1995) is similarly perturbed. He likens the trend in sports sociology towards post-modern thinking to “a Pol Pot type ground zero view of social development,” where the past is irrelevant and where “the future lies in cyberspace and hyperreality” (p. 5; also see Giulianotti, 2005). Certainly, since the cultural turn, numerous sports scholars have produced interesting and insightful ethnographical studies of sports cultures. Beal (1995, 1996), Anderson (1999) and Wheaton and Tomlinson (1998), for example, provide rich insights into the cultural particularities and micro-politics of skateboarding, snowboarding and windsurfing cultures respectively. However, while these works “magnif[y]...immediate and local conditions” they also “dimin[ish]...historical and comparative perspectives” (Rojek & Turner, 2000, p. 634). Under the impetus of the cultural turn, there is a tendency among sports scholars to sacrifice the broader

social and historical context. Moreover, by focusing on single groups in “one quantum of time” (Willis, 1978, p. 191), they ignore dimensions of cultural change and development.

While these objections are fitting for many strands of cultural studies, the radical contextual cultural studies approach advocated by Lawrence Grossberg appears to offer an encouraging alternative. “Context is everything and everything is context” in cultural studies declared Grossberg (1997b, p. 7) before proceeding to describe cultural studies as “a contextual theory of contexts as the lived milieu of power” (p. 8). A radical contextualist position sees cultural practices as “busy intersections” (Rosaldo, 1989), as places where many things happen, where multiple trajectories of effects and investment intersect (Grossberg, 1997b). The meaning, politics, and identity of these cultural practices can only be understood by the way they articulate into a particular set of complex historical, economic, and political relationships. For Grossberg (1993) the method of articulation transforms “cultural studies from a model of communication (production-text-consumption; encoding-decoding) to a theory of contexts” (p. 4).²² He defines articulation as “the methodological face of a radical contextualist theory” (Grossberg, 1997, cited in Morris, 1997, p. 46). It involves the “deconstruction and reconstruction of a historical context, in order to produce a contextually specific map of the social formation” (Howell, Andrews & Jackson, 2002, p. 155). Notably, some sports scholars have adopted rigorous contextual cultural studies approaches and the method of articulation and, in so doing, have produced careful, detailed studies linked to the broader context of contemporary culture. Examples include McDonald and Andrews (2001; also see Andrews, 1993, 1996), Andrews (1999), and Kusz (2001) who contextualize Michael Jordan, suburban soccer, and young white masculinities respectively. Thus,

²² It is important to note that articulation has become something of a catchall, a label encapsulating the social formations of power, a practice and method (Morris, 1997), and even a theory, as in ‘the theory of articulation’ (see Slack, 1996).

contrary to Rojek and Turner's (2000) claims, radical contextual cultural studies appears to pay due attention to context and history.

The irony here, however, is that the radical contextual cultural approach to context is not unique; it shares commonalities with the contextual approach adopted by some social historians (e.g., Marwick, 1998; see Thorpe, 2006). Both approaches acknowledge that context can generate frameworks of meaning, "simultaneously inform, arouse awareness and extend perspectives," and provide a "powerful way of seeing" (Booth, 2005a, p. 295). Rather than attempting to establish causal relationships between phenomena, contextualists seek to understand phenomena by placing them in the circumstances in which they occurred. Contextualists interpret phenomena within "a unitary, intellectual whole that is understood by the connections and relationships between numerous events, structures and processes" (Booth, 2005a, p. 296). The historical approach to context, much like the method of articulation, involves "the interrelating, the integrating, the weaving together of strands of evidence that point to change or continuity in human life in the past" (Struna, 1986, p. 22). Through this fusion of historical sources – the reconstruction of a context – the historical fact becomes meaningful "only in an ensemble of other meanings" (Thompson, 1972, p. 45). Yet, I argue that a social history approach to context (e.g., Marwick, 1998) advances the cultural studies approach in two ways; it offers a systematic approach that assists in making informed judgments about the identification of significant events, circumstances and people, and it provides a way to contextualize multiple historical conjunctures and, in so doing, shed light on large scale trends, developments and changes (see Thorpe, 2006). The key point here, however, is that while both approaches allow for comparisons between periods and can therefore "point to change" (Struna, 1986, p. 22), they do not facilitate explanations of this social change. Ultimately, it is sociologists rather than radical contextual cultural studies theorists who are better equipped to deal with change over time through their theories that identify causal

factors.²³ Thus, in this thesis, the focus is on six different social theories that offer various explanations of causal factors, that is, structures, agency and culture as potential motors of change. Here I link my understanding of causal factors directly to the broad motors of social change.

By employing multiple social theories this thesis gives consideration to structure, culture, and agency, as potential motors of change. While the majority of the social theories adopted in this PhD view structures (economic, gender or culture) as determining action independently of the will of human agents, some give consideration to both structure and agency (e.g., third-wave feminism, Bourdieu's theory of embodiment, Foucauldian theorizing), and noticeably fewer locate the fundamental source of change within the conscious human agent (e.g., liberal feminism). Theories that advocate a single motor of change, whether a human disposition or a contradiction in a deep structure, are alone inadequate for understanding the multiple levels of change – both seemingly superficial and substantive – within contemporary phenomena such as female snowboarding. Therefore, this thesis utilizes six social theories, each with its own position on the relationship between structure and agency, in order to access a variety of concepts that may aid in understanding the multiple levels of change in female snowboarding. In the next section I will briefly introduce the six social theories that inform this thesis, and discuss each in terms of its position in the structure/agency debate.

Social change and the structure/agency debate: Six social theoretical positions

Marx's theory of social change emphasizes the material structures of production. These structures operate independently of agents' consciousness. As Marx (1977) wrote in one of his most famous

²³ There are two basic approaches to causality. The first, and more common, focuses on the production of empirical correlations between variables. The second refers to general processes of action. According to this approach social actions arise out of the complete interplay of mental dispositions, contexts and structures (Ekstrom, 1992). I deploy the term causality in this thesis according to the second approach.

aphorisms: “Men²⁴ make their own history but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves but under circumstances directly encountered, given, transmitted from the past” (p. 300). From a Marxist perspective, social change can only emanate from the transformation of economic relations, which will ultimately lead to a “radical alteration of social arrangements” (Waters, 2000, p. 177).

Post-Fordists are less reductionist than classic Marxists. They associate change, both economic and cultural, with the nature of industrial organization and work. Such changes include greater measures of individual freedom and levels of opposition to economic regimentation. Yet, critics charge post-Fordists with interpreting change too optimistically, as extensions of freedom and creativity, and mistaking effects for causes to the extent that what they see as the primary facts (e.g., dispersal and decentralization of production) derive from, or are dependent products of, less visible processes (e.g., new varieties of exploitation) (Kumar, 1995).²⁵ As Kumar (1995) argues: “it is just as possible that changes in culture and politics are pushing on changes in the economy as the other way around, or at least, that the causal connections are two way” (p. 65).

The openly political or critical practice of feminist theory has clear implications for social change, and it advocates highlighting and challenging continuing gender power imbalances. However, feminism comprises various theoretical stances and political approaches. Liberal feminists view agents as having potential for bringing about emancipation and social change (Beasley, 2005; Hall 1996; Whelehan, 1995). Radical feminists advocate the destruction of hierarchical and patriarchal structures and their concomitant gender relations. Although liberal and radical feminist theory and politics privilege agency and structure respectively, third-wave feminists are more at ease with contradiction, and acknowledge, to varying degrees, both agency

²⁴ In this thesis, where quotes use words ‘man’ or ‘men’ to stand for all people, I adhere to the original quote.

²⁵ According to Kumar (1995) “the multinational networks of global capitalism are the other face of the decentralization and dispersion that are the most obvious features of the post-Fordist economy” (p. 146).

and structure. Hence, it might be argued that the younger third-wave feminist perspective has more explanatory potential in the contemporary context.

Gender theorists also give some consideration to agency. Yet, many gender theorists – in particular those concerned with hegemonic masculinity – tend to employ Gramsci’s concept of hegemony as a means to explain the staying power of a particular structure of domination (e.g., gender order), and in so doing, downplay agency. Gramsci advocated that social change depends upon the control of culture. Thus, like cultural studies scholars, many gender theorists have appropriated the Gramscian position that “sees history as actively produced by individuals and social groups as they struggle to make the best they can out of their lives under determinate conditions” (Grossberg, 1993, pp. 29-30). From this perspective, resistance to hegemonic forms of everyday life represents a potential foundation of social change. The implication is that humans can challenge dominant practices, create alternative practices and potentially create social change through cultural practices. Yet for radical feminists, and gender theorists, “agency is never completely free but always constrained and enabled by its structural and ideological situation and the experience of the actor” (Lloyd, 1988, cited in Booth, 2003, p. 119). In short, people “make history but always in particular enabling and disabling conditions” (Lloyd, 1988, cited in Booth, 2003, p. 119). In this PhD, however, I concur with Giulianotti’s (2005) recent argument, that “while gender-based relations of power and domination certainly obtain within sport, we should avoid culturally reductive readings that underplay social actors’ critical, interpretative capacities” (p. 80).

In recent years, a host of theorists have begun to point to the significance of the body and embodiment in contemporary society. Among their number is French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu who, in his theory of distinction, assigns a central place to the body, and via a number of theoretical concepts provides insight into the distinctive bodily practices employed by individuals

and groups within society. Bourdieu's conceptual schema identifies a link between cultural reproduction and social reproduction; any group that can establish its power over others can turn culture into a tool of exclusion and control. The ongoing and successful reproduction of relationships of domination lies at the heart of Bourdieu's social theory and, although there might be struggles, these occur within an enduring hierarchical social space. For Bourdieu (1985), "the social world is, to a large extent, what the agent makes of it, at each moment; but they have no chance of unmaking it and remaking it except on the basis of realistic knowledge of what it is and what they can do from the position they occupy within it" (p. 729). It has been argued that Bourdieu's schema excludes an account of social change at the level of the system and does not allow for meaningful agency or process at the individual level, or as Jenkins (2002) puts it: "there is rebellion in this model but, alas, no revolution" (p. 137).

In the late 1960s and 1970s, post-structuralism emerged as "a loosely aligned series of philosophical, political and theoretical rejoinders to the unrest and turbulence that engulfed...France" during this period (Andrews, 2000, p. 106).²⁶ While poststructuralists differ considerably with respect to their particular engagements with the modernist project, they are linked by their mutual concern with "radically problematizing modernity" (Andrews, 2000, p. 108). Among post-structuralists, "structure is denied" (Waters, 2000, p. 128), and in so doing they offer "new and challenging perspectives on the history of Western societies" and social change (Andrews, 2000, p. 115). Departing from liberal and Marxist ideas which draw our attention to the

²⁶ The prefix 'post' should not be interpreted as a comprehensive and conclusive repudiation of structuralism (Andrews, 2000). Post-structuralism is "not 'post' in the sense of having killed structuralism off" argues Sturrock (1986) but rather "'post' only in the sense of coming after and seeking to extend structuralism in its rightful direction" (cited in Andrews, 2000, p. 113). Refining this point, Andrews (2000) explains that "post-structuralism builds upon structuralism's Saussurean understanding and focus on the constitution of meaning, reality and subjectivity within language" (p. 113). Furthermore, while some commentators use 'post-structuralism' and 'post-modernism' interchangeably, Andrews (2000) argues that post-structuralism's distinct intellectual lineage, and focus, render it too important to be subsumed under the broad and ambiguous banner of postmodernism. "Any uncritical conflation of post-structuralism and postmodernism...appear[s] to be misleading, inaccurate and thereby ill-advised," argues Andrews (2000, p. 108).

economy, the state, organizational dynamics, and cultural values, poststructuralists center social analysis on “processes relating to the body, sexuality, identity, consumerism, medical-scientific discourses, the social role of the human sciences, and disciplinary technologies of control” (Seidman, 1994, cited in Andrews, 2000, p. 115). Arguably, Michel Foucault is one of the “most sociologically influential” post-structuralists (Waters, 2000, p. 122). In contrast to Bourdieu’s (and indeed many others) conceptualization of social change, Foucault rejects the idea that there is any straightforward causal link between large-scale determining structures and the actions of individuals; he understands each type of authority as determined by its own set of social forces and power relations. According to Foucault (1980), the pervasiveness of power within disciplinary society does “not mean one is trapped and condemned to defeat no matter what” (pp. 141-142); rather, resistance is part of every power relationship. From this perspective, the human agent is neither the origin of social relations nor the passive product of an externally imposed system of social constraint; there is mutual dependency of structure and agency (McNay, 1992).

In light of the increasing dominance of “the terrain of the socio-cultural” (Howson & Inglis, 2001, p. 314), it might be argued that this PhD adopts an ‘unfashionable’ approach to social change. However, by employing six different social theories, this thesis gives consideration to structure, culture, and agency, as potential motors of change. This is consistent with my objective to build a more nuanced explanation of female snowboarders. In other words, I seek to expand upon existing knowledge of female physical youth culture by painting a fuller, more complete, picture of women in snowboarding culture than would be possible by focusing only on a single theory. I want to avoid assigning primacy to single factors or conditions in explaining change by adopting a variety of social theories. Explaining what it is within the phenomenon of female snowboarding that actually changes and how these changes occur is no easy task, and each social

theory provides a different answer to these questions. The question now, however, is how will I achieve this understanding and explanation?

Balancing theory and research is a prime goal of sociology, yet, according to Waters (2000), “the actual practice is all too rare” (p. 4). Throughout his work Bourdieu challenged many dualisms including theory and empirical work. Eschewing the choice between grand theory and narrow empiricism, his research craft encompassed a two-way, uninterrupted traffic between theory and evidence. According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), “research without theory is blind, and theory without research is empty” (p. 162). Similarly, sociologist Norbert Elias (1983) explained that, “theoretical thinking retains its force...only as long as it does not lose touch with the terra firma of empirical facts” (p. 96; also see Mills, 1959). Despite numerous scholarly accounts providing insights into a variety of social theories, few of these are situated in ‘real’ social phenomena. Furthermore, social theories are rarely compared in their efficacy for understanding ‘grounded’ social phenomena. Hence, I position this study as grounded in the ‘real’ social phenomena of female snowboarding, which forms the terra firma on which each of these six social theories is interrogated and critiqued for its efficacy in explaining the development, and current tensions in the cultural position, of female snowboarders. The interchange between theory and research is central. The sensitizing themes – structure, agency, culture, the body and embodiment, gender, and power – emerged from the snowboarding culture, and were then refined and developed in ‘conversation’ with theory.

The six social theories employed in this study offer different and often complimentary insights into the cultural phenomenon of female snowboarding. I do not pretend to provide an exhaustive account of each theory. It would be impossible to analyze in detail all the strengths and shortcomings of each theory in the space available. Moreover, such an analysis would not aid my goal of providing a more nuanced explanation of female snowboarding within critical social

theory. Instead I have cast my net widely, and I focus on select critical and key concepts from each social theory. While the sensitizing themes emerged from the snowboarding culture, the ultimate selection of the concepts is grounded in a solid understanding of each theory, and I chose only those concepts that I believed would provide the most insight into female snowboarding. Put simply, the conversation between theoretical and cultural knowledge was central to the selection of the key concepts. I employed only those concepts and schema that enhance understanding of the multiple sources of power inherent in the lived experiences of female snowboarders. The chosen concepts are those that remain flexible enough for appropriation and application to this contemporary phenomenon. Moreover, they are the concepts that “alert us to distinctions in what we may see, or in what we may make of what we see when we come to interpret it” (Mills, 1959, p. 122). Theoretical concepts that did not facilitate my analysis of female snowboarders were superfluous to this study, and were thus not dealt with. As Slack (1996) explains “successful theorizing is not measured by the exact theoretical fit but by the ability to work with our always inadequate theories to help us move understanding ‘a little further down the road’” (p. 112). In this study I ‘work with’ social theory in order to both illustrate the potential of social theory for explaining contemporary social phenomena, and enhance understanding of women in snowboarding culture.

Methods

Research is a process that occurs through the medium of a person – “the researcher is always and inevitably present in the research” (Stanley & Wise, 1993, cited in Wheaton, 2002, p. 246). In this section I introduce the procedures I used to produce knowledge about women in snowboarding culture and discuss my role as the researcher. Having spent eight consecutive winters snowboarding in New Zealand and North America, I could be considered a cultural insider. My

physical abilities and knowledge about snowboarding gave me access to the culture and a head start in recognizing the significant issues and sensitizing themes and concepts, and in discerning relevant sources. However, this ‘insider knowledge’ also carries potential pitfalls. Perhaps one of the hardest tasks in this research was negotiating the path that allowed me to understand and acknowledge the participants’ worldviews and their subjectivities, while also gaining the “critical distance” necessary to contextualize those views and actions (Wheaton, 2002, p. 262). This involved not only “demystifying the familiar” but also “analyzing respondents’ views” (Wheaton, 2002, p. 262) and engaging with them from a number of different theoretical perspectives. As my research progressed I acquired greater analytical distance. Thus, throughout this study I self-consciously reflected on my constantly shifting positions as a female researcher and an active snowboarder, and how these roles influenced the theoretical and empirical development of the study.

Having chosen the theories, a key issue was to determine what counts as evidence. This study employed multiple modes of data generation, a type of methodology used extensively by Bourdieu and which he describes as “discursive montage” of “*all sources*” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 66, italics added). Bourdieu (1992) adds that this is “the only possible attitude toward theoretical tradition” (p. 252). Similarly, Grossberg (2001) recommends using “any and every kind of empirical method, whatever seems useful to the particular project” in order to “gather more and better information, descriptions, resources,” and improve one’s interpretations (cited in Wright, 2001, p. 145). Throughout this study I seized all types of data, evidence, sources, and artifacts to enlighten my inquiry into female snowboarding. Indeed, I used a whole gamut of methods, which varied according to the available evidence and the particular circumstances of their application. Of course, as Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron (1991) remind us, no matter how sophisticated one’s “techniques of observation and proof,” if it is not accompanied by a “redoubling of

theoretical vigilance,” it will only “lead us to see better and better fewer and fewer things” (p. 88). In the case of female snowboarders, the range and diversity of theories structured my evidence, and in so doing helped me to see better and better more and more things. While some theories draw more strongly upon specific methods (e.g., Foucauldian theorizing and geneology), readers should note that no critical social theory proscribes specific methods. Each of the forthcoming theoretical chapters is, therefore informed by my “discursive montage” of *all* the sources (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 66). However, every theory adopted in this study asks different questions of the evidence, and thus, each chapter approaches and analyzes the same (and different) sources in different ways, depending on the sociological questions being asked. Nonetheless, throughout this research, I continually sought “negative instances or contradictory cases” from *all* the sources in order to avoid including only those elements of the snowboarding culture that would substantiate my analyses (Mason, 2002, p. 124).

According to Mills (1959), sociologists do not study projects, rather they become tuned, or sensitive, to themes that “they see and hear everywhere in [their] experience” (p. 211). As I became increasingly sensitive to the themes in female snowboarding, I gathered evidence from personal observations and experiences, magazines, websites, newspapers, interviews and personal communications, videos, internet chat rooms, promotional material, television programs, press releases, public documents, reports from snowboarding’s administrative bodies, and promotional material from sporting organizations and from associated industries.²⁷ Overall, therefore, the analysis draws on 70 interviews with 37 snowboarders, 10 instances of fieldwork in three countries, and access to 51 websites, 23 videos, and more than one hundred magazines from 17 different publishers (See Tables 1.0, 1.1, 1.2 & 1.3). “Even the humblest material artifact is,” as Eliot (1947) explains, “an emissary of the culture out of which it comes” (cited in Vamplew, 1998,

²⁷ Citations from specific magazines, websites, videos etc. are listed in the References.

p. 268). Certainly, using cultural sources, such as magazines, films, and websites,²⁸ among many other sources, helped deepen my understanding of snowboarding’s cultural complexities. But even the richest caches of primary source materials “will speak only when they are properly questioned” (Bloch, 1952, cited in Hardy, 1999, p. 91). Thus, this evidence was refined and developed in conversation with the theoretical concepts.

Table 1.0 Magazines consulted

Magazine Title	Country of Production	Years Analyzed
Australian, New Zealand Snowboarding	Australia	2005-2006
Australian Snowboarder	Australia	1994-2006
Curl: Girls Lifestyle Magazine	New Zealand	2005-2007
Document Snowboard	United Kingdom	2002-2006
Frequency: The Snowboarders Journal	America	2003-2006
Manual: NZ Skate & Snow Culture	New Zealand	2003-2006
New Zealand Adventure	New Zealand	2004-2006
New Zealand Snowboarder	New Zealand	1993-2007
OnBoard: European Snowboarding Magazine	Germany	2005-2006
SG: Surf, Snow, Skate Girl Magazine	America	2002-2005
Snowboard Canada	Canada	2003-2006
Snowboard Journal	America	2005-2006
Snowboarder Magazine	America	1993-2006
Snowboard: Products, Place & Personalities	America	2005-2006
Transworld Business	America	1994-2006
Transworld Snowboarding	America	1988-2007
Transworld Snowboarding Buyer’s Guide	America	2004-2006

²⁸ According to Williams and Copes (2005), “regardless of the subculture they participate in, many of today’s youths use the internet to develop new relationships and to gain insights into how their peers perform subcultural selves” (p. 68). Continuing, Williams and Copes (2005) add: “expressing subcultural identities online is part of the identity work individuals perform in their everyday lives,” yet “identity online is not separate from the face-to-face world...rather [it] complements and supplements it. We do not want to overemphasize the internet as a ‘virtual’ social space. Interaction online, like offline, takes many forms and should be conceptualized as another (ever-increasing) aspect of our everyday lives” (p. 73).

Table 1.1 Websites consulted

Website	Country of Production	Web Address
Snowboarding		
Betty Go Hard	Canada	http://www.bettygohard.com/home.html
Betty Rides	America	http://www.bettyrides.com
Boarderzone	New Zealand	http://www.boarderzone.com/
Boarding for Breast Cancer	America	http://www.b4bc.org/
Board the World	Australia	http://www.boardtheworld.com/
Burton Snowboards	America	http://www.burton.com
Chorus	America	http://chorususa.com/
Chunky Knit Productions	United Kingdom	http://www.chunkyknit.com/go/home/
Cold as Ice	America	http://www.caibrands.com/
Flakezine	America	http://www.flakezine.com
Greys on Trays	America	http://www.greysontrays.com/
Method European Snowboard Mag	Austria	http://www.methodmag.com/
MGT Snowboard Camps	Canada	http://www.mgtsnowboardcamp.com/
Out Board	America	http://www.outboard.org/
Out Ryders	America	http://www.outryders.org/
Shannon Dunn.com	America	http://www.shannondunnsnow.com/home.html
Snowboard.com	Canada	http://snowboard.colonies.com/
Snowboard Secrets	America	http://www.snowboardsecrets.com/
Snowboarder Magazine	America	http://www.snowboardermag.com/
Snowboarding Online [defunct]	America	http://www.solsnowboarding.com
Transworld Snowboarding	America	http://www.transworldsnowboarding.com/snow
Snow-sports		
Big Lines	America	http://www.biglines.com/
Gravity Fed	America	http://www.gravityfed.com/
Powder Magazine Online	America	http://www.powder.com/
Ski Press World	Canada	http://www.skipressworld.com
Snow Link	America	http://www.snowlink.com/
Snow Sports Industries America	America	http://www.snowsports.org/
Vail Snow	America	http://www.vailsnow.com/
Board-sports		
Curl Magazine	New Zealand	http://www.curl.co.nz
Girlie Camps	United Kingdom	http://www.girliecamp.com/
Girls Learn to Ride	America	http://www.girlslearntoride.com
Moms on Boards	America	http://store.momsonboards.com
Reef	America	http://www.reef.com/
SG Magazine	America	http://sgmag.com
Transworld Business	America	http://www.twsbiz.com/twbiz
Transworld Skate	America	http://www.skateboarding.com/skate/
Transworld Surf	America	http://www.transworldsurf.com
Extreme sports		
Adventure Online	America	http://www.nationalgeographic.com/adventure/
EXPN	America	http://www.expn.com
Extreme Media Group	England	http://www.extrememediagroup.com/
Mountain Zone	America	http://www.mountainzone.com/
X Girl Sport	America	http://www.xgirlsport.com/

Table 1.1 Websites consulted continued

Other		
Apparel News	America	http://www.apparelnews.net/
ESPN	America	http://espn.go.com/
Maxim Online	America	http://www.maximonline.com/index.aspx
National Geographic	America	http://www.nationalgeographic.com/
National Sporting Goods Assoc	America	http://www.nsga.org
NBC Olympics	America	http://www.nbcolympics.com/
NZ Girl	New Zealand	http://www.nzgirl.com/index.php
Sports Illustrated	America	http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/
Women's Sport Foundation	America	http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/

Table 1.2 Videos consulted

Video Title	Year	Production Company	Country of Production
Snowboarding			
3 Degrees	2003	3 Degrees	New Zealand
Amp	2000	Mack Dawg Productions	America
Axis of Evil	2003	Pylon Productions	New Zealand
Committed	2005	Strait Jacket Films	America
Notice to Appear	2002	Standard Films	America
Shakedown	2004	Mack Dawg Productions	America
Shoot the Ones You Love	2004	Gnarcove Videoplays	Canada
The Resistance	2000	A Forum/Mack Dawg Production	America
Totally Board Nine	2001	Standard Films	America
Whiskey: The Movie	1994	Boozey the Clown Productions	Canada
Whiskey: The Adventure of Boozey the Clown	1995	Boozey the Clown Productions	Canada
Female-only board sports			
As If...	2005	Misschief Films	America
Dropstitch	2004	Chunkyknit Productions	United Kingdom
Hardly Angels	2001	XX Productions	America
Last Winter	2006	Chunkyknit Productions	United Kingdom
Our Turn	2000	XX Productions	America
Shot in Dark	2003	Produced by Lauren Graham	Canada
Movies			
Dogtown and Z-Boys	2005	Sony Pictures	America
First Descent	2005	Universal Pictures	America
Skiing and snowboarding			
Impact	2005	Warren Miller Productions	America
Mind the Addiction	2003	Teton Gravity Research	America
The Hit List	2005	Matchstick Productions	America

This research follows Mills' (1959) exhortation to scholars to bring their life experiences to the fore in their intellectual work. "Do not be afraid to use your experience and relate it directly to various works in progress," said Mills (1959, p. 196). Hence, this study draws extensively on approximately 600 days snowboarding experience on more than 30 mountains in New Zealand, Canada and America. During this time I held many roles in the snowboarding culture (i.e., novice, weekend-warrior, core boarder and athlete) and industry (i.e., semi-professional athlete, snowboard instructor, event organizer, terrain-park employee and journalist). This cultural experience also enabled me to complete participant-observation phases during this thesis that focused on a number of snowboarding communities (i.e., Ohakune,²⁹ Queenstown,³⁰ Wanaka,³¹ Methven³²) and ski resorts (i.e., Turoa Ski Resort, Whakapapa Ski Resort, Coronet Peak, The Remarkables, Snow Park, Mt Hutt, Mt Dobson, Ohau) in New Zealand during the 2004, 2005, and 2006 winter seasons. During November and December 2005, I also conducted three weeks fieldwork at three key snowboarding communities in North America: Whistler (British Columbia, Canada),³³ Mount

²⁹ Ohakune is a small ski town located at the base of Mt Ruapehu – an active volcano, and the highest mountain (9175 feet/2797 meters) in the North Island of New Zealand. Mt Ruapehu plays host to New Zealand's two largest ski areas (Turoa and Whakapapa), which are both managed by Ruapehu Alpine Lifts. While the majority of users travel from major North Island urban centers (e.g., Auckland, Wellington) in the weekends, Ohakune and National Park (a small community northwest of Mt Ruapehu) are home to most resort employees and many passionate snowboarding and skiing 'locals.'

³⁰ Nestled in the magnificent landscape of the Southern Alps, Queenstown is "New Zealand's premier visitor destination and alpine resort" (see <http://www.queenstownnz.co.nz/>). Two ski resorts, Coronet Peak and The Remarkables Ski Area – both owned by Southern Alpine Recreation Limited – are located within a short drive of the Queenstown town-ship, which hosts a thriving international snowboarding scene during the winter months.

³¹ Wanaka, located 75 miles (120 kilometers) northwest of Queenstown, is another popular snowboarding destination. Wanaka residents have the option of riding at Cardrona Alpine Resort, Treble Cone Ski Area or Snow Park. The latter is the southern hemisphere's first 'freestyle resort' and caters specifically to young, core snowboarders and skiers by offering an extensive array of well-maintained artificial freestyle features, including a superpipe, a quarterpipe, and numerous jumps and rails, as well as a 5000-watt sound system that delivers music over the entire terrain-park. During the winter, Snow Park hosts a number of highly esteemed competitions and events, which attract many of the world's best freestyle snowboarders and skiers.

³² Methven (New Zealand) is a small farming community located 57 miles (92 kilometers) west of Christchurch (largest South Island city), and 16 miles (26 kilometers) from Mt Hutt Ski Area (owned by Southern Alpine Recreation Limited). Methven is home to a small, tight-knit community of passionate snowboarders (and skiers) who enjoy riding at Mt Hutt and the various club-fields – private patches of mountain managed and operated by private ski clubs but open to the public (e.g., Mount Olympus, Porter Heights) – nestled high inside the eastern rim of the Southern Alps.

³³ Whistler (Canada) is known as the snowboarding Mecca. Every year thousands of boarders from across the globe make the pilgrimage to Whistler with the dream of living and breathing snowboarding for the season; some never leave.

Footnote continued on the next page

Hood (Oregon, USA),³⁴ and Salt Lake City (Utah, USA).³⁵ Observations were made in natural settings both on and off the snow, including lift lines, chair lifts, resort lodges, snowboard competitions, prize giving events, video premiers, bars, cafes, local hangouts and snowboard shops. During this fieldwork I observed, listened, engaged in analysis and made mental notes, switching from snowboarder to researcher depending on the requirements of the situation. The participant-observation phase enabled me to refine and develop the analytical themes that simultaneously emerged in the study of documentary and visual sources, as well as produce new areas of inquiry. Furthermore, participant-observation was a form of “sensual research” (Evers, 2006, p. 239). My “researching body” not only observed and jotted notes, it also actively participated and in so doing, was “penetrated by and fe[lt] the field it was investigating” (Evers, 2006, p. 239). That is, it was “research at the embodied level, with all the movement that implies” (Evers, 2006, p. 239) and it offered new opportunities for experiencing, observing and sharing the bodily and social pleasures inherent in the practice of snowboarding.

Certainly, the snowboarding culture thrives in Whistler, such that it is commonly described as the snowboarder’s Disneyland. Located less than two hours north of Vancouver (British Columbia, Canada), Whistler is home to some of the world’s best snowboarding terrain. Two mountains, Whistler and Blackcomb, rise up a mile out of the valley (5280 feet/1609 meters) and offer access to over 8000 acres of ride-able terrain. The average annual snowfall is 30 feet (9.14 meters), and with a total of 33 lifts, boarders choose from over 200 marked runs. Whistler/Blackcomb is so popular among boarders that it wins the *Transworld Snowboarding* Resort Poll year after year because it offers “the complete snowboarding experience on-hill and off – from the perfect corduroy cruisers; long, challenging tree runs; sheer cliffs; and quality of snow, to the epic kickers, rails, and Super-pipe, as well as the restaurants, hotels and nightlife in Whistler Village” (Fast, 2005, p. 24).

³⁴ Mt Hood is an active volcano located 67 miles east of Portland (Oregon). The mountain hosts two ski resorts, Mt Hood Meadows and Timberline Ski Resort. Summer snowboarding on the glacier of the latter is infamous among snowboarders worldwide. Unlike Whistler (Canada) and Queenstown (New Zealand), and like Mt Ruapehu (New Zealand), Mt Hood is not a destination resort. Rather the majority of users travel from Portland or surrounding areas. Two small towns (Government Camp and Hood River) are located within a short drive of the resorts, and are home to most resort employees and passionate snowboarders. The local scene here epitomizes ‘hard core,’ with most residents very committed to the snowboarding (or skiing) lifestyle.

³⁵ While Salt Lake City has traditionally been renown as a haven for devout Mormons, it has recently become a key destination for American and international snowboarders alike. The Wasatch Mountains are home to seven world-class ski resorts (Brighton Ski Resort, Park City Mountain Resort, Alta Ski Resort [skiing only], Snowbird Ski and Summer Resort, The Canyons Ski Resort, Solitude Mountain Resort, Deer Valley Ski Resort) all within 30-45 minutes of the city. With many snowboarding manufacturers and media producers also establishing themselves in Salt Lake City, the snowboarding industry and culture there is currently thriving.

During these participant-observation phases, however, some ethical issues arose for me as a researcher. For example, while completing fieldwork in Salt Lake City (Utah, USA) I was privy to shameful conversations between three core male snowboarders (two of whom were professional snowboarders, and one a professional snowboarding photographer and film-maker) that reduced professional female snowboarders to sexual objects. Snippets from the conversations included: “She’s probably the hottest female snowboarder and she rides really good but from what I hear, she’s gets a bit freaky in the bedroom. Her ex-boyfriend told me that she...;” “she was sleeping on my floor and asked whether my bed was comfortable. I knew she wanted me to invite her in but I didn’t think it was my role to be hitting on the athletes; it wouldn’t be very professional would it? But she really wanted it;” “she has definitely lost some of my respect” (field notes, November 13, 2005). Another top female snowboarder was declared “a butch lesbian” (field notes, November 13, 2005). As one of two females caught up in this conversation, I challenged the males on some of their assumptions but, for the most part, I adopted a position of cognitive dissonance opting to listen rather than actively participate. Throughout my observations I occasionally overheard or witnessed sexist behavior and conversations like the above. I negotiated my way through these situations differently depending on the dynamics of the interaction and my role in the relations; sometimes I remained in the background observing silently, other times I engaged in discussions and challenged perpetrators. In the latter, however, I tended to draw more upon my position as an active cultural participant than as a researcher so as not to compromise my access. Throughout the participant-observation phases, however, I remained reflexive of my dual role as a cultural participant and researcher, and the access and constraints associated with these often-conflicting identities.

With ethical approval from the University of Waikato, I also conducted informal interviews with 19 female and 18 male snowboarders (see Table 1.3 for interviewee information). Participants

ranged from 18-56 years of age, and included novice snowboarders, weekend warriors, committed/core boarders, professional snowboarders, an olympic snowboarder and olympic judge, snowboarding journalists, photographers, film-makers, and magazine editors, snowboard company owners, snowboard shop employees and owners, snowboard instructors and coaches, and event organizers and judges. The snowball method of sampling proved effective with many participants helping me gain access to other key informants by offering names, contact details (e.g., email addresses, phone numbers), and even vouching for my authenticity as “a researcher that *actually* snowboards” (field notes, November 2005). All interviewees received both an information sheet that outlined the project and their ethical rights, and a consent form (see Appendices 1.0 & 1.1).³⁶ All interviewees had the choice to remain anonymous (full confidentiality), to be partially identified (e.g., occupation, and/or first name) or to be fully identified (full name and occupation), and signed the consent forms accordingly; all but two agreed to be fully identified. In this thesis, all quotes from interviews will be cited using only the interviewee’s first name.

During the interviews, I asked participants to reflect on their beliefs about various aspects of the snowboarding culture and encouraged them to express their attitudes, ideas and perceptions. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to four hours in length, depending on the willingness of participants. I also distributed interviews via email to 30 participants living or traveling in America, Australia, Canada, Europe, Japan and South Africa. The majority of respondents wrote freely and in colloquial tones, their comfort with this medium perhaps reflective of the time spent on the internet for emailing and chatting in their everyday lives.³⁷ In this thesis, interviews

³⁶ These forms were also sent via attachment to those participating in email interviews.

³⁷ According to *Transworld Snowboarding* magazine, snowboarders in North America spend on average 22 hours per week on the Internet (Hard Numbers, 2005 November, p. 58). A study completed by Board-Trac, a California based research company that specializes in the lifestyles and consumption habits of board-sport participants around the world, shows that 51 per cent of snowboarders use the internet for visiting manufacturers sites, 47 per cent visit sites associated with the sport, 63 per cent use the internet for email and 51 per cent use it for chatting (retrieved from <http://www.board-trac.com/pages/industry.html>).

conducted in-person are referenced as ‘personal communication,’ whereas email interviews are referenced as ‘personal correspondence.’

Table 1.3 Interviewee Information

Interviewee	Age	Country	Type of Participant (years experience)	Role in Culture or Occupation	Source
Female					
1. Pamela Bell	32	NZ	Core (13)	Olympian, Coach, Owner of Fruition Apparel	Interview (1) Email (3)
2. Carissa Bray	25	NZ	Novice (1)	Student	Email (1)
3. Julianne Bray	29	NZ	Pro (13)	Olympian, Female snowboard camp coach	Email (1)
4. Sophie Brown	22	NZ	Core (4)	Physical education teacher	Interview (1) Email (1)
5. Marie Buchta	24	CA	Novice (2)	Nurse	Interview (1) Email (2)
6. Jamie Douglas	24	US	Core (6)	Student	Email (2)
7. Jaime Dryden	25	CA	Core (7)	Qualified snowboard instructor, Nurse	Email (2)
8. Fiona Duncan	27	NZ	Pro (8)	Professional snowboarder, Head coach women’s snowboard camp, Event organizer	Interview (1) Email (1)
9. Janet Freeman	42	US	Core	Owner of Betty Rides Apparel	Interview (1)
10. Abby Lockhart	24	NZ	Pro (5)	Professional snowboarder, Snowboard coach	Email (2)
11.Emily Laurence	24	AU	Core (5)	Qualified instructor, Lawyer	Interview (1) Email (2)
12. Marcia Jewett	56	CA	Marginal (12)	Self-employed	Email (1)
13. Robyn Peddie	24	SA	Novice (1)	Personal assistant	Email (2)
14. Moriah Roberts	30	US	Core (9)	Snowboard company employee	Interview (1) Email (2)
15. Mel Simmons	27	NZ	Core (7)	Snowboard judge	Email (2)
16. Jennifer Sherowski	30	US	Core	Ex-professional, Senior contributing editor for <i>Transworld Snowboarding</i>	Email (1)
17. Hana Sullivan	28	NZ	Pro (9)	Professional snowboarder, Snowboard coach	Email (2)
18. Jacquie Walch	24	US	Core (6)	Qualified snowboard instructor, Student	Interview (1) Email (2)
19. Bridget White	21	NZ	Core (7)	Sponsored snowboarder, Student	Email (1)

Table 1.3 Interviewee Information continued

Interviewee	Age	Country	Type of Participant (years experience)	Role in Culture or Occupation	Source
Males					
1. Chris Cleave	23	US	Core (6)	Qualified snowboard instructor, Student	Interview (1) Email (2)
2. Colin Delaney	25	AU	Core (6)	Photographers assistant	Email (2)
3. Andrew Graeme	25	NZ	Core (12)	Qualified snowboard instructor, Resort employee	Email (2)
4. Luke Hill	24	US	Core (8)	Qualified snowboard instructor, Snowboard cinematographer	Interview (1) Email (1)
5. Graham Holland	45	NZ	Skier	Owner of snowboard shop, More than 20 years involvement in the ski and snowboard industry	Interview (1)
6. Hamish Jackson (Pseudonym)	29	NZ	Core	Sponsored snowboarder, Snowboard shop employee	Interview (1)
7. Douglas Johns	21	NZ	Core	Snowboard shop manager	Interview (1)
8. Gavin Key	30	NZ	Core (12)	Sponsored snowboarder, Snowboard clothing/logo designer	Email (1)
9. Jimmy Leydon	26	NZ	Core	Snowboard shop employee	Interview (1)
10. Nick Maitland	28	NZ	Core (10)	Snowboard terrain park employee	Interview (1) Email (2)
11. Dan Maitland	27	AU	Marginal	Personal trainer	Email (1)
12. Derek McCoy	24	CA	Marginal (11)	Engineer	Email (1)
13. Conan Marriot	18	NZ	Core	Snowboard store assistant	Interview (1)
14. James Masters	24	UK	Marginal	Gym instructor	Interview (2)
15. Thomas Steere	22	NZ	Core (10)	Qualified instructor	Interview (1)
16. Dave Stevenson	24	CA	Core (12)	Sponsored snowboarder, Snowboard filmer, Geologist	Interview (1) Email (2)
17. Ste'en Webster	40	NZ	Core (17)	Olympic snowboard judge, Event organizer, Co-founder & editor <i>New Zealand Snowboarder</i> magazine	Interview (1) Email (4)
18. Zane White (Pseudonym)	28	US	Core (9)	Snowboard cinematographer	Interview (1)

Many interviews were conducted with participants with whom I had met during my snowboarding career. As a core snowboarder I had previously shared snowboarding and cultural experiences with many of my interviewees, which proved essential for my rapport with participants and also facilitated the snowball sampling technique that I used to expand my pool of interviewees. Interestingly, interviewees occasionally reflected upon our shared experiences or their memories of my position in the culture to facilitate discussion:

I don't think it's any different riding with females of the same ability. We had a great time at Big White [Ski Resort, Canada] because we were of similar ability we could ride together, you taught me stuff in the pipe and I listened and was stoked on your comments (Nick, personal correspondence, April 4, 2004).

Holly, you know my worst injury. You were there. We were riding at Norquay at Banff [Canada], when I caught my heel edge off a [jump] take off and knocked myself out cold. I woke up on the spine board, on my way to the hospital (Dave, personal correspondence, September 9, 2004).

My perceived cultural authenticity seemed to bode well for my access to informants – particularly core boarders and those working in the snowboarding industry – who might otherwise have been cautious of an outsider infiltrating their culture for research purposes. I did not remain neutral or passive while conducting in-person interviews; rather, I aimed to construct an environment where the interview participants' interpretive capabilities were “activated, stimulated, and cultivated” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, cited in Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 105). Occasionally I attempted to facilitate rapport and prompt discussion by sharing some of my own snowboarding experiences during the interview. This strategy proved particularly valuable during interviews with individuals who I did not know prior to commencing my research. The majority of participants welcomed further communication (e.g., “If you want me to clarify anything or answer any other questions, just let me know,” Pamela, September 22, 2004), and thus most interviews were followed up with further email discussions or in-person communications; in some cases, participants with extensive

cultural knowledge became key informants (e.g., Ste'en, Pamela) and were contacted on a regular basis throughout my research.

The evidence gained from these interviews was applied to a number of theoretical approaches, particularly post-Fordism, feminisms, hegemonic masculinity, and Foucauldian theorizing. It is important to note, however, that the language of snowboarding culture is highly distinctive; snowboarders have their own argot to describe the snowboard experience, as well as equipment and techniques. Thus, I forewarn the reader of the colorful jargon used throughout this thesis. In describing the perspectives and practices of this culture, I incorporate numerous insider voices from interviews, as well as participant-observations, magazines, videos and websites, alongside various slogans, clichés, and common site- or setting-specific terms. In order to respect participants' style of writing, I have not edited quotes from email interviews, or websites and magazines; the grammar appears in this thesis as it did in the original. However, in some instances, snowboarding magazines and websites censor correspondent's communication (e.g., sh*t), and thus the text is presented as it appeared in the original document.

My insider knowledge and cultural identity undoubtedly influenced my ability to develop rapport with participants during interviews and participant-observation. For example, while in the United States completing fieldwork, I brought a cap from a Portland (Oregon) snowboard store. Admittedly, I liked its style and color, and was naive about the fact that this was one of the most 'authentic' core brands within the local snowboarding scene. Core snowboarders are efficient at reading the body and all its symbols, and within moments of meeting some local boarders I received comments such as "where did you get that 'Obey' cap?" and "you've only been in town two days and you're already wearing an 'Obey' cap?" Wearing this cap gave me instant cultural credibility among local core snowboarders and facilitated my rapport with interviewees. During my participant-observation phase in Whistler (Canada), I experienced the flipside of this scenario.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, I was forced to rent an out-dated rental board. Interestingly, chairlift conversations came to an abrupt halt when core snowboarders observed this board, as it was a clear give-away of an outsider status, and appeared to significantly hinder my rapport with some snowboarders (notably, non-core participants rarely noticed). While this was a somewhat frustrating experience, it provided me with a fresh perspective of the cultural intricacies and social hierarchies, and the affect these can have on ‘outsiders’ of the snowboarding culture. These examples illustrate the capricious nature of some of my interactions with participants. While I made attempts to manage my impressions (e.g., by wearing snowboard specific clothing, employing snowboarding argot, sharing snowboarding experiences), I could not control the interpretations that others drew from my performances. In this sense, as Shilling (2003) notes, I was “caught in a web of communication irrespective of individual intentions” (p. 85). Throughout the research phase I was implicitly aware of this situation, and my identity as a researcher and snowboarder, as well as the influence this had on my interactions with boarders.

Notably, my evidence derives from a wide variety of snowboarding geographies. In particular, my interviewees reside in an array of countries, including America, Australia, Canada, Europe, New Zealand and South Africa. However, they overwhelmingly described their snowboarding experiences using the same jargon and expressed similar cultural sentiments. Snowboarders around the world read many of the same magazines, watch the same videos, and visit the same websites. They also buy products and equipment from the same companies, and engage in similar styles of participation. Core snowboarders also tend to be nomadic, with many traveling internationally to experience new terrain and ‘live the dream’ of the endless winter.³⁸ In so doing, cultural values and styles are communicated across borders, to create what some have

³⁸ A recent online survey conducted by www.snowboard.com of more than 2000 snowboarders from around the world showed approximately 43 per cent of correspondents had snowboarded at least once in a foreign country (Poll Results, 2006).

termed a ‘global snowboarding culture.’ According to *Transworld Snowboarding* journalist Jennifer Sherowski (April 2004), snowboarding “transcends borders and language barriers. We belong to a planet-wide culture that makes journeying to the remotest places the equivalent of visiting a pack of friends for a day of slashing it” (p. 106). Attempting to better understand the global snowboarding culture, I have examined cultural artifacts (e.g., magazines, websites, films) from America, Australia, Canada, Europe, Japan and New Zealand, and during my participant-observation phases I observed and engaged in conversation with snowboarders of many different nationalities. However, while I explore some cultural differences, discussion of the peculiarities of all local snowboarding cultures is beyond the scope of this study. Furthermore, while this study attempts to provide insight into female snowboarding as a global phenomenon, it privileges the experiences of women in Western snowboarding cultures.

Combining the empirical evidence with secondary sources (especially scholarly research relating to the kindred activities of surfing, skateboarding and windsurfing) helped me to construct the social and cultural contexts of female snowboarding relevant to the basic history of the phenomenon discussed earlier in this chapter and in the forthcoming Marxist political economy, post-Fordism and Bourdieu chapters. Secondary sources included theoretical and empirical literature covering social and cultural change, sport and leisure, and youth cultures.

As previously mentioned, this study focuses on select critical and key concepts from each social theory. The sensitizing themes emerged from the snowboarding culture, and were then refined in ‘conversation’ with the theory. The dialogue between theoretical knowledge and cultural knowledge, gained from previous and current cultural participation combined with multiple modes of data generation, was central to this thesis. The following section provides an overview of the chosen concepts and the “theoretical vigilance” (Bourdieu et al., 1991, p. 88) that comprises this study.

Overview

The remainder of this thesis comprises seven chapters. In the first six chapters I explore female snowboarding from different theoretical perspectives. These chapters basically sit on a broad macro to micro continuum. The early chapters (Marxism, post-Fordism, feminisms, hegemonic masculinity) examine female snowboarding within a broad economic, social and gender context, whereas the later chapters (Bourdieu's theory of embodiment, Foucauldian theorizing) focus on the narrow practices within specific contexts of female snowboarding. Notably, I explore each theory primarily through the work of one key theorist (e.g., political economy and Karl Marx; post-Fordism and Krishan Kumar; hegemonic masculinity and R. W. Connell; embodiment and Pierre Bourdieu; discourse and Michel Foucault) or by focusing on one key theoretical position within that theory (e.g., third-wave feminism). The final chapter is a critical conclusion.

The six theoretical chapters follow a broadly similar format, beginning with a brief introduction that places the theory in its socio-political context, followed by a critical explanation of the basic concepts particular to the theory and their interrelationships. The critiques serve the purpose of identifying the questions and theoretical insights relevant to understanding women in snowboarding culture. Thus I devote considerable space to justifying my selection or rejection of the theoretical concepts. As Jeffrey Alexander (1995) explains, all "theories are created by individuals in their search for meaning" in response to concrete material conditions (pp. 79-80). Certainly, some theoretical concepts are more suitable for explaining the contemporary phenomenon of female snowboarding than others. The remainder of the chapter then focuses on the themes and insights offered by applying the chosen concepts to understanding female snowboarders.

Chapter Two examines snowboarding as a capitalist phenomenon through the works of political revolutionary and social theorist Karl Marx (1818-1883). This chapter comprises three

main parts. The first provides an overview of selected theoretical concepts propounded by Marx. The second employs Marx's three basic principles of capitalism to explain how snowboarding propagates capitalist accumulation, competition and exploitation in its modes of economic and political organization. Snowboarding has flourished, becoming a global and billion-dollar industry within three decades. Burton Snowboards, which holds approximately 40 per cent of this market (Chester, 2004), is a good example of a successful capitalist company. In this chapter I examine Burton as a case study. The third part critiques traditional Marxism, and more specifically the base-superstructure model, as a theory of culture, politics and ideology. While this chapter reveals the inextricable links between snowboarding culture and capitalist forms of accumulation, competition and exploitation, and in particular how female snowboarding reflects key aspects of capitalism, it raises serious questions about Marxism's ability to explain culture and cultural politics.

Taken as a conglomerate of contemporary economic, political and cultural circumstances, post-Fordist theory becomes a particularly insightful theoretical framework for analyzing cultural phenomena such as snowboarding because it broadens the locus of power away from economic classes to social classes and their cultural attributes. In Chapter Three, post-Fordism helps explain the relationship between the snowboarding economy – outlined in the previous chapter – and snowboarding culture. This is particularly important when examining the female niche market in snowboarding. Chapter Three comprises four main parts. In the first I provide an overview of Fordism and post-Fordism and briefly consider some of the various attempts to differentiate the two systems. This part identifies Krishan Kumar's (1995) approach as having the most potential for explaining female snowboarding. Part two provides the context upon which the remainder of the chapter builds. Here I draw upon Kumar's approach to briefly describe the economic and cultural changes in contemporary Western society, and consider these changes in relation to young

women. The third part examines the roles of young women as consumers and entrepreneurs in a highly fragmented snowboarding culture and economy. The first three parts draw causal connections between the snowboarding economy and culture. The fourth and final part is a critique of post-Fordism; it considers the strengths, followed by the limitations, of the Kumarian approach to post-Fordism and its ability to explain female snowboarding. Ultimately, this chapter illustrates that the post-Fordist system facilitates many new consumption and production opportunities for female snowboarders.

Chapter Four adopts a third-wave feminist perspective to shed light on the phenomenon of women in the snowboarding culture. Third-wave feminism in snowboarding is a good example of what Hall (1999) defines as “the reshaping of feminism into individualism, self-growth, and the commodification of everyday life, with an increasing focus on the body and women’s physicality” (cited in Heywood & Dworkin, 2003, p. 121). Adopting a third-wave feminist perspective, this chapter analyzes the experiences and practices of young female snowboarders, and more specifically, examines the contradictory and paradoxical relationships between agency, womanhood and physicality. Firstly, it illustrates the potential empowerment of women through the physicality of snowboarding, and describes how athleticism is an activist tool for some third-wave feminists. Following this, I explain how the display of both culturally understood masculine and feminine characteristics by female boarders contributes to dismantling culturally defined, traditional, and essentialist, binaries. I then analyze those female snowboarders who demonstrate both a ‘masculine’ capacity for aggression and dominance, and the ‘feminine’ arts of image management. These women are aware of their commodity value and have no qualms about marketing their sexuality to boost their public profile and image, and secure financial benefits. Following this, I refer to third-wave feminism as a generational expression of feminist consciousness that has been successfully individualized by consumer capitalism. Lastly, I employ

Martin's (1990) criterion of feminist organizations to explain how some female boarders adopt a third-wave perspective and blend liberal and radical feminist political strategies in their attempts to instigate change.

Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony provides the foundation upon which Chapter Five develops. This chapter analyzes gender construction within snowboarding via the concept of hegemonic masculinity. This chapter comprises four main parts. The first provides an overview of selected theoretical concepts propounded by Australian sociologist R. W. Connell and colleagues. In the second part I critique the relevance of Connell's concepts within the present moment of gender politics and consider suggestions from various scholars for the reformulation of these concepts. In the third part I examine the efficacy of these recommended reformulations by applying them to the snowboarding culture via an examination of masculinities and age. Here I also consider the reciprocal relationships between men and women, and examine individuals' experiences of gender in the mixed-sex environment. The final part of this chapter is a critique of the reformulation. Here I argue that, despite the potential of a so-called 'third-wave' perspective towards studies of men and masculinities for shedding light on the new orders of gender and sexual relationships experienced by young men and women in the snowboarding culture, the reformulated conceptualizations of hegemonic masculinity remain highly problematic.

In his theory of distinction, Bourdieu assigns a central place to the body, and, via a number of theoretical concepts, endeavors to provide insight into the distinctive bodily practices employed by individuals and groups within contemporary society. In Chapter Six I explore two of Bourdieu's most insightful concepts, field and capital, and their potential to explain the meanings and practices of female snowboarders especially with respect to practices of distinction and identity formation. First, I apply the concept of field to an examination of how early snowboarders embodied distinctive dress practices to clearly distinguish themselves from skiers and each other. I

also examine how embodied gender practices divide women into different social groups. Second, I utilize the concept of capital, to explain how boarders earn symbolic capital through demonstrations of commitment, physical prowess and risk taking. In so doing I expose the unequal distribution of symbolic capital based on gender status. The concepts of field and capital have the potential to enhance our understanding of how the bodily practices of snowboarders create different levels of consciousness within social groups and help forge cultural and political alliances.

Chapter Seven draws upon the work of Michel Foucault to reveal a nexus of power that helps produce the subjective meanings and experiences of female snowboarders. Questions of power, gender, and sexuality are central to this analysis. Foucault stresses the importance of local, specific struggles, and asserts that power relations are evident within any social context; they are “created, maintained, and exerted by the production and circulation of discourse” (Smart, 1985, cited in Andrews, 1993, p. 157). Here I employ Foucault’s unique conceptualization of power, to facilitate an analysis of the media and the production of cultural knowledge, and discourses of femininity, in snowboarding culture. This chapter consists of two main parts. The first provides a critical overview of some of Foucault’s most influential concepts, particularly those that facilitate an exploration of the snowboarding media as a producer of ‘regimes of truth’ in the snowboarding culture. The second part then focuses on Foucault’s later work, particularly the concept of ‘technologies of self.’ In so doing, it gives greater consideration to the agency (or subjectivity) of female boarders and examines how women make sense of the multiple and contradictory mediated discourses of femininity in snowboarding culture. Not only does this part examine the likelihood of social transformation given the actions of female boarders, it also critically evaluates the sexualized images of women in the snowboarding media and the discursive effects these have on women’s snowboarding experiences. Ultimately, Chapters Six and Seven illustrate that, despite

Bourdieu and Foucault having had relatively little to say about women or gender, their work can be fruitfully combined with feminist perspectives to shed light on the complex relationships between gender, embodiment and power in physical cultures such as snowboarding.

Chapter Eight draws together, and interrelates, the main findings, conclusions and directions that emerged from the foregoing theoretical discussions. This concluding chapter consists of three main parts. First, I expound the conversations between theory and research that have been ever-present in this study. Second, I engage in dialogue between the various theoretical perspectives in order to “discover commonalities and convergences” (Waters, 2000, p. 4). This part is organized around the interweaving strands or themes of contemporary social theory that I regard as central to female snowboarding, viz., structure, agency, culture, the body and embodiment, gender and power. Indeed, it is only by bringing the six social theories adopted in this study into conversation that I am able to thoroughly explore the contributions of the various theoretical perspectives for illuminating the complexities of social life and female snowboarding. Lastly, I offer four suggestions for understanding social phenomena such as young women in popular physical culture.

Concluding Thoughts

While the methodology and structure of this thesis might seem unorthodox, C. Wright Mills (1959) saw strength in such an approach. He urged scholars to think in terms of a variety of viewpoints, claiming that this will “let your mind become a moving prism catching light from as many angles as possible” (Mills, 1959, p. 214). Michel Foucault (1985) also believed “there are times in one’s life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all” (cited in Mills, 2003, p. 6). Ultimately, the structure of this thesis not only provides a critique of the

efficacy of numerous social theoretical concepts for understanding female snowboarding as a contemporary social phenomena but it also facilitates my attempt to ‘think differently than one thinks’ and ‘perceive differently than one sees.’

2. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SNOWBOARDING

Political revolutionary and social theorist Karl Marx (1818-1883) has been a major influence on the development of sociology, as often a subject of criticism as of inspiration. Although Marx's (1956[1847]; 1964; 1970[1885]; 1977[1852]; and 1968[1848] and 1976[1845] with Engels) writings cover an enormous spectrum, he remains the pre-eminent theorist of capitalist society. *Capital* (1970[1885]), his most detailed work, spells out the economic mechanisms of capitalist society, developing the labor theory of value, the theory of capital accumulation, and the possibilities of capitalism's internal collapse. Simply put, for Marx, the economy is the main determinant of social phenomena. Inevitably, since Marx's death in 1883, social life has changed, and nowhere more so than in gender relations. Against this background, the relevance of his theories for explaining contemporary social and economic phenomena is hotly debated. As Bottomore (1956) states, "after a century of turbulent economic and political changes, and in the face of entirely new problems, we have to ask what is still living and what is dead in Marx's theory" (p. 4). Whereas some argue that Marx's theories belong in the dustbin of history, others believe his fundamental critique of political economy "still holds a vibrant, untapped potential for critical sociological study" (Beamish, 2002, p. 38). Harvey (1989) proclaims that, "the invariant elements and relations that Marx defined as fundamental to any capitalist mode of production still shine through, and in many instances with an even greater illuminosity than before" (p. 187). Giulianotti (2005), for example, believes that Marxist perspectives retain "explanatory currency" in explaining the "hyper-commodification" of sport (p. 41). In this chapter I explore some of Marx's more relevant concepts and their potential to explain the organization of snowboarding for trading, accumulation, profit and power.

This chapter comprises three main parts. The first provides an overview of selected theoretical concepts propounded by Marx. The second employs Marx's three basic principles of capitalism to explain how snowboarding propagates capitalist accumulation, competition, and exploitation in its modes of economic and political organization. Snowboarding has flourished, becoming a global and US\$2.28 billion-dollar industry within three decades (Select Snow, 2004). Burton Snowboards, which holds approximately 40 per cent of this market (Chester, 2004), is an excellent example of a successful capitalist company. In this chapter I examine Burton as a case study. The third part critiques traditional Marxism, and more specifically the base-superstructure model, as a theory of culture, politics and ideology. While this chapter reveals the inextricable links between snowboarding culture and capitalist forms of accumulation, competition and exploitation, and in particular how female snowboarding reflects key aspects of capitalism, serious questions remain over Marxism's ability to explain culture and cultural politics.

Dissecting Marx

Marx summarized the "guiding principles" of social life as follows:

In the social production of their existence, men [sic] inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. (Marx, 1971, p. 20)

This excerpt alludes to a number of Marx's key concepts, including 'mode of production,' 'forces of production,' and 'relations of production.' The following offers a brief explanation of each of these concepts.¹ It is important to note that these concepts, especially mode of production, are

¹ Some of Marx's other key concepts, including alienation, base/superstructure and class, will be explained and critiqued later in this chapter.

purely analytical abstractions because, according to Marx (1973), the concrete only reveals itself through the analysis of abstract concepts (Callinicos, 1995; Samuel, 1981).

Forces, Relations and Mode of Production

In Marxism the economy is made up of the ‘forces of production’ and the ‘relations of production.’ The former refers to both the materials worked on and the tools and techniques employed in production of economic goods. By contrast, the relations of production have proved difficult to define. At the heart of the issue is whether the forces of production exist independently of the relations of production given that the former includes labor processes that are integral aspects of the latter (see Harris, 1991; Himmerlweit, 1991). However, for most scholars this problem of definition evaporates in more generalized discussions about the relations between social classes and, in particular, the relations between capitalists and workers. The totality of these relations constitutes the capitalist ‘mode of production.’ In the capitalist mode of production, capitalists control both the forces of production and the disposal of the product.²

Marx primarily concerned himself with the capitalist mode of production. In *Capital* (1970), he demonstrated that three conditions, and three only, determine the capitalist mode of production. In Marxism then, first, there must be continuous economic growth. A basic drive of the capitalist mode of production is “the drive to accumulate capital” (Mandel, 1976, p. 60). Second, accumulation of capital fuels competition between capitalists, and leads them to seek new technology and new ways of organizing and controlling labor. “Capitalism” wrote Harvey (1989) “is necessarily technologically and organizationally dynamic. This is so in part because the coercive laws of competition push individual capitalists into leap-frogging innovations in their

² The capitalist mode of production differs from other modes with respect to the relationships between the forces and relations of production. For example, in the feudal mode of production, lords of the manor did not directly control the peasants’ forces of production, tools and land but they did control the disposal of the peasants’ produce (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 2000, p. 228; see also Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 1980).

search for profit” (p. 180). Third, the quest for accumulation by the owners of the means of production (capitalists) leads them to extort maximum surplus-value from those who own only their labor power (workers). What Marx’s *Capital* explained, was, above all, the “ruthless and irresistible impulse to growth which characterizes production for private profit and the predominant use of profit for capital accumulation” (Mandel, 1976, p. 11). Marx also showed that these three necessary conditions of capitalism were inconsistent and contradictory thus rendering this mode of production necessarily crisis-prone.

Arguably, Marx’s three conditions of the capitalist mode of production remain relevant to understanding contemporary society (Mandel, 1976). Certainly, these conditions have the potential to inform this PhD. Therefore, the following section applies Marx’s three premises of capitalism to snowboarding and, in so doing, it explains ongoing processes of capital accumulation, competition, and exploitation in snowboarding.

Capitalism and Snowboarding

The following analysis is divided into three parts. I begin by analyzing Marx’s first condition of growth to explain the rapid development of the snowboarding market and, in particular, Burton Snowboards, from backyard to global industry. Marx’s second condition, that accumulation of capital fuels competition between capitalists and leads them to seek new technologies and new ways of organizing and controlling labor, guides my subsequent investigation into new trends and innovations in the highly competitive snowboarding marketplace. Lastly, Marx’s third condition that growth in real value rests on the exploitation of productive labor informs my examination of professional snowboarders, including women, as laborers. Here I also draw upon Marx’s concept of alienation (see Marx, 1964).

Capital Accumulation: Burton Snowboards

Marx's first condition of capitalism – that growth is inevitable – guides the following discussion of Burton Snowboards and its quest for continual capital accumulation in periods of growth and crisis.

Twenty-three year-old Jake Burton Carpenter established Burton Snowboards in 1977 in Londonderry, Vermont.³ Having recently graduated from New York University with a degree in economics, and with work experience at a New York business broker company, Burton wanted to start his own business. An avid Snurfer in his teenage years, Burton saw the activity as an untapped opportunity for capital accumulation (Helmich, 2000). Indeed, he confessed that his primary drive was to “create a successful business” (Burton, 2003, p. 403) and “make a good living...like 100 grand a year or something” (Burton Carpenter & Dumaine, 2002, para. 12). He calculated that by producing 50 boards a day, he could make at least a comfortable living; it never occurred to him that supply might exceed demand (Burton Carpenter & Dumaine, 2002). Only now does he admit to being “blindly optimistic” (cited in Helmich, 2000, para. 5):

I didn't do any market research; I didn't talk to any competitors. I just brought a little saber saw and started making boards in my apartment. I didn't know what I was doing... but I had no choice other than do things myself. I tried everything; solid ash, marine plywood, fiberglass...and made 100 board prototypes that first winter. It was trial and error. (Burton Carpenter & Dumaine, 2002, p. 64)

Burton worked mostly alone, relying on some part-time high-school worker help. After making the boards, he became a “traveling salesman,” loading his station wagon and driving to ski and sports stores across the Eastern States trying to market and sell his product (Bailey, 1998, para. 28).

Within the first year the fledgling company had sold 300 boards for US\$88 each, although “everyone said it was too much” (Burton, cited in Howe, 1998, p. 11). The company's black-and-

³ Although his full name is Jake Burton Carpenter, Jake recently changed it to Jake Burton to avoid confusion. From hereafter I will refer to him as Burton, except where he has published under either Jake Burton or Jake Burton Carpenter.

white brochure described the boards as “a perfect complement or alternative to a sled” (Bailey, 1998, para. 28). Burton initially thought that his market would comprise “guys like me in their 20s” but he shortly realized that his product appealed more to teenagers. Amongst this group, however, the price was too high. Burton responded with a cheaper version, the ‘Backyard,’ which sold (without bindings) for US\$45. The following year, 1979, he sold 700 boards but continued to struggle financially.

By 1981 Burton had spent his \$120,000 inheritance and was \$130,000 in debt but orders for his boards climbed into the thousands over the next few years. In the early and mid 1980s Burton shifted his focus from selling boards to promoting snowboarding as a physical activity.⁴ To create a market, Burton lobbied the local ski resorts to open their slopes to snowboarding.⁵ Paul Alden, who worked for Burton Snowboards from 1984 to 1990, recalls that Burton “spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to put this sport on the map” (cited in Bailey, 1998, para. 32). In 1983, Stratton Mountain (Vermont) became the first major ski field to open its piste to snowboarders. Others quickly followed. Sensing the growing momentum, Burton turned his attention back to his product. With financial backing from his wife’s family, he added better bindings, a high-tech base and steel edges to his boards, making them more maneuverable. Burton continued to develop snowboarding technologies, and to improve his marketing and distribution practices. In 1984 sales of Burton Snowboards reached US\$1 million.

Burton Snowboards was not alone in the early snowboarding industry. Dimitrije Milovick (Utah), Tom Sims and Chuck Barfoot (California), Chris and Beverly Sanders (California), and Mike Olsen (Washington), also recognized opportunities in snowboarding. They established Winterstick (1975), Sims Snowboards (1978), Avalanche Snowboards (1982), and GNU

⁴ “Early on,” Burton said, “our ads didn’t sell the company – they sold the sport” (cited in Phillips, 1996, para. 6).

⁵ Burton explains, “there was sort of a massive grassroots lobbying effort that had to be done, and I think we were clearly more responsible for pulling that off than anybody” (cited in Phillips, 1996, para. 6).

Snowboards (1984) respectively. Although predominantly males pioneered the early snowboarding industry, women were integral players. Donna Carpenter, for example, has been an important part of Burton Snowboards since she and Jake married in 1981 (Stassen, June 2005a). From 1985 to 1990 she was Burton Snowboards first European Sales and Operations Manager, and later became company CFO (Chief Financial Officer). Similarly, in the early 1980s, Beverly Sanders co-founded Avalanche snowboards. Chris Sanders, her boyfriend (and later husband), made snowboards in his garage. In the weekends the couple would hike up the slopes at Lake Tahoe's Soda Springs to test these boards, and "every weekend Bev would end up selling them to some curious skiers" (Chris Sanders, cited in Howe, 1998, p. 31).

While the early board-makers shared an alternative impulse, their plans for the activity and styles of participation varied. As snowboarding historian Susanna Howe (1998) explains:

Burton's reserved but determined East Coast personality and ski racing background informed his vision of snowboarding... while the Californian lifestyle was at the core of [Tom] Sim's plan. Having been immersed for over a decade in the volatile skateboard industry and its media-based structure, Sims, with all the right media contacts, was poised to build a personality-driven hero-worship machine of promotion for snowboarding. (p. 23)

Burton and Sims hosted two major annual contests, the Nationals and the Worlds respectively, in the early 1980s. Not only did such contests contribute to fostering a larger, national and international community, they also had a significant impact on the commercial success of their companies (Howe 1998). The rivalry between Burton Snowboards and Sims Snowboards continued to grow and as the competitive arena opened up in the 1980s, Burton and Sims regularly butted heads. The following comment from Tom Hsieh, editor of the first snowboarding magazine, *International Snowboarder Magazine* (established in 1985 and now defunct), is illuminating:

There was a lot of struggle between Burton and Sims. Jake's whole thing at the time was that the sport needed credibility and professionalism. He hated the whole thrash, "skate and destroy" attitude. [Tom] Sims was all, "Hey, this is my roots," skating, half-pipes, vertical. That early conflict was great for me as a publisher. I was in the middle of these two guys, the devil on one shoulder and the angel on the other. I would get

calls at three in the morning from those guys. Jake would call up and say that I had too many guys in the air, not enough guys on the ground. That basically meant that I had too many Sims (freestyle) riders and not enough Burton (alpine) riders. I couldn't believe I was hearing this. (cited in Howe, 1998, p. 46)

Howe (1998) argues that, ultimately, “the Sims-Burton, West-East coast rivalry would prove healthy for snowboarding’s advancement” (p. 23). Howe’s comment echoes Marx’s premise that without competition “the ‘driving fire’ of growth would become extinguished... totally monopolized capital would essentially be stagnating capital” (Mandel, 1976, p. 60); the snowboarding market was definitely not stagnating.

The sport and the industry continued to grow during the 1980s and into the mid 1990s. Burton Snowboards grew “on average about 100% per year” during this period (Burton Carpenter & Dumaine, 2002, p. 64). By 1995 it employed 250 workers and was worth well over US\$100 million. The growth of the sport and industry attracted an influx of new companies, many of which had their roots elsewhere, in surfing (e.g., Billabong, Ripcurl), skateboarding (e.g., DC, Etnies, Airwalk) and skiing (e.g., Rossignol, Soloman, Voikal). By 1995 the North American snowboard retail industry was worth US\$750 million (Randall, 1995). That same year more than 300 companies peddled snowboard equipment, apparel and accessories at the industry trade show, compared with just 90 companies two years earlier. Some of these companies were owned and/or operated by women, including Betty Rides (co-owned and operated by Janet Freeman), Prom (founded by Tina Basich and Shannon Dunn), Twist (operated by Lisa Hudson), and Cold As Ice (founded by Darcy Lee Post).⁶ During the late 1980s and 1990s snowboarding developed a cohesive industry complete with its own media, international events and competitions, trade-shows, fashions, and professional and amateur athletes.

⁶ See Chapter Three: Post-Fordism and the Women’s Niche Market for a more detailed discussion of female owned and operated snowboarding companies.

The potential for growth in overseas markets was considerable and Burton Snowboards established offices in Innsbruck (Austria) in 1986 and Tokyo (Japan) in 1995. Brad Steward, an employee at Sims Snowboards, recalls that everyone thought Burton was “nuts for going to Europe” (cited in Bailey, 1998, para. 34) but he admitted that Jake “always had vision” and knew how to “look at the much bigger picture” (para. 34). Today the majority of snowboarding manufacturers distribute to a global market. From their offices in Innsbruck and Tokyo, and headquarters in Burlington (Vermont), Burton Snowboards distributes via independent Burton representatives to authorized specialty retailers in 36 countries including the United States, Canada, 28 countries in Europe, two countries in South America, and Japan, Korea, Australia and New Zealand. Some 4,248 specialty retail shops currently carry Burton products – 1,563 in the United States, 451 in Canada, 1,629 in Europe and 705 in Japan (Fact Sheet, 2003). Foreign sales account for 60 per cent of volume, with a very profitable Japanese segment (Horyn, 2004).⁷ Through geographical expansion, Burton Snowboards was able to fulfill Marx’s premise of the basic drive of the capitalist mode of production – growth – as it is only through growth that profits can be assured and capital accumulation sustained.

Industry sources predicted that snowboard market sales would double to US\$1.5 billion at retail by the end of the 1990s (Randall, 1995). When Ride Snowboards became the first snowboard company to go public on the NASDAQ stock exchange in 1994, it sold all 500,000 shares in the first two weeks: It then released another 75,000. Within a month the shares had reached US\$28 each, six times the release price. Despite massive growth during this fifteen-year period, some warned that consolidation was inevitable. Rodger Madison Jr., chairman of Ride Snowboards predicted, “this is a textbook example of an early-stage, fast-growth market. You’re going to see a major shakeout. Instead of 100 companies, in five years you might have 12” (cited in Randall,

⁷ The Japanese market constitutes more than 29 per cent of Burton’s total sales (Burton History, 2005).

1995, p. 46). Madison's prophecy proved correct. Sagging sales in Asia (particularly Japan) during their economic downturn, and overproduction, triggered a 'shakeout' in the late 1990s.

Professional boarder Todd Richards (2003) reflects on this period:

US coverage of Olympic snowboarding had been decidedly underwhelming – a massive 10 minute segment wedged into 5 days of live figure skating. The [1998] Olympics were supposed to ignite a growth expansion for the snowboard industry but the lack of coverage, was more a fizzle than a bomb. It was a false alarm that made manufacturers look at their warehouses and say, “hmmm, what the hell am I going to do with all these snowboards?” The market was flooded with companies, too many companies creating too much equipment for too few snowboarders. Following the Olympics the snowboarding industry suffered a brief dark period. It trimmed the fat, and the strong survived. (p. 217)

Larger companies acquired many smaller snowboarder-owned companies around this time. In 1998 Quicksilver (surf company) purchased Lib Technologies (snowboard manufacturers), Gnu Snowboards (snowboard manufacturers), Arcane (snowboard boot manufacturers), and Bent Metal (snowboard binding manufacturers). Similarly, K2 (ski-company) acquired Ride Snowboards and Morrow Snowboards. Others downsized. Joyride Snowboards reduced the number of employees from 120 to six. Still others exited the market (e.g., Millennium Three [snowboard manufacturer], Belligerent [bindings manufacturer], and Random Snowboards) (Deemer, 2000). This crisis seems to support Marx's premise that accumulation is a contradictory process in which the rate of profit can also fall and thus retard capital accumulation.

Not only is the ability to read the market a prerequisite for financial success, at times of economic difficulty and intensifying competition the “well organized corporation has marked competitive advantages” through its ability “to make swift decisions” (Harvey, 1989, p. 230).

During this financial downturn Burton remained the industry leader because, as Burton boasted:

We don't have much moneyed competition. The pure snowboarding companies don't have a lot of money, don't have real [research and development], don't have great operations. And the ski companies, who are very well financed, don't really understand the sport, and they don't have the focus. We've got the focus that the little guys have, we've been around the sport, we understand the image. We have roundtables with pro riders who help us design our boards and keep us ahead of the market. And we've got

all the [technology], [research and development], financing, and operational know-how of the big guys. That's why we've been successful. (Burton Carpenter & Dumaine, 2002, p. 64)

Burton Snowboards remains privately owned by Jake Burton and his wife. He does not release financial information. Estimates, however, suggest that Burton Snowboards currently controls approximately 40 per cent of the market, with company sales for the 2003 financial year estimated at US\$140 million (Chester, 2004). Clearly, Burton Snowboards understands the laws and rules of capital accumulation.

Continual Innovation in a Competitive Marketplace

In an increasingly competitive and volatile market, Burton Snowboards has embraced innovative marketing strategies, technologies, and ways of organizing labor to maintain its leadership position. Marx's second principle of capitalism – that under the coercive laws of competition, technological and organization progress is both inevitable and good – informs the following discussion of these strategies.

Since the late 1990s the snowboarding market has been infiltrated by large, mainstream companies; Burton Snowboards faces intense competition from Nike, K2, and Adidas-Salomon. These companies are very well financed and invest significant amounts of money in their marketing programs. They sponsor groups of elite boarders, and invest heavily in advertising, product design and packaging. It also seems that more serious competition is on the horizon for Burton Snowboards. Quiksilver, a global surf company valued at US\$1.8 billion, recently acquired the French outdoor sporting specialist Rossignol Group (ski and snowboard equipment) for US\$317 million with the goal of becoming a leader in the outdoor leisure industry (Andrusiak, 2005). However with the influx of new companies from outside the culture, perceptions of

‘cultural authenticity’ have become a central concern among core boarders.⁸ As the president of one mainstream company stated, “it’s a difficult category. It’s highly technical, and core snowboarders are loyal to core snowboard brands. They are not really open to mainstream brands” (Dick Baker, Ocean Pacific President, cited in Deemer, 2000, para. 17). To core boarders – the most savvy of consumers – the ‘authenticity’ of a snowboarding company is central to their consumption choices. Moreover they shy from companies that appear too commercially successful. According to one cultural commentator, core snowboarders base their consumption decisions on

values such as loyalty and commitment...riders will typically consider the nature of the company: Is the company committed to snowboarding? Does the company truly understand snowboarding? Companies that are seen to have ulterior motives or as not part of the snowboarding culture will generally be boycotted. Such companies cannot be trusted. (The Principles, 2002, para. 2)

As discussed, Burton Snowboards holds a significant share of the market and perceptions of being too commercially successful exist in some quarters. For example, anti-Burton sentiments regularly appear on snowboarding websites: “I would rather ride on a Glad garbage bag than ride a Burton” (posted by ULLiGaN151, on March 11, 2005, www.snowboard.com); “If you wanna buy an overpriced piece of crap that doesn’t support warranty claims, then get a Burton” (posted by snowdad, on November 28, 2003, www.snowboard.com); “I personally do not like [Burton] because they’re trying to take over the sport and they’re only in it for the money that’s not what snowboarding is all about” (posted by grrlboarder, on October 30, 2004, www.snowboard.com);

I don’t like Burton cuz it seems like they try too hard to over-hype their products when most aren’t even the best quality they say. While some of their sh*t is top notch, most isn’t that great. It’s rad that Jake Burton still owns em and they’ve been around for so long but it just seems lame how they dominate sh*t so much, even though that is business, they just seem too geared towards the dollar (posted by SsKnAoTwE on July 18, 2004, www.snowboard.com).⁹

⁸ See Wheaton and Beal (2003) for a discussion of the “discourses of authenticity” in windsurfing and skateboarding cultures.

⁹ As discussed in the introductory chapter, I have not edited quotes; in some instances, snowboarding magazines and websites censor correspondent’s communication (e.g., sh*t).

Not surprisingly, competitors help fuel this sentiment. For example, at a 2004 tradeshow, Ride Snowboards posted a banner stating: “The worst thing about riding a Burton is telling your friend you’re gay” (see Buzinski, 2004). Shortly after, Ride Snowboards publicly apologized for this homophobic banner. However, Ride Snowboards continued to produce stickers for individuals to place on their snowboards with ‘the unBurton’ printed on them.

In a highly competitive industry, it is not simply products but the corporate image itself that become essential. Image building is a central characteristic in contemporary capitalist systems. In Harvey’s (1989) words:

Images become all-important in competition, not only through brand-name recognition but also because of various associations of ‘respectability,’ ‘quality,’ ‘prestige,’ ‘reliability’ and ‘innovation.’ Competition in the image-building trade becomes a vital aspect of inter-firm competition. Success is so plainly profitable that investment in image-building (sponsoring events, as well as direct marketing) becomes as important as investment in new machinery etc. (p. 288)

Snowboarding companies, such as Burton, employ various strategies to create and re-create a culturally authentic corporate image. The snowboarding media, especially films and magazines, play a decisive role in the lives of snowboarders, by confirming, spreading and consolidating cultural perceptions (see Chapter Seven: Foucault and the Snowboarding Media). Hence, snowboarding companies use these mediums extensively to advertise their products and, more importantly, for corporate image work. Doug Palladini, publisher of *Snowboarder* magazine, observes that

Snowboarders are passionate consumers. ...magazines are not just something you pick up at the airport. To the core, it is the bible. Companies are spending up to 50% of their budgets on advertising. In most industries, they spend 5%. Snowboarding is a completely image-based sport and the most direct line to kids is through our magazines. (cited in Howe, 1998, p. 104)

Like advertising in the broader society, much of the snowboarding advertising does not “inform or promot[e] in the ordinary sense” but is “geared to manipulating desires and tastes that may or may not have anything to do with the product sold” (Harvey, 1989, p. 287). This is evident in

advertisements for Burton Snowboards which regularly appear as an expensive double-page spread inside the front cover of most issues of most snowboarding magazines, including *Transworld Snowboarding*, *New Zealand Snowboarder* and *Australian Snowboarder*. Observing Burton's extensive advertising campaign, an online magazine (or zine) journalist writes: "Burton Corp. would advertise on the side of a garbage truck if they thought it contained a snowboard" (*Flakezine.com*, February 26, 1996). Nonetheless, the photography and design of Burton advertisements is of the highest quality undertaken by well-paid professionals. As Booth (2005b) writes, "as well as a tool for producers and retailers to manipulate desire, advertising helps ensure company and brand recognition in competitive markets" (p. 324). Advertisements for Burton Snowboards typically emphasize the high status and skill levels of their sponsored riders, combined with either a focus on the snowboarding lifestyle or the innovative design and technology of their product. The first two strategies help connect the company to its cultural roots; reinforcing the company's 'authenticity' is critical to deflecting charges of industry domination.

More recently, the demand for growth and continual capital accumulation has shifted attention from the production of goods to the production of events that have an "almost instantaneous consumption time" (Harvey, 1989, p. 157). Burton Snowboards established the Burton Global Open Series in 2006, which includes some of snowboarding's most prestigious events including the Burton European Open Snowboarding Championships, Nissan X-Trail Nippon Open, Burton US Open, New Zealand Burton Open, and the Burton Australian Snowboarding Open Championships.¹⁰ The company also invests heavily in the highly esteemed Arctic Challenge and has recently established the novel Burton Abominable Snow Jam (Mt Hood, Oregon). Burton Snowboard's recent partnership with Mandalay Entertainment further illustrates

¹⁰ Although figures of such investment are unavailable, the total prize money for the Burton Global Open Series (US\$700,000) is indicative of the company's economic investment.

the company's innovation in striving for continual growth. Development plans include theatrical features, television programming in a variety of formats, including original entertainment, reality, and event coverage. Through these varied properties, "the partnership will bring both events and activities as well as showcase Burton's vast history and knowledge to new and expanded audiences" (Press release, October 17, 2004). Burton Snowboards' expansion into the production of events and media is an innovative attempt at, to paraphrase Harvey (1989), mastering or actively intervening in the volatile snowboarding market by "saturating the market with images" (p. 287).

Burton Snowboards also invests in other forms of image building, including sponsorships, and direct marketing, which further enable it to "manipulate taste and opinion" (Harvey, 1989, p. 287). Burton Snowboards, and its subsidiary companies (Analog [outerwear], Gravis [shoes], R.E.D [helmets], Anon [goggles]), sponsor over 100 snowboarders worldwide, approximately 30 of who are women, including olympic half-pipe gold medalists Kelly Clark and Hannah Teter, and Shannon Dunn, Torah Bright, Victoria Jealouse, and Natasza Zurek.¹¹ In 2005 Burton Snowboards went on a 'World Tour' marketing campaign, traveling to 31 countries in North America, Europe and Japan with 25 of its top athletes. Burton Snowboards' sponsorship of events and athletes illustrates the company's commitment to snowboarding, and thus does important corporate image work. Also of interest is Burton Snowboards' marketing which frequently reinforces the authenticity of the company via Burton's personal pronouncements; "Jake has dedicated the past 26 years of his life to snowboarding," "Jake is widely accepted as the founder of snowboarding," "Jake is Burton's most avid product tester and strives to snowboard over 100 days per year" (Fact Sheet, 2003), "I'm first and foremost a snowboarder" (Burton, cited in Helmich, 2000, para. 7).

¹¹ There are different levels of sponsorship. Burton sponsors young riders at a 'factory level,' supplying them with snowboarding equipment. The next level is a 'rookie' sponsorship, where riders receive equipment and/or clothing, occasional travel budgets and other incentives. The top level of sponsorship is Burton's Global Team. The Global Team consists of 22 snowboarders (six women and 16 men) who receive full sponsorship, in some cases including six-figure salaries.

Burton Snowboards clearly understands that, in a competitive capitalist system, the need to invest in image building never ceases, and they continue to produce new and innovative advertising and marketing campaigns.

New technologies and new organizational forms help Burton Snowboards accelerate the innovation and production process and maintain the competitive advantage. Subcontractors in Canada, China and Italy produce Burton snowboards, boots and bindings respectively. To speed up the production process Burton Snowboards uses the latest computer technologies. For example, an innovative program called 'Pro/ENGINEER' helps the company design snowboard prototypes in under an hour. Prior to this program, the process took a week: "Speeding prototype time helped deliver the new product faster to a competitive market" (Buchanan, 2001, para. 17). According to Harvey (1989),

accurate and up-to-date information is now a highly valued commodity. Access to, and control over, information, coupled with a strong capacity for instant data analysis, have become essential to the centralized co-ordination of far-flung corporate interests. The capacity for instantaneous responses to changes in exchange rates, fashions and tastes, and moves by competitors is...essential to corporate survival. (p. 159)

New technologies of electronic control help reduce turnover times in production and thus contribute to Burton Snowboards' leading position in the competitive snowboarding market.

Faced with strong market volatility, heightened competition, and narrowing profit margins, employers in the contemporary capitalist system have "taken advantage of weakened union power and the pools of surplus (unemployed or underemployed) laborers to push for more flexible work regimes and labor contracts" (Harvey, 1989, p. 150). In 2003 Burton Snowboards had 309 employees in the United States, 76 in Europe and 69 in Japan. The company obliges its employees much longer hours during periods of peak demand (e.g., winter), and compensates with shorter hours at periods of slack demand (e.g., summer). Benefits for employees at the headquarters in Burlington (Vermont) include a free season pass to Stowe Mountain Resort and flexibility in their

work regimes. For example, if it snows two feet overnight employees can take a few hours off in the morning to go snowboarding but are expected to work late in the evening. The work environment is accommodating of young employees; the dress code is casual, dogs are allowed, and a skateboard ramp is available for use during breaks. Despite the appearances of a relaxed workplace, however, a former employee asserts that Burton Snowboards is famous for “burning out the bright-eyed young workers who flock to the company” and adds that “there is nothing light about it, the work is serious as hell” (cited in Goodman, 2003, para. 19).

From a Marxist perspective, it might be argued that the quest for accumulation by Burton Snowboards leads them to extort maximum surplus value from their workers. The current trend in labor markets is to “reduce the number of ‘core’ workers and rely increasingly upon a labor force that can quickly be taken on board and equally and costlessly be laid off when times get bad” (Harvey, 1989, p. 152). The labor structure of Burton Snowboards is similar to that described by Harvey (1989), it is “made up of core and periphery groups” (p. 150) and relies heavily upon part-time, temporary or sub-contracted work arrangements. This labor structure allows Burton to remain flexible in a highly volatile industry. For example, in 2002, following the September 11 terrorist attacks and a poor snow year in North America, Europe and Japan, Burton Snowboards underwent a restructuring and 102 employees were laid off (Snowboard Shocker, 2002, para. 6). Burton conceded that “the people side of these moves suck” but is nonetheless necessary to remain competitive in a capitalist system (Snowboard Shocker, 2002, para. 5).

Summarizing Burton Snowboard’s business philosophy, the company website touts: “We never stop innovating. We never stop creating. And we never stop listening to snowboarders” (www.burton.com, 2005). Indeed, Burton Snowboards’ strategic marketing, production, and labor processes, are a good example of “capitalists...leap-frogging innovations in their search for profit” (Harvey, 1989, p. 180), thus supporting Marx’s second premise of capitalism. I will now expand

upon the third aspect of Marx's premise of capitalism via a discussion of the labor processes in the snowboarding industry.

Professional Snowboarding and Labor-Power

The snowboarding industry comprises many jobs, including snowboard instructor, park-crew, journalist, photographer, competition judge, coach and event organizer. However, few are high paying. I will explore the attraction of such occupations shortly. Here, however, I will focus on the top tier of the snowboard industry job market, the potentially financially lucrative labor of the professional snowboarder. Snowboard companies maintain close contact with consumers by sponsoring a team of professional and amateur snowboarders. According to Zane (pseudonym), a core US snowboarder and cinematographer, the companies "spend so much money on their team because the team influences the kids, and the kids see a team riding a certain type of product, and that sells products" (personal communication, November 14, 2005). Professional boarder Todd Richards (2003) also elaborated on the functions of the sponsored athletes and their role in a snowboarding company's commercial success:

Snow was a business, and I was essentially selling snowboarding. Magazine editors, for the most part, looked at contest results to help them figure out who deserves to be on their covers. Kids looked at magazines and brought snowboards based on who was riding them. The marketability, and thus the success of all companies, was directly related to the exposure their team riders were able to secure. (p. 136)

Manufacturers and retailers hire riders on the basis of their physical skills, personality, and attitude that reflect positively on the company. The perceived marketability of a snowboarder is also very important; a point alluded to by David Carrier-Porcheron, a professional snowboarder sponsored by Burton: "I've been asking Burton, 'Why don't you pick up Gaetan? He's so sick!' They're like, 'No, we couldn't...the name Gaetan Chanut is just not selling'" (cited in Dresser, January 2005, p. 148). According to one industry insider:

It's just marketing, marketing, marketing...stuffing these kid's minds with 'coolness.' It's really big business; if you do it right you can really go far. It all depends on who your sponsors are and how good you are at talking, because even a mediocre snowboarder can go far if they know how the industry works, on the flipside the best snowboarder ever can get absolutely nothing because he or she doesn't market themselves right (Zane, personal communication, November 14, 2005).

Professional snowboarder Kris Jamieson observes "some people making so much money and some so little" in the snowboarding industry (cited in Howe, 1998, p. 101) and draws a perceptive conclusion: "It just goes to show you that snowboarding is just like any other capitalist venture. People don't get what they deserve. They get what they negotiate" (cited in Howe, 1998, p. 101).

Members of an online snowboarding website (www.snowboard.com) recently debated the status of snowboarding companies based on the quality of their 'team' of sponsored riders. Among the comments were: "Burton has the best team and gear, everyone on the team is cool" (posted by malibubarbie177 on June 9, 2004); "I think the best team is Burton [it] is big, and the most complete, and now they have J[eremy] Jones" (posted by sassyboarder87 on June 12, 2004); "Jeenyus has assembled the team! Sure Burton has an impressive team and you'd sell your soul for their sh*t but you would have a good team if you had money as well...Jeenyus has heart" (posted by JAWD1N, on June 8, 2004). Of course, implicit in the final comment here is that the size and quality of a snowboard team is "directly relative to the company budget" (Ste'en, personal communication, October 18, 2005). Not surprisingly, Burton has an advantage here, as Zane recognized:

Money is power. Pro riders will go anywhere the money and fame is. All the best riders in the world ride for Burton, not because Burton has the best product but because Burton has the most money and will make their riders the most famous. Burton has developed this image of absolute quality and professionalism, which is crazy because most snowboard companies go in and out of being cool but Burton has been steadily the best, and they are just getting bigger and bigger. Burton is the most amazing marketing machine (personal communication, November 14, 2005).

Burton Snowboards clearly understands the cultural, and thus economic, value of their professional athletes/workers.

The notion that professional snowboarding is the ‘dream job’ pervades the snowboarding culture. Among Tina Basich’s responsibilities as one of the first sponsored female snowboarders in the late 1980s, she had “to wear [her] sponsors’ clothing and gear whenever I was snowboarding” and she had “to compete in snowboarding competitions and be in photo shoots for media exposure in the new magazines.” Not surprisingly, she “wasn’t giving this up for anything” (Basich, 2004, p. 65). Yet while professionalism bestows travel, lifestyle, status and prestige,¹² one can also discern elements of exploitation in the relationship between manufacturers and athletes.

The relationship between snowboarding manufacturers (capitalists) and professional snowboarders (workers) appears to support Marx’s third premise of capitalism that the quest for accumulation by the owners of the means of production (capitalists) leads them to extort maximum surplus value from those who only own their labor-power (workers). As Marx explains, growth in real value rests on the exploitation of productive labor. This is not to say that professional snowboarders confront gross exploitation. On the contrary, some earn six figure salaries. But those amounts have to be contextualized by the relationships between what boarders receive and what they create (Harvey, 1989). A recent promotional document sheds some lights on the harsh realities of professional snowboarding that include “repetitive risk, lack of health insurance, shortness of careers, and lack of any type of pension” (Northwave, Drake, & Bakota, Winter 2004/2005, p. 16). In his autobiography, professional snowboarder Todd Richards (2003) referred to negotiating his ‘employment’ contract with Morrow (snowboarding company):

For a few months, Mr. Jerk had been dropping hints to me about the company’s budget and how I needed to be a “team player,” obviously trying to soften me up for the negotiating table. I was thinking, *Screw you. You just sold 30,000 boards with my name on them. I’ve been with this company for nine years. The Olympics are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and if you want me to flash the Morrow logo around the world,*

¹² See Chapter Six (Bourdieu and ‘Boarding Bodies) for a more detailed discussion of status and prestige in snowboarding culture, and professional snowboarding.

you need to pay me! And that's what I intended to tell him as the big sit-down approached.

It amazed me how a meeting about one basic issue can drag on for hours. The point was...I wanted a three-year one-million-dollar contract. Period. I was getting pretty pissed off that Morrow wasn't stepping up to the plate. I was about to say, "Pay me, or I'm riding for Airwalk," when Mr. Jerk finally spoke up. "You know what Todd...we want you to ride Morrow at the Olympics. And we want to thank you for all these years. We're going to give you what you want." I went nuts inside. I was shitting my pants. Basically, Mr. Jerk had the ability to pay the amount the whole time but he wanted me to crumble and take less. When I didn't give in he had no choice but to agree to the million-dollar contract. (p. 192; emphasis in original)

Professional female snowboarders also experience difficulties as workers owning only their labor-power, as is revealed in the following two examples:

The whole business aspect has been an obstacle for me...[I have] learnt the hard way...I've often just jumped into things, or signed a contract without reading it or understanding it and having enough confidence in myself to tell someone that I'm worth a certain amount. (Megan Pischke, cited in Hakes, 2000, para. 5)

When I first started out professional snowboarding...it was a big party...I was riding, getting product, and starting to get paid. But now...being a professional is serious...because I'm dealing with a higher level of everything. The people that are interested in snowboarding now and the people that you want to appeal to are big corporations, people that have PhDs and they don't even snowboard, they don't ski, they go to the gym for their workout. Try to go from working with people that snowboard to people that have absolutely no idea, who have never even seen snow. They are the people that are making all the decisions now and you have to market yourself to them. Being a pro snowboarder means being versatile, kind of like an entrepreneur of your own talent. (Morgan Lafonte, cited in Baccigaluppi, Mayugba & Carnel, 2001, p. 96)

When asked if she receives adequate financial compensation, professional snowboarder Morgan Lafonte replied,

God, no! Hell, no! K2 thinks my niche is backcountry, [but] anybody that goes into the backcountry is putting [themselves] at risk right away. For someone like K2 to ask me for a film segment in Hatchett's movie, I gotta be out there bustin' my ass. I've gotta be one up on the guys. You know, whoever gets up there first gets it. For what you do to your body and yourself, no, you're definitely not paid what you need to be. (cited in Baccigaluppi et al., 2001, p. 96)

When contextualizing the relationship between what boarders receive and what they create, some professional snowboarders appear exploited by their employers. As workers who rely solely upon their labor-power, professional snowboarders are vulnerable to the processes associated with capitalist accumulation. Notwithstanding the essential roles of the professional, pro-snowboarder Tom Burt remarks that they are “the first...to hit the floor when companies fall... [they’re] just a marketing tool” (cited in Baccigaluppi et al., 2001, p. 97). Todd Richards (2003) sums up the plight of the sponsored snowboarder during the economic crisis of the late 1990s: “...for the average pro snowboarder trying to make a living, it meant, ‘Damn, my royalty check sucks this month.’ Or worse, ‘What do you mean, you’re restructuring the team? Oh, I get it. I’m fired’” (p. 217). The capitalist economy is, in Mandel’s (1976) words, “a gigantic enterprise of dehumanization, of transformation of human beings from goals in themselves into instruments and means for money-making and capital accumulation” (p. 65).

From a Marxist perspective, the increasingly competitive nature of the contemporary snowboarding market leads capitalists to extort maximum surplus value from their workers, and professional snowboarders are under intense pressure to perform (produce). Chad Otterstrom describes his sponsorship with Forum Snowboards as “kinda stressful” because my employers are “always freaking out about everyone getting their video parts done” (cited in Sherowski, February 2005, p. 144). While Tina Basich accepts that snowboarding “is my job and how I make my living,” she dislikes the constant “pressure to perform” for sponsors for whom photographs in a magazine or a part in a snowboard video are “as important as winning the X-Games” (Basich, 2003, p. 170). While some accept the physical, psychological and financial pressures of professional snowboarding, others do not. World Champion snowboarder Craig Kelly, for example, retired at the peak of his career from professional competitive snowboarding, which he likened to “prostitution” (Howe, 1998, p. 82). As he put it: “Snowboarding is something that I

think should be done on your own terms. Society is full of rules, and I use the time I spend in the mountains as an opportunity to free myself of all constraints...I decided that competing on the World Tour restricted the freedom that I found with snowboarding in the first place” (cited in Reed, 2005, p. 54).

According to Marx’s concept of alienation, the capitalist mode of production alienates workers from the act of production (see Marx, 1964, 1982). Working becomes an alien activity without intrinsic satisfaction; external constraints compel workers to produce and production ceases to be an end in itself (see Petrovic, 1991). Work in fact becomes a commodity that is sold and its only value to the worker is its salability. Indeed, in a capitalist society, professional sport is also reduced to work (Rigauer, 1981[1969]). Professional sport assumes the same relations as the workplace: “The athlete is the producer, the spectators the consumers” (Rigauer, 1981[1969], pp. 68-69). Like the worker, sport dehumanizes the professional sportsperson. Rigauer (1981[1969]) claims that the athlete is alienated at the point at which sporting performances are transformed into a commodity. As professionals, “athletes forfeit control over their labor power, and are forced to maximize productivity” (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 32). Beamish (2002) agrees, arguing that this insight is central to the study of sport and physical activity because

if sporting activity is so rich with creative potential – so robust with opportunities for individuals to explore their own limits and the limitations of human physical performances – the loss of control of the product can have devastating consequences for the creative potential of physical activity. (p. 37)

Simply put, market-structured sport restricts the expressive and creative potential of the athletes themselves. In 1994, *Flakezine* magazine predicted that

in the hands of the ‘mainstream,’ snowboarding will become exactly like skiing, golf, inline skating, NASCAR, and tennis....boring, dull, and staid. Sure, snowboarders, snowboard companies, and the snowboard media will make a lot more money (yippee) but it will be in exchange for their souls, creativity, and individuality. (cited in Baccigaluppi et al., 2001, p. 145)

To many, the inclusion of snowboarding into the 1998 winter olympics represented the capitulation of creative snowboarding. Indeed, the addition of snowboarding to the 1998 winter olympic program met some resistance from those who opposed the rigid rules that inevitably accompany such competition. Paul Trapiski, a New Zealand snowboarder, feared that olympic rules would turn the sport into “something like freestyle skiing...with people telling you what trick you can and can’t do” (cited in Webster, 1997, p. 28). Many snowboarders also opposed the conformity introduced by uniforms. “The youth of the world,” said snowboarding coach Rob Roy, did not want to see “the best snowboarders in the world riding in uniforms in a half-pipe. That’s not why the youth of the world has embraced snowboarding. The youth of the world will say, ‘Uh-oh. Our parents have a hold of this sport now’” (cited in Humphreys, 2003, p. 421). Much to the disgust of American olympian Todd Richards (2003), this is exactly what happened: “It was bad enough I had on Reeboks – the Official Sponsor of the Olympic Team – but I couldn’t even put a sticker on my board. No stickers allowed – sooooooooooooo not snowboarding” (p. 200). While admitting a tinge of “American pride,” Richards (2003) insisted that he was first and foremost “a snowboarder” and that the compulsory “cowboy hat made me feel ridiculous” (p. 205).

Many of the changes forecast by *Flakezine* in 1994 can be observed in contemporary professional snowboarding, as journalist Cody Dresser (2004) notes:

The existence of a professional snowboarder has degraded into a serious, high pressure situation over the years. The transformation was subtle but somewhere, somehow, everything changed. *Stress levels rose as the fun factor slowly crumbled.* Snowboarding has been sterilized and neutered by the mainstream, the Olympics, the X-Games...*homogenized* by way of professionalism practiced in team sports like football or track and field – *tainted by training and endless competition.* (p. 125; emphasis added)

In a discussion about the pressures he faces to meet sponsors’ demands to produce video footage, professional snowboarder Marc Frank Montoya comments

It’s a *lot* harder [today] ’cause there’s more competition out there. A lot of new blood coming in...just like any other sport. It’s like a big ol’ production. It’s definitely not as

much fun as it used to be when you could go to a resort and ride all day and film it. Now you have to work, hike...to the biggest kicker and build some big ol' jump. Make sure the landing's all good. It's too big of an ordeal. I didn't start snowboarding to be pro. I didn't start to watch myself on film but *I have to now because that's what I get paid to do*. I busted my ass this winter...it's just all about filming every day. Filming, filming, filming...I got burned out on it. (cited in Yant, 2001a, para. 22, emphasis added)

Whereas Montoya primarily pursued snowboarding as a means of self-expression and self-exploration, as a professional snowboarder (worker) he has become alienated from his labor; the market now shapes and restricts his snowboarding experiences.

Jean Brohm (1978) maintains that the physical demands placed on the sportsperson in training and in sporting contexts amounts to bodily oppression. The inhumanity of this situation is itself, he says, a form of alienation. From this perspective it might be argued that professional snowboarders experience a form of alienation when they confront serious injury and even death in order to 'get the shot,' and thus 'earn' a wage. Snowboarding journalist Jennifer Sherowski (2003a) observes that professional snowboarding is increasingly "dangerous," with "riders...put[ting] their lives on the line to get the gnarliest footage and photos" (p. 48). Early professional snowboarder Mike Basich reveals the risks associated with his job:

A lot of people say I'm lucky for what I do for a living. Sure, maybe that's true. I get to travel the world and not have a nine-to-five job. But when I get to work, my worries are not about giving a report to my boss or something. I worry about making it through the day without breaking a bone or getting stuck in an avalanche (knock, knock). Your body takes a beating. You're never home. Lots of lag time at the airports. You're in the cold all the time. (cited in Baccigaluppi et al., 2001, p. 95)

Professional snowboarder Travis Parker sums up the situation when he says that we "have to risk our lives to make a paycheck" (cited in Sherowski, 2003a, p. 48).

Despite the potential for alienation in professional snowboarding, with significant sponsorships on offer, many boarders happily embrace commercial approaches. The rewards from selling one's labor power are alluring, as Richards (2003) makes clear:

I'd be a liar if I said the thought of being on the first U.S Olympic Snowboard team didn't fire me up. Wheaties boxes, international prestige, the best half-pipe in the world – and let's not forget the cold hard cash that goes with it all. (p. 185)

I wanted to make more money, stay ahead of the other guys, drive the nicest car, and have the nicest house. (p. 270)

Similarly, professional snowboarder Tara Dakides describes her good fortune as simply “amazing:” “I never thought in a million years that I would be able to buy things that I'm able to buy [a new home, a condominium, a new sports-utility vehicle]” (cited in Roberts, 2002, p. A1).

Arguably, snowboarding reflects the three key aspects of capitalism: Growth, competition and exploitation. In this capitalist system some women struggle with the capitalist/worker relationship, others have reaped the financial benefits of their cultural authenticity, and a few have established their own companies and become capitalists themselves. Marx's three conditions of capitalism illuminate how snowboarding reflects the key premises of capitalism but where do culture, ideology and politics fit into this explanation of snowboarding as a social phenomenon?

Critique

The most common criticisms of Marx center on “unfulfilled predictions (global communism never occurred), over-simplification of social stratification (class relations are more complex than dichotomous), and his ‘economism,’ which viewed the economic base as determining all other ‘superstructures’ (cultural activities, for example, are not always commodified)” (Giulianotti, 2005, pp. 30-31). Certainly, Marx's system of Communism has yet to eventuate. However, many critics “over-simplify Marx's thinking” (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 31). Hence, the following section examines the latter two critiques – the limitations of traditional Marxism for explaining class and culture – in greater detail and in relation to contemporary snowboarding.

Class

The concept of class is central to Marxism. According to Bottomore (1956), Marx showed, by empirical investigation, “how the development of modern capitalism necessarily leads to a social transformation in which the working-class movement will abolish all classes” (p. 21). But Marx’s analysis of class, and class struggle, has proved less than satisfying. Contemporary society is not split, as Marx predicted, into two hostile classes. Rather a much more complex class structure has evolved (Gurley, 1984). Moreover, it has been argued that class struggle has little to do with change from one society to another (Abercrombie et al., 2000). Arguably, Marx’s analysis of class and class struggle is of little relevance for explaining contemporary society, or snowboarding culture per se.

While the majority of snowboarders are white (89 per cent)¹³ and middle-upper class,¹⁴ participants in the snowboarding culture rarely consider race or class. Despite a general lack of awareness of, or concern about, class related issues among snowboarders, some boarders do recognize class dimensions in the sport. Zane surprised me in an interview when he declared: “I think snowboarding is still a rich kid sport. It’s really hard for poor kids to come up in snowboarding and get a chance to ride enough to be good” (personal communication, November 14, 2005). Continuing, he revealed:

My parents weren’t well off, so when I started snowboarding, I had a job just so I could afford to go riding. We [my brother and I] definitely found ways around the money though, we would drive 3.5 hours to go riding with fifty bucks in our pockets, find a cheap hotel or sleep in the car, scam lift tickets...we’d do anything to do what we loved (personal communication, November 14, 2005).

¹³ According to a recent study conducted by the United States National Sporting Goods Association, only 11 per cent of American snowboarders are members of racial/ethnic minority groups; 3.6 per cent Asian, 2.3 per cent Hispanic/Spanish/Latino, 1.6 per cent African American, 1.1 per cent Native American, and 2.4 per cent other (NGSA, 2001).

¹⁴ The American Sports Data reports that the average mean household income of snowboarders is more than US\$56,000 (The Changing Marketplace, no date), which is higher than the medium income of US\$42,228 (DeNavas-Walt & Cleveland, 2002). More recently, *Transworld Snowboarding* stated that 44.3 per cent of American snowboarders have a household income of US\$75,000 a year or more (Hard Numbers, 2005, p. 58).

Marc Frank Montoya, the first and only American-Mexican professional snowboarder, also complains about expensive lift-tickets that exclude the lower classes from the resorts: “They charge like 50 or 60 bucks. That’s how they [resorts] keep the city kids from going up and snowboarding” (cited in Yant, 2001a, para. 13). As a lower-class youth, Montoya went to great lengths to snowboard, admitting, “I jacked [stole] a snowboard and I’d clip tickets. And I’d jack gas. I stole my food everyday on the way up there. Went to 7-Eleven, jacked a bunch of Lunchables – threw ‘em down my pants” (cited in Yant, 2001a, para. 13).¹⁵ Despite a six-figure salary, Montoya still “clips tickets” in order to not “let them get away with that bullshit” (cited in Yant, 2001a, para. 13). Nonetheless, such acts of symbolic resistance tend to be isolated in the snowboarding culture; certainly there are no signs of a revolution among lower-class snowboarders.

Marx’s analysis of social class as applied to snowboarding in the contemporary capitalist society is also problematic because of the difficulties in fitting professional snowboarders into a two-class scheme. The financial success of some professional snowboarders illustrates a key feature of the political economy of snowboarding in that “wealth derives not from ownership of the means of production and control over wage labor but from ownership of aesthetic ingenuity and the ability to create and mobilize cultural authenticity” (Booth, 2005b, p. 328). As Ste’en explained, “now the successful riders are marketing themselves through any other means than competition...videos, books, video games; there are so many new ways of turning your name into profit” (personal communication, October 18, 2005). The relations of production in the snowboarding economy cannot be simply divided into those who own and control the means of

¹⁵ Clipping tickets is common practice among (typically younger) snowboarders and skiers on a tight budget. They approach patrons in the resort car park who appear to be heading home from a morning on the mountain, and offer them a cheap price for their used lift-ticket (e.g., \$10 for a lift-ticket initially purchased for \$60). If the ticket-holder agrees, the ticket is clipped/removed from their jacket and attached to the new proprietors jacket.

production and are able to take the product (capitalists), and those who depend on their own labor alone (workers). The key issue here is that a Marxist position does not account for social actors' critical faculties and interpretive capacities. As Giulianotti (2005) explains, "many professional athletes are not passive cogs in sport's commercial wheel but have won improved industrial conditions and often superlative financial rewards for their erstwhile commodification" (p. 42).

Another limitation of a Marxist perspective is the tendency to focus on the negative, and ignore the positive, aspects of capitalism. The Marxist approach adopted in this chapter, for example, overlooks the enjoyment and opportunities that professionalism offers some snowboarders. According to US professional snowboarder Bjorn Leines,

the best thing about being a professional snowboarder is probably all the opportunities that come along with it. Like being able to travel, meet new people, and see different things. And you're pretty much your own boss, so you can do anything you want. It's really cool being able to do what you love. (cited in Bridges, 2005, para. 40)

The worker-capitalist relationship in professional snowboarding consists of opportunities and constraints, and therefore cannot be explained solely by the concepts of alienation and exploitation that focus exclusively on the negative elements of this relationship. This pessimistic approach is also apparent in the Marxist explanation of Burton Snowboards.

Certainly, Jake Burton is a capitalist who has embraced and benefited from capitalist accumulation and exploitation of his staff. Yet, Burton also took risks, worked hard and provides a product enjoyed by many consumers. Many snowboarders appreciate Burton's contribution to the development of the sport and culture, and the opportunities his company offers its sponsored athletes are second to none:

Burton made snowboarding. Lots of people don't want to believe that because Burton has lots of money. But without Burton, snowboarding would not be as progressive as it is today. Burton pays its riders so well. Every single one of the Burton riders is on the snow 200 plus days a year. Jake is on the snow every day, the guys from Salomon aren't. Jake is the man (Moriah, personal communication, November 14, 2005).

Doing business in over 35 countries, Burton Snowboards also proclaims to conform to the following ethical global production guidelines: 1) “Be a good corporate citizen in every country, respecting customs and languages,” 2) “Give overseas operations your best manufacturing technology,” 3) “Keep expatriate headcount down and groom local managers to take over,” 4) “Let plants set their own rules, fine-tuning manufacturing processes to match skills of workers,” 5) “Develop local R&D to tailor products made,” and 6) “Encourage competition among overseas outposts with plants back home” (Burton Goes, 2005, p. 15). Burton Snowboards also has a philanthropic bent. For example, Burton Snowboards raised and donated US\$152,000 to disaster relief efforts to help those affected by the hurricanes in North America and earthquakes in Pakistan during 2005 (Press Release, 2005) and has also established ‘Chill,’ an international, non-profit intervention program for at-risk inner-city youth aged 10-18. Since 1995 ‘Chill’ has provided over 8,500 disadvantaged youths from eleven North American cities with the opportunity to learn to snowboard. This program provides participants with transportation, lift-tickets, instruction and gear once a week for six weeks.¹⁶ Arguably, Marx’s analysis of class, and class struggle, is limited because it splits society into two hostile classes: Workers and capitalists. But, as the previous examples illustrate, Jake Burton and Burton Snowboards are not simply the capitalist villains that a Marxist perspective might suggest. Moreover, professional snowboarders do not necessarily

¹⁶According to the Burton website, “Chill takes these kids riding six times each so they have the opportunity to actually learn to snowboard – and therefore, to actually succeed. This achievement helps cultivate the self-confidence that these kids often lack. The Chill experience enables the kids to feel better about themselves and their potential. Chill offers this experience during the after-school hours when kids are often unsupervised, allowing them to use this time productively; 96 per cent of our partner agencies across all eleven cities tell us that most or all of our kids show improved self-esteem well after the six-week program is complete; 80 per cent of our partner agencies across all eleven cities tell us that most or all of our kids show an improved attitude well after the snow melts; 57 per cent of our partner agencies across all eleven cities tell us that most or all of our kids improve their academic performance as a result of their time with Chill.” For more information visit <http://www.burton.com>

confront gross exploitation, and they have access to a degree of creative capital unknown to the factory worker.

Culture

For all the evidence supporting snowboarding as a model of capitalist enterprise, many aspects of the culture run contrary to the capitalist model. In this section I examine some of these contradictions, and outline the limitations of traditional Marxism for explaining contemporary snowboarding culture.

Snowboarding still retains some connections to the new leisure movement of the 1960s that espoused cooperation, fun and freedom as its principal tenets. Snowboarders tend to embrace the somewhat idealistic philosophy that snowboarding is about “fun, self-expression, and getting back to nature, not making money” (Humphreys, 2003, p. 416). As top Norwegian snowboarder Terje Haakonsen explains, “snowboarding is about fresh tracks and carving powder and being yourself... It’s not about...big money” (cited in Perman, 1998, p. 51). Similarly, Athena, a professional US snowboarder describes snowboarding as “an individual thing...[that] gives you freedom to express your own style. The perks that come along with the sport, such as friends and travel and money are the bonus” (cited in Coulter-Parker, 1997, p. 57). Although a select few professional snowboarders embrace commercialized forms of snowboarding and have benefited from them, the majority of participants view money as merely a means to an end – the snowboarding lifestyle. Professional New Zealand snowboarder and magazine editor Dylan Butt (2005) testifies:

Becoming a professional ‘Extreme Athlete’ has gotta be the best career in the world. Getting paid huge amounts of money to do what you enjoy, living the ‘rock star’ lifestyle, rolling around in pimped-out wagons, groupies hangin’ off each arm, non-stop parties and traveling the world to the most luxurious of destinations... You better pinch yourself because you’re dreaming... Sure, snowboarding has come a long way in the last decade, the industry has grown, mainstream media has jumped on board using

snowboarding and snowboarders as marketing tools...hell, it's even an Olympic sport with three separate disciplines next year! Along with all this hype comes the opportunity to make a living out of it. Let me rephrase that, a lifestyle out of it! That's the key word, 'lifestyle.' Any true snowboarder will tell you that's what it's all about, living in the mountains and snowboarding as much as possible, working your ass off to make enough money to go overseas so you can do it all over again while everybody else is back home lying on the beach. (p. 88)

Another snowboarding journalist writes:

Not everyone who rides a snowboard is a snowboarder but for those who do bear this illustrious title, it's an undeniable way of life. High school ends, and the road starts calling – off to mountain towns and the assimilation into weird, transient tribes full of people who work night jobs cleaning toilets or handing you your coffee in the early mornings, all so they can shove a fistful of tips in their pocket and ride, their real motives betrayed by goggle tans or chin's scuffed by Gore-Tex. In this world, people don't ask what you 'do,' they ask you where you work – knowing that what you do is snowboard, just like them, and any job you might have is simply a means for it. (Sherowski, January 2005, p. 160)

As previously mentioned, the majority of jobs in the snowboarding industry – snowboard instructor, ski lift-operator park-crew, journalist, photographer, competition judge, coach, and event organizer – are not high paying. These jobs tend to be held by passionate snowboarders committed to the lifestyle rather than the economic rewards. In the words of top snowboarding photographer Trevor Graves: “If you're shooting to maintain the lifestyle, it's worth it. That's all you can do with the time constraints anyway. It's not a huge cash-maker, like fashion or rock photography. It's really about living snowboarding” (cited in Howe, 1998, p. 107). After professional snowboarder Leanne Pelosi finished university she relocated to “Whistler to be a poor snowboarder while all [her] university friends were making cashola” (cited in Sherowski, January 2005, p. 168). In comparison to “sitting behind a desk working some white-collar job,” she is “living [her] dream, meeting amazing people, and snowboarding year-round;” “My choice was definitely better...I love it” she adds (cited in Sherowski, January 2005, p. 168). Such examples of snowboarders refusing to embrace opportunities for capital accumulation illustrate that

snowboarders still privilege culture. But how does traditional Marxism deal with culture, particularly cultural ideologies and politics? The answer lies in the base-superstructure model.

The Base-Superstructure Model

Marx and Engels employed the building-like metaphor of base and superstructure to further propound the idea that the economic structure of society conditions the existence and forms of the state and social consciousness (Bottomore, 1991; also see Cohen, 1978). Economic relations represent the base while the superstructure consists of the various political and cultural institutions of the social formation. From an orthodox Marxist perspective, the superstructure is not autonomous; it does not emerge out of itself, rather it has a foundation in the social relations of production; the economy determines the superstructure. Marxist theorists stress economic processes and, in particular, assume that change in the mode of production initiates societal developments:

What is society, regardless of its particular form? The product of men's [sic] interaction. Are men free to choose this or that social form? Not at all. Assume certain levels of development of production, commerce, and consumption, and you will have a corresponding social constitution, a corresponding organization of the family, of orders and classes, in a word, a corresponding form of civil society... (Marx, 1963, cited in Nicholson, 1986, p. 375)

Simply put, as the structure of the base varies, so will the nature of the superstructure. One key function of the superstructure, however, is to act as a framework for ideologies that justify and stabilize the modes of production and consumption under capitalism.

While a fruitful analytical device, the base and superstructure metaphor has also excited a great deal of debate both inside and outside Marxism. One bone of contention is the notion that the base *determines* the superstructure. A number of critics argue that the model entails economic

determinism.¹⁷ Yet, very few proponents of the notion of base and superstructure adopt such a determinist perspective. Moreover, Marx and Engels never held to such a doctrine. According to Engels, “neither Marx nor I have asserted this. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic factor is the *only* determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, absurd phrase” (letter to J. Bloch, 21-22 September 1890, cited in Larrain, 1991, p. 47). While some critics continue to decry economic determinism, others argue that the relationship between the base and superstructure is purely functional. The French philosopher Louis Althusser was one such advocate. In the late 1960s Althusser led a revolution in Marxist thought. While the base-superstructure arrangement, which Althusser likened to a three-story building in which the economic base is the ground floor with political and ideological levels built upon the base, implies economic determinism (the analogy suggests “that the upper floors could not ‘stay up’ [in the air] alone, if they did not rest precisely on the base” [1977, p. 129]), Althusser insisted that the relationship should not be seen in such simplistic, vulgar terms. He thus attempted to reformulate this model and provide a new structural analysis (Althusser, 1969). Instead of seeing superstructural elements, such as ideology, culture, and politics, simply as reflections of the economic base, he proposed a scheme in which the superstructural elements are the conditions of existence of the economy.

For Althusser, the base-superstructure relationship is two directional. Going up, the base has the quality of “determination in the last instance” (Althusser & Balibar, 1970, pp. 216-224) (Althusser borrows this phrase from Engels [1959]). According to Althusser (1969), the economic structure is always the “structure in dominance,” it defines the general pattern of relationships between the various levels of the structure (cited in Waters, 2000, p. 119). In this structural edifice,

¹⁷ Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony was an attempt to introduce agency as a means to overcome the structural determinism inherent in classical Marxism (see Chapter Five: Hegemonic Masculinity and the Snowboarding Culture).

relationships of determination also apply in a downward direction. First, the political and ideological levels exist in a state of “relative autonomy,” an autonomy predisposed by the economic base (relations of production) in capitalism (Waters, 2000, p. 119). Such opposition offers an illusion of freedom in the superstructure, “thus allowing the secret constraints of the economic arena to survive unchallenged. Their autonomy is therefore ‘relative’ to the structure in dominance” (Waters, 2000, p. 120). Second, the superstructure is said to engage in ‘reciprocal action’ towards the base. Here the super-structural arrangements operate to keep the capitalist system going. Citing Marx, Althusser (1977) writes, “every child knows that a social formation which did not reproduce the conditions of production at the same time as it produced would not last a year” (p. 123). The formation must “ensure its own future by making sure its members know what they have to do and are committed to doing it,” and ultimately it is the superstructure that accomplishes this outcome (Waters, 2000, p. 120).

Although Althusser’s reinterpretation of the base-superstructure model views culture as ‘relatively’ autonomous, and thus has some explanatory power for the relationship between the economy and culture, this model is problematic. The base-superstructure model treats the superstructure of ideas as “secondary phenomenon...a mere reflection whose reality is ultimately to be found in the production relations. Consciousness is thus emptied of its specific content and significance and is reduced to economic relations” (Bottomore, 1991, p. 47). It is as though the superstructures (politics, ideology and culture) do not need to be analyzed in themselves. Clearly, this model has a limited ability to explain contemporary social phenomena such as snowboarding which, although demonstrating many of the basic tenets of capitalism, has a high cultural component.

Ultimately, the base-superstructure metaphor does not succeed in conveying an adequate understanding of culture. This is partly because it has been asked to play two roles simultaneously:

To describe the development of specialized levels of society brought about by capitalism and explain how one of these levels determines the others. While adequate to perform the first function – employing traditional Marxist concepts facilitates an explanation of capitalist relations as a reality in snowboarding culture – the metaphor seems less adequate when trying to explain political or cultural relationships, social consciousness, or to account for the emergence of each level as part of the social totality (Bottomore, 1991). This is especially problematic in a contemporary social system in which “the ties binding culture to economy” continue to “tighten” (Murdock, 1997, p. 69). Today, “no artificial separation can be maintained between the ‘light’ sphere of culture and symbols and the ‘heavy’ world of economics and material objects” (Rowe, 2004, p. 68). According to Rowe (2004), under conditions where the economies and social structures of advanced capitalist societies grow increasingly dependent on cultural processes, we must see culture, social relations, and economics as

inextricably linked in a manner that *defies a simple equation involving arrows pointing in a single, determining direction*. The sphere of culture is now more than ever where the key economic processes of production, distribution and exchange take place. At the same time, cultural production is always directly or indirectly, currently or potentially, connected to the world of making products, supplying services and generating profits. (p. 68; emphasis added)

Similarly, Maxwell (2001) argues “culture is always *in* political economy” (p. 3). Hence, we must “link cultural experience to political economy” and “tear down the imaginary walls separating culture, economics, and politics” (Maxwell, 2001, p. 1).

As this chapter has alluded, the snowboarding cultural industry is both similar to, and different from, other industries. On the one hand, it is a clearly organized industry and is part of the general productive economic system. On the other hand, it does not simply make commodities; it, as Murdock (1997) argues about the cultural industries in general, “makes available the repertoire of meanings through which the social world, including the world of commodities, is understood and acted on” (p. 68). Hence, as Murdock (1997) proclaims, it is “not enough simply to

acknowledge this duality [between the economy and culture], we need to conceptualise the relations between the material and discursive organization of culture without reducing one to the other” (p. 68). The potential of traditional Marxism for explaining the snowboarding culture is limited by the determination of the superstructure by the base. But, as Hall (1986) explains, although the structure of ownership and control within the cultural industries is not “a sufficient explanation of the way the ideological universe is structured, it is a *necessary starting point*” (p. 11; emphasis added). The Marxist perspective may be limited in its ability to explain the cultural element of the snowboarding industry. It has, however, provided a good foundation upon which the following chapters will build. In fact, all social theories employed in this study have links to the work of Karl Marx.

Moving On

Employing a traditional Marxist perspective, this chapter has illustrated how snowboarding reflects the three key aspects of capitalism: Growth, competition and exploitation. In this capitalist system, some women struggle with the capitalist/worker relationship, others have reaped the financial benefits of their cultural authenticity, and a few have established their own companies, and become capitalists themselves. But the economic reductionism of this theoretical approach makes Marxism insufficient for explaining the importance of culture, and the relationship between culture and economy, in the contemporary phenomenon of female snowboarding. Furthermore, Marxism’s potential for explaining power in female snowboarding is problematically one-dimensional.

“In a trivial sense Marx never wrote about power; in an important one he wrote about nothing else” explained Waters (2000, p. 219). Continuing, Waters (2000) wrote, “the history of human societies is, [Marx] theorizes, so suffused by power differences and power struggles that a separate specification of power is unnecessary” (p. 219). Marx sees power as an aspect of the

economic relationships that fundamentally determine the shape of society. The relationship of material resources to the acquisition of power is circular: “The more material resources one has the more one can control others, and the more one can control others the more material resources one can acquire” (Waters, 2000, p. 220). Within this general orientation, power is applied and experienced not by specific individuals but by classes and groups. In capitalist societies, Marx’s notion of power tends to be highly concentrated in the relationship between capitalists and workers, and limited to capitalists. In this system, ownership of capital defines the capitalist and capitalism does not discriminate on the basis of gender.¹⁸ In this sense then, female capitalists in the snowboarding market have access to economic power. Yet, power in the snowboarding culture and female snowboarding more specifically, is much more diverse than the means of production.

As John Nauright (2005) correctly observes, the “political economy of sport” is “highly gendered” (p. 211). Yet, the Marxist approach adopted in this chapter gave little attention to the gendered nature of the political economy of snowboarding beyond the experiences of elite level female snowboarders. While a traditional Marxist perspective sheds much light on the capitalist dimensions of snowboarding, I believe that a post-Fordist approach offers more fruitful examinations of the intersection of political economy and gender in snowboarding culture. Thus, the following chapter builds upon the knowledge of how snowboarding propagates capitalist accumulation, competition and exploitation from a post-Fordist perspective and provides a fuller explanation of the causal connections between the snowboarding economy and culture. Arguably, post-Fordism is a potentially more insightful theoretical framework for analyzing cultural phenomena such as female snowboarding, and explaining power beyond the means of production.

¹⁸ By no means does this imply that women have not experienced gender discrimination within capitalist societies.

3. POST-FORDISM AND THE WOMEN'S NICHE MARKET

Post-Fordist theory purports to describe a restructuring of capitalism in the final quarter of last century. According to post-Fordists, the worldwide economic crisis of 1973, sparked in large part by the Arab oil embargo, prompted a reconfiguration of Fordism and the emergence of a highly flexible post-Fordist system (Amin, 1994; Kumar, 1995). The earlier Taylor-Fordist system that had emphasized high volume and standardized mass-production changed to one based on rapid and often highly specialized responses. In other words, “economies of scope” superseded “economies of scale” and capitalist production began to rapidly respond to, and take full advantage of, quick changing fashions (Harvey, 1989, p. 155). Though economic changes lie at its core, in the hands of several of its proponents, post-Fordism includes wide-ranging political and cultural changes.¹ For example, Scott Lash (1990) believes culture is “part and parcel of the economy” (p. 38) while Stuart Hall proclaims that post-Fordism “is as much a description of cultural as of economic change” (quoted in Amin, 1994, p. 31). Moreover, Hall adds, in the realm of post-Fordism, “culture has ceased to be, if it ever was, a decorative addendum to the ‘hard world’ of production and things, the icing on the cake of the material world” (quoted in Amin, 1994, p. 31).

Taken as a conglomerate of contemporary economic, political and cultural circumstances, post-Fordist theory becomes a particularly insightful theoretical framework for analyzing cultural phenomena such as snowboarding because it expands the locus of power away from economic classes to social classes and their cultural attributes. In a post-Fordist system, snowboarding appears as a cultural industry where consumers “identify cultural gratification with consumption”

¹ In these respects, post-Fordism “overlaps to a good extent with some central aspects of post-modern theory” (Kumar, 1995, p. vii). A significant body of work links postmodernism and post-Fordism; see for example Jameson (1991, 1994), Harvey (1989), Soja (1989), Grossberg (1992), and Hall (1989). I will discuss my concerns with this approach in the conclusion of this chapter.

(Amin, 1994, p. 31). In short, post-Fordism provides a fuller explanation of the relationship between the snowboarding economy – outlined in the previous chapter – and snowboarding culture. This is particularly important when examining the women’s niche market in snowboarding.

This chapter comprises four main parts. In the first I provide an overview of Fordism and post-Fordism and briefly consider some of the various attempts to differentiate the two systems. This part identifies Krishan Kumar’s (1995) approach as having the most potential for explaining the phenomenon of female snowboarding. Part two provides the context upon which the remainder of the chapter builds. Here I draw upon Kumar’s approach to briefly describe the economic and cultural changes in contemporary Western society, and consider these changes in relation to young women. The third part focuses on the aspects of the snowboarding culture that appear to be explained by a post-Fordist perspective. More specifically, it examines the roles of young women as consumers and entrepreneurs in a highly fragmented snowboarding culture and economy. It is important to note, however, that these young women tend to be among a very small middle class core, and such opportunities are not available to all women. The first three parts draw causal connections between the snowboarding economy and culture. The fourth and final part is a critique of post-Fordism; it considers the strengths, followed by the limitations, of the Kumarian approach to post-Fordism and its ability to explain female snowboarding. Ultimately, this chapter illustrates that the post-Fordist system facilitates many new consumption and participation opportunities for female snowboarders. But the question remains, do these new opportunities empower women? More specifically, do the new opportunities within the post-Fordist system help young women “gain control over their lives” and “foster power (that is, the capacity to implement)” in women, for “use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important”? (Page & Czuba, 1999, para. 11).

Theoretical Overview

It is not my intention here to provide an in-depth history of the development of either Fordism or post-Fordism. A number of excellent resources already achieve those tasks (see Harvey, 1989; Lash & Urry, 1987). My primary objective is simply to outline the Fordist and post-Fordist systems as an introduction to the theoretical debate surrounding the changes from one to the other, before advocating Kumar's approach as the most useful for describing the contemporary system, and female snowboarding per se.

Fordism refers to the mechanized, mass production manufacturing methods developed in the United States of America in the early 1920s by motorcar manufacturer Henry Ford. This new manufacturing system spread from motor cars to other consumer products and from the USA to other countries and, by the 1970s, it was the normal method of manufacturing standardized products in high volumes in many industries around the world (Amin, 1994; Kumar, 1995). However, a number of developments in the final quarter of the twentieth century (e.g., global economic fluctuations, intensified competition for established producers, shifts in consumer demand, new forms of more flexible automation, political change) threatened Fordism, such that commentators began to speak of post-Fordism, a term used as a generic description of the changing nature of capitalism and theoretical accounts of these changes (Amin, 1994).

Theorization of this historical evolution and change has not passed unchallenged. In fact, post-Fordism is a hotly contested concept and, like the phenomena it seeks to understand, lacks a fixed and uniform interpretation (see Amin, 1994; Hirst & Zeitlin, 1991). Hence, one must approach the literature on post-Fordism as a debate rather than a universally accepted theory of transition (Amin, 1994). Arguments exist over the nature of Fordism, the origins of its crisis, the bearers of change, and the shape of things to come. Divisions also exist among post-Fordists as to whether post-Fordism constitutes a social threat or social opportunity. Among the different

approaches to post-Fordism are those advocated by the New Times (Hall & Jacques, 1989), Regulationist (Aglietta, 1979; Lipietz, 1985, 1987) and Neo-Schumpeterian (Freeman, Clarke, & Soete, 1982; Perez, 1985) schools.

A group of British Marxists attempting to come to terms with what they saw as fundamental and far-reaching changes in the nature of contemporary capitalism developed the New Times approach (see Hall & Jacques, 1989). As with other post-Fordists, they single out “flexible specialization”² as the orchestral force “driving on the evolution of the new world” (Kumar, 1995, p. 51). The New Times approach takes a neo-Gramscian orientation to exploring social, cultural, and political – as opposed to economic – characteristics and effects of post-Fordism. What distinguishes the New Times approach, reflecting its Marxist orientation, is the breadth of its analysis and the more schematic nature of its presentation; “it binds, within its opposition of Fordism and post-Fordism, elements of politics and culture together with changes in work and organization, and in production and consumption” (Kumar, 1995, p. 51).

Attempting to explain the dynamics of long-term cycles of economic stability and change, French political economists pioneered the Regulation approach in the 1970s and 1980s (Aglietta, 1979; Lipietz, 1985, 1987). In order to articulate and explain the systematic coherence of individual phases of capitalist development, Regulation theory draws on a number of key concepts to identify the core mechanisms at work in contemporary capitalism including the ‘regime of accumulation,’ ‘mode of regulation,’ and ‘dominant industrial paradigm’ or ‘labor process.’³ The

² The theory of flexible specialization, first formulated by Piore and Sabel in 1984, was an attempt to describe and explain a new form of manufacturing organization that emerged with the decline of Fordism. Flexible specialization is the “production of a wide and changing variety of products in small volumes (including single items) for specialized markets, using general-purpose machinery and skilled and adaptable labor; it can be viewed as a modern form of craft production” (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 2000, pp. 135-136).

³ Regime of accumulation explores regularities across the whole economy that enables a coherent process of capital accumulation, including factors relating to the organization of production and work. Mode of regulation refers to the laws, state policies, industrial codes, and consumption habits that regulate and reproduce a given accumulation regime. Dominant industrial paradigm or labor process refers to patterns of industrial and work organization including

Footnote continued on the next page

Neo-Schumpeterian approach is similar to the Regulation approach but attaches more significance to “technology and technical standards in initiating, sustaining and separating individual long waves” of capital development and accumulation (Amin, 1994, p. 11; see also Freeman et al., 1982; Perez, 1985). It explores technological innovations that effect forms of work and work organization and that stimulate high-growth sectors.

While critics accuse the more economically grounded approaches (e.g., the Regulation and the Neo-Schumpeterian approaches) of economic or technological determinism, they charge those that privilege cultural and political phenomena (e.g., the New Times approach) with either ignoring the economic or of reading cultural practices from economic structures (see Nadesan, 2001). Yet, some attempts have been made to capture *all* the various economic, political and cultural dimensions of post-Fordism (see e.g., Harvey 1989; Rustin, 1989). Kumar’s (1995) approach is one such example.

Kumar (1995) draws selectively from the post-Fordist literature to articulate a blend of post-Fordism that gives equal weight to changes in the economy, politics and industrial relations, and culture and ideology. He stresses that we must combine these changes because it is unlikely that they are occurring independently (Kumar, 1995). Moreover, it is just as likely that “changes in culture and politics are pushing on changes in the economy as the other way around – or, at least, that the causal connections are two way” (Kumar, 1995, p. 65). Kumar sketches these changes as follows. In the economy, we see

the rise of a global market and of global corporations, and the decline of national enterprises and the nation state as the effective units of production and regulation; flexible specialization and the dispersal and decentralization of production, replacing mass marketing and mass production; flatter hierarchies and an emphasis on communication rather than command in organization; vertical and horizontal disintegration, and an increase in subcontracting, franchising, internal marketing within

technological forms and industrial relations. For a more detailed, yet succinct, summary of these concepts see Amin (1994, p. 8).

firms, and the hiving-off of functions; rise in the number of flexi-time, part-time, temporary, self-employed and home workers. (Kumar, 1995, p. 52)

Political and industrial relations are accompanied by

the fragmentation of social classes, the decline of national class-based political parties and class voting, and the rise of social movements and ‘networks’ based on region, race or gender or on single-issue politics... a labor force divided into core and periphery; the end of the class compromise of corporatism; the break-up of standardized, collectivist welfare provision, and the rise of consumer choice and private provision welfare. (Kumar, 1995, p. 52)

In culture and ideology we witness

the rise and promotion of individualist modes of thought and behavior; a culture of entrepreneurialism; the end of universalism and standardization of education, and the rise of modularity and pupil- and parent-choice; fragmentation and pluralism in values and lifestyles; post-modernist eclecticism, and populist approaches to culture; privatization in domestic life and leisure pursuits. (Kumar, 1995, p. 52)

Rather than attempting to explain or theorize the changes in culture, politics, and economic and social institutions, Kumar seeks to provide a broad description of the contemporary system.

Therefore, adopting a Kumarian approach, the remainder of this part of the chapter briefly describes the economic and cultural characteristics of Fordism and post-Fordism.

Fordism

Although Henry Ford introduced the new system of manufacturing into his automobile factory in the early 1920s, it was not until after the Second World War that heavy industrial manufacturing economies adopted Fordist manufacturing techniques suited to consumer, or late, capitalism (Harvey, 1989). Based on mass consumption, Fordism was a system of standardized mass production. Marketers in the early Fordist period viewed the Western world as a single, mass, market. Manufacturers made products with universal appeal. For example, Henry Ford conceived of the Model T as the “universal car... There was no reason, in Ford’s view, for anyone to buy another model” (Tedlow, 1990, pp. 6-7). Thus the development, promotion and exploitation of

mass markets dominated by national brands characterized early Fordism. However, postwar Fordism represented not simply a form of economic organization based on mass-production; it also represented a whole culture, “a total way of life” (Harvey, 1989, p. 135). For example, Henry Ford’s highly automated regime of work involved “a new type of worker and a new type of man [sic]” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 302). In order to discipline his workers and acquaint them to his regime of work, Ford employed an army of inspectors. Such organizational innovations drew upon Taylor’s (1911) principles of scientific management that attempted to transform the administration of the workforce in the interests of increased profitability.⁴ Ford’s inspectors set out to structure workers’ private lives: “Fordism meant the assembly line but it also meant Prohibition and Puritanism, the attempt to regulate the sexual and familial life of the worker along with his work life” (Kumar, 1995, p. 50).

As a total way of life, Fordism profoundly affected the *Zeitgeist*, the social mood or tempo, of the times. The post-war social mood became directly linked to an economic and political system that celebrated mass production and mass consumption. The *Zeitgeist* affected all spheres of life: The society of “trained gorillas” (Frederick Taylor, quoted in Gramsci, 1971, p. 302) and mass consumers forged systems of mass education and mass welfare and subscribed to mass class-based politics. Fordist economies of scale produced cultures of limited scope, with limited lifestyle choices (Berman, 1992). The social mood of the times stressed conformity based on a “narrow, solemn and hieratic” orthodoxy (Berman, 1992, p. 43).

This is not to say, however, that everyone blindly accepted the cultural blandness of standardized mass production and consumption. The counter-cultural critiques and practices of the 1960s, according to Murray (1989), amounted to an attack on the central principles of Fordism, its

⁴ One of the most fundamental charges against the post-Fordists is that they have merged Taylorism and Fordism. By highlighting the relationship between the two, I do not wish to imply that they are the same thing. Although Sabel (1984) recognizes a clear equation: “Taylorism presupposes Fordism and Fordism implies Taylorism” (cited in Kumar, 1995, p. 207), other accounts deny the link (see Williams, Haslam, & Williams, 1992).

“definitions of work and consumption... and its overriding nature” (p. 43). From that time onwards we can see a fracturing of the foundations of predictability on which Fordism rested. But it was the sharp recession of 1973, stemming largely from the Arab oil embargo that “shook the world out of the suffocating torpor of ‘stagflation’ [stagnant output of goods and high inflation of prices]” (Harvey, 1989, p. 145). While Fordism delivered an unparalleled plethora of goods cheaply and on a mass scale and it satisfied the appetites of voracious markets eager to enjoy the fruits of mass production, it had a relatively short lifespan as new groups of mass consumers emerged who demanded new fashions and styles at a faster and faster pace (Kumar, 1995). In short, Fordism was a rigid and unwieldy system that erroneously “presumed stable growth in invariant consumer markets” (Harvey, 1989, p. 142), and was thus easily overturned by a new post-Fordist economy and culture.

Post-Fordism

In contrast to the rigid Fordist system, post-Fordism rests on flexibility in the key areas of labor markets, products, and patterns of consumption (Murray, 1989). More specifically, the post-Fordist regime of accumulation required shifts from mass-production to flexible production and from mass consumption to specialized consumption (Lash, 1990). Each of these will be briefly considered in turn.

Flexible production is a key feature of post-Fordism. Under the conditions of recession and heightened competition, the drive to explore new, small-scale markets became fundamental to capitalism’s survival. For example, within a post-Fordist capitalist system, the snowboarding market has fragmented into a diversity of small-scale consumer groups. Recent developments include the extremely lucrative women’s market and the youth market. The different styles of snowboarding participation (freeride, freestyle and alpine) also provide new niche markets. This

market fragmentation is evident in the diversification of the snowboarding industry. Many small companies specialize in producing boards (e.g., GNU, Option, Morrow), women's boards (e.g., Chorus), boots (e.g. 32, DC, Osiris), clothing (e.g., NFA, Bonfire, Dub, Volcom, 686, Sessions, Holden), women's clothing (e.g., Betty Rides, Nikita) or accessories (e.g., Grenade Gloves, Dragon goggles and sunglasses, Dakine backpacks, Air-Blaster) targeted at specific market segments. Some of these niche companies are the creations of professional snowboarders attempting to capitalize on their cultural status (e.g., Air-Blaster, Grenade, Holden). Ste'en Webster, editor of *New Zealand Snowboarder*, however, described the difficulties of catering to the 'core' niche market:

There are always going to be little pockets, little niches to cater to but as soon as you become semi-successful those niche markets aren't into you anymore and suddenly your mainstream but then you're competing against the big guys and you don't have a shit show once you're up against them (personal communication, October 18, 2005).

The "big guys," such as Burton Snowboards, target every segment of the snowboarding market and have expanded beyond the production of snowboards, bindings and boots to include snowboarding clothing (jackets, pants, beanies and undergarments), accessories (goggles, gloves, helmets and body armor), bags (urban bags, snowboard packs, travel bags and board bags), footwear and casual clothing (t-shirts, long-sleeves, sweatshirts and caps). However, in an attempt to maintain its 'cultural authenticity' and avoid claims of industry domination (see Chapter Two), Burton has established what appears in the market as a confederation of small specialist firms including R.E.D. (helmets and body protection equipment), Gravis Footwear (shoes and bags), Anon Optics (goggles) and Analog Clothing (casual apparel line). This is common among large-scale firms in a post-Fordist system. As Kumar (1995) explains, "large firms now look to a future in which they will increasingly appear as a confederation of small firms, rather than large-scale, centralized hierarchically coordinated organizations of the Taylorist kind" (p. 46).

In the post-Fordist system, small-batch production and sub-contracting bypass the rigidities of the Fordist system and satisfy a far greater range of market needs. Yet accelerating turnover time in production would be useless without an accompanying reduction in the turnover time of consumption. Indeed, post-Fordism has witnessed quick-changing fashions and the mobilization of all the “artifices of need inducement,” such as the continual re-packing and branding and advertising of products, and cultural transformation, this implies (Harvey, 1989, p. 156).

The shift from mass consumption to specialized consumption is also characteristic of the post-Fordist system. Post-Fordist marketers invest commodities with meaning according to what segment of the population they aim to reach. They pay close attention to the styles favored by their niche markets and appropriate those styles as commodities. In this system, culture and cultural activity, especially leisure and recreation, increasingly became cultural industries; that is, commodities sold in the market to individual consumers who, in turn, increasingly identify cultural gratification with consumption (Amin, 1994). Ste'en, for example, recalled his “infatuation with new products...the brand names, the colors, the smells” as a young boarder; “getting all the new gear,” he said, “is addicting... [and] the snowboarding companies depend on that” (personal correspondence, October 18, 2005). In the post-Fordist system, lifestyles based on consumption tend to have a significant effect on one's sense of self-worth and broader social status. Post-Fordist producers and marketers not only cope with rapidly and continually changing lifestyles and fashions, they capitalize upon them no matter how short term or limited their influence.

The shift from Fordism to post-Fordism has had an impact on the *Zeitgeist*. New Times post-Fordists argue that “diversity, differentiation and fragmentation” – the hallmarks of post-Fordism – are replacing “homogeneity, standardization and the economies and organization of scale” in more than simply the economic sphere (Hall & Jacques, 1989, p. 12). Similarly, Harvey (1989) explains that the relatively stable aesthetic of Fordist modernism has “given way to all the

ferment, instability, and fleeting qualities of a postmodern aesthetic that celebrates difference, ephemerality, spectacle, fashion, and the commodification of cultural forms” (p. 156).⁵ Some scholars claim that post-Fordist methods of work have produced post-modernist modes of living and thinking and feeling life.⁶ These claims will be further examined in the conclusion.

Whereas Fordism encouraged conformity in the *Zeitgeist*, post-Fordism fostered the rise and promotion of individualist modes of thought and behavior (Kumar, 1995). Individualism and privatization are redrawing the boundaries between the state and society, the public and private sphere, society and individual. Yet the ramifications of such shifts are complex: “For some they empower the individual and for others they enfeeble society” (Kumar, 1995, p. 170). The new individualism seems to have had a particularly strong effect on women “in stimulating them to achieve more in business and professional life and...to make their way in society independently of men” (Kumar, 1995, p. 170). I examine this claim further in parts two and three.

That post-Fordist theory is mainly concerned with cultural, political, and economic and social institutions of contemporary Western societies, makes it very wide-ranging. Obviously, it would be impossible to consider all of these in one chapter. However, as Kumar (1995) recognizes, we can pursue post-Fordist theory at “a number of different levels” depending on one’s interest (p. 153) and my concern here is with those economic and cultural elements of the contemporary system that directly relate to female snowboarding. If post-Fordism carries any merit, then

⁵ It is important to note, however, that Marshall Berman (1983) argues that this is equally applicable to modernism/early capitalism.

⁶ A very large number of features are said to characterize postmodernity. At risk of simplifying the complexity of the transition from modernity to postmodernity, Rojek (1995) describes these features under five headings – knowledge, authority, culture, communication and the economy. Here I am referring to the cultural features of postmodernity, which include the “growing importance of the culture industries;” “the aestheticization of everyday life, in which an individual’s life is increasingly seen as an aesthetic or cultural project;” “the construction of identity by individual choice rather than by traditional ascription;” “the fragmentation of personal identity, which changes over the life-course and between different social settings;” and “different ways of experiencing space and time” (Rojek, 1995, pp. 136-138). Rojek (1995), however, reduces the economic features of postmodernity to post-Fordism (see pp. 140-145) whereas I follow Kumar (1995) and the New Times school in examining both the economic and cultural changes to post-Fordism.

snowboarding, which emerged in the early 1970s, has always been a part of the post-Fordist economy, culture and *Zeitgeist*. Hence, adopting a Kumarian approach, I do not attempt to theorize the motors of change in post-Fordism. Rather, this chapter draws upon elements of Kumar's schema to facilitate a description of the contemporary post-Fordist system and its relationship to contemporary young women and female snowboarders respectively.

Young Women in a Post-Fordist System

In the post-Fordist system the transition from youth to adulthood has become much more complicated. The new economy has erased the full-time job market for young people and youth unemployment is a key issue facing many post-Fordist economies.⁷ Moreover, the collapse of standardized, collectivist welfare provision adds to the pressures experienced by youths. These changed conditions have been accompanied by the “expansion of individualization and wider choice,” whereby traditional support structures have been replaced by “an emphasis on the individual and her personal strategies for ‘making it’” (Aapola, Gonick & Harris, 2005, p. 59). The ideas of “good personal choices and flexibility” have become central to one's ability to survive and prosper under these post-Fordist circumstances (Aapola, et al., 2005, p. 59; also see Beck, 1992).

In other words, the new times mean uncertainties, less security, less clear direction, more pressure, more choices, and harder decisions for contemporary youth (see Ball, Maguire & Macrae, 2000;

⁷ According to a new study by the International Labor Organization (ILO), youth unemployment has skyrocketed worldwide over the past decade to some 88 million, reaching an all time high with young people aged 15 to 24 now representing nearly half the world's jobless. While youth represent 25 per cent of the working age population between the ages of 15 and 64, they made up as much as 47 per cent of the total 186 million people out of work worldwide in 2003 (Youth Unemployment, 2004, paras 1 and 2). Unemployment levels are highest among youth in developing regions (e.g., South Asia, the Middle East and Africa and sub-Saharan Africa). However, these trends are also apparent in some post-industrialized economies. For example, between 2000 and 2003, the employment rate for American teenagers fell dramatically, from 44 per cent to 36 per cent, its lowest level in the post-World War II period. Among young adults, the employment rate fell about five percentage points (What is Happening, 2004). It is important to note, however, that in other major countries for which research for this PhD was conducted, youth employment rates are increasing (i.e., Canada, New Zealand). In Canada, for example, the unemployment rate among young people aged 20-24 fell from 16.3 per cent in 1997 to 13.4 per cent in 2004 (Study: Youth, 2005; also see, A Profile, 2004).

Du Bois-Reymond, 1998; Miles, 2000). The following comment, posted on a snowboarding website (www.snowboard.com), is illustrative of the pressures experienced by some contemporary youth:

I am so confused on what the f*ck to do with my life...I am in a way really scared to decide on something – whether it be getting a real job, being a drifter, or going back to school...what if I choose the wrong thing...sh*t it is so strange – when I was a little girl I had this idea that I would change the world, do great things, make a difference in people’s lives...I still want to do all this but sh*t how? Is it possible to have a midlife crisis at 24? (posted by pdog, April 28, 2004).

According to Aapola, Gonick & Harris (2005), “whilst youth enjoy greater flexibility in constructing their life trajectories,” they also bear the “material and psychological weights” of self-responsibility with “far fewer structural supports than were in place for previous generations” (p. 61). Some, such as Nick, an ex-core snowboarder, welcome the freedom: “I have a whole lot of ‘don’t know’s’ in my future which I love...that keeps it exciting” (personal correspondence, July 9, 2005). Others, however, find the freedom stressful and challenging.

In response to these pressures, many of today’s youth value priorities in life apart from work. Furthermore, as work diminishes as a mechanism of identity formation, self-presentation and lifestyle are becoming more important resources for cultural capital.⁸ “Although youth [as a period of life] has traditionally been associated with a carefree, present-oriented attitude,” Turco (1996) writes,

...members of Generation X have faced greater economic uncertainty than have other recent generations, particularly the baby boomers. Consumers in this generation, either in spite of or because of this uncertainty, seek a balance between work and leisure and participate in fast-paced, high-risk sports. (cited in Shoman, Rose, Kropp & Kahle, 1996, p. 24)

⁸ See Chapter Six: Bourdieu and ‘Boarding Bodies, for a detailed discussion of cultural capital.

The growing importance of leisure might signal dissatisfaction with notions of adulthood and power based on economic criteria. The following comment illustrates the importance of leisure to young people facing new pressures in a post-Fordist system:

I turned 27 yesterday. For over 5 years now I've been stuck at a crummy job. Most of my friends have moved away, either to go to far away colleges or just had to relocate for jobs.... So, my life has been pretty empty for a while. Snowboarding has helped me out a lot – it helps me forget everything for a while, so that when I have to face reality again, I can face it with a fresh perspective (posted by dewhitewolf27, April 28, 2004, www.snowboard.com).

Many young women also experience the pressures of the post-Fordist economy and culture, and have responded by questioning whether employment is the only track towards happiness and fulfillment in life. The following comment from one young woman is illustrative of the attitudes expressed by many of the female snowboarders interviewed for this thesis:

I want to mountain bike, snowboard, skate, paint, write, raft, hike, and travel.... Anyone know a job where I can do all of these? I don't care about the pay, as long as my buddha belly is happy (posted by pdog, April 28, 2004, www.snowboard.com).

Although individual youths experience and deal with societal, parental and personal expectations and pressures differently, these tensions must not be ignored, as they are an important part of the conditions in which contemporary young people live, and thus contribute to their experiences of work, education and leisure.

Choice and self-invention have become central to the ways in which many young women think about their identities and futures within the new post-Fordist economy and culture (Aapola et al., 2005; see also Harris, 2004a, 2004b). Even though unemployment and youth unemployment in particular, have risen dramatically in recent times in many countries (e.g., USA), there has been an expansion in the opportunities available to young women (Aapola et al., 2005). The feminization of the labor force, along with the successes of feminism in improving gender equity in education and work (see Chapter Four: Feminisms and Female Boarders), are often represented as detrimental to young men and unproblematically advantageous for young women (e.g., see

Wilkinson, 1994, for a discussion of the ‘genderquake’). To some extent, many young women have enjoyed the benefits of the new labor market and new opportunities for tertiary education,⁹ and many exhibit the resilience and flexibility required of those who will be successful in a post-Fordist economy where employers demand flexibility and mobility. Unlike even a generation ago, many young women are imagining and organizing their lives around careers and in this way are “entering into the new economy with enthusiasm and a sense of entitlement” with respect to participation (Aapola et al., 2005, p. 64). However, these new opportunities are not available to all young women. Although upper and middle-class young women, with “considerable resources, networking opportunities and social capital provided by their families, can make the most of new opportunities,” young women without these support structures “struggle to find a livelihood and a place in the new economy” (Aapola et al., 2005, p. 68). The expansion of traditional female work, that is, casual, temporary, part-time and short-term typical of the post-Fordist system, offers many of these women only subsistence wages and is typically devoid of opportunity.

Yet, many young women “sit[ting] at the intersection of feminist discourse and economic reality” are taking seriously messages of self-invention, choice and flexibility (Aapola et al., 2005, p. 76). Ideas of girl power, freedom, choice and individualism translate easily into the post-Fordist economic context (see Cole & Hribar, 1995). It is important to note, however, that structural limitations of the new economy differentially affect young women’s educational and employment opportunities. In the words of one journalist: “Girl power is flexing its economic muscles” via the spending power of “single, professional, independent and confident young women” (Lambert,

⁹ According to a study completed by the US government, “the shifts in employment among sectors of the economy are consistent with improving job opportunities for female youth along with stagnant or declining opportunities for their male counterparts” (What is Happening, 2004, p. 7). The same study also discusses trends in young male and female education: “among recent cohorts of young males, no more are finishing high school, no more are getting some postsecondary education, and no more are obtaining a bachelor’s degree” (What is Happening, 2004, p. 4). In contrast to their male counterparts, however, female youth are “completing more education. More are finishing high school, more are getting postsecondary education, and more are obtaining a bachelor’s degree” (What is Happening, 2004, p. 4).

2003, cited in Harris, 2004a, p. 166). It must be reiterated, however, that this is a small middle class core. The post-Fordist industrial, economic and cultural transformations ushered in since the 1970s across the Western world have been the backdrop against which privileged women have embraced new roles in education, work, sport and leisure. Or, as Kumar (1995) puts it, in a post-Fordist system women are able to achieve “more in business and professional life and...to make their way in society independently of men” (p. 170). But are the new consumption and participation opportunities available to young women empowering them?¹⁰ This question is explored throughout the remainder of the chapter. In the following part I examine the roles of young women as consumers and producers in a highly fragmented snowboarding market.

Post-Fordism and Female Snowboarders

In a post-Fordist system, the continuous creation of new needs and wants, and new niche markets can “alert us to new cultural possibilities” (Harvey, 1989, p. 109). Indeed, when companies identified female snowboarding as a new and untapped niche market, they turned to female boarders as a ‘new cultural possibility.’ The following discussion focuses on female snowboarding as a new niche market, and is divided into two main parts. First, I examine the attempts by snowboarding manufacturers to target female consumers via the production and marketing of women-specific products. I then turn my attention to female snowboarders who have embraced the new economic and cultural opportunities available within a post-Fordist system.

¹⁰ There are, of course, multiple readings of empowerment. Here the term refers to young women’s ability to gain “control over their lives” and “act on issues that they define as important” (Page & Czuba, 1999, para. 11).

The Female Snowboard Niche Market

Prior to the early 1990s, female snowboarders used equipment, and wore clothing, designed by men for men. Tina Basich (2003) recalls the lack of clothing available to female boarders during the early years, complaining that all the boys' clothes were "super-huge:"

I'd have to roll up the sleeves and the pants and wear a belt to hold them up...my pants would get stuck in my bindings and I'd go to do a trick in the pipe only to have my coat ride up and blind my view for landing. (p. 102)

In the logic of post-Fordism, however, female snowboarders are a niche-market and an important consumer group whose cultural desires and aspirations must be acknowledged and catered for. In the mid to late-1990s, the snowboarding industry recognized the untapped potential in this niche market, and started accommodating the needs of female snowboarders by designing and producing women-specific equipment and clothing.

A good example of the snowboarding industry attempting to cater to female boarders is the production of female-specific snowboards and boots. Physical and technical considerations are critical to board and boot design. Women have smaller feet (board width), are typically lighter and shorter, and often have a narrower stance (board length), and their feet tend to be narrower and have a higher arch (Women's Tech, 2006). In the early 1990s Nitro created the Petra Mussig race board and Checker Pig marketed the Lisa Viciguerra freestyle board (Gasperini, 1996). These boards sold for a season in Europe but never reached the American market. In 1993, Burton made the first women's snowboard boots, which sold out in the first two months. In 1994, Sims tested the US market and launched a full scale marketing campaign, touting its 'First Women's Pro Model Snowboard' with Shannon Dunn as the rider. It was a success and Sims surpassed its estimated financial goals five times over (Sosienski, 1995). Kemper Snowboards also released a Tina Basich pro-model. Recalling these exciting developments, Basich (2003) states:

We were able to help design the boards to our specifications and design our own art for the graphics. It was the perfect opportunity to tie in my art with my snowboarding

career. I remember finding a list of goals that I had made a few years earlier that lists 'My own pro model snowboard' with a 'ha ha!' next to it. At the time I thought it was a long shot because only the guys had pro model snowboards. I was proving myself wrong and that became a big deal in so many ways. Professional and Olympic women skiers were shocked. It turned the heads of corporate sports manufacturers like Nike and Trek. Other than basketball shoes and tennis rackets, not many other manufacturers had professional female-endorsed sporting equipment. (pp. 101-102)

By 1995, numerous snowboarding companies catered for the female consumer with specific boots and boards with graphics and colors chosen and designed by women.¹¹

Frustrated by the lack of clothing options for female boarders, and observing a growing demand for women-specific equipment and apparel, Basich and Shannon Dunn established Prom, the first female snowboard clothing company, in 1994. They designed clothing specifically for women, with slimmer cuts, pastel colors and butterfly logos. Recognizing the potential of this new market, other companies quickly followed and started producing female-specific clothing lines. The making and marketing of equipment and clothing for women signalled that the industry was ready not only to include women but also to cater for their needs in both fashion and function. As a cover of the Japanese magazine *Snow Style* exclaimed in 1994, there is "no need to look like a guy anymore" (cited in Basich, 2003, p. 107).

Post-Fordist marketers invest commodities with meaning according to what segment of the population they want to reach. In the broader society, marketers often target the young female market by using Girl Power sentiments or, rather, 'commodified feminism' in a way that positions young women as creators of their own identities and life chances, and as liberated by their participation in the consumer culture that surrounds them (see Cole & Hribar, 1995). The Girl Power market not only relies on young women as its key consumer group but also "sells an image of savvy girlness to them in the process" (Harris, 2004a, p. 166). Similar marketing strategies are employed by snowboarding companies in their attempts to reach the female consumer. Companies

¹¹ It is important to note that some female boarders enjoyed the androgyny of the early snowboarding culture and did not embrace these new products. This will be further examined in the 'critical conclusion' of this chapter.

often use language that connotes girl power sentiments of autonomy, rights, independence and power. For example, Burton touted its 'Girls Punch' board as "girl power" and, making a direct link between this product and pop culture, described it as "what a girl wants."¹² "We know girls are rocking. So it is only natural that they deserve a board that can live up to their expectations," proclaimed the 2004 Burton catalogue (p. 48). A range of Volcom Girls jeans have featured buttons that declare the wearer "liberated by Volcom," and Rossignol has promoted its top-of-the-range female freestyle board, Amber, as "provocatively feminist! This demanding board is for girls with tough personalities, militating for committed riding," and described the graphics as "'Bad Girl' pink and black cosmetics" that will "stand out in the snow-parks" (Rossignol Winter 2004-2005 brochure, p. 23).

Another current theme in marketing for female snowboarders is the use of traditionally feminine graphics and colors. Missy Samiee, co-owner of Goddess Snowboards, described their product as "designed by women with women in mind," claiming they "don't have guns or ugly graphics like a lot of guys' boards. Ours are pastel colors with classic looks" (cited in Sosienski, 1995, para. 14). Women's boards typically feature feminine designs and names. In 2005, for example, they carried names such as Tika, Empress, Feather, Nymph, Zen Purity, Zen Peace, Wild flower, Bella, Liberty, Amber, Diva, Ivy and Radiant. By comparison male boards wear labels like Destroyer, Nomad, Mission, Shadow, Tribal Fear, Machine, Zen Energy, Fury, Bonehead, Evil Cluster, Punisher, Exile and Dark. Graphics on female boards included flowers, birds and cartoons, and the most prevalent color schemes were white, pink and pastels. Male boards generally featured scary, morbid or creepy images of skulls, skeletons, flames, devils, criminals, warriors, fighting, dragons, monsters, and naked women, with black and red the dominant colors (Buyers Guide,

¹² In 1999 pop singer Christina Aguilera released the song "What a girl wants," and in 2000 this song received the "Best girl-power song" award by Teen Magazine. In 2003 Warner Brothers also released a video targeting the teenage market titled "What a girl wants."

2003). Arguably, there is a correlation between the production and marketing of female equipment and increased rates of female participation.¹³ Ste'en, a snowboard magazine editor and olympic snowboard judge, believed that the production of female-specific product "helped grow the women's sector of the sport and helped make women feel more comfortable within the sport" (personal communication, October 18, 2005). "From an industry perspective it's a good thing," continued Ste'en, because "it's another way to market, another niche to fulfill, more product to sell, and more ads; there is the dollar side to it" (personal communication, October 18, 2005). As this comment indicates, for many within the industry, the economic potential is equally (or perhaps more) important than the cultural opportunities provided by the female niche market.

The female niche market continued to grow throughout the late 1990s and, by 2001, the women's market comprised the "fastest growing aspect of snowboarding" (Women's Market, 2001, para. 4). Based on a recent study completed by Label Networks (2005) that showed three times as many young American women wanting to learn to snowboard in the next five years as young men, Jake Burton predicted that "there will be more girls than boys on snowboards" in the near future: "They are coming on strong, and it's only going to get stronger" (Volvo Sports Design Forum, 2005a, para. 13). Drake Bindings Marketing Manager, Chrissy Coffinger, also proclaimed:

women are growing in the sport – and fast. They're out there riding hard and sacrificing their bodies to challenge and progress snowboarding. They're in videos, getting interviews, winning contests... Not to mention the fact that they're busy spending tons of money on both boards and accessories. (cited in Sherowski, October 2005, p. 54)

Most of the companies that entered the boarding industry to cater for male boarders have broadened their product lines to tap into the female market (e.g., Rossignol, Nitro, Ride Snowboards). Some large companies, seeking to further capitalize on the growing female market, have established separate female divisions. Examples in 2007 included Quiksilver (Roxy Snow)

¹³ It is important to note, however, that these marketing strategies did not satisfy all female consumers. This issue will be further examined in the conclusion to this chapter.

and Volcom (Volcom Girls). Interestingly, Volcom Girls contributed 32 per cent to Volcom's US\$110.6 million revenues in 2004; a 200 per cent increase since 2002 (Stassen, August 2005). Other smaller companies, including Cold as Ice (outerwear and accessories), Betty Rides (outerwear), Nikita (street clothing) and Chorus (snowboards), focus solely on the female niche market; women own and operate many of these companies.

The contemporary female market contains numerous subcategories that cater for different levels of ability and styles. According to Donna Burton Carpenter, the notion of a homogenous women's market is a figment of the male imagination and is responsible for the "shrink it and pink it" mentality among many male-dominated companies (Volvo Sports Design Forum, 2005a, para. 7). The smartest companies seeking capital accumulation, however, invest heavily in expanding their product ranges to target new subgroups of female boarders. In 2005, Burton Snowboards produced 115 female-specific products: Seven models of female specific snowboards (three more than 2004), two models of women's bindings, eight models of women's boots, and nine pairs of female-specific gloves, each in a variety of sizes and colors. This is an extensive range of products considering that many female boarders still prefer to use non-gender specific products.¹⁴ In 2005 Burton Snowboards also provided female boarders with the choice of three different ranges of outerwear options – Radar, Burton, and AK – which collectively offer women 125 jacket options, and 65 different pairs of snowboard pants. Cold As Ice, a women-specific snowboard outerwear company, provided four different ranges of snowboarding outerwear: American Standard, Ice Breaker, Glam Slam and Star Dust (girls). Betty Rides, another female-specific snowboard clothing company, also offered four ranges of outerwear: Trinket, Elements, All Mountain and Girl.

¹⁴ I examine the reasons many female snowboarders prefer to use non-gender specific products in the critical conclusion.

With the influx of companies trying to capture the female consumer in the early 2000s, the women's snowboarding market has become increasingly competitive. Moreover, as Kathleen Gasperini, women's market trend forecaster and president of Label Networks, stated:

Girls today are so much more demanding and so much more savvy than just ten years ago. Designing for young women today has to include a global perspective. Girls can sense brands that are cool and core. They seek them out and are very brand conscious. (Volvo Sports Design Forum, 2005b, para. 6)

In order to appeal to this increasingly savvy female consumer, snowboard companies must prove their 'cultural authenticity' and demonstrate their commitment to women's snowboarding. Hence, snowboarding manufacturers are investing heavily in sponsoring female athletes,¹⁵ women-specific events (e.g., Roxy Chicken Jam, Nikita Chickita Snowdown, Queen of the Mountain¹⁶) and media (e.g., *Dropstitch* [2004], an all-female snowboarding video, was sponsored by Roxy, Nikita, Billabong, Saloman, Burton, Oakley, Vans, *White Lines* magazine, Powderroom.com, *Method Magazine* and Peugeot). Supporting charity programs, such as Boarding for Breast Cancer (B4BC), is a recent trend among snowboarding companies (e.g., DC [shoes and snowboard boots], Billabong [outerwear], Bonfire [outerwear], Nixon [watches] and Betty Rides, all support B4BC). Others demonstrate their commitment to women by donating a percentage of their global sales to support breast cancer research (e.g., Sessions, K2). Burton Snowboards has also set about making the sport more accessible to women by establishing 'Learn to Ride' snowboard centers and camps, rewarding retailers that hire women, and introducing a campaign that promotes the image of young women "having fun in the snow with friends" (Volvo Sports Design Forum, 2005a, para. 10).

¹⁵ For example, in 2005 Rossignol (snowboards, boots, and bindings) sponsored Hana Beaman, Dorianne Vidal and Erin Valverde; ThirtyTwo (snowboard boots) sponsored Alexi Waite, Jana Meyen and Leanne Pelosi; Vans (snowboard boots and shoes) sponsored Erin Cromstock, Hana Beaman, Tara Dakides, Silvia Mittermuller and Dorian Vital; Nitro Snowboards (boards, boots, and bindings) sponsored Jessica Dalpiaz, Lisa Wiik, Tania Detomas and Jana Meyen; Salomon Snowboards (boards, boots, and bindings) sponsored Keiko Yanagisisawa, Torah Bright, Fabienne Reuteler, Jenny Jones and Annie Boulanger.

¹⁶ Sponsors of the Queen of the Mountain 2004 event included Gallaz (female division of Globe skate shoes), Billabong, Betty Rides, Dickies Girl, Volcom, Ripcurl, OP Girls Learn to Ride, Surf Diva, Oneill, *SG Surf, Snow, Skate Girl Magazine* (now defunct), and *Snowboarder Magazine*.

The success of the female-niche market has opened up new opportunities for women within the snowboarding industry. In 1987, Bev Sanders, Lisa Hudson and Donna Carpenter were the only three females in the industry; manufacturing Avalanche snowboards, Airwalk boots, and Burton Snowboards respectively. Hudson recalls going to board meetings with forty men in suits and being “the only female in upper management” (cited in Howe, 1998, p. 118). But the recent boom in female-specific products has helped women find new spaces within the snowboarding industry. Women increasingly hold positions of responsibility in the industry as manufacturers, CEOs, filmmakers, publishers, journalists and event organizers. In 2005, women held 50 per cent of the top positions at *Transworld Snowboarding*, including associate editor, associate art director, photography department manager and senior contributing editor. In 2001 Jake Burton observed that his company had “become male-dominated without us really realizing it” (cited in Stassen, June 2005a, para. 22). Since then, Burton Snowboards has adopted a women-led philosophy.

Donna Burton Carpenter elaborates:

We decided, as we wanted to grow into a multi-image brand in the world, that we needed to recruit, promote and retain women in leadership positions. We need women to make strategic decisions, which we carry out with our increasing number of women executives and managers, and with women in the marketplace, and in the field [athletes]. We will never know how far we can take this concept [the women’s market] if we never involve women in all aspects of decision-making. (Volvo Sports Design Forum, 2005a, para. 12)

Burton Snowboards has particularly targeted female engineers within the industry, an area traditionally dominated by men. In the words of Donna Burton Carpenter, “we had to be more proactive” (cited in Stassen, June 2005a, para. 32). For Burton Snowboards, being “more proactive” included the establishment of engineering partnerships with universities and providing internships for female engineers. Much of this progress can be attributed to the growth of the female niche market that has provided opportunities previously unavailable to women in the snowboarding industry and sport. But are women being empowered by these new opportunities?

Has the post-Fordist system fostered power in female snowboarders such that they can gain a sense of “control over their lives” and “act on issues they define as important”? (Page & Czuba, 1999, para. 11).

The Female Niche Market: Empowering Women?

In a post-Fordist system, female snowboarders are not passive consumers, or cultural dupes, rather they appropriate space to dictate what is produced and consumed. Professional snowboarder Barrett Christy believes “snowboarding as an industry has been pretty supportive of its girls, we’ve had signature boards, boots, clothes, shoes, etc and *we’ve created a market* for women’s specific products” (cited in Hakes, 2000, para. 70; emphasis added). Similarly, Jake Burton Carpenter alludes to the power of the female consumer in the snowboarding economy: “It wasn’t me that made girls’ riding happen. It was the girls themselves. And once they made that choice, we didn’t shy away from the investments needed to make women’s products happen and develop in the right way” (Volvo Sports Design Forum, 2005a, para. 13).

But how does a signature board equate to empowerment? Likewise, how do consumption choices improve one’s power to “create, think and act”? (Taft, 2001, cited in Harris, 2004b, p. 90). How much power lies in choosing a particular board, pair of boots or jacket over another? On the one hand, it might be argued that every choice situation involves acts of selection and rejection that give the consumer a sense of power. On the other hand, it might be said that through consumption, women are experiencing, paradoxically, “an increased sense of control with minimal impact of the oppressive social context within which they are located” (Cavanagh, 2005, p. 1424; also see Becker, 2005). Arguing a similar point from a broader perspective, Adorno (2001) stated that, capitalism’s ‘culture industry’ “impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves” (cited in Giulianotti, 2005, p. 34). Giulianotti

(2005) likewise explains, “popular cultural products, in film, music and sport, are instrumentally standardized, pre-packaged as commodities with a ‘pseudo-individualism’ that distracts the masses from their unfreedom” (p. 34). More specifically, Nauright (2005) observes that political struggles by women for recognition in sport are “subsumed under marketing opportunities” (p. 211). “Empowerment and consumption,” says Harris (2004b), are “closely linked through the associations made between products for young women and being confident, strong, assertive, a leader, a role model, and in charge” (p. 90). In these ways, consumption is seen as a “shortcut to power” (Harris, 2004b, p. 90). Young women’s power is defined “only as a power to buy, rather than a power to create, think and to act” (Taft, 2001, cited in Harris, 2004b, p. 90). As such, it “promotes another barrier to girls’ expression of social critique and their political and civic participation” (Taft, 2001, cited in Harris, 2004b, p. 90). Whereas a Marxist perspective would privilege the latter argument, that female boarders are not empowered by these new opportunities for consumption, a post-Fordist perspective, that gives more room for agency and tends to sway towards optimism, privileges the former.¹⁷

The remainder of this part presents two case studies of female snowboarders who have embraced the opportunities available within the female niche-market. Chorus Snowboards and women-only snowboard camps are good examples of young women adopting the individualistic and entrepreneurial *Zeitgeist* of post-Fordist culture. These examples support Kumar’s (1995) claim that the new post-Fordist economic and cultural system has had a particularly strong effect on women “in stimulating them to achieve more in business and professional life and...to make their way in society independently of men” (p. 170). In a post-Fordist system, the female snowboarder appears as a ‘new cultural possibility;’ she has the opportunity to be both a consumer and a producer. Thus far I have considered the new spaces available to the female boarder as

¹⁷ This will be further discussed in the critical conclusion.

consumer. The following case studies illustrate the potential of female snowboarders to engage in cultural production in a post-Fordist economy and culture.

Chorus Snowboards

Chorus Snowboards, founded in October 2000 by five professional female snowboarders, manufactures innovative products for women only. The initial business idea was to cater to the female niche market by creating a “snowboard company built for women, by women who wanted to infuse the sport with equality and innovation” (Rodgers, 2001, para. 5). According to Chorus Snowboards brand manager Georell Bracelin, their initial market was “split between underserved women and ostracized women” (cited in Rodgers, 2001, para. 11). By producing a range of boards for women of all ability levels and age groups, the founders hoped to ‘pioneer’ a new space for women in snowboarding.

In 2000, the company officially endorsed a pro-women perspective, empowerment, solidarity, and mutual caring and support. Chorus claimed to celebrate women’s “intelligence, intuition, and expression,” and the company’s philosophy was to “inspire women to...push themselves” and to advocate on their own behalf (Mission, no date, para. 2). The founders also recognized the importance of solidarity among women, claiming “we are independent, we are tribal, we are a team, we are a family, we are Chorus” (Mission, no date, para. 2). Thus, the brand name attempted to communicate a need for solidarity and allied strength among female boarders – a philosophy closely associated with radical feminism (see Chapter Four: Feminisms and Female Boarders). The founders wanted “women snowboarders to be taken seriously and to identify with the message of this brand: Pride in female athletics” (Rodgers, 2001, para. 16). The boards were named accordingly; carrying labels such as respect, strength, determination, confidence, and grace (Rodgers, 2001, para. 14). Chorus also claimed to have a collectivist internal structure, in which

women work together and share decision-making responsibilities. According to Bracelin, “everytime we move a patch or change a graphic, we post the product online for all five girls [co-owners] to look at and approve” (cited in Rodgers, 2001, para. 18). The female athletes, designers and artists worked “closely together to test, ride and collaborate on the design of the entire line” (Chorus snowboard, 2002, para. 7). Professional rider and co-founder Roberta Rodger proudly claimed to have “created a voice for women in this industry” (cited in Rodgers, 2001, para. 7). In the light of recent changes which I will discuss next, however, this appears to be an overstatement.

Although founded by female snowboarders, Chorus is not autonomous, and when the former parent company, Molly Manufacturing, restructured in 2003, it pulled Chorus off the market. Later that year Motiv Sports, a specialty sporting goods company based in Southern California, purchased Chorus. At the time of writing Motiv Sports had a hierarchical structure and its management was predominantly male. More importantly, after Jim Alfaro replaced female brand manager Georell Bracelin and a number of the founding female members left the company, the female collective of Chorus disintegrated. Nonetheless, Chorus has retained some of its identity by officially endorsing women’s active snowboarding participation; “we want girls to get out there and ride, have fun, [not] left on the sidelines watching and cheering for the boys” (motivsports.com, no date, para. 2). However, it remains to be seen whether the company’s practices continue to support pro-women ideologies, values and structural arrangements, or whether this is simply another example of a large corporation targeting the female demographic by appropriating and co-opting girl-power language of individual empowerment. Thus, despite some women finding space within the snowboarding industry, this example suggests that we should be wary of interpreting the changes within the post-Fordist system too optimistically; this concern will be discussed in more depth in the critical conclusion.

Women-Only Snowboard Camps

An industry renegade, world champion Greta Gaines launched the first women-only snowboard camps in 1992. Gaines' experiences of competing against men in Alaska inspired her Wild Women Camps. In her words, "it was lonely, and I wanted more women to ride with, so I decided to teach them how!" (cited in Reynolds, 1999a, para. 5). After attending a "Wild Women" camp, a journalist described her experience: "I might have looked like a pallid working mom but beneath the Spaghetti O's stained shirt beat the heart of a Shredding Betty stoked to unearth the tail-grabber within" (Reynolds, 1999b, para. 1).

As snowboarding's popularity among women continues to grow, so too does the interest in women-only snowboard camps, and virtually every major resort sponsors special instructional programs for women. For example, SheRide Snowboard Camps are held annually at Durango Mountain Resort (Colorado). According to snowboard instructor and camp organizer Julie Visnich, SheRide camps are based on the concept of a "sisterhood of riders helping each other tackle the mountain... its all about mutual support and learning to ride together" (DMR Hosts, 2004, para. 4). "It's sisterhood at the speed of life, it's about empowering riders to take it to the next level," she adds (DMR Hosts, 2004, para. 4). Similarly, in an effort to encourage more female participation, New Zealand snowboarder Pip Grant also organized 'A Women's Quest' held at Coronet Peak (Queenstown) in 2001. Grant's aim was to "create a social event that focused on women riding together, sharing their skills and knowledge" (Women's Quest, 2001, para. 2). These women-only camps claim to give women of all ages the chance to learn in a supportive, no-pressure and noncompetitive atmosphere. It is an approach that found support from Kathleen Gasperini, a committed snowboarder and author of an article in *Snowboarder* magazine. Describing her experiences at these snowboard camps, she wrote, "we never would have ridden like we did

without the confidence we've developed from riding together... with the support of other women, old inhibitions faded fast" (Gasperini, 1994, p. 28).

However, attendance at women-only camps carries a hefty price tag. A three-day Wild Women Snowboard Camp costs at least US\$850, a two day Canadian MGT Snowboard Camp costs C\$369, and a four-day women's snowboard camp at Snowbird Resort costs US\$1285. These women-only camps are profit-making ventures and only those with a disposable income accrue the benefits. Economics provide the basic motives for the majority of the founders of these camps. Professional snowboarder and co-founder of MGT Snowboard Camps Leanne Pelosi admits, "I just wanted to snowboard as much as possible but I didn't have a job and I wasn't getting paid.... so I used my savings and Joanna and I came up with MGT.... it helps pay my rent" (cited in Floros, 2004, para. 10). Pelosi has clearly adopted the entrepreneurial attitude so characteristic of post-Fordist culture. The key issue here, however, is that, within a post-Fordist system, female agents have space into which they can move should they desire.

The post-Fordist industrial, economic, and cultural transformations ushered in since the 1970s across the Western world have contributed to the new roles of young women within the realms of work, sport and leisure. More specifically, the financial and cultural success of the female niche-market has caused an expansion in the opportunities available to young women in the snowboarding industry, sport and culture. Chorus Snowboards and women-only snowboard camps are illustrative of a recent trend among young women entering the new post-Fordist economy and culture with enthusiasm and a sense of entitlement to participation. To paraphrase Kumar (1995), in this post-Fordist system some female snowboarders have been stimulated to achieve more in business and professional life and to make their way in the culture independently of men. For example, having bought her ex-husband out of her business, Janet Freeman, owner and operator of Betty Rides, proudly affirms "snowboarding pays for this house, for my kids' school, for the food

on the table. I'm the luckiest person on earth" (cited in Lewis, 2005, para. 24). Female entrepreneurs have found space within the women's niche market to both earn an income, and reconstruct and recreate new cultural meanings for female snowboarding. It is important to reiterate, however, that these young women (like most female snowboarders) tend to be among a very small middle class core, and such opportunities are not available to all women.

A Critical Conclusion

Post-Fordism is a hotly contested concept and, in recent years, has received a critical battering from commentators within and outside the post-Fordist realm. Here I briefly consider the strengths, followed by the limitations, of the Kumarian approach to post-Fordism and its ability to explain female snowboarding.

The general appeal of post-Fordist theorizing is its ambitiousness in scope, sensitivity to historical change, and unwillingness to be limited by the boundaries of academic disciplines (Kumar, 1995). According to Kumar (1995), the main value of post-Fordist theory lies in its ability to "direct our attention to developments that have so far escaped our proper notice" (p. viii). Certainly, post-Fordist theory facilitates a description of the broad contemporary social system and directs my attention to new developments in the women's snowboarding niche market. More specifically, the appeal of Kumar's approach is that it gives equal consideration to changes in the economy, politics and industrial relations, and culture and ideology, and thus has the potential to facilitate a wide-ranging description of the snowboarding context.¹⁸ This aspect of Kumar's approach is especially important in relation to recent discussions regarding post-Fordism and post-modern theory.

¹⁸ Admittedly, this chapter focuses on the economy and culture of snowboarding.

Some scholars argue that post-Fordism overlaps with the central aspects of post-modern theory (see Jameson, 1994; Harvey, 1989; Soja, 1989; Grossberg, 1992; Hall, 1989). In their attempts to explain cultural changes by economic changes, Harvey (1989) and Jameson (1994) offer us a neat and synchronous chronology of the development of Fordism and modernism, and post-Fordism and postmodernism: “The economy invariably takes the lead, producing dilemmas and contradictions to which the culture responds in attempts to resolve these through artistic forms” (Gartman, 1998, p. 126). My objections to this conceptualization are twofold, and concur with those proposed by Gartman (1998). First, developments of the economy and culture are much more complex and uneven than these synchronous chronologies allow. As Grossberg (1992) has written, we must reject the assumption “that there is a single relationship between capitalism and culture (e.g., between late capitalism and postmodernism) and recognize the possibility of different struggles and articulations existing within different spatial and temporal logics” (pp. 325-326). Similarly, Frow (1991) has noted that most postmodern chronologies postulate a “synchronic necessity” that imposes “a universal historicity on distinct and unevenly developed domains of the social” (cited in Gartman, 1998, p. 126). According to Gartman (1998), “capitalism and culture do not progress in some unilateral lock step dictated by economics. Although ultimately related to one another in a social totality, culture and economy can develop in relative autonomy, according to their own dynamics” (pp. 126-127). This unevenness may occur not only between but also within these two institutions, with, for example, “different types of culture developing at different rhythms and rates” (Frow, 1991, cited in Gartman, 1998, p. 127). Second, in the relation between economy and culture, the former need not take causal priority. Harvey and Jameson remain faithful to the broad Marxian model of base and superstructure (see Chapter Two), holding that the economic base influences the cultural superstructure. Both seek to derive the cultural realm from the logic of an epochal socioeconomic system, setting up “a mechanically causal relation between

the primary and an epiphenomenal realm” (Frow, 1991, cited in Gartman, 1998, p. 127). Simply put, Harvey and Jameson’s explanations of the overlap between post-Fordism and postmodernism are highly problematic; they do not sufficiently recognize the potential for a dialectical relation between economy and culture.

In light of this critique and the foregoing chapter, a major strength of Kumar’s post-Fordist approach is the recognition that the relationship between culture and economy is dialectical. Employing Kumar’s theoretical approach, this chapter has highlighted aspects of the two-way relationship between the snowboarding market and culture. Although the economy helps define the cultural opportunities and meanings for female snowboarders, the cultural responses by female snowboarders may exert a dialectical influence on economic developments, facilitating and perhaps even contradicting them. This supports Kumar’s (1995) claim, that it is “just as possible that changes in culture and politics are pushing on changes in the economy as the other way around – or, at least, that the causal connections are two way” (p. 65). This approach also shows that, within a post-Fordist system that celebrates new niche markets, female snowboarders have – to varying degrees – the ability to dictate what they consume and produce.¹⁹

The cultural responses by female snowboarders to economic developments ultimately depend on their position within snowboarding culture, and the broader society. The positions of women within the snowboarding culture range from the novice and marginal boarder (who participates once or twice a year) to the professional rider (who usually boards more than 200 days a year). These various cultural positions give rise to a range of cultural responses, including

¹⁹ This chapter has focused on the cultural positions of Western women as consumers and producers in the global boarding culture. However, I concur with Gartman’s (1998) argument that “culture should be seen as a response or reaction to economic changes by producers within a *particular social structure*. Depending on the specific configuration of class interests surrounding economic changes such as mass production, the position of cultural producers will vary, giving rise to cultural responses that vary from country to country and from high to popular culture” (p. 135). Thus, I acknowledge that further research is necessary to examine how the positions of female snowboarder’s as cultural consumers and producers vary among different countries.

passive consumption, reflexive consumption, and cultural production (also see Chapter Seven: Foucault and the Snowboarding Media). Simply put, not all female snowboarders are in a position to benefit, or be empowered, by these economic and cultural changes. Yet post-Fordism does not facilitate an explanation of the different levels of access female snowboarders have to reflexive consumption and cultural production. The following discussion of the questionable marketing and production of female snowboards and clothing, and the responses of some female snowboarders to these practices, suggest that within a post-Fordist system, some female consumers have little power to dictate what it is produced and consumed.

Many young women appreciate the opportunity to purchase clothing and equipment designed specifically for their technical, physical and/or cultural snowboarding needs. As Jaime, a Canadian snowboarder, explained, “I think female-specific snowboard companies and products are great. I always support the chick clothes. And I’d love to get a new women’s board if I ever get a new one” (personal correspondence, February 10, 2005). Although this chapter identifies changes in the industry that appear to empower females and support their active participation, the production and marketing of some, but not all, of these products is questionable. For example, until recently, lesser quality snowboards were justified on the grounds that women tend to be less destructive of their boards (Johnston, 2001). But suggestions that boards made specifically for women should be “soft as noodles” are condescending on the part of manufacturers because they are based on the assumption that women are not as strong as men and cannot control stiffer performance boards (Johnston, 2001, para. 1). Such construction methods encourage differences between male and female riding styles, and exclude women who seek snowboards for optimum performance. Despite the inferior quality of many women’s snowboards, they still carry the same price tags as male boards. Ste’en, for example, described female specific equipment as simply a “marketing ploy” (personal correspondence, May 11, 2003). Similarly, snowboarding journalist

and snowboarder Tracey Fong (2000) called the “stereotypical girlie” pastel pinks, baby blues, glam fabrics and fake fur being promoted by some snowboard clothing companies a “disturbing trend” (para. 1). Fong (2000), like many other female riders, does not regard snowboarding as “cute” (para. 4). Despite numerous complaints (see below), clothing designed for women frequently puts fashion before function and quality. The 2003-2004 Cold As Ice range, for example, promotes “surprising feminine features” (Snowboard Apparel, 2003, para. 14) including fur-lined hoods and hems more suitable for urban fashion statements than for active snowboarding participation.

Female snowboarders are not cultural dupes, and many are less than optimistic about these questionable production and marketing techniques. Indeed, Pamela complains: “Too many of these companies still rely on male perspectives of what women want. I don’t want butterflies, flowers and birds on my snowboard... and everything doesn’t have to be pink” (personal correspondence, February 18, 2005). Comments posted on a snowboarding website (www.snowboard.com) further reflected this sensibility:

I’m sick of these crappy women’s boards that are only marketed towards beginners and have bright pink colors and cutesy stuff (posted by shayboarder, May 25, 2004).

I don’t like the guys boards that have all the skeletons and monster crap on them. But I wouldn’t want a girly board because I have a hard enough time proving to guys that I’m on the mountain for the same reason they are...to board (not to pick up boys), and having girly sh*t just puts me into a category of “girly girl” (posted by michele9993, May 26, 2004).

I’m a bloke but I can see how some of the graphics out there could be seen as a bit bloody patronizing – they have more in common with sanitary towels than snowboards! (posted by grafsnow, January 24, 2005).

As a girl who doesn’t fit the girl build, I am not an A cup for Nikita clothing or 110 pounds for the nice 143-148 [length in cm] boards, and I ride more than 100 days a year, longer than most girl boards last...I have always purchased guy boards. Since I’m not the stick figure Barbie snowboarder and actually ride more than most I need a harder board. For some girls it’s great, but not for me (posted by shayboarder, August 10, 2005).

As these comments show, production and marketing techniques that tout Girl Power messages, employ lesser quality construction and traditionally feminine designs, and put cultural and physical limits on women's snowboarding, do not satisfy all female consumers.

The question as to whether the new opportunities available to young women in a post-Fordist economy and culture are empowering, has been a central theme throughout this chapter. Much of the evidence presented earlier suggests that new opportunities available in the female niche market have empowered female snowboarders. However, as the above comments suggest, some female snowboarders remain cautious of the opportunities (for consumption) available in the post-Fordist context. This highlights a major limitation of the post-Fordist approach; that some theorists interpret the changes "too optimistically, as extensions of freedom and creativity" (Kumar, 1995, p. 65). While the post-Fordist approach adopted in this chapter paints a generally positive picture, the post-Fordist system has not miraculously empowered all female snowboarders. For example, despite some women finding space within the snowboarding industry it remains a male terrain. "Women are definitely out-numbered in the snowboard industry," said Janet Freeman, owner of Betty Rides: "I am on the Board of Directors for the snowboard industry for the whole United States, and [the ratio] of men to women [is] always 6:1" (personal communication, November 9, 2005). Freeman also complained that:

Women in the snowboard industry who are aggressive and ask or demand what they want are seen as bitches, whereas men who are seen doing that are considered strong and powerful. Even my own reps [sales representatives], the male reps, talk differently to me than I think they would a male office manager. If you're emotional, which I am, people think, "up her meds [medication]." I get mad about that. If you're a woman, [they think] you're pregnant, or you're on your period, or whatever. They just think you're a bitch. My own reps, even my own warehouse crew, give me some shit. I think they would respect a male more than they respect me (personal communication, November 9, 2005).

The "boys club" aspect of the industry also "disappoints" Jennifer Sherowski, senior editor of *Transworld Snowboarding* magazine: "Men have a different way of bonding and there is definitely

a tradition of ‘hooking up your bro’s’ when it comes to business and stuff” (personal communication, November 22, 2005; see also Looking Through, 2007). As these comments (and the previous example of the restructuring of Chorus Snowboards) illustrate, we must be wary of interpreting changes within the post-Fordist system too optimistically.

Post-Fordism facilitates a description of the economic and cultural changes in the broader social context and alerts me to distinctions in the snowboarding economy and culture with regard to the role of female snowboarders as consumers and producers. The explanatory potential of a post-Fordist approach, however, is limited in that it does not provide any clearly defined concepts that might facilitate the interpretation of these distinctions. Another general charge made against post-Fordist theory is that it mistakes effects for causes, and that what it sees as the primary facts are derivative or dependent products of less visible processes (Kumar, 1995). While the post-Fordist approach adopted in this chapter has described the influence of economic and cultural factors on the role of female snowboarders, less consideration is given to how the changing positions of young women in contemporary society and snowboarding culture more specifically, might be initiating, or at least contributing to these changes. The key point here is that the potential of a post-Fordist approach for explaining the female snowboarding phenomenon is limited because it gives little consideration to the broader gender context. Of central concern to this study is the inability of post-Fordism to explain gender politics in snowboarding culture. Kumar’s post-Fordist approach does give some consideration to micro-politics but it doesn’t focus on gender questions. Arguably, micro-politics based on gender can be better explained within a feminist framework. Hence, building upon this discussion of the new opportunities available to young women in a post-Fordist system, the following chapter employs feminist theory to explain the quest by some female snowboarders for a redistribution of power and improved opportunities through their practices.

4. FEMINISMS AND FEMALE BOARDERS

Pamela: I think we [female snowboarders] are powerful, positive and able to effect change in our sport – we just have to go out there and make those changes ourselves and create the difference.

Holly: So, would you consider yourself a feminist?

Pamela: Yes absolutely – but due to bad press over the word ‘feminist’ I’ll go in for ‘equal rights’ if that’s ok by you. I guess I’m kind of a ‘third-wave’ feminist, of sorts (personal correspondence, February 18, 2005).

Feminist theory is the intellectual foundation of the modern women’s movement that seeks to change the existing gender order and its discriminatory practices against women. Although feminist theory is not able to tell feminists what to do in specific circumstances, it helps them better understand their culture, to analyze its workings, and unravel the various interconnections that bind a culture (Frazer, 1989). Recognizing the influential contribution of feminist theorizing, Jarvie and Maguire (1994) proclaim that it has “has mediated the sociology of knowledge – if not all disciplines and traditions of thought” (p. 162).

Employing feminist theory, this chapter analyzes the practices, politics and gendered identities of young women, and female snowboarders, in the current cultural moment. This chapter comprises two main parts. In the first I provide a critical overview of second and third-wave feminist theorizing. I examine the efficacy of liberal and radical second-wave feminist theoretical perspectives for understanding the constraints and progress of female snowboarders to initiate changes in relation to gender discrimination, and conclude by identifying the third-wave feminist perspective as having the most potential for explaining contemporary female snowboarding. Part two focuses on the strengths of third-wave feminism for explaining the power, culture and gendered identities of female snowboarders in the twenty-first century. This part discusses

athleticism as an activist tool and source of empowerment among some third-wave feminists. I then demonstrate how the display of both culturally defined masculine and feminine characteristics by some female boarders is helping to dismantle traditional, and essentialist, binaries. I also shed light on the different sensibilities of younger generations of female boarders concerning their willingness to display and play with the apparently paradoxical relationship between what is termed “female masculinity” (Dowling, 2000) and image management. Following this, I refer to third-wave feminism as a generational expression of feminist consciousness that has been successfully individualized by consumer capitalism. Lastly, I employ Martin’s (1990) criterion of feminist organizations to explain how some female boarders are adopting a third-wave perspective and blending liberal and radical feminist political strategies in their attempts to instigate change.

Feminisms: Past, Present, and Future

Gender relations are a key feature of all feminist theorizing and politics (Birrell, 2000; Birrell & Theberge, 1994; Hall, 1996; Hargreaves, 1986, 1994, 2000, 2004; Theberge, 2000; Thompson, 2002; Tong, 1989). For women, feminist theories provide “new ways to understand ourselves as gendered beings,” and “new ways to see connections between our individual lives and the lives of other women and men” (Birrell, 2000, p. 62). Although feminist theory is “grounded in an analysis of personal experience,” the challenge is learning to “see beyond” our own personal situations to the “broader social conditions” (Birrell, 2000, p. 62). Feminist theory is an “openly political or critical practice committed not only to analyzing gender” in society but also to “changing those dynamics” (Birrell, 2000, p. 62). Designed to “produce and extend knowledge about women’s lives and realities to assist change,” feminist theorizing privileges “women’s standpoints” (Thompson, 2002, p. 111). Feminists argue that because we live in a world of “increasing complexity, confusion and contradiction,” theories must “meet the social world on these terms”

(Birrell, 2000, p. 62). Hence, one of the most important features of feminist theorizing is that it is a “dynamic process” (Birrell, 2000, p. 61; also see hooks, 1984).

While feminist theory and politics advocate highlighting and challenging continuing power imbalances, the feminist worldview comprises numerous theoretical positions and political approaches. Members of the women’s movement have always aligned themselves with different models of feminism, each with their unique images of gender relations, explanations for the source of oppression, and strategies for self-fulfillment and autonomy (hooks, 1984; Jagger & Rothenberg, 1993; Tong, 1989). Among the distinct schools of feminist theory are liberal feminism, radical feminism, cultural feminism, socialist feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, existentialist feminism, postmodern feminism, post-structural feminism and third-wave feminism (see Jagger & Rothenburg, 1993). Although these schools contain some important points of overlap, they also reveal sharp points of disagreement. Of specific interest to the first part of this chapter are the variances between liberal and radical feminist perspectives and, more broadly, those between second-wave and third-wave feminism.

For historical convenience, many scholars and historians break feminism into waves (Taylor, 1989; Whittier, 1995; see also Aronson, 2003).¹ In particular, Rossi (1982) refers to a cyclical generational pattern in the women’s movement, with each feminist wave separated by roughly two generations. Thus far, the feminist movement consists of the first (1848 to the mid-

¹ Serious critiques have been leveled against wave approaches for understanding the history of feminism (see Mann & Huffman, 2005). Wave approaches “too often downplay the importance of individual and small-scale collective actions, as well as indirect and covert acts” (Mann & Huffman, 2005, p. 58). There is also a tendency to focus on “common themes that unify each wave” and thereby obscure diversity (Mann & Huffman, 2005, p. 58). The wave metaphor is built on the trajectory of feminist development common to countries with similar histories of sex-based struggle, and overlooks national context (Lotz, 2003). The wave metaphor also tends to ignore nation-specific material conditions and political contexts. While I am sensitive to these critiques, I think the wave approach has merit when used to describe mass-based feminist movements. As Mann and Huffman (2005) explain, “the wave metaphor only makes sense when it is used to describe mass-based movements that ebb and flow, rise and decline, and crest in some concrete, historical accomplishments or defeats” (p. 58). Like Mann and Huffman, I do not suggest that the waves of feminism are equivalent with the history of feminism; rather, waves are simply those historical eras when feminism had a mass base.

1920s), second (1960s to early 1980s), and third (early 1990s-2000s) waves. The primary concern of first wave feminism was women's suffrage (see Sanders, 2000). The 1960s marked a new, more adversarial, phase of feminism. Second-wave feminists focused on the radical reconstruction or elimination of traditional sex roles and the struggle for equal rights; their strategies were more radical than both their predecessors and successors.² Second-wave feminists built feminist organizations and fought for legislative changes regarding the family, sexual relations, reproduction, employment and education (see Thornham, 2000). Third-wave feminism emerged in the early 1990s in response to the perceived inadequacies of the second-wave. It was developed by feminists seeking to challenge and expand common definitions of gender and sexuality in contemporary society (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, 2004; Heywood & Drake, 1997; Heywood & Dworkin, 2003; Labaton & Martin, 2004; Walker, 1995).

Baumgardner and Richards (2000) believe "each wave has brought a swelling of momentum that has carried us closer to women's equality" (p. 69). However, a period of backlash has followed each wave of feminism. For example, the reaction against the second-wave was evident in a decline in grassroots mobilization and negative public discourse by antifeminist organizations and media figures in the late 1980s and 1990s (see Faludi, 1991; Ferree & Hess, 1995; Schneider, 1988). These backlashes contribute to troughs – "quiet periods" (Rossi, 1982, p. 9) – between waves, in which political action recedes; yet progress continues in some arenas such as education and employment. Thus the women's movement has followed periods of mass-involvement, backlash, and "quiet" periods, with different generations living through different stages of the cycle that have clearly influenced their experiences and attitudes toward feminism (Aronson, 2003).

² It is important to note that the strategies of third-wave feminists continue to develop.

Demarcating the participants in each wave is problematic. Feminist scholar Amber Kinser, for example, explains feeling caught between the second and third-waves, and defines herself as a “mid wave” feminist (Kinser, 2004, p. 124). Similarly, feminist philosopher Jo Trigilio says, “I feel as if I am standing on the beach with my surfboard, too late to catch the peak of the second-wave and unwilling to conform to the rules of the pack riding the third” (Alfonso & Trigilio, 1997, p. 9). As these comments illustrate, depicting the relationship between the second and third-waves is particularly difficult.³ Hence, in this study I will use what various writers have called a “political generation” (Whittier, 1995, p. 15), which is not merely a product of chronological age and may include more than one chronological generation. The key to understanding a political generation is context and the material conditions of the historical moment (Henry, 2003). This chapter privileges the second and third waves given their close associations with the historical context in which female snowboarding emerged and has developed.

Second-Wave: Liberal and Radical Feminism

Liberal and radical feminism created and nurtured the many variations of feminism within the second-wave. Notwithstanding subsequent developments, liberalism and radicalism remain “residual categories” of feminist theory and politics (Birrell, 2000, p. 64).

In general, liberal feminists believe that reform within the existing social institutions will eliminate discrimination based on gender. Hence they advocate equal access, equal opportunity, equal reward structures, and equal rights for women (Birrell, 2000). One important example of legislative reform was the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments in 1972 in the USA.⁴

³ Both the media and scholars refer to young feminists in various ways, from using specific time periods to using more collective imagery, such as “Generation X” or a “mother-daughter trope” (Heywood & Drake, 1997, p. 47; Quinn, 1997).

⁴ This gender-equity law states that “no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program or

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According to sports historian Mary Jo Festle (1996), the “passage of Title IX reflected the feminist tenor of the early 1970s... the women’s liberation movement had begun encouraging women to demand more opportunities, break free of stereotypes, reclaim their bodies, and exercise their strength” (cited in Heywood & Dworkin, 2003, p. 50). The emergence in the 1970s of sport feminism – a feature of second-wave feminism – drew upon liberal feminist principles, and was linked to the specific quest for equal sporting opportunities among men and women (Birrell & Theberge, 1994; Hall, 1996; Messner & Sabo, 1990).

Liberal feminists working in the realm of sport typically want the same opportunities and resources for girls and women as for boys and men; they want to remove the barriers to participation that constrain women. Liberal feminism is “essentially pragmatic” and liberal feminists privilege agency (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 28). Sports activists have worked hard to bring about equal opportunities. Arguably, they have succeeded in gaining “easier access and better facilities for women in sports, improved funding and rewards, equal rights with men under the law, top quality coaching on par with men, and an equivalent voice with men in decision making” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 27; also see Cahn, 1994). Moreover, researchers claim that women’s increased involvement and participation in sport has “challenged the naturalization of gender difference and inequality” (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 9).

A radical feminist approach adopts an “unequivocal women-centered perspective that recognizes and celebrates differences among women” and simultaneously seriously questions the centrality of male definitions and practices in contemporary society (Hall, 1996, p. 91). For many radical feminists, the liberal feminist aim of equal opportunity for women is impossible because society itself is fundamentally patriarchal in structure (see Birrell, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994;

activity receiving federal financial assistance” (cited in Pemberton, 2002, pp. 10-11; also see Gavora, 2002). Similar anti-discrimination laws exist in many western countries.

Messner & Sabo, 1990). Radical feminists advocate the destruction of patriarchal ideologies and the abandonment of hierarchical and patriarchal institutions and relationships (Messner & Sabo, 1990). Whereas liberal feminists tend to privilege agency, radical feminists focus on hierarchical structures and the gender relations that emanate within these structures; redistribution of power through separatism is the logical strategy for radical feminists (Birrell, 1984, 2000). Radical feminism is a form of essentialism that argues that women and men are fundamentally different (Agger, 1998; Hall, 1996). According to this logic, women and men “occupy different spheres and use different types of reasoning...and moral concepts with which to understand the world” (Agger, 1998, p. 110). Hence, radical feminists seek spaces in which women can thrive on their own. Some feminists argue that women should not emulate the hierarchical, competitive and aggressive nature of men’s sports but they should build alternative models (Lenskyj, 1991, 1994; Theberge, 1985). Radical feminists tend to reject characteristics normally ascribed to men, and associated with sports, such as strength, competitiveness, aggression and assertiveness, and, instead, celebrate characteristics popularly, and ideologically, classified as female, notably cooperation, grace and tenderness. They maintain that separate organizations will give women access to more sports, create wider definitions of femininity and provide women with opportunities to administer and control their own activities (Hall, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994; Messner & Sabo, 1990).

Critique

This section examines the limitations of second-wave feminist theory, particularly liberal and radical feminism, for explaining the contemporary female snowboarder and for generating change within snowboarding culture.

From a liberal feminist perspective, the enhanced opportunities for individual female snowboarders to win equal prize monies, participate in events and competitions, earn media

approval, and obtain sponsorship deals and industry support amounts to individual equal opportunity, and might be seen as signs of significant progress. While achievements by some individuals point towards positive social change, closer analysis reveals complexities and contradictions in this supposed progress. In fact, in the case of female snowboarding, liberal feminist theory and politics are problematic for several reasons (see Thorpe, 2005).

Despite the increased opportunities available to contemporary female boarders, changes in the status of individual females do not challenge the social role that snowboarding plays in the construction of gender difference and inequality. A liberal feminist perspective tends to overlook deeper and more serious structural issues, and incorrectly endorse the commonsense notion that increased opportunities reflect a “broad political and ideological consensus” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 29). In doing so, it “fails to examine oppositional values which relate to broader structures of power” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 29). The lack of concern about structural domination is consistent with the liberal belief that women can achieve equality with men without challenging and changing the social structure because, as noted above, liberal feminists pay less heed to social structures of constraint. Thus, liberal feminism can be critiqued because ultimately, sexual equality cannot be achieved through women’s agency alone; this requires “major alterations in the deepest social and psychological structures” (Tong, 1989, p. 38).

The liberal quest for equal opportunity in snowboarding also tends to privilege the struggles of certain groups of women. Female boarders are not a homogenous group, and differences in background, class, race, ethnicity, age, capability and sexual preference can lead to very different expectations and experiences (Hall, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994). Hence the increase in women’s participation is not uniform across all groups of female boarders and a liberal feminist perspective does not necessarily explain the multiple and varied experiences of female snowboarders.

Liberal sports feminism also tends to focus on quantitative change and, in so doing, ignore the ideological and symbolic dimensions of gender oppression (Birrell, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994). For example, a liberal feminist approach would encourage female snowboarders to take for granted the distinctly masculine modes of thought and practice in snowboarding (see Chapter Five: Hegemonic Masculinity and the Snowboarding Culture), such that it would seem commonsense for women to follow in the footsteps of men. Indeed, the media and many male and female boarders typically compare women's performances to male standards. For example, olympic gold medallist Kelly Clark comments that she wants to "push it right up there to where the men are now" (Women's Snowboarding, 2002, para. 11).⁵ To gain access to, and equality within, the male-dominated institution of competitive and professional snowboarding, women must imitate men and adopt the hierarchical and aggressive values underpinning competitions and competitive relationships. Ironically, as liberal strategies successfully encourage more female participation, the numbers of females participating, competing and being judged by male standards rise. Moreover, the increasing visibility of females within the male-dominated snowboarding culture diverts attention away from the production and reproduction of a gender linked value system, and fosters acceptance of the dominant ideologies that support them (Hargreaves, 1994). Certainly, liberal feminism has its strengths but, in practice, liberalism ultimately reinforces snowboarding as an activity best suited to males.

A radical feminist perspective gives greater consideration to the patriarchal structures that constrain female snowboarders' agency. However, whether structural analysis provides better insight into the female snowboarding phenomenon, and social change in the boarding culture,

⁵ When *Transworld Snowboarding* recently asked readers to respond to the question, "should female riders get paid as much as the dudes [male snowboarders]?" most correspondents emphasized male superiority: "guys can throw bigger tricks, so why not pay them more" (Chelsea, Ontario, Canada), "If the girls are as good as the guys, then yes. But if they're not, then to hell with this equality crap" (Sean, Plantation, Florida, USA), "It all depends on the skill, not the gender. If a female rider is not as good as a male rider then she should get paid less" (Mara, Tokyo, Japan) (In Your, 2005, p. 54).

remains questionable. A radical feminist explanation of oppression is also problematic because it tends to emphasize biological differences (Hargreaves, 1994). This theoretical approach ultimately locks the biological natures of males and females into a single universe of apparently natural relationships that are “blind to history” and culture and “ignore changing feminine and masculine identities and different gender relations” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 32).⁶ The emphasis on biological differences also omits theoretical perspectives on the ways in which “men and women are exploited together” in cultural pursuits such as snowboarding, and how “gender relations articulate with capitalist relations” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 34).

From a radical feminist political perspective, women-only snowboarding ventures (e.g., women’s snowboarding camps) provide women with the space to bond and interact free from discrimination and sexism, and thus give them a sense of control and autonomy. Separatism, however, does not necessarily improve the status of women in the snowboarding culture. Often it introduces further complexities, contradictions and problems by recreating gender divisions. Separatism celebrates exclusionist policies and differences between people. In its aggressive form, separatism celebrates rigid divisions and stereotypes that “limit both sexes” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 34). Furthermore, rigid separatism is incompatible with the development of the mixed nature of snowboarding and undermines the potential for “direct power sharing between men and women” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 34). Simply put, the philosophy of separate development tends to exaggerate the overall extent of male domination and ignore ways in which gender relations in snowboarding, and the broader society, have changed significantly in the past three decades.

Women-only endeavors might appear as positive political steps toward female equality but, in reality, when women congregate around female specific alternatives, male dominated

⁶ The changing gender order in snowboarding will be explored in more depth in Chapter Five: Hegemonic Masculinity and the Snowboarding Culture.

institutions remain unchallenged; thus reinforcing a naturally superior position. For example, admitting the limitations of separatist snowboarding competitions, senior editor of *Transworld Snowboarding* magazine, Jennifer Sherowski (January 2004), wrote, “when you split up the men’s and women’s events... people assume that they won’t get a good show or be impressed and entertained by women snowboarding... and no one shows up to watch the girls ride” (para. 1). Sherowski also identified “a real problem” in the production of female-specific snowboarding videos:

There’s pretty much not a single woman in any of the major production company’s videos, which is why all the women got together to do their own thing (Misschief, Dropstitch, etc.) but I’m not sure that solves the problem. I think there needs to be less segregation. Production companies need to see women as a viable, valuable thing in this sport and start filming them, and women need to work harder to make that happen instead of segregating themselves (personal communication, November 22, 2005).

Like Sherowski, I believe radically inspired separatist-type projects cannot bring about significant change by themselves. Changing the gender-relations in snowboarding is a long-term project and, in the case of female snowboarding, liberal or radical strategies alone will not put an end to male domination. Although radical change is certainly necessary to secure structural changes, at the level of practical politics, female snowboarders need to pursue liberal solutions in the short term as well (see Messner & Sabo, 1990; Thorpe, 2005).

Third-wave feminists recognize both liberal and radical strategies as opening new possibilities for women and men to make social change a reality. Whereas the theory and politics of liberal and radical feminism, at a very broad level, tend to privilege agency and structure respectively, third-wave feminism is more at ease with contradiction and, to varying degrees, explores both agency and structure.

Third-Wave Feminism

Many women born in the last quarter of the twentieth century have had very different experiences from those of previous generations. Hence it should come as no surprise that the feminist questions and strategies of many contemporary young feminists differ from earlier generations. Speaking on behalf of a younger generation of feminists, Baumgardner and Richards (2000) advocate a different form of feminism; “being liberated doesn’t mean copying what came before but finding one’s own way – a way that is genuine to one’s own generation” (p. 130). Whereas the first and second waves emerged in historical periods more amenable to mass movements seeking to accomplish social change, third-wave feminism developed in a different context. Third-wave feminism has been shaped by both the sense of entitlement secured by second-wave feminism and the backlash against feminism provoked by those very successes (Cullen, 2001).

Feminism confronted hard times during the 1990s. The mass media accused feminists of being man-haters and the term became synonymous with aggression rather than fairness. Some commentators accused feminists of seeking to turn the social order upside down and of striving for ultimate female superiority (Fauldi, 1991). Simultaneously, many beneficiaries of first and second-wave feminism disavowed feminism either as unnecessarily ideological and doctrinal and political or as superfluous. They pointed to women with successful careers working alongside men and noted a relatively egalitarian gender order (Agger, 1998; Percy & Kremer, 1995; Renzetti, 1987). During this period many young women felt ignored by the women’s organizations founded by earlier generations (Morgan, 1995). Some of these women thought second-wave strategies “didn’t speak to their media-savvy, culture driven generation” (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p. 77). Third-wave feminism, which began speaking for itself in the early 1990s, came of age politically amid this backlash. Yet, the emergence of this new branch of feminism has sparked tensions between second and third-wave feminists, with many of the former accusing young women of

being ignorant about their history and apathetic about their rights as women (Jacob, 2001).

However, while many third-wave feminists might not know their history, it seems some second-wave feminist cannot let their history go.⁷

In response to accusations from second-wave feminists, third-wave feminists argue that their feminism has been articulated as a generational difference – a reaction against perceptions about feminists that have permeated society, not the movement itself (Labaton & Martin, 2004). Young feminists are aware of their position as entitled agents and often attribute this to their feminist predecessors. Baumgardner and Richards (2004) explain, “because of when we were born, younger women can take certain freedoms for granted” (p. 63). Indeed, “our entitlement is a mark of their [second-wave feminists] success” (Baumgardner & Richards, 2004, p. 63). As previously mentioned, the first and second waves of feminism furnished this younger generation of women with greater choices about sexuality, more opportunities in education and employment, and new ways of asserting their autonomy and rights. Hence, Baumgardner and Richards (2004) do not see the third wave as a specific set of assumptions or theories but as an “evolution of feminism building on previous generations” (p. 63).

The third wave also emerged in a period of social and cultural diversity fulfilled at the tail of the second-wave. One of the early criticisms of mainstream second-wave feminism was its inattentiveness to racial, cultural, sexual and national differences. While third-wave feminists have

⁷ Friedlin (2002, para. 1) describes “second and third-wave feminists clash[ing] over the future” at a feminist conference held in New York in May 2002. Comparing the collectivism of the second-wave to the more individualistic attitude prevailing among women today, second-wave feminists expressed concern for the future of feminism. Letty Cottin Pogrebin argued that, “we were action-oriented in a public, political context. We had to challenge laws, change patterns, [and] alter behavior. Being able to bare your midriff is fine as an expression but it doesn’t mean things are going to change” (cited in Friedlin, 2002, para. 11). Erica Jong added, “we have produced a generation of uppity women who feel entitled” (cited in Friedlin, 2002, para. 13). In response, third-wave feminist Jennifer Baumgardner said she was “surprised by the amount of people who were really innovative in their youth and refuse to see innovation in [today’s] youth” (cited in Friedlin, 2002, para. 16), and Kalpana Krishnamurthy, co-director of the Third-Wave Foundation exclaimed, “I think that the impact of the feminist movement was in helping women to achieve a voice. Now, we are articulating that voice in a multiplicity of ways” (cited in Friedlin, 2002, para. 19).

shed the propaganda about feminists espoused by the media, they have taken to heart and built on the second-wave reactions to criticisms from women of color and gay women that the second-wave was racially and sexually exclusive. Third-wave feminist activists argue that feminism needs opening and emancipation from ideological rigidity to include other identities based on race, sexuality, class, nationality and geography (Labaton & Martin, 2004). Walker (1995) sets third-wave 'hybridity'⁸ in opposition to what she describes as a rigidly ideological second-wave feminism: "For many of us it seems that to be a [second-wave] feminist...is to conform to an identity and way of living that doesn't allow for individuality, complexity, or less than perfect personal histories" (p. xxxi). Heywood and Drake (1997) also embrace hybridity as a defining feature of third-wave feminism:

The lived messiness characteristic of the third-wave is what defines it: girls who want to be boys, boys who want to be girls, boys and girls who insist they are both, whites who want to be black, blacks who want to or refuse to be white, people who *are* white *and* black, gay *and* straight, masculine *and* feminine, or who are finding ways to be and name none of the above. (p. 8)

A good example of third-wave activism is the Third-Wave Foundation, a philanthropic organization that "helps support the leadership of young women ages 15 to 30 by providing resources [grants and scholarships], public education, and relationship building opportunities" (www.thirdwavefoundation.org). The Third-Wave Foundation defines itself, and its politics, through the multiple subject positions and diverse community affiliations of its members. Its mission statement reads as follows:

Third-wave is a member-driven multiracial, multicultural, multi-sexuality national non-profit organization devoted to feminist and youth activism for change. Our goal is to harness the energy of young women and men by creating a community in which members can network, strategize, and ultimately, take action. By using our experiences

⁸ The notion of hybridity suggests that identities are "not pure but the product of mixing, fusion, and creolization. Underlying this account of identity is attention to the mixing and movement of cultures.... The resulting fusion or hybridity of identities is not the product of the assimilation of one culture or cultural tradition by another but the production of something new" (Marshall, 1994, p. 295).

as a starting point, we can create a diverse community and cultivate a meaningful response. (cited in Heywood & Drake, 1997, p. 7)

Simply put, the prefix *third-wave* is a reclamation – a way to be an inclusive feminist (Labaton & Martin, 2004).

Third-wave feminism is less ideological and more strategic than the second-wave. Third-wave feminists “embrace second-wave critique as a central definitional thread while emphasizing ways that desires and pleasures subject to critique can be used to rethink and enliven activist work” (Heywood & Drake, 1997, p. 3). Continuing, Heywood and Drake (1997) define feminism’s third-wave as “a movement that contains elements of second-wave critique of beauty culture, sexual abuse and power structures” while also acknowledging and making use of “the pleasure, danger, and defining power of those structures” (p. 3). One feminist describing this paradoxical perspective admits, “[If violated] we’re not afraid of lawsuits, boycotts, organized protests, or giving the deserving offender a good cussing out... but we also recognize that there are times when winning requires a lighter touch. And sometimes a short skirt and a bat of the eye is not only easier but infinitely more effective” (Joan Morgan, cited in Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p. 163). The strategies employed by third-wave feminists, however, are only possible in the knowledge that there is legal and institutional support for women’s rights.

A major difference between second and third-wave feminists is that the latter feel at ease with contradiction. Third-wave feminism is a product of the contradiction between ongoing sexism and greater opportunities for women. “We are the daughters of privilege,” says Joan Morgan (a black feminist speaking on behalf of the younger generation) and “we walk through the world with a sense of entitlement that women of our mothers’ generation could not begin to fathom” (cited in Heywood & Dworkin, 2003, p. 41). Although “sexism may be a very real part of my life...so is the unwavering belief that there is no dream I can’t pursue and achieve simply because ‘I’m a woman’” (Morgan, 1999, cited in Heywood & Dworkin, 2003, p. 41). This new social context

fosters a third-wave feminism that explicitly embraces hybridity, contradiction and multiple identities. From the third-wave feminist perspective, “binaries” like “[masculine/feminine], active/passive, strong/weak, violent/peaceful, and competitive/co-operative belong to essentialist gender ‘natures’” that have long ceased to have relevance (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003, p. 9). As this chapter will illustrate, female snowboarders also challenge many of these traditional gender binaries.⁹

While young women in the twenty-first century may buy into some – perhaps overly – optimistic ideas about female freedom, they are not cultural dupes. They contest many contemporary gender attitudes and ideals and question their own feminisms (Jowett, 2004). Young women’s choices and actions have pushed them to new definitions and understandings of female empowerment and social change (Walker, 1995). In contrast to second-wave feminists who argue that women need to work collectively to change patriarchal practices, the ambitions and aspirations of third-wave feminists are often more individually focused, self-defined and self-oriented. Hence their primary focus is individual, not collective, action and many express feminist ideas without labeling them as such (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1994; Morgan, 1995; Percy & Kremer, 1995; Pomerantz, Currie & Kelly, 2004; Renzetti, 1987; Rupp, 1988; Stacey, 1987). Indeed, their simultaneous endorsement of feminist goals and purported defiance of feminism has led to labels such as the ‘I’m not a feminist but...’ generation; hence leading to the common perception that third-wave feminists are not politically active (Heywood & Drake, 1997; Peltola, Milkie & Presser, 2004; Thompson, 2002). However, as self-defined “every-day feminists,” they advance their causes through “stealth feminism” that draws attention to key feminist issues and goals “without provoking the knee-jerk social stigmas attached to the word feminist” (Heywood &

⁹ Building on this discussion, Chapter Five: Hegemonic Masculinity and the Snowboarding Culture, examines how some male snowboarders are also challenging these binaries, while others continue to reinforce them.

Dworkin, 2003, p. 51). It is important to note, however, that ongoing debate and dialogue between second-wave and third-wave feminists complicates discussions surrounding this newer strand of feminism. Third-wave feminism is not a single doctrine; rather, adherents continually negotiate with the arguments of second-wave feminists, as well as the new struggles facing women in an ever-changing context.

Third-Wave Feminism and Female Snowboarders

Third-wave feminism in snowboarding is a good example of what Hall (1999) defines as “the reshaping of feminism into individualism, self-growth, and the commodification of everyday life, with an increasing focus on the body and women’s physicality” (cited in Heywood & Dworkin, 2003, p. 121). This section examines five aspects of the contradictory and paradoxical relationships between agency, womanhood and physicality in snowboarding under the headings: 1) empowerment, 2) femininity and masculinity, 3) female masculinity and image management, 4) co-optation, and 5) new organizations. The first four aspects analyze third-wave feminism as a response to the backlash against feminism. Here I focus on the political strategies unique to third-wave feminism and their application by female snowboarders. In the fifth and final part I explain how some female snowboarders combine liberal and radical strategies to create a distinctive approach to initiating social change.

Born in the last quarter of the twentieth century, I am among the new generation of women who have had access to opportunities unknown to most of our mothers and grandmothers. I believe third-wave feminism is a useful heuristic tool that can facilitate our understanding of the gendered experiences and practices of young women in the contemporary cultural moment, and point to some interesting developments and new directions for feminism (e.g., diversity, tolerance of difference and contradiction, multiple-level praxis). However, I am also critically aware that there

are many unresolved tensions and contradictions inherent in this new strand of feminism. Thus, in the following discussion I seek to highlight both the strengths and shortcomings of third-wave feminism for understanding and enhancing the experiences of female snowboarders.

1) Empowerment

Feminist theorists, such as Susan Birrell and Nancy Theberge (1994), Jennifer Hargreaves (1994), Pirkko Markula (2003), Margaret Ann Hall (1996), and Belinda Wheaton and Alan Tomlinson (1998) have explored the question of whether sports cultures offer women a source of empowerment. For many of these theorists, the empowering potential of sport resides in its physicality, which invests power – ability, strength, and confidence – in the female body. Theberge (1991) argues that “for some women, sport has become a means to realize their energy, creativity, and potential... through the bodily practice of sport some women have come to reclaim and re-experience their selves” (cited in Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998, p. 259). Like many young women participating in organized sports, female snowboarders are proud of their well-honed bodies and achievements and “feel, in an intensely personal way, a physical sense of empowerment and control, strength and beauty in the female body” (Hargreaves, 2004, p. 195). My research and fieldwork reveals that snowboarding has the potential to be an empowering experience for many recreational and committed females alike. Amy Spence, a beginner snowboarder, describes snowboarding as helping to free her from everyday gender constraints:

I'm on chairlift #8 at Mount Snow in Vermont, a borrowed snowboard dangling from my left foot, the bright April sun's warmth helping me temporarily forget my sore, wet body. I look over to my companion on the lift and see smiling back at me a scrappy twelve-year-old boy. “Rad sticker,” he declares, looking at my newly placed Ride Like a Girl sticker. He smiles approval. For a moment, I forget my age, my gender, my responsibilities. I wonder how I appear to this kid. My blonde hair stuffed in under a hat, my face hidden under Oakley's, my body disguised by my baggy coat and pants. I could be any age, any gender. But I'm not. Here I am, a 29 year-old-woman who, only after three days, is ready to trade in her world for the flight on the board. I am, as they say, stoked to be here. (cited in Carlson, 1999, p. 3)

Many scholars and practitioners believe that outdoor recreation helps women resist traditional gender roles and leads to discovering a new sense of self. “In nature,” says Henderson (1996), “conformity to traditional female roles is not required. In the outdoors, women often discover aspects of themselves that they did not know existed prior to challenging themselves in this environment” (p. 196). Interestingly, when top New Zealand snowboarder Hayley Holt was asked why she quit competitive ball-room dancing and chose to focus on a snowboarding career, she replied, “snowboarding was more my thing, I didn’t have to *pretend* to be a lady anymore” (cited in Catsburg, 2005, p. 110; emphasis added). Marie, a Canadian novice snowboarder, similarly insisted that snowboarding provided her with an ‘escape’ – if only temporary – from the everyday performativity of gender and pressures to conform to the feminine ideal:

When you put on a snowboard jacket and several layers, you can feel fun and cool and sexy, and no one can tell if you’re ten pounds overweight...so there isn’t as much body image. I think that’s a good thing about the clothing in snowboarding. I get to be less feminine on the mountain and I like that. I can, what I call, ‘get dirty,’ wear no makeup, maybe not shower in the morning, get sweaty, and hang-out with my friends, and eat things I wouldn’t otherwise eat. I’ll have a burger and fries at lunch, which I wouldn’t do when I’m off the mountain. I think that’s a fun novelty about it, because in my day-to-day life I do wear mascara and heeled shoes everyday (personal communication, November 7, 2005).

Thus, it appears that snowboarding has the potential to empower women via their physical and social experiences. However, their cultural experiences in snowboarding also empower some women.

Among committed female participants, sporting cultures such as snowboarding are an important site of identity creation, “an environment in which female participants negotiate status and construct feminine identities as active sports participants” (Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998, p. 259). New Zealand snowboarder Pamela believed that snowboarding “gives you a sense of confidence – that is priceless.” “I now know,” she adds, “that I can do things that other people think are impossible, in fact, the more people think they aren’t possible, the more I want to do it”

(personal communication, February 18, 2005). Fellow New Zealand snowboarder Abby explained that snowboarding has given her the confidence to travel to Canada, America and Japan, and to become a Snow Girls coach at the women-only snowboard camps at Snow Park, Wanaka. In her own words:

I've made so many amazing friends all over the world. Snowboarding for sure brings out the best in me; it's so fun. It's taken me to the place in life where I wanna be. Who knows where else it will take me, snowboarding makes me shine and the sky is the limit! (cited in Butt, 2006a, p. 38)

Core Canadian boarder Jaime said snowboarding “made me more adventurous” and “gave me enough confidence to take my level 1 instructors course” (personal correspondence, February 10, 2005). Likewise, professional boarder Tina Basich explained that snowboarding was “the first and only thing that made [me] comfortable about who [I] was” (cited in Howe, 1998, p. 120): It “gave me confidence I never knew I had. That’s such an empowering feeling that I continue to hold onto... [snowboarding] helped me with my self-esteem throughout my entire life” (Basich, 2003, p. 212).

Through snowboarding, some women experience and develop bodily skills and gain both physical and mental strength. Professional rider Megan Pische described the “cool feeling” when “you do a trick that you originally thought, ‘no I can’t do that’ but then you end up doing it and having the confidence” (Hakes, 2000, para. 4). While the physicality of sports such as snowboarding helps some women realize their “energy, creativity, and potential” (Theberge, 1991, cited in Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998, p. 259), in some cases, this self-actualization extends beyond the snowboarding context. Mel, for example, attributed her general “confidence” to her snowboarding experiences:

You can't ride if you're not confident in yourself. Period. You'll never get it down, not properly. It's helped me push myself to places there's no way I would've gone otherwise, and I'm not just talking about cliff drops, rails and booters [terrain features upon which snowboarding maneuvers are performed]. I'm talking about people, places, and major attitude adjustments. It's helped me become a much better person in so many

ways. I grew up on the Northshore, sheltered as, basically a snob. But through the places snowboarding's taken me, here and overseas, the people I've met, it's made me a much more open and accepting person. That's something I can only attribute to snowboarding (personal correspondence, February 22, 2005).

Third-wave feminists Heywood and Dworkin (2003) advocate athleticism as a "tool" to help women gain control over their lives (p. 45). Indeed, like other female athletes who experience their bodies as "strong and powerful, and free from male domination or control" (Theberge, 1987, cited in Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998, p. 259), many female snowboarders live as active agents by investing power in their own bodies. The key point here, however, is not simply that sport, or snowboarding per se, offers women a source of empowerment but rather that the critical material conditions that facilitate women's individual agency – space, encouragement, and legislation – have changed considerably since second-wave feminism. Third-wave feminism recognizes that contemporary young women have access to opportunities, time and support, unknown to previous generations, and thus we are seeing them thrive in all aspects of society, including sport and snowboarding per se.

2) *Femininity and Masculinity*

Jennifer Hargreaves (2004) observes different groups of women "defining for themselves" how to use and celebrate their bodies "not in ways that are assimilated to the male-dominated system, or that are in opposition to male-defined practices but *on their own terms*, 'for themselves'" (p. 194, emphasis added). Among contemporary young women there is little agreement about whether women should be 'feminine' or 'masculine.' While some young women celebrate traditional femininity, others embody traditionally masculine traits. In snowboarding culture, some female boarders embrace the paradoxes of post-second-wave femininity whereas others adopt traditionally 'masculine' traits and, in so doing, are helping cultivate a new female identity.

In this sense, third-wave feminism provides the response to Oglesby's (1990) query, "Where is the celebration of the feminine in feminism?" (p. 242). Many young feminists accept and indeed revel in the stereotypical feminine, thus displaying their confidence in themselves and their culture (Cullen, 2001). Comments from Donna Burton Carpenter are revealing here:

I can remember – and this is going back a couple of years or so – I interviewed some of Burton's women global team-riders. We were talking about going in the direction with women's clothing that was more fashionable than we had done before. Almost all of them said, "We understand that the female consumer might want to buy a pair of light-blue boots – or whatever it is – but I have to compete with the big boys, and I want to be taken seriously." They were basically saying, "I have to look like the guys." Now as women gain confidence in their abilities and their place in the sport, they're becoming less self-conscious of those kinds of things. They can feel free to express themselves. (cited in Stassen, June 2005a, para. 47)

Core snowboarder, Jaime, admitted she is no longer "trying to be a guy" or "the toughest chick around;" instead she is relishing the feminine and saying, "hey look, I'm a chick and I can ride just as hard as anyone!" (personal communication, February 10, 2005). Similarly, Pamela proclaimed that, on the mountain, "I am feminine because I am myself and I am female" (personal communication, February 18, 2005). Others are adopting a more paradoxical post second-wave femininity that manifests itself in punk or Riot Grrrl subcultures.

In the 1970s and 1980s, many female punks freely experimented with gender transgressions. Wearing torn jeans and ratty t-shirts, they constructed an androgynous image; others played the sex goddess by bleaching their hair and wearing micro-dresses (Büld, 1978; Leblanc, 1999). In the early 1990s, the Riot Grrrls, a group of radical young females embodying pro-girl identity politics and separatist philosophies, appropriated the accoutrements of girlhood (e.g., thrift store girls' clothes, knee socks), femininity (e.g., short skirts), and alternative youth culture (e.g., industrial boots, body piercings, unconventional haircuts, unusual hair colors). They presented an ironic display and disruption of the signifying codes of gender and generation (Kearney, 1998). Drawing on the experimental dress practices of female punks and Riot Grrrls,

many young female boarders also play with asexual and hypersexual images. As discussed briefly in Chapter Three, professional snowboarders Tina Basich and Shannon Dunn established the female snowboard clothing company Prom in 1994 and, in direct contrast to the masculine styles of the existing clothing, reveled in a parody of female sexuality. They designed clothing specifically for women, with slimmer cuts, pastel colors and butterfly logos. Moreover, at the 1994 Air and Style Big Air snowboarding contest in Innsbruck (Austria), Basich and Dunn openly defied the decision by contest organizers to exclude female participants. Dressed in pink Prom outfits and pigtails, they hiked up the scaffolding and, with the large crowd rowdily cheering them, they proceeded to jump the gap on their snowboards (Basich, 2003; Howe, 1998). In the mid-1990s female boarders continued to reinterpret male-defined snowboarding dress practices. For example, some re-appropriated the punk-inspired studded belt (a standardized snowboarding accessory) and donned bright pink versions. A photo of Lauren, an 18-year-old core female snowboarder, in *Transworld Snowboarding* shows her wearing black snowboard pants, a black tank-top, a pink punk belt, and a pink headband; Lauren describes her “personal style” as “pink and black – tough yet feminine” (On Location, 2005, p. 226; see Figure 1.8). While Baumgardner and Richards (2004) admit that wearing pink will not “overturn society,” they argue that it can invoke confidence (p. 60). Contemporary female boarders refuse to define snowboarding as a male-identified activity and happily hold on to feminine traits. The dress practices of female snowboarders, like those of female punks and the Riot Grrrls, complicate conventional social dichotomies and disrupt the signifying codes of gender (see Chapter Six: Bourdieu and ‘Boarding Bodies).¹⁰

¹⁰ Interestingly, male snowboarders further complicate the signifying codes of gender by also wearing pink belts, beanies and clothing on the mountain; I explore this further in Chapter Five: Hegemonic Masculinity and the Snowboarding Culture.

Some female boarders further disrupt conventional social dichotomies by embodying traditionally masculine traits. Despite the tendency of many sports writers and commentators to play down women's competitive and aggressive characteristics (see Duncan & Harsbrook, 2002; Duncan & Messner, 1998), many female snowboarders publicly and privately adopt these traits. When asked whether she considered herself to be feminine on the mountain, American snowboarder Jamie, replied, "No, the only thing feminine about me on the mountain is my pink goggles. I like to be aggressive, wear big baggy outerwear and don't care what I look like" (personal correspondence, February 10, 2005).¹¹ Professional snowboarder Megan Pisce also admitted to being "a really aggressive person, agro and kind of a spaz" (Hakes, 2000, para. 21), and Cara Beth Burnside declared, "I'm obsessed... I want to be top three...I am so competitive" (Hakes, 2000, para. 51). Tara Dakides described herself on the mountain, as "probably the furthest thing from feminine...when I get frustrated and mad, I can't help but throw mini tantrums or yell...aggressive sports call for a little aggression at times" (Ulmer & Straus, 2002, para. 5). Dakides was also renowned for her foul mouth, often "dropping F-bombs during poor practice runs" (Elliot, 2001, para. 13). Dakides confessed that although she tried to conform to gendered expectations and "be nice," it "always felt forced," so she eventually accepted "I just had to be me" (Elliot, 2001, para. 13).

The adoption of certain culturally understood masculine traits by some female snowboarders does not mean that these women are becoming like men. Rather, it suggests that the "relationship between gendered social roles and biological sex is more fluid than we have been taught to believe" (Newitz, Cox, Sandell & Johnson, 1997, p. 178). Miller (2002) agrees that masculinity is "no longer the exclusive province of men as spectators, consumers or agents;"

¹¹ It is interesting to note, that in their comments (i.e., Jamie, Tara) is a very clear understanding of the dominant cultural understandings of 'appropriate' femininity.

females can now rearticulate masculinity, “as a prize rather than a curse” (p. 52). Paradoxically, for many female boarders, the greatest compliment remains ‘you ride like a guy.’ Media commentators laud female snowboarders who demonstrate certain traditional masculine characteristics. For example, Dave Duncan declared Tara Dakides “the toughest and most fearless rider...right now” (Tara-bly Dangerous, 2000, para. 3). The cultivation of a position called ‘female masculinity,’ in which women embrace traditionally male-defined traits, could be a major step towards dissolving the existing male-female gender hierarchy (Dowling, 2000; Heywood & Dworkin, 2003), and ultimately achieving gender parity. It is important to note that many of the women adopting aspects of masculinity also revel in elements of emphasized femininity. Embodying the third-wave, Jamie described herself as “a big tomboy” and then added, “but at the same time I like to get my hair done and go shopping” (personal communication, February 10, 2005). As living examples of third-wave feminism, these female snowboarders explicitly embrace hybridity, contradiction, and multiple identities.

3) Female Masculinity and Image Management

Some of the younger generation of female snowboarders demonstrate a traditional ‘masculine’ capacity for aggression and dominance, and have simultaneously mastered the ‘feminine’ arts of image management. For Baumgardner and Richards (2004), “embracing girlieness as well as power,” epitomizes third-wave feminism (p. 59). Among younger women, displays of “feminine physical attractiveness and empowerment” are not viewed as mutually exclusive or necessarily opposed realities but as “lived aspects of the same reality” (Messner, 2002, pp. 17-18). In the words of journalist and professional skier Kristen Ulmer: “I can wear lipstick and still kick ass” (Ulmer, no date, para. 38). Professional boarder Victoria Jealous described “jumping off roofs and out of trees since I was a little kid” but, as far as she is concerned, this “doesn’t mean I’m not

feminine. I love being a woman” (Ulmer & Straus, 2001, para. 6). By adopting “cultural production and sexual politics as key sites of struggle” (Heywood & Drake, 1997, p. 7), third-wave feminism may provide a new critical framework to explain future changes within snowboarding, and sport in general.

In terms of image management, many of the new generation of top female boarders have immersed themselves in commercialization. They are aware of their commodity value and have no qualms about marketing their sexuality to boost their public profile and image, and reaping the financial benefits. One journalist recently described the commercial appeal of top snowboarder Tara Dakides’ alternative femininity as “a knockout combo of skill, swagger and sex appeal,” adding “it helps that she’s beautiful: deep green eyes and toothpaste-ad grin, a hyper-athletic body, biceps bulging and abs rippling...pierced nostril and belly button, and an intriguing tattoo...” (Elliot, 2001, para. 2; see Figure 1.9). Increasingly, female snowboarders including Dakides, Gretchen Bleiler and Victoria Jealous feature in male magazines such as *Maxim*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *FHM* (see Figure 1.4). By posing in ways that promote their heterosexual femininity, the bodies of female boarders become “fetishized” commodities that are attractively packaged, marketed and sold (Williams & Bendelow, 1998, p. 73). However, Heywood and Dworkin (2003) believe that bodies coded as athletic “can redeem female sexuality and make it visible as an assertion of female presence” (p. 83). Canadian boarder Jamie, for example, reads these images as evidence of female snowboarders’ “confidence in their lifestyle and their looks” (personal correspondence, February 10, 2005). In contrast to how female athlete images have previously been theorized (see e.g., Duncan, 1990; Duncan & Messner, 1998), in most instances where these female boarders choose to exhibit their bodies, they tend not to appear defenseless before the gaze. On the contrary, they wear a look of control and shrewd self-commodification. Consideration of the contexts in which these women make decisions about the display of their

bodies reveals that they are not necessarily exploited or manipulated in the way that many second-wave feminists insist. Rather, their decisions are informed and conscious and, as such, reflect their positions of power. For example, in response to the question, “What was it like to pose practically nude for the cover of *FHM*?” (Floros, 2004, p. 36), Dakides replied: “I’m always open to new experiences and feeling sexy and doing different kinds of photos. I think every woman should feel good about themselves and go out and have nice pictures taken of them” (cited in Floros, 2004, p. 36).



Figure 1.4. From left to right: Jamie Little (ESPN Motocross commentator), Tara Dakides (professional snowboarder) and Gretchen Bleiler (professional snowboarder) on the February 2004 cover of *FHM* wearing only body paint.

The female athletes who pose in these magazines, however, tend to show limited awareness of the unintended broader consequences of their actions. Many of these young women exist, as Baumgardner and Richards (2000) put it, in a state of “pre-consciousness” and they “haven’t yet had the opportunity to examine the politics of their own lives” (p. 84). However, some women do deliberate the broader implications. Upon receiving an offer to pose in a *Playboy* feature on women in extreme sports, Tina Basich’s first reaction was “Hell no!” but she admits that “curiosity led me to call them back” (Basich, 2003, pp. 191-192). She gave the offer serious consideration but, following discussions with her parents and analyzing the content of *Playboy*, concluded that she did not belong in the magazine. Despite numerous offers, Australian professional snowboarder Torah Bright also refuses to feature in any “*FHM* style” photo shoots because of her “religion” (Questions For, 2005, para. 7). In her own words, “I’m Mormon, so I personally would not do it. We are taught that our bodies are our most sacred things. I definitely would never do anything like that to better my career, but each to their own” (Questions For, 2005, para. 7).

In their readings of these images, many other female snowboarders seem to have internalized a similar individualistic – “each to their own” – mentality. Robyn, a novice snowboarder from South Africa, explained, “it’s up to the individual,” and claimed these images “do not represent all female boarders” (personal communication, February 9, 2005). Other female boarders, however, do not personally agree with such overt sexual displays. For example, American snowboarder Jaime admits, “it kind of pisses me off” (personal communication, February 10, 2005). However, the majority of the female snowboarders I spoke with were either supportive or apathetic toward other women’s decisions to display their bodies in a sexualized manner. New Zealand snowboarder Pamela, for example, said, “basically its like water off a duck’s back...I barely register it” (personal communication, February 18, 2005).

Second-wave feminists typically take offense at such overtly sexualized displays, arguing that, as the product of “a backlash against women,” they “diminish their power, trivialize their strength, and put them in their sexual place” (Burstyn, 1999, p. 3). Donna Lopiano, the executive director of the Women’s Sports Foundation (USA), argued that, “any exposure in a sports magazine that minimizes athletic achievement and skill and emphasizes the female athlete as a sex object is insulting and degrading” (cited in Drape, 2004, para. 6). According to Giulianotti (2005):

Despite arguments regarding self-expression and choice, such measures reflect these athletes’ weak structural position within sport: self-sexualization is a desperate strategy to generate male-dominated public interest and corporate backing. (p. 88)

While conceding some truth to these arguments, my concern is the tendency, also recognized by Giulianotti (2005), among scholars to ignore young women’s agency, and “underplay social actors’ critical, interpretative capacities” (p. 80).

In contrast to second-wave feminists, the younger generation contend that, as athletes, they have “worked their asses off” for their bodies and are proud of them, and see it as their God-given, MTV-culture-driven right to exhibit them” (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003, p. 78). When asked for her perspective on female snowboarders posing in *FHM*, Pamela explained that under the early influence of a second-wave “staunch feminist/equal rights mum” she opposed this choice (personal communication, February 18, 2005). Today, however, she has a more third-wave perspective: “If you have a hot body you can do whatever the hell you want with it, so I actually think ‘good on them’” (personal communication, February 18, 2005). Robyn also adopted a strong third-wave perspective in her reading of these sexual displays, and asserts, “women’s sexuality is a tool that gives us power over men...so go girls!” She applauded female snowboarders who “make money off males,” but admitted, “it’s a pity they have to take their clothes off. If they could do it while keeping their clothes on it would be *even better*” (personal communication, February 9, 2005, emphasis added). Robyn supports women who capitalize upon the financial opportunities available

in a new economic and cultural system (see Chapter Three), and she understands these women's actions as the result of strategic decisions, rather than exploitation or manipulation. Her comments, however, are contradictory in that she celebrates women's sexuality as a "tool" for power in one breath, and then advocates "keeping their clothes on" in another. Such contradictions are characteristic of many young third-wave feminists.

The second and third waves of feminism differ significantly in their perspective and approach to the pursuit of financial profit as a legitimate feminine drive. Naomi Wolf (1993) critiques the second-wave for being "hostile to precisely the kind of capitalist skills that would empower women most" (p. 263), and argues that second-wave feminism seems

more comfortable with the important tasks of pointing out economic discrimination against women, or with legislating more money for women, than it is with the potent 'masculine' act of putting the means of profits in women's own hands. In its hostility to capitalism, [second-wave] feminism has not yet made the jump from asking to taking. (p. 263)

In contrast, younger feminists have taken this leap. As part of a post-anti-discrimination laws (e.g., Title IX) generation these women assume the rights to not only play sport but also to reap its rewards.

In the current cultural moment, the market enjoins young men and women to 'sell themselves' as a way to 'make it.' Resources, however, are still skewed toward men. These factors have a powerful effect on female boarders and their views of self-promotion. Professional boarder Gretchen Bleiler understands that "times are tough, and it's crucially important to seize every opportunity in order to make the most of your career;" adding, "trust me, I know... I was featured dressed up in body paint on the cover of *FHM*" (Bleiler, January 2005, p. 60) (See Figure 1.4). In another interview she demanded that sponsors "whip out your checkbooks" and "show me the money" (cited in Sherowski, February 2004, p. 48). Unlike earlier feminist generations, members of this younger generation are aware of their economic worth and not afraid of 'taking' what they

feel they deserve. If, as Wolf (1993) proclaims, “financial literacy is a goal as basic to women’s empowerment as reproductive literacy” (p. 265), then third-wave sentiments have helped some women achieve this goal.

4) Co-optation

While third-wave feminism demonstrates promise and potential for instigating individual change in a new social context, it is not unproblematic (Messner, 2002). As discussed in Chapter Three, since the mid 1990s, ‘girl power’ has become a useful slogan for marketers targeting younger women who have grown up in a post-second-wave feminist environment. Images of girl power include contemporary pop stars (e.g., Pussy Cat Dolls), action heroes (e.g., Buffy, Lara Croft) and athletes (e.g., Gabrielle Reece, Tara Dakides). These “girl heroes” demonstrate a masculine capacity for aggression and dominance, but have also mastered the fine arts of image management (Hopkins, 2002). Moreover, although these women, and their corporate sponsors, employ third-wave feminist vocabularies and ideas, their form of feminism is grounded in entertainment and consumption rather than more traditional areas of education and politics (Cole & Hirbar, 1995; Hopkins, 2002; Messner, 2002; Thorpe, 2006). Numerous examples of the co-optation of third-wave feminism permeate the marketing of female specific snowboarding products. An advertisement for Nixon watches in 2003, for instance, endorsed professional boarder Torah Bright as the ultimate example of girl power and, in doing so, appropriated the paradoxical language of third-wave feminism: “Torah is a girl who knows what she wants. Her focus is straight ahead and she ... is ready for the next challenge ... has changed the rules of being a woman ... can turn heads and at the same time be feisty, but that doesn’t mean she isn’t ladylike, she’s all woman and has the skills to prove it” (Nixon, 2003, p. 67). An advertisement for Burton Snowboards also featured a conventionally beautiful professional female boarder wearing a short, tight, white t-shirt that read

“snowboarding makes me happy” (Burton, 2004, pp. 22-23). This ad mirrors the Nike ‘if you let me play’ campaigns that enthusiastically touted the positive benefits that accrue to girls who participate in sports (Messner, 2002). It seems that snowboarding marketers are as slick as Nike personnel in appropriating and manipulating the signs and symbols of individualist and consumerist third-wave feminism. Certainly, in the process of commercialization, the feminist politics and philosophies of the 1970s and 1980s seem to have become, for some (not all) women, another form of t-shirt politics, and the female boarding body has been firmly situated within a commercialized variant of “heterosexual femininity” (Dworkin & Messner, 2002, p. 23). The appropriation of the symbols of feminist rebellion, minus their philosophies, highlights an important aspect of contemporary Western society. It seems that Karl Marx was right when he warned that anything becomes morally permissible if it is economically profitable (Berman, 1992).

While the individually focused, self-defined and self-oriented ambitions and aspirations of third-wave feminists might benefit a select few women, in its present form, third-wave feminism appears to do little to instigate the major changes required to end male domination (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000; Cullen, 2001; Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003; Heywood & Drake, 1997). Dicker and Piepmeier (2003) call third-wave feminism a “feminist free-for-all” that empties feminism of any core set of values and politics (p. 17). They argue that, while it is fine to challenge perceptions of what feminism is or to engage the world in a playful and individualistic way, feminist engagement has to take into account the power relations surrounding gender, race, class and sexual orientation. Hence, feminism must entail a politics that is transformative of both the individual and society. Baumgardner and Richards (2000) make the same point more playfully when they write: “Without a body of politics, the nail polish is really going to waste” (p. 166; see also Mann & Huffman, 2005). According to Baumgardner and Richards (2000), feminism for this younger generation “is like fluoride. We scarcely notice that we have it, it’s simply in the water” (p. 17). Continuing, they

admit that “while on a personal level feminism is everywhere,” on a political level the movement is “like nitrogen: ubiquitous and inert” (Baumgardner & Richards 2000, p. 18). Snowboarding culture presents many examples of young women embracing an a-political attitude, as demonstrated in Dakides’ response to an interviewer asking her opinion on the ‘Girls Kick Ass’ movement in snowboarding: “Girls do kick ass but I’m not one to get all up in your face about it” (Yant, 2001b, para. 16). The following comment from American professional snowboarder Janna Meyen further illustrates the prevailing individualistic mentality among many young women: “I’m not out there representing women’s snowboarding. I’m out there doing it for myself. For me it’s a totally individual thing” (Willoughby, 2004, para. 16).

Political action is clearly not a priority for many of this generation of female boarders. According to Susan Hopkins (2002), if 1970s feminism was built on ideals of authenticity and solidarity, feminism in the twenty-first century is built on the dreams of celebrity and self-advancement. In this third-wave context, the idea of doing something for the greater good seems to have become an anachronism. Arguably, third-wave feminism as individual power and consumer power (see Chapter Three) writes young women’s sociopolitical power out of the language of feminism. This, of course, poses a challenge to the potential of snowboarding to empower young women in the sociopolitical arena. However, as I discuss in the next section, in response to observed gender inequalities, some women are creating snowboarding organizations, and reconstructing and recreating new meanings of female snowboarding that promote both individual and collective change.

5) New Organizations

Many scholars believe that feminist organizations hold the key to understanding and perpetuating the development and spread of feminism as an instrument of personal and collective change

(Martin, 1990). However, no consensus exists regarding the essential qualities of feminist organizations. Feminist organizations in the modern Western women's movement have proved to be extraordinarily prolific, creative, variegated and tenacious. Writing from a second-wave feminist position, Martin (1990) identifies 10 criteria of a feminist organization. These include (a) ideology,¹² (b) guiding values,¹³ (c) goals,¹⁴ (d) outcomes,¹⁵ (e) history,¹⁶ (f) structure,¹⁷ (g) practices,¹⁸ (h) members and membership,¹⁹ (i) scope and scale²⁰ and (j) external relations.²¹

Although grounded in second-wave feminism, I suggest that Martin's criteria can help reveal the third-wave mentality in contemporary female snowboarding; that is, how some women are

¹² Martin (1990) argues that feminist ideology is the acknowledgement that women are an oppressed and disadvantaged group. The source of this problem is rooted in social arrangements, the correction or elimination of which requires social, political, and economic change (see Martin, 1990, pp. 189-192).

¹³ Values are normative preferences that are invoked as guides to goal formation, action, planning, policy making, and so on. Feminist values focus on the primacy of interpersonal relationships; empowerment and personal development of members; building of self-esteem; the promotion of enhanced knowledge, skills, and political awareness; personal autonomy; and the politics of gender (Martin, 1990, p. 192).

¹⁴ The three major types of goals for feminist organizations are (a) to change their women members by improving their self-esteem, political awareness, skills, and knowledge; (b) to serve women generally through providing education or services; and (c) to change society so that women's status, treatment, opportunities, and condition in life are improved (Martin, 1990, p. 193).

¹⁵ Feminist outcomes are the consequences of feminist organization activities for members, for all women, and for local and national societies. Feminist organizations report having improved members' self-esteem, sense of power and autonomy, skills and knowledge, political awareness, and consciousness of women's oppression and having transformed society through their expectations and perceptions of possibilities for women. Whether this has actually been accomplished by feminist organizations is disputable (Martin, 1990, pp. 193-194).

¹⁶ Founding circumstances refers to the relationship of an organization's founding date to the women's movement (or sub-movements). If an organization was founded during the women's movement, in association with the movement, this is prima facie evidence that it is feminist. Founding circumstances affect not only an organization's original form but also its character and practices throughout its life span (Martin, 1990, p. 194).

¹⁷ Structure, an organization's normative internal arrangements, concerns the manner in which control or authority is organized and power is distributed, the way work is divided up and integrated, and the arrangements for decision making and conflict resolution. As an ideal type, feminist organizations are depicted as having collectivist internal structures, although, according to Martin (1990), relatively few do so. The structures of many feminist organizations are impure mixtures of bureaucracy and democracy rather than a single type. Early feminists equated power with exploitation and domination but power has recently come to be seen as an aspect of organizational structure that can be used positively as well as negatively, for people as well as against them (Martin, 1990, pp. 195-196).

¹⁸ Practices are the strategies that feminist organizations employ, both internally and externally (Martin, 1990, p. 196-7).

¹⁹ Questions relevant to the issue of membership in feminist organizations include: "What are the requirements for membership? What are the characteristics of members? What are the categories of members? How are the members recruited, affiliated, and terminated? What status distinctions are made and why?" (Martin, 1990, pp. 197-198).

²⁰ Scope refers to whether a feminist organization is local versus national. Scale refers to membership numbers, number and range of activities, number of clients served and services provided, and size of the annual budget (Martin, 1990, pp. 198-199).

²¹ External relations concern the nature, intensity, and content of an organization's ties to its environment or to the individuals, groups, and organizations beyond its boundary (Martin, 1990, p. 199).

employing *both liberal and radical strategies* in their attempts to make social change a reality in a new feminist context. In the following case-study I employ a selection of Martin's criteria in an analysis of Shannon Dunn's P-Jamma Party, an organization founded by the former professional snowboarder to initiate individual and structural change within snowboarding.

Shannon Dunn's P-Jamma Party

Professional snowboarder and 1998 olympic halfpipe bronze medalist Shannon Dunn created 'The P-Jamma Party' in 2003. A pregnancy the previous year compelled Dunn to take a step back from competitive snowboarding which enabled her to look at women's snowboarding from a different perspective (Stravers, 2004).²² Observing significant gender inequalities in the media coverage of female boarders, Dunn vowed to initiate change (Stravers, 2004). Drawing upon radical and liberal feminist principles, she organized a four day, all female, non-competitive event with the aim of maximizing female exposure through editorial photos and TV/video coverage. In her own words, "there's such limited coverage of women in snowboarding, and I feel like if you give [women] opportunities they're going to go off and get good photos [taken of them]" (cited in Stravers, 2004, p. 71). Thus, it might be argued that a feminist *ideology*, as well as radical feminist *values* of co-operation rather than competition, and nurture rather than ruthless individualism, underpinned the P-Jamma Party. Describing her *goals* for this event, Dunn echoed radical feminists: "I wanted to create an event for the top girls in snowboarding to come together and get media coverage in a low key, non-intimidating and non-competitive atmosphere" (cited in Rodger, 2004, para. 1). Thus, rather than a contest where riders are paid based on their results, the P-Jamma Party was "a collaborative effort" to "progress" the position of women in the sport via increased media coverage

²² My research and fieldwork reveals that it is women who have finished their careers as professional snowboarders, and who reflect on the politics of their experiences, that are the most likely to become inspired to improve conditions for the next generation (see Chapter Seven: Foucault and the Snowboarding Media).

(Stravers, 2004, p. 61). Instead of competing against each other, and other males, for the photographers' attention, female participants "worked with" female and male photographers and filmers to "get the shot" (p. 61). The event also facilitated female relationships and the sharing of knowledge. In the words of veteran boarder Roberta Rodger, "I like it when I helped someone out... that's always been my motto in snowboarding" (cited in Stravers, 2004, p. 71).

While founded on feminist *ideologies* and *values*, the P-Jamma Party required the assistance and support of non-feminist organizations to make the event feasible. For example, Northstar Resort (Tahoe, California) provided the women with free lift tickets and accommodation, and a number of other companies, including Burton snowboards, Nixon watches and Puma, donated free products that were then gifted to the female athletes, as well as to photographers, filmers and journalists in appreciation of their time and efforts (Dunn, 2003). It is difficult to decipher the balance of power, exchange and dependence patterns, and inter-organizational patterns between these organizations. However, I suggest that, if only in this particular case, feminist organizations can benefit from network ties with non-feminist organizations. Furthermore, as with many third-wave feminist organizations (and unlike many second-wave feminist organizations), this event welcomed the assistance of, and resources from, female *and* male photographers, journalists, filmers and resort staff. Thus, as mentioned above, third-wave feminist organizations tend to be less-ideological and more strategic than organizations established by second-wave feminists.

From a feminist perspective, the *outcomes* of this event appear to be commendable. According to one media source, "no longer will the women...be content to stay on the media's B-list. The face of women's riding has become, by way of these four days, that much more recognizable" (Stravers, 2004, p. 70). Roberta Rodger believed this event helped female boarders realize what they can accomplish "together instead of against each other" (Stravers, 2004, p. 70).

Similarly, fellow professional Tina Basich acknowledged that the women-focused environment helped create an important “bond” and “alliance” between “the strongest girls in snowboarding” (Stravers, 2004, p. 71). It is important to note here, that such claims can only tell me what organizational leaders (or official documents) assert to be true or are willing to admit. Examination of other dimensions is necessary to assess whether the feminist *outcomes* of an organization are as significant as they claim. In fact, closer analysis reveals that the claimed feminist outcomes of the P-Jamma Party are largely overstated; benefits were only available to a select few. This was an exclusive event with participation limited to only those professional female boarders (19 and 13 women in 2003 and 2004 respectively) invited by Dunn. These exclusive *membership* practices are more compatible with a liberal feminist philosophy of individual opportunity than a radical feminist perspective that celebrates differences among women and advocates inclusivity. Simply put, the P-Jamma Party draws upon both liberal and radical feminist principles to provide some women with the opportunity to gain increased media coverage.

According to Martin’s (1990) criteria, Shannon Dunn’s P-Jamma Party is a feminist organization. Although this organization does not reflect a pure or ideal type, it demonstrates the criteria of feminist ideology, values, goals and outcomes. Like many other contemporary feminist-inspired organizations, Shannon Dunn’s P-Jamma Party was founded at a time later than the women’s movement, and thus reflects subsequent developments in the movement. Like feminist organizations in the modern Western women’s movement, third-wave feminist organizations are extraordinarily prolific, creative, variegated and tenacious; they combine both liberal and radical feminist strategies in their attempts to instigate change (e.g., Shannon Dunn’s P-Jamma Party, Boarding for Breast Cancer, Freestyling for Funds²³). These feminist organizations are crucial to

²³ Boarding for Breast Cancer (B4BC), a “non-profit, youth-focused education, awareness, and fundraising foundation” with a mission to “increase awareness about breast cancer, the importance of early detection and the value

Footnote continued on the next page

understanding and perpetuating the development of third-wave feminism as a potential instrument of personal and collective change in snowboarding. In comparison to the post-Fordist approach adopted in the previous chapter, which provided insights into the cultural and economic dynamics of the female niche market via a discussion of female organizations such as Chorus Snowboards and women-only snowboard camps, a third-wave feminist perspective, and more specifically Martin's ten dimensions, helps shed light on contemporary gender politics.

Towards A Synthesis

The lives of each generation of young women are not static but always changing. Hence, feminist theory must remain fluid, open, and responsive to changing contexts and new conditions. In this chapter I have argued that the critical material conditions that facilitate young women's agency – space, encouragement, and legislation – have changed considerably since second-wave feminism, and that third-wave feminism provides a useful heuristic tool for analyzing the practices and gendered identities of young women, and female snowboarders, in the early twenty-first century. A

of an active lifestyle" (www.b4bc.org), is another good example of an extraordinarily prolific, creative and variegated third-wave feminist organization. B4BC was founded in 1996 by professional female snowboarders, Tina Basich and Shannon Dunn, and Lisa Hudson (snowboard company manager), Kathleen Gasperini (snowboarding journalist) and Brad Stewart (founder of Bonfire Snowboards), after a mutual snowboarding friend (and aunt, in the case of the latter), Monica Stewart, was diagnosed with breast cancer. Before her death in 1996, Monica actively voiced her frustration about the lack of breast cancer awareness and education for young women. Inspired to initiate change, the co-founders of B4BC began collaborating with an extensive list of male and female artists (e.g., musicians, painters, designers) and athletes, as well as marketing (e.g., Billabong, Betty Rides, Burton, Paul Frank, Nixon, O'Neill, Vans) and media (e.g., ESPN X-Games, Elle Girls, Fuel TV, MTVU, Snowboarder Magazine, Transworld Snowboarding) sponsors and partners, to organize numerous educational and fundraising events (e.g., Pink Ribbon Jibbin Rail Jam Contest; B4BC Board-A-Thon; the Annual B4BC Snowboard and Music Festival; the 2001 Modart Breast Mold Auction of paper mache casts of women's busts, including several professional snowboarding such as Basich, Dunn and Barrett Christy, painted by various male and female action sports and urban cultural artists). Since 1996, B4BC has raised more than US\$500,000 for breast cancer research and education in the USA (see www.b4bc.com). Inspired by the success of B4BC, top New Zealand female snowboarders established the inaugural Freestyling For Funds event held at Snowpark (Wanaka) and Turoa (Mt Ruapehu) in 2005. Freestyling For Funds is an all-inclusive, non-competitive women's snowboarding event, in which female boarders share knowledge about breast cancer, and participate in events such as the 'Bikini Downhill' and 'Boxes and Boobs Rail Jam.' Embodying a third-wave approach, some women choose to further celebrate this event, and the female body, by participating in bras or bikinis. While this is a women-focused event, men's attendance is welcomed. All proceeds from the event are donated to the *New Zealand Breast Cancer Foundation*.

particular strength of third-wave feminism is that it recognizes that, at some level, second-wave feminists have achieved their aims; contemporary young women have access to opportunities, time, and support, unknown to previous generations, and thus we are seeing them thrive in all aspects of society, including physical youth cultures such as snowboarding. However, some scholars and commentators argue that contemporary young women are ignorant about their history and apathetic about their rights as women. In particular, many second-wave feminists proclaim that political action is not a priority for the current generation of young women. I argue, however, that many young women are not apathetic about their rights; rather their forms of praxis take a different shape from previous feminist generations. As Harris (2001) explains, young women have “developed quite new ways of conducting political organization, protest, debate, and agitation” (p. 8). Female snowboarders, for example, cleverly exploit the resources of contemporary societies (technology, popular culture, and the media) to reconstruct and recreate new meanings of female snowboarding that promote both individual and collective change. They use, and create, websites and chat-rooms (e.g., www.powderroom.net, www.bettygohard.com, www.snowgirls.co.nz), and voice their concerns in snowboarding magazines. With the goal of producing more opportunities for professional female boarders and offering alternative discourses of femininity in the snowboarding culture, women have also developed their own companies (e.g., *Fruition*), and snowboarding films (e.g., *As If...* [2005]) and magazines (e.g., *Curl*); the latter provide important space for women to display their skills, gain cultural knowledge and voice their opinions. Women also organize female-only snowboarding events and competitions (e.g., Nikita Chickita Jam, Queen of the Mountain, P-Jamma Party). Perhaps more important, is that young women are redefining their bodies as points of celebration such that they are visible symbols of their agency and power. Put simply, the feminist philosophy ‘the personal is the political’ continues to hold true in contemporary female snowboarding.

Within the feminist movement, the dialogue between theory and practice is essential for the politicization of experience. However, a key problem with third-wave feminism lies in the increasingly noticeable gap between theory and practice. Moreover, there is minimal analysis about how to make women's sport political. In reality, the source of female boarders' critiques and their strategies for change are informed by personal experiences of what it is like to be a woman in a male-dominated sport, rather than feminist theory. It seems that the most dynamic feminism arises from personal experience and the most radical changes for women's snowboarding have been practical ones. Of course, this is not unique to third-wave feminism; women from all waves of feminism have drawn most strongly upon their life experiences to critique existing gender- and power-relations. The key point here, however, is that while third-wave feminism points to some interesting developments and new directions for feminism – diversity, tolerance of difference and contradiction, multiple-level praxis – at present it tends to leave these under-theorized and at the level of anecdote (Harris, 2001). As Michelle Jensen (2000) suggests, this lack of theory poses a serious problem for those trying to teach and learn feminism beyond the second-wave. She reports that her students of third-wave feminism have begun to ask “Isn't there some third-wave *theory* we could read?” (p. 24). Jensen is right to point out that, amidst all the talk of young feminism, there is little explication of how this constitutes a new theoretical framework of the constitution of gendered subjectivities and power. In light of such concerns, I believe theoretical syntheses with third-wave feminism and the work of Pierre Bourdieu, or third-wave feminism and Foucauldian theorizing, have the potential to provide many fruitful opportunities for analyzing gender in contemporary society, and popular physical cultures such as snowboarding (this is discussed further in the concluding chapter). Furthermore, feminist theories have traditionally reflected and affected the personal and public struggles of advocates to achieve feminist progress, and I argue that this should remain a goal of future third-wave feminist theorizing. Simply put, I believe it is

important that third-wave feminist theories and concepts are made accessible so that women can use them to reflexively interpret the social conditions of their existence and inform their involvement in related practical and political issues.

Gender, as a category of oppression, is a key feature of all second- and third-wave feminists theorizing. However, by privileging gender as the dominant form of oppression, feminism exposes itself to accusations of reductionism. That is, by focusing on gender, feminists risk excluding other categories of oppression. “This is a serious problem” for those critically engaged in social and cultural analyses, warns Birrell (2000), because gender is “only one part of an interconnected matrix of relations of power which also include relations of class, race, sexuality, religion, age, etc” (p. 65). Continuing, Birrell (2000) explains that, “neatly separating gender out of this matrix can only happen theoretically” (p. 65). Certainly, while this chapter has demonstrated that third-wave feminism has the potential to enhance our understanding of the experiences of contemporary female snowboarders, by focusing almost exclusively on *women’s* snowboarding experiences, the conception of gender as a relational process is lost. A relational conception of gender necessarily includes a “critical examination of both femininity and masculinity as they develop in connection with each other within a system of structured social inequality” (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 13). Although some third-wave feminist approaches do consider gender as a relational process (e.g., Heywood & Dworkin [2003] explain both women’s embrace of female masculinity and men’s adoption of a more feminized masculinity), they do not go far enough. The following chapter builds on the knowledge of female snowboarding gained from feminist theory and, employing R.W Connell’s concepts of hegemonic masculinity and the gender order, examines the similarities, as well as the discords, between the experiences of men and women snowboarders. In doing so, Chapter Five attempts to move towards an understanding of gender as a relational concept in all its complexities.

5. HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY AND THE SNOWBOARDING CULTURE

Before the 1980s, men undertook most social science research that, not surprisingly, focused on their worlds; yet rarely did men investigate masculinity. Since the late 1980s, however, there has been a surge of theorizing about masculine precepts, identity, behavior, and relationships. A key figure in much research about men, gender, and social hierarchy is sociologist R. W Connell. In collaboration with colleagues, Connell popularized the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity,’ which refers to the cultural dynamics by which men establish and maintain dominance in society (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1987; Connell, 1987, 1990, 1995, 2001, 2002). The influence of the concept of hegemonic masculinity on critical gender research cannot be overstated. Indeed, hegemonic masculinity has influenced theorizing about gender relations in many disciplines including sports studies where scholars have used it to facilitate understanding of the gendering processes related to sport, particularly the “critiques of heavy contact, male-dominated sports such as American football and rugby union and the sexist and violent cultures that support such sports” (Pringle, 2005, p. 257; see Messner, 1992; Sabo & Panepinto, 1990; Young & White, 2000; Young, White & McTeer, 1994). Despite its wide application, Connell’s conceptual schema has also attracted serious criticism; in particular its failure to explain the multiplicity, fluidity and dynamism of contemporary gender relations (see Donaldson, 1993; Miller, 1998a; Pringle, 2005; Seidler, 2006; Speer, 2001; Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Whitehead, 2002). However, because of its widespread influence and acceptance in sport studies, in this chapter I will examine the efficacy of Connell’s conceptual schema for explaining gender relations within contemporary snowboarding culture.

This chapter comprises four main parts. The first provides an overview of selected theoretical concepts propounded by Connell. In the second part I critique the relevance of the

concepts of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and ‘gender order’ within the present moment of gender politics and consider suggestions from various scholars for the reformulation of these concepts. Here I voice my concern about theorizations of gender that seem to be caught within a particular historical moment when men were first reacting to the challenges of feminism. Arguably, the ‘generational shifts’ in gender-relations highlighted in Chapter Four (Feminisms), call into question much of Connell’s work. Indeed, born in the last quarter of the twentieth century, many of the participants in this study have grown up with access to critical material conditions – space, encouragement, and legislation – largely unavailable when Connell was first developing her concepts of hegemonic masculinity and gender order. Thus, having found Connell’s original conceptual schema inadequate to explain the gendered experiences of this new generation of young men and women, in the third part I examine the efficacy of the recommended reformulations by applying them to the snowboarding culture. The final part of this chapter is a critique of the reformulation. Here I argue that, despite the potential of a ‘third-wave’ perspective towards studies of men and masculinities for shedding light on the new orders of gender and sexual relationships experienced by young men and women in the snowboarding culture, the reformulated conceptualizations of hegemonic masculinity remain highly problematic.

A Conceptual Overview

It is not my intention here to provide an in-depth history of the development of Connell’s concepts. A number of texts already achieve this task, of which the recent article by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) is a particularly good example. However, the theoretical model of hegemony underpinning the concept of hegemonic masculinity owes much to Antonio Gramsci’s (1971) neo-Marxist analysis of class relations, and deserves explication before I outline the two key concepts, hegemonic masculinity and gender order, which will be analyzed in this chapter.

Hegemony

Hegemony, a pivotal concept in Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's (1971) *Prison Notebooks*, refers to the cultural dynamic by which a ruling class establishes and maintains control of subordinate groups. In other words, the notion of hegemony follows largely from Marx's theory of ideology – the ideas of “the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas” (Marx & Engels, 1976 [1845], p. 67). Hegemony is gained and maintained through complex processes of consent and coercion associated with a “series of cultural, political and ideological practices” (Hargreaves & McDonald, 2000, p. 49). The concept of hegemony was Gramsci's attempt to introduce agency as a means to overcome the structural determinism inherent in classical Marxism. Hegemony involves the persuasion of the greater part of the population to comply with their subordination, particularly through the media and the organization of social institutions such as education, health care and the judiciary system, in “ways that appear natural, ordinary, normal” (Donaldson, 1993, p. 645).

Hegemony explains how ideas and practices, which at first glance seem contrary to the interests of subordinate groups, are accepted and embraced to the extent that they “become commonsense” (Hargreaves & McDonald, 2000, p. 50). As Hearn (2004) notes, hegemony provides “a way of talking about overarching ideologies at the level of everyday, taken-for-granted ideas and practices performed ‘with consent,’ and ‘without coercion’” (p. 53). Importantly, hegemony is not a process in which subordinate groups are simply duped by dominant ideologies. Rather, hegemony is a “process of experience, negotiation and struggle by individuals in real-life situations,” and thus it is an unstable process that requires the ongoing practice of *winning* of consent from subordinate groups (Hargreaves & McDonald, 2000, p. 50). A key element of hegemony is the processes by which it adapts and changes to challenges facing those in positions of power, such that these processes ultimately work to maintain the power bloc's dominance. It is, then, “never ‘complete’ or fixed but rather diverse and always changing” (Hargreaves & McDonald, 2000, p. 50).

Hegemony is thus “historically constructed, within the context of particular social relations and institutional forms” (Theberge, 2000, p. 324).

Hegemonic Masculinity

Gramsci’s concept of hegemony greatly influenced Connell’s understandings of gender and masculinity, and facilitated her concept of hegemonic masculinity. However, before examining Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity it is necessary to first very briefly define masculinity. According to Connell, masculinity is “not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 836). Instead, masculinities are “configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 836). Connell found Gramsci’s notion of “consent-through-incorporation” useful for explaining how “particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth,” and how they “legitimate and reproduce the social relations that generate their dominance” over women as well as over ‘other’ men (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1987, p. 179). Hegemonic masculinity has thus been defined as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 1995, p. 77). Hegemonic masculinity is regarded as a state or condition of the workings of ideology. In other words, male power is a ‘hegemonic project’ (Connell, 1995), a specific strategy for the subordination of women, embedded in ideological and material structures. But, unlike the notion of patriarchy, this conceptualization allows space for ambiguity and change (see Hargreaves, 1982; Messner & Sabo, 1990). Thus, Connell (1995) acknowledges that women may “simultaneously resist and collude in hegemonic masculinity” (p. 77). According to Connell (1995), hegemonic masculinity “is not a

fixed character type, always and everywhere the same;” rather, it is “the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable” (p. 76). The significance of this conceptualization on the sociology of masculinity, and critical gender research more generally, cannot be overstated. The concept of hegemonic masculinity helped scholars move from the overly simplistic, reductionist, a-political and a-historical notions of sex role theory and patriarchy.¹ Thus the concept of hegemonic masculinity is argued to succeed where patriarchy fails: It “offers a nuanced account of the processes” of gender relations “while staying loyal to the notions of gender and sexual ideology, and male dominance” (Whitehead, 2002, p. 90; see also Pringle, 2005).

More recently, Connell (2002) has built his understanding of gender upon a four-fold analytical structure: Gender *power relations*, *production relations* (division of labor), *cathexis* (emotional relations), and *symbolism* (see pp. 58-68). Connell’s notion of gender *power relations* demonstrates the ongoing presence of patriarchy despite its vigorous contestation by women and some men. In terms of sport, this notion of power relations facilitates understanding of the ways in which the dominant mores regarding “toughness, aggression and competitiveness” that promote masculine hegemony, work to “exclude or undermine women’s participation” (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 95; also see Messner, 1990; Young, McTeer & White, 1994). The notion of *production relations* (division of labor) refers to modern capitalism’s tendency to remain gender-specific, by “directing women into different forms of labor” from men (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 95; Connell, 1995, 2002).

Cathexis (emotional relations) concerns the “politics of desire in defining gendered objects of

¹ The concept of patriarchy has been a powerful tool in illuminating the many layers of male domination but it has been criticized as a “trans-social and a-historical concept that ignores varying forms of male domination” (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 7). As feminist sport theorist Jennifer Hargreaves (1982) argues, “the concept of patriarchy implies a fixed state of male oppression over women, rather than a fluid relationship between men and women which is complex and moves with great speed at times” (cited in Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 7) (see Whitehead, 2002, p. 87 for a more detailed critique of patriarchy). The extent to which hegemonic masculinity goes beyond this conceptualization of gender, however, is questionable and is discussed further in this chapter.

pleasure” (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 95). *Symbolism* relates to the “role of human communication in reproducing the gender order” (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 95). As Connell (2002) writes, “though language – speech and writing – is the most analyzed site of symbolic gender relations, it is not the only one. Gender symbolism also operates in dress, makeup, gesture, in photography and film, and in more personal forms of culture such as the built environment” (p. 66). Each of these analytical structures offers tools to explain some core aspects of snowboarding and, more specifically, identify various mechanisms of male domination and female subordination. In the remainder of this section I provide three examples that are representative of how gender *power relations*, *production relations*, and *cathexis* respectively, manifest themselves in snowboarding culture.

Connell’s notion of *gender power relations* is useful to understand the ongoing presence of male domination in the snowboarding culture, despite its vigorous contestation by some female and male snowboarders. For example, biological reductionism features strongly as an implicit defense of male superiority in the snowboarding culture. In the words of one male boarder:

Guys are always going to be better. Chicks are only just doing 900’s [degrees of rotation on a jump on in the half-pipe]. Guys have been doing 900s for ages. Girls just aren’t strong enough. Girls are girls...they are always weaker, the average girl is scared to even put on a snowboard and go down the hill (Tom, personal communication, August 11, 2004).

Furthermore, the following comments from female snowboarders illustrate how “women collude with male hegemony and largely accept the biological explanations offered for their ‘inferior’ performances, even when there is no validity for such explanations” (Bryson, 1990, p. 175):

Boys are always stronger than girls... no matter what, and to be a really good snowboarder you need to be strong... strong girls are never going to be as strong as the top guys. Jana Meyhen, she’s the raddest girl snowboarder there is. For us girls, we are like “wow she can do that?” But to the boys, she ain’t shit. I mean she’s good for a girl but there is no girl that boys can think “wow she’s as good as I am” (Moriah, personal communication, November 14, 2005).

If I think about the whole girl/boy thing, the only thing I find most frustrating is the physical element...not pushing yourself or going to the same limits as boys. I always

admired how boys could have less fear. Girls have so much more self-preservation (Pamela, personal communication, September 18, 2005).

Moriah, an American core female snowboarder, throws further light on the subject:

Moriah: I see girls doing *almost* everything the boys are doing now. But I think girls will always be a step behind the boys. Girls are never going to be leading the sport, never.

Holly: Why do you think that is?

Moriah: I dunno...testosterone. We are girls...we still have that feminine aspect. I think it's really hard to overcome that, and you feel like you still have to be a lady. But in order to ride the stuff these guys are riding *you need to be a man*, and guess what, we don't have a ball-sack... To be a snowboarder I don't know if you can really be a lady, it's not a ladies' sport. Even though we are really pushing it and trying to make it a ladies' sport, *it's a man's sport*...we are the minority (personal communication, November 18, 2005; emphasis added).

Even though some female snowboarders (e.g., olympians, professionals) display particular combinations of force and skill much more effectively than many male boarders, the persistence of beliefs in “normal” differences in physical ability remains “one of the main ways in which the superiority of men becomes ‘naturalized’” (Connell, 1983, cited in Whitson, 1990, p. 24). The key issue here is that these ideologies serve as “symbolic proof of men’s superiority and right to rule” (Connell, 1995, p. 54) and work to undermine women’s participation in snowboarding culture.

The notion of *production relations* (division of labor) is visible in sports cultures where women commonly provide “unpaid domestic or clerical labor to support male-dominated sports clubs” (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 95; also see Thompson, 1999). Similar production relations can be observed in the snowboarding industry. For example, in the majority of snowboard shops visited during my fieldwork, I observed female employees selling clothing while males worked on more technical and knowledge-specific tasks, particularly the selling and repair of equipment.² Not all

² Certainly, the assumption that males are ‘naturally’ more knowledgeable about technology is not snowboarding specific. For example, it is often expected that men will be more knowledgeable about car engines than women (see Mellström, 2002; Wajcman, 1991).

boarders are ignorant of these gendered production relations. Having visited numerous snowboarding shops during a one week trip to Whistler Ski Resort, Canadian novice boarder Marie observed: “The girls stand there and just sell clothes, while the guys sell all the equipment...it’s just assumed that guy snowboarders know more about that stuff than girls” (personal communication, November 7, 2005). The gendering of production relations in the snowboarding culture is certainly changing, as illustrated in Chapter Three (Post-Fordism and the Women’s Niche Market) and Chapter Four (Feminisms and Female Boarders), but the assumed ‘natural’ physical and technological superiority of males continues to permeate the culture.

Cathexis (emotional relations) concerns the “politics of desire in defining gendered objects of pleasure” (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 95). As Donaldson (1993) states, “heterosexuality and homophobia are the bedrock of hegemonic masculinity” (p. 645). A fundamental element of hegemonic masculinity is that “women exist as potential sexual objects for men while men are negated as sexual objects for men. Women provide heterosexual men with sexual validation, and men compete with each other for this” (Donaldson, 1993, p. 645). In snowboarding culture, graphics on snowboards, websites, and advertisements in magazines often objectify women as sexually available (see Chapter Seven: Foucault and the Snowboarding Media). Arguably, such mechanisms work to reinforce all women as sexual objects rather than as competitors. Moreover, such images support the assumption that all snowboarders – male and female – are heterosexual. Nevertheless, many gays and lesbians enjoy snowboarding. Some have even formed clubs and websites, such as Outryders (www.outryders.org) and OutBoard (www.outboard.com). The latter has almost 4000 members in 50 American states and 27 countries. Gay ski weeks in major ski resort destinations attract thousands of boarders and skiers alike. However, openly gay snowboarders tend to be on the margins of the culture (e.g., weekend warriors). By 2007, no professional snowboarders had admitted to being gay. The following comment expressed by a core

female snowboarder is illustrative of the attitudes held by many committed male and female boarders:

At a guess, I would say there wouldn't be too many top snowboarders that are homosexual, probably because you have to be really strong, have lotsa ego, and be able to take big slams, and perhaps the typical gay man wouldn't be *man enough* for that. On the flipside, I wouldn't be surprised if some of the top women snowboarders are gay – cos the stuff they do takes balls!! (Hana, personal correspondence, April 5, 2006; emphasis added)

Homophobia in the snowboarding culture reinforces heterosexuality, at the very least.

As these three representative examples illustrate, Connell's analytical structure offers tools to explain a variety of strategies that help to make men's domination over women appear as commonsense in snowboarding culture. Another key feature of Connell's conceptual schema is the gender order, which, while further extrapolating on the gender relations between men and women, also highlights the relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men.

Gender Order

Like Gramsci, Connell understands power as hierarchically structured (see Pringle, 2005). He describes the hierarchically structured gender order as “a historically constructed pattern of power relations between men and women and definitions of femininity and masculinity... the structural inventory of an entire society” (Connell, 1987, pp. 98-99). In contrast to the notion of patriarchy, which viewed men as an undifferentiated group responsible for the oppression of women, the gender order attends to the diversity of power relations among different groups of men (Messner & Sabo, 1990). At any given historical moment there are “competing and co-existing masculinities, some hegemonic, some marginalized, and some stigmatized” (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 12). Moreover, this gender order is always context-specific. It is a dynamic process and in a constant state of change. According to Connell (1995), four practices and relations construct the main

patterns of masculinity in the current Western gender order: Hegemony, subordination,³ complicity,⁴ and marginalization.⁵ Utilizing the concept of the gender order, we can “begin to conceptualize how hierarchies of race, class, age and sexual preference among men help to construct and legitimize men’s overall power and privilege over women” (Messner, 1990, p. 107).

While Connell advocates examining the various practices and relations of masculinity in the gender order, he tends to focus on hegemonic masculinity. For Connell (1995), it is not necessary to offer a general descriptor of hegemonic masculinity but only to posit that, “a hegemonic form of masculinity [is] the most honored or desired in a particular context” (p. 77). Therefore, to say that a particular form of snowboarding masculinity is hegemonic means “that its exaltation stabilizes a structure of dominance and oppression in the gender order as a whole” (Connell, 1990, p. 94). Moreover, to be culturally exalted the pattern of masculinity “must have exemplars who are celebrated as heroes” (Connell, 1990, p. 94). Hegemonic masculinity in the snowboarding culture is naturalized in the form of the hero and presented through media that revolve around heroes (Connell, 1983).

³ Within the gender order there are specific gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men. According to Connell (1995), the most important case in contemporary European/American society is the dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men. He outlines how gay men are subordinated to straight men via an array of material practices and argues that such practices work to “position homosexual masculinities at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men” (p. 78). But gay masculinity is not the only subordinated masculinity: “some heterosexual men and boys too are expelled from the circle of legitimacy” (Connell, 1995, p. 79).

⁴ Complicity refers to those men (and women) who might not *actively* promote hegemonic masculinity but do not attempt to challenge or change it either. Connell’s (1995) concept of complicity is rendered more plausible given what he refers to as the “patriarchal dividend” (p. 77); the social benefits that men generally gain from the subordination of women, subordinated men and marginalized groups. For the complicit male, these benefits offer power and legitimacy over subordinated and marginalized ‘others’ within the gender order, without having to actively defend or promote it oneself.

⁵ Connell recognizes that the interplay of gender with other structures such as class and race creates further relationships between masculinities. He employs the term ‘marginalization’ to refer to the relations between the masculinities in dominant and subordinated classes or ethnic groups but admits that this term “is not ideal” (1995, p. 80). Marginalization is always relative to the authorization of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group.

As cultural exemplars of hegemonic masculinity, professional male snowboarders do, in various ways, express widespread masculine ideals, fantasies and desires. Physical prowess and risk-taking are important aspects of hegemonic masculinity embodied by professional boarders, and endorsed by the media. The following description of Scotty Wittlake, a professional snowboarder, is a good example:

He rides with a determination to take snowboarding to a not-yet-defined level, with complete disregard for what the snowboarding world is doing, and with no thought to what pain and abuse his body goes through. He searches out terrain that others steer clear of. Jumps with nightmare take-offs and punishing landings aren't obstacles but challenges to Wittlake, who has broken teeth, ribs, both ankles, his nose, collapsed a lung, cracked a femur, and crushed bones in his cheek resulting in the loss of sight in his right eye during his quest to stick the scariest of landings. (McConnaughy, in Blehm, 2003, pp. 115-117)

Snowboarding magazines also regularly feature photos of professional male riders proudly displaying gashes, black eyes, bruises, stitches, swelling and broken bones and, in so doing, culturally exalt those male snowboarders who engage in risky behavior and sustain injury (see also Chapter Six: Bourdieu and 'Boarding Bodies). The representations of idyllic lifestyles (i.e., travel to exotic snowboarding destinations, financial independence, partying, heterosexual prowess) of professional male snowboarders, promoted by snowboarding companies and media (e.g., advertisements and videos), also work to create a compelling mythology for many young men.

According to Chris Sanders, CEO of Avalanche Snowboards,

The dream is basically what the kids see when they look in the magazines and see Damian [Sanders] or Terje [Haakonsen]. They are great lifestyle icons. They have it great. It looks like their lives are 24-hour-a-day adventure. You get handed these plane tickets, you hang out with cool photographers, dye your hair however you want to, and you're making money so your parents have no say in your life. *It's all sex, action, and glamour.* To an 18-year-old guy, this is the dream. (cited in Howe, 1998, p. 68; emphasis added)

The influence of this masculine fantasy is such that one male participant declared he wanted to be a professional snowboarder solely because it would make him "more popular with the girls"

especially the “pro-hos,” who he coarsely described as “only good for a suck off” (Tom, personal communication, August 11, 2004). Observing the influence these cultural exemplars have on the actions of other male boarders, particularly younger males, professional female snowboarder Morgan Lafonte asked: “Why do boys worship men so much? All the men in snowboarding look the same, have the same mannerisms, talk the same and ride the same...I can’t tell the difference and I’m inside the sport” (cited in Howe, 1998, p. 118). In summary, the masculine symbolic identities emulated within board-riding cultures such as snowboarding, work to “keep the symbolic comparison between men and women alive and with it the socio-biological specter that is deployed to reduce complex social phenomena to simplistic understandings of biological difference” (Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 109). Moreover, the commercial promotion of snowboarding’s exemplars is a good example of how hegemony is maintained in gender relations within snowboarding culture.

Connell’s formulations of hegemonic masculinity and gender order have a number of advantages. First, they “allow for a diversity” of masculine identities (Wetherell & Edley, 1999, p. 336). Second, they are more attentive to gender power relations. Third, Connell’s work notes the “relevance of relations between men as well as relations between men and women for the formation of gendered identities” (Wetherell & Edley, 1999, p. 336). Finally, this approach has proved particularly useful for “understanding the broad social context of gender relations” (Wetherell & Edley, 1999, p. 336). Thus, Connell’s concepts of hegemonic masculinity and gender order clearly have some usefulness. Importantly, they can signal the existence of dominant and subordinate patterns of male behavior across various sites, including snowboarding culture, while indicating how such patterns may contribute to the “material actualities of gender inequality” (Whitehead, 2002, p. 92). Certainly, the thinking of Connell and colleagues, and the concept of hegemonic masculinity in particular, have significantly influenced the studies of men, masculinities, and sport that began to emerge in the early 1990s.

By the late 1980s, the concept of hegemony had achieved almost total dominance in sports studies; it explained better than rival theories “the tenacity and staying power” of dominant groups “in the face of...opposition” (Morgan, 1997, p. 189; Gruneau, 1988). According to Ingham and Donnelly (1997), “this Gramscian orientation fit[ted] well with arguments about patriarchy” and was the catalyst for feminist analyses focusing on hegemonic masculinity (p. 387). Scholars working in sport studies in the early 1990s enthusiastically embraced the concept of hegemonic masculinity because it offered both a way for feminists to explain women’s complicity in their own subjectification in a post anti-discrimination law (e.g., Title IX) society, and an opportunity for men to “deconstruct their own sexual politics” (Ingham & Donnelly, 1997, p. 390). Especially notable in relation to the latter was the collaboration between Messner and Sabo (1990) and the work of Pronger (1990). These US male scholars were among the first to employ the notion of hegemonic masculinity as an explanation for those males (as well as women and children) that fell victim in the process of masculine socialization in sport (Ingham & Donnelly, 1997). Connell’s influence on the sociology of sport has been profound, yet his concept of hegemonic masculinity, like all concepts and theories, is a product of its time. “Theories are created by individuals in their search for meaning” in response to concrete conditions, argues Jeffrey Alexander (1995, pp. 79-80). Connell’s thinking, and his concept of hegemonic masculinity, developed at a time when progressive men were trying to make sense of second-wave feminism and to position themselves accordingly. Since then, however, there have been ‘generational shifts’ in gender-relations (see Chapter Four) that call into question much of Connell’s earlier work. Some scholars have recently identified a number of weaknesses in the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and gender order, and have called for their reformulation.

Critique

This section of the chapter highlights a number of weaknesses in, and contradictions surrounding, Connell's conceptual schema. This critique consists of three parts. First, I briefly discuss some of the issues concerning hegemony theory. Following this, I examine several critiques of hegemonic masculinity, which I support with examples from the snowboarding culture. Lastly, I discuss some of the recommended reformulations propounded by 'third-wave' men and masculinities scholars (e.g., Seidler, 2006; Whitehead, 2002).

Hegemony

The concept of hegemony that informs hegemonic masculinity has some shortcomings. First, actually pinning down a strict definition of hegemony is no easy task. It is, as several writers have noted, a very "slippery concept" (Rojek, 1995, cited in Whitehead, 2002, p. 92).⁶ While the concept of hegemony "purports to bridge the structure and agency dichotomy," it lacks an "adequate analysis of the subject" (Whitehead, 2002, p. 92). Consequently, the notion of hegemony "falls prey to being open to quite different interpretations and utilizations by critical theorists" (Whitehead, 2002, p. 92). According to Miller (1998a), the concept of hegemony is highly problematic because it

explains everything and nothing in a circular motion, tending to lack a dynamic history made at specific sites. It accounts for seemingly resistive moves to domination as a function of repressive tolerance, or as incorporated in ruling logics via cooptation; such moves are rarely investigated for themselves but as symptoms of politics from elsewhere, and this 'elsewhere' is the given of whoever currently rules. (p. 433)

⁶ This slipperiness goes back to Gramsci himself who placed hegemony in different historical contexts as well as having to deal with prison censorship (see Anderson, 1976/7).

Furthermore, as Giulianotti (2005) points out, some scholars (e.g., Canclini, 1995) have criticized hegemony theorists for “selecting data to fit (and thus confirm, rather than test or prove) the meta-theory” (p. 56).

A second concern is that despite Gramsci’s emphasis on hegemony as a transformational concept, ultimately he focused on the binary division between competing groups, particularly those with power and those without (Pringle, 2005). While Gramsci’s definition of hegemony appears to rely less on the classical Marxist base-superstructure distinction (see Chapter Two), in the final analysis, all that the concept offers is, according Whitehead (2002), a “fine tuning of conflict theory, with the actions of groups and individuals reduced to a desire or search for material advantage, ideology being the key tool at their disposal in this quest” (p. 92).

In addition, the concept of hegemony has attracted criticisms regarding issues of ideological determination and critical social action. “Ideological interpellation is certainly utilized by dominant groups and institutions...but social actors do not necessarily internalize these messages whole-heartedly, or construct alternative world-views that reflect subordination,” argues Giulianotti (2005, p. 50). Scholars have warned against following some interpretations of hegemony theory into an “overstatement of the ideological predominance of the ‘ruling class’” (Miliband, 1977, cited in Giulianotti, 2005, p. 49) that underplays “the diverse and continuous challenges to that state of domination” (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 49). Pringle (2005) argues that Gramsci’s simplistic connection between ruling groups and power concerned Foucault (1978) who rejected the assertions that one could easily locate the source of power and that “a binary division existed between the ruled and the rulers” (Pringle, 2005, p. 260). There is “no such duality extending from the top down and reacting on more and more limited groups to the very depths of the social body,” argued Foucault (1978, cited in Pringle, 2005, p. 260). While Foucault’s views on power will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven, the key point here is that he opposed

Gramsci's understanding of hegemony and power and particularly, how he traced the working of ideologies back to a ruling group(s).

In summary, Gramsci "accepted the existence of a binary division between dominators and the dominated or between different classes of people" (Pringle, 2005, p. 260). These concerns with different classes, the constraints of institutional structures, the hierarchical workings of power and ideological determination continue to "dominate Gramsci's legacy" (Gruneau, 1993, cited in Pringle, 2005, p. 260). The issues raised here are particularly relevant because a number of these concerns (e.g., the ambiguity of the concept, the dualistic model of hegemonic power, and the over-emphasis on structure and the playing down of agency) also find expression in recent criticisms of Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Recently, researchers have begun to express doubts over the application of Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity (Donaldson, 1993; Martin, 1998; Miller, 1998a; Pringle, 2005; Seidler, 2006; Speer, 2001; Star, 1999; Weatherell & Edley, 1999; Whitehead, 1998, 2002). These doubts center on the ambiguity of the hegemonic masculinity concept, the over-emphasis on structure, the dualistic model of hegemonic power, the tendency to focus on men and ignore women, the lack of concern for relational aspects of gender, the privileging of negative aspects of masculinity, and the narrow representation of men's subjectivities. Each of these concerns will be discussed in turn below.

Edley and Wetherell (1995) are correct to ask, "just what counts as hegemonic masculinity?" (p. 129). Indeed, Miller (1998) describes it as a "hybrid term," which, under the guise of explaining everything, "actually explains nothing" (cited in Speer, 2001, p. 108).

Although commonly used, hegemonic masculinity is rarely explicated in a way that can be easily

applied to empirical evidence. Thus, it has been described as a notion “as slippery and difficult as the idea of masculinity itself” (Donaldson, 1993, p. 644). Pringle (2005) links this ‘slipperiness’ to attempts to “represent an unstable and contextually bound amalgam of multiple and independent discourses” (p. 267). Hegemonic masculinity, he continues, is

typically defined in relation to discourses of sexualities (e.g., heterosexual and homosexual), affects (e.g., emotional toughness, resilience and work ethic), appearances (e.g., muscular, rough and large), occupations (e.g., men’s work vs women’s) and dominations (e.g. male dominance and leadership of females, children, and subjugated and marginalized males). Yet these multiple discourses are not mutually dependent. (p. 267)

Pringle (2005) declares hegemonic masculinity “a term of generalization and generalizations” (p. 267). The concept of hegemonic masculinity leaves a number of questions unanswered including, “how is the theorist to identify instances of ‘masculinity’? By what criteria are these instances identified?” (Coleman, 1990, p. 189; also see Speer, 2001). Given that this chapter is specifically looking for empirical insight into masculinities and femininities in snowboarding culture, this ambiguity makes the concept of hegemonic masculinity highly problematic as an explanatory tool.

While at the macro-structural level, hegemonic masculinity is effective in exemplifying the masculine ethos that privileges what have traditionally been seen as natural male traits (Whitehead, 1999), it has proven inadequate when applied to the analysis of individual subjectivities and their constitutions (Pringle, 2005). As Wetherell and Edley (1999) note, the concept of hegemonic masculinity struggles to account for the reproduction of male identities and the ways that males negotiate understandings of themselves and masculinities (see also Whitehead, 1999). This is particularly apparent in Connell’s (1990) examination of a professional tri-athlete (Steve Donoghue) who is said to live “an exemplary version of hegemonic masculinity” (p. 93). Overall, Giulianotti (2005) argues that rather than employ ethnography to reveal the subtleties of hegemonic masculinity, Connell resorts to “simple *dietrologia*: hidden voices and forces control

[Donoghue] to the extent that one wonders why Connell bothered to interview the athlete” (p. 96). In other words, by assuming that such conditions are the product of ideological and structural dynamics, Connell marginalizes his subject, or even makes him invisible. Within Connell’s conceptual schema, the structure dominates with some insights into (contested) patterns of behavior added. As Whitehead (2002) puts it, “the individual is lost within, or, in Althusserian terms, subjected to, an ideological apparatus and an innate drive for power” (p. 93). The ‘absent subject’ in notions of hegemonic masculinity and the gender order exposes a fundamental weakness in the concept. While it attempts to recognize difference and resistance, ultimately the concept rests on “the notion of a fixed (male) structure” (Whitehead, 2002, p. 94).

A number of social commentators have expressed concerns about the dualistic model of hegemonic power underpinning the concept of hegemonic masculinity, in which complex gendered power relations are reduced to an ‘oppressor-victim’ dualism (Pringle, 2005; Seidler, 2006; Star, 1999; Whitehead, 2002). In *Gender and Power* and his later *Masculinities*, Connell remains caught within a framework of gender and power that insists that men still take for granted privileges and opportunities denied to women. While this reminds me of the continuity of patriarchal relations, locating all masculinities (and femininities) in terms of a single pattern of power – the “global dominance” of men over women (Connell, 1987, p. 183) – is clearly inadequate for understanding relations among groups of men and forms of masculinity, and of women’s relations with dominant masculinities. As the following example of an unknown woman deflating a known male snowboarder’s ego illustrates, gender power relations in snowboarding culture are considerably more complex than the dominance of men over women:

The mandatory post-contest party was held at someone's house in nearby Donner (California). Swierz and I were getting pushed around in this sea of people, when some girl asked us, "So, who are you guys?" Swierz said, "I'm Kris," and I said, "I'm Todd Richards." She flattened me with one fell swoop. "Do you always introduce yourself with your full name?" she asked. I was a stuttering idiot at that point but she went on. "Why do you have to introduce yourself as Todd Richards? Do you think I'll recognize your name or something? I don't care if you are some pro, so get over yourself." This wouldn't have been so horrible if she hadn't been so right on. Truth be told, I knew there was a little bit of a buzz going on about me, and I wanted to impress her. Being a pro had been my biggest goal, and I flaunted it a bit. Boy, that girl chopped my ego in half. (Richards, 2003, p. 93)

I argue that the agency of female snowboarders, and its effect on male subjectivities, cannot be reduced to an 'oppressor-victim' dualism. It must be noted that, acknowledging the limitations of his conceptual schema, Connell recently conceded the need for "better ways of understanding gender hierarchy" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 847).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity not only implicitly echoes a radical feminist conception of men as the bearers of power, it also reinforces a radical duality in the ways we think of men and women (Seidler, 2006). Despite the concept of hegemony initially being introduced into discussions of masculinity to deal with relational issues – most importantly, the connections between the differences and hierarchies among men, and the relations between men and women (Connell, 2000) – the majority of studies have dichotomized the experiences of men and women.⁷ As Brod (1994) accurately observes, there is a tendency in men's studies to presume "separate spheres" and proceed as if women were not relevant to the analysis (cited in Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 837). The exclusion of women from men and masculinities research is, as Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) have recently acknowledged, regrettable because "gender is

⁷ It should be noted here that the concept of hegemonic masculinity was "originally formulated in tandem with the concept of hegemonic femininity – later renamed 'emphasized femininity' to acknowledge the asymmetrical position of masculinities and femininities in a patriarchal gender order. ...In the development of research on men and masculinities, their relationship has dropped out of focus" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 848).

always relational” and “patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity” (p. 848).

Another important limitation of this dualistic model, that sees men as either disrupting or contributing to the gender order, is the tendency to focus on negative aspects of masculinity (Pringle, 2005). Collier (1998) sees this as a crucial deficit in the concept and notes that masculine behavior can “serve both interests and desires of women” (cited in Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 840). The tendency to highlight negative aspects of masculinity was particularly apparent in critical sociological studies of men’s experiences in sport during the 1980s and 1990s that represented sport “as a hostile cultural space for boys to grow up in and to develop relationships with one another and with women” (McKay, Messner & Sabo, 2000, p. 6).

Certainly, the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and gender order have been valuable in exposing relations between diverse masculinities. At the same time, however, they have narrowed the terms in which these masculinities can be understood (Seidler, 2006). Over time hegemonic masculinity has become a universal form of theory that can be imported into different contexts; the practitioner simply “‘fill[s] in’ in the cultural differences and rethink[s] the relations of gender power within a specific culture” (Seidler, 2006, p. 12). It is as if the theory “stands alone, in its own space and is not open to critical reframing through an engagement with the lived experience of diverse masculinities” (Seidler, 2006, p. 12).

Arguably, Connell’s (1995) theory of four broad categories of masculinities – hegemonic, subordinate, complicit and marginalized – acts to “shape research conclusions in a manner that makes it difficult to account for more fluid or ambiguous subjectivities” (Pringle, 2005, p. 266; also see Miller, 1998b). In reality, men can position themselves in multiple ways, depending on the context; they can seem “both hegemonic and non-hegemonic...at the same time” (Wethereall & Edley, 1999, p. 343). Miller (1998a) is particularly concerned by the relative rigidity of how the

concept of hegemonic masculinity contributes to the representation of subjectivities. He asks rhetorically:

Can hegemonic masculinity allow for theoretical diversity and historical change, and for those times when men are not being men, when their activities might be understood as discontinuous, conflicted, and ordinary rather than interconnected, functional, and dominant – when nothing they do relates to the overall domination of women or their own self formation as a gendered group? (p. 433)

Such concerns are especially relevant when discussing masculinity in contemporary snowboarding culture, as I shall demonstrate in the next section.

Fratriarchal hyper-masculinity is a dominant force in snowboarding culture,⁸ but we must also consider the potential for new individual sports, such as windsurfing, skateboarding, and snowboarding, to “broaden the boundaries of sporting masculinities” (Wheaton, 2000a, p. 434; also see Beal, 1996). Confirming this sentiment, professional snowboarder Gretchen Bleiler (March 2005) states:

Football requires tons of training and big muscles – snowboarding, well, doesn’t. It’s more a means to express your creativity, an added bonus being that if you’re a skinny, scrawny person, you might even do better than that guy with big muscles. (p. 58)

Moreover, while most professional male snowboarders exemplify hegemonic masculine affects (e.g., emotional toughness) and notions of sexuality (e.g., heterosexual) few fit Western society’s exemplary masculine model in terms of physical appearance (e.g., muscular, rough, large). Rather, professional male snowboarders tend to be short and slight in stature.⁹ Hence, individual sports such as snowboarding, which do not privilege the hyper-masculine physique, provide ‘other’ men with opportunities for participation; men who might otherwise be excluded from traditionally masculine team sports (e.g., rugby union, rugby league, ice-hockey, American football). Arguably, snowboarding simultaneously reinforces dominant forms of masculinity and provides space for

⁸ I will discuss the snowboarding fratriarchy in depth in the third part of this chapter.

⁹ Big mountain riders are an exception. This will be discussed in the third part of this chapter.

alternative masculinities.¹⁰ Employing the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and gender order, however, it is difficult to explain such complexities. For example, as I demonstrate in the following example, hegemonic masculinity does not explain the complex subjective positions adopted by professional snowboarder Shaun White.

In the 2005-2006 season White became the most successful snowboard competitor in the history of the sport, with 12 consecutive wins, including two X-Games gold medals, an olympic gold medal in the half-pipe, and victory in the US Open half-pipe and slope-style championships. The legendary skateboarder Tony Hawk described him as “one of the most amazing athletes on the planet” (cited in Edwards, 2006, p. 45). In the media coverage of his olympic celebrations White was shown crying openly with his parents and siblings. In 2006 he was 19 years old, five-foot eight (177 centimeters) and only 140 pounds (63.5 kilograms). He is nicknamed the ‘flying tomato.’ He has publicly admitted to being scared when snowboarding in Alaska (Bridges, 2005); and *Rolling Stone* declared him “the coolest *kid* in America” (front-cover, March 9, 2006) (see Figure 1.5). While White demonstrates high levels of physical prowess and dominates snowboarding competitions with his aggressive riding style, he does not exemplify hegemonic masculine affects (e.g., emotional toughness) or fit the exemplary Western masculine model in terms of physical appearance (e.g., muscular, rough, large). It is problematic to try and categorize Shaun White as either an embodiment or exemplar of any of Connell’s four types of masculinity (i.e., hegemonic, subordinate, complicit, or marginalized). In other words, Connell’s multiple masculinities paradigm makes it difficult to represent the complexities of contemporary masculinities (Pringle, 2005).

¹⁰ For similar observations in the windsurfing and skateboarding cultures see Wheaton and Tomlinson (1998), Wheaton (2000a), and Beal (1996).



Figure 1.5 After winning a gold medal in the half-pipe event at the 2006 winter olympics, Shaun White appeared on the March cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine.

Despite the appeal of the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and gender order, they reveal fundamental inconsistencies and weaknesses in their ability to explain the dynamic and fluid relationships between men, and men and women, in the early twenty-first century. As previously mentioned, it is also important to question the relevance of these theoretical frameworks, developed in the 1970s and 1980s, for explaining contemporary gender relations. Ways of talking, thinking, representing and practicing masculinities and femininities have changed significantly since these concepts were developed. This is particularly apparent in the contemporary snowboarding culture where there is an increasing plurality of masculinities. Indeed, the increasing array of masculinities is a process that has been accelerated by a post-Fordist system that

encourages the fragmentation of snowboarding culture. Much like masculine identities in windsurfing culture, masculinities in snowboarding culture are being increasingly “centered on and around leisure consumption practices” (Wheaton, 2003, p. 193). This is particularly apparent in current cultural exemplars. Professional female snowboarder, Gretchen Bleiler (2005b) comments on this development:

I’ve run into an awful lot of fashion-conscious males in snowboarding lately. Professional riders used to spend hours working on a never-been-done-before trick, now they spend hours flipping through *GQ* [men’s fashion magazine] for the latest clothing trends. (p. 60)

This trend is not limited to the cultural elite. Many young male snowboarders also place high importance on the latest snowboarding fashions. Arguably, the male snowboarding body, like other male bodies, is now subject to “objectification and (patterns of) consumption in a similar way to that which has long been experienced by female bodies” (Whitehead, 2002, p. 182). Another trend in snowboarding fashions is the production of male snowboarding outerwear, clothing, and equipment in traditionally ‘feminine’ colors (e.g., pastel pinks and blues, bright pink, etc.). Interestingly, many male snowboarders have embraced this trend and, in so doing, are playing with traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, as well as assumed heterosexuality (see Figure 1.6). In the words of a core female snowboarder, “it is really acceptable for boys to be ‘super feminine’ these days. I mean...all my snowboarder boy friends are way more gossipy than me. They are wearing pink and fur, and they love going shopping too” (Moriah, personal communication, November 14, 2005). The movement (by some, not all, men) away from hyper-masculinity in snowboarding culture is highly compatible with consumption. As Donaldson (1993) observes, changes in masculinities, particularly “the emotional liability and soft receptivity of what’s new and exciting,” are more appropriate to a consumer-oriented society than “hardness and emotional distance” (p. 652).

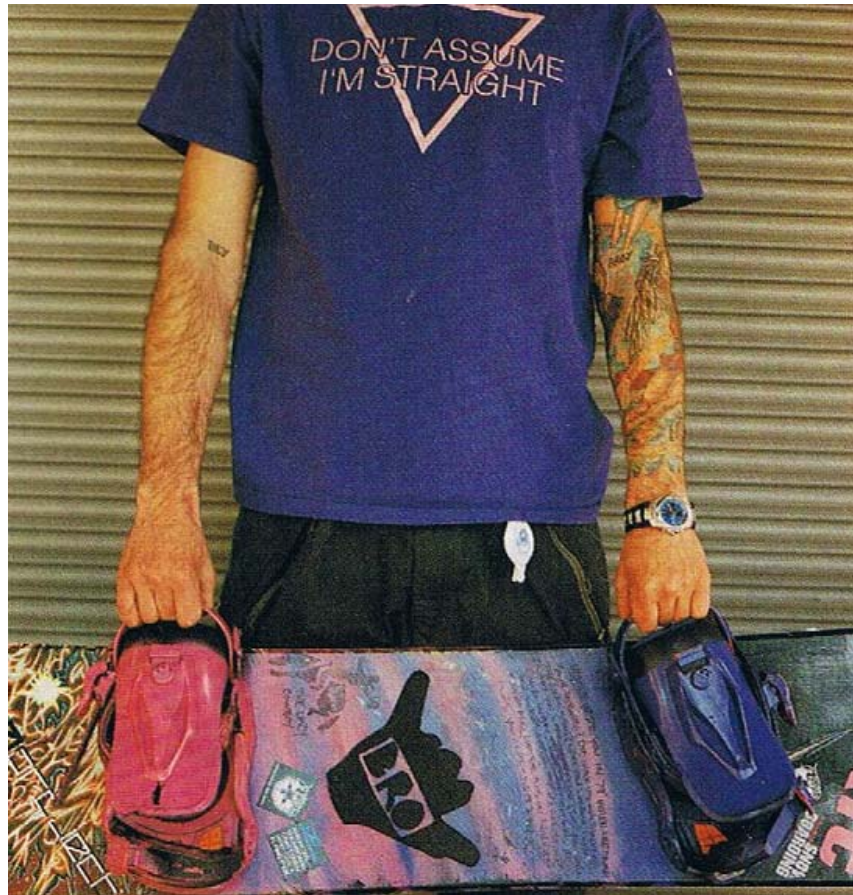


Figure 1.6 This image, featured in the September 2002 issue of *Transworld Snowboarding* magazine, is illustrative of the trend popular among some male snowboarders to play with traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, as well as assumed heterosexuality. This particular male snowboarder's equipment is pink and purple, traditionally 'feminine' colors, he sports extensive tattooing on his arms, and he wears a t-shirt that questions his sexuality.

Clearly, masculinities and femininities are plural and multiple; they differ over space, time, and context, and are rooted in the cultural and social moment (Whitehead, 2002). Thus, it is no longer tenable to talk of males or masculinity in the singular, it is now necessary to employ the term 'masculinities' both to "reflect our new times and to expose the cultural construction and expression of masculinity to closer and more exacting cultural scrutiny" (Beynon, 2002, p. 1). According to Seidler (2006), we can no longer assume the viability of such theoretical frameworks that largely emerged in relation to second-wave feminism:

we need to be aware of how gender relations have transformed within patriarchal cultures... This does not imply that patriarchal relationships have disappeared or that violence against women and gays has lessened but such relationships do not carry the same legitimacy for young people who have often grown up within very different gender and sexual orders. They do not have the same concerns as previous generations; nor do young women and men identify the centrality of their relationships with feminism. (p. 3)

Whitehead (1998) also sees critical writing on masculinity “locked in an unproductive, sterile and incestuous relationship with concepts that, while useful, have little more to tell us about men – and even less to tell us about multiple masculinities as ways of being, now apparent in late or post-modernity” (p. 61). Like Whitehead (1998, 2002) and Seidler (2006), my research means that I, too, am uneasy about theorizations that seem to be caught within a particular historical moment when men were first reacting to the challenges of second-wave feminism. I am particularly concerned with the limitations of Connell’s initial dualistic and reductionist model of power for explaining the agency of young female snowboarders, and the subjective gendered experiences of young male and female boarders. Thus, I concur with Seidler (2006), who states that “in order to relate to different generation and cultural experiences of masculinities, we need to break with some of the inherited frameworks and attempt to ask new kinds of questions” (p. xxvi). Before abandoning Connell’s concepts altogether, however, I think it is necessary to consider the possibility of reformulation.

Reformulation

A “third-wave” has recently emerged within the critical study of men and masculinities that acknowledges the limitations of Connell’s conceptual schema for explaining the complex gender dynamics of difference, subjectivity, power and identity in contemporary society, and suggests new directions (Whitehead, 2002, p. 100). According to Whitehead (2002), the so-called ‘third-wave’ has its roots in identical developments in feminism (see Chapter Four) and general sociology. At

the heart of this new sociology of masculinities is the attempt to understand the connections between the illusory character of masculinities and the material consequences of men's practices, and the influence of culture and environment on this process (Whitehead, 2002). While some proponents of the 'third-wave' advocate abandoning Connell's conceptual schema altogether and employing postmodern or post-structuralist perspectives in their critical study of men and masculinities (e.g., Pringle, 2005; Whitehead, 2002), others recommend significant reformulations of the existing frameworks. Understandably, Connell is a strong advocate of the latter and has proposed numerous reformulations of the concept. For example, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) have argued for:

a more complex model of gender hierarchy; emphasizing the agency of women; explicit recognition of the geography of masculinities, emphasizing the interplay among local, regional, and global levels; a more specific treatment of embodiment in contexts of privilege and power; and a stronger emphasis on the dynamics of hegemonic masculinity, recognizing internal contradictions and the possibilities of movement toward gender democracy. (p. 829)

The following section pursues a selection of these recommendations (i.e., a more complex model of gender hierarchy; emphasizing the agency of women; and the interplay of masculinities and femininities) in a discussion of masculinities and femininities in the snowboarding culture. In so doing, however, the discussion ultimately shows that despite the potential of these recommendations for shedding light on areas in the study of men and masculinities, many of the critiques leveled against Connell's original conceptual schema continue to hold true.

Reformulation and Masculinities in the Snowboarding Culture

This section of the chapter examines the relations between different kinds of masculinities within snowboarding culture. More specifically, it attempts to pursue a selection of 'third-wave' masculinity recommendations (i.e., emphasizing the interplay of masculinities and femininities,

and the agency of women) for a more complex model of gender hierarchy via an examination of masculinities and age. Despite their apparent similarities, boys, young men and older men involved in sports such as snowboarding “bring different problems, anxieties, hopes, and dreams to their athletic experiences, and thus tend to draw different meanings from, and make different choices about their athletic [experiences]” (Messner, 1992, p. 153). Thus, the following discussion compares and contrasts the snowboarding experiences of ‘Grommets’ (pre- and early adolescent boys), ‘The Bro’s’ (young men), ‘The Real Men’ (big mountain boarders), and ‘The Old Guys’ (late twenties and beyond) – categories used by the participants themselves – respectively. There are, of course, numerous exceptions to these groupings (e.g., a male snowboarder in his thirties acting like a teenager on the mountain). However, I do not believe we should allow the exceptions to deny the differing realities of the lived experiences of boys, young men, and older men in the snowboarding culture.

Snowboarding is, for the most part, a gender-integrated activity with male and female boarders participating alongside one another; they share the slopes, chairlifts, terrain-parks and half-pipes. Thus, not only does the following discussion describe the different masculinities in the snowboarding culture, it also responds to McKay, Messner and Sabo’s (2000) call for more “critical *relational* studies of gender and sport” (p. 5), and considers the reciprocal relationships between men and women, as well as examining individuals’ experiences of gender in this mixed-sex environment.

Grommets

'Grommet' is a name typically given to pre- and early-pubescent male snowboarders.¹¹ Grommets tend to experience snowboarding in different ways to their older peers. They take snowboarding very seriously; as one young male boarder wrote, "I eat, breathe, and sleep snowboarding. It takes all of my thought away from me during school and while I'm at home. I almost get breathless watching snowboarding on television" (retrieved from www.snowboard.com, February 16, 2005). For these young males, snowboarding is an important site for constructing a distinctive 'snowboarder identity' that has links to masculinity. As with many other sports and physical youth cultures, physical prowess seems to be, and is seen as, a "rite of passage" to manhood, the "completion of a young boy's masculinity" (Whannel, 1992, cited in Macdonald, 2001, p. 106; also see Young, 1965). Connell (1987) argues that, "what it means to be masculine is, quite literally, to embody force, to embody competence" (p. 27). Especially among young male snowboarders, for whom "other sources of recognized masculine authority (earning power, sexual relations, fatherhood) are some way off, the development of body appearance and body language that are suggestive of force and skill is experienced as an urgent task" (Whitson, 1990, p. 23).

Grommets tend to approach snowboarding with full gusto and, having yet to experience or understand the full consequences of serious injury, often appear fearless. Observing the growing number of young boarders on the mountain, Canadian novice boarder Marie commented:

There are so many kids now that are between the ages of 7-10, and they are fearless, and they are tiny, so they can whip through trees and moguls, and I don't necessarily think in control. You see 9-year-old boys going off huge jumps in the terrain park, flipping and spinning but I don't know how much riding skills they actually have. I call these kids the 'Gumbie Babies,' they have no fear and just seem to bounce back (Marie, personal communication, November 12, 2005).

¹¹ Young male surfers and skateboarders are also called 'Grommets.'

Similarly, Pamela, a New Zealand snowboarding coach explained, “being naïve is the most valuable thing and you see that with the young guys, before they have their first big accident, they are just mad, they have so much youthful enthusiasm and energy” (personal communication, September 18, 2005). Many older male boarders are more cautious: “Grommets seem out of control...always trying to progress too fast and end up endangering us all. Plus they seem so overdone with the current fashions, music and catch phrases. They look and act like dickheads sometimes” (Nick, personal correspondence, April 4, 2006).

Older male snowboarders often see it as their responsibility to actively patrol boys’ behavior on and off the mountain. According to Gavin, a more senior core boarder: “Grommets are the best, they are the future of the sport and its good to see them ripping. But it’s important to pull them up when they get out of line and start getting too cocky, or too smart, for their own good” (personal correspondence, March 29, 2006). Grommets occasionally experience aggressive and demeaning ‘initiation’ rituals from older male boarders who believe this is an important part of ‘becoming a real snowboarder.’¹² For example, “grommets these days lack respect, they are cocky, and will get to a stage in their lives where they will realize they should have shut their gobs and learned from those older and wiser,” declared one core male snowboarder: “It is these smart-ass grommets with no-respect that get their nuts shaved and glued onto their legs” (Andrew, personal correspondence, March 27, 2006). Despite (or perhaps because of) having experienced similar

¹² While working at a ski-resort in Oregon (United States) during the 2001-2002 winter season I witnessed the extent of these initiation rituals. At a party I was witness to a homemade video played for the entertainment of the guests. The video featured three boys, between the ages of 11-13, being forced to drink excessive amounts of alcohol by a group of older male snowboarders, who were supposed to be their caregivers and coaches for the weekend. These boys were then exposed to a variety of demeaning pranks; they were stripped to their underpants, derogatory terms such as ‘dickhead’ and ‘gaper’ were written across their foreheads and chests in heavy-duty marker pens, they were violently pushed into cold showers, and then locked in dark rooms in separate parts of the house. Initially the boys saw the humor in the activities and seemed to be enjoying the attention the older males were paying them but, by the end of the video, they appeared genuinely terrified, and two of the boys were crying hysterically and calling out for their mothers. While watching the videotape, the perpetrators of this dehumanizing and violent behavior laughed and joked, and explained how these “little spoilt brats” deserved everything they received. The majority of the partygoers also saw the humor in this hazing ritual. Despite the disturbing nature of this video, no one questioned the perpetrators’ actions.

‘initiation’ practices in his early snowboarding career, Gavin accepts it as “a rite of passage that we all experience” (personal correspondence, March 29, 2006).

Most frequently, grommets, like other young males, congregate with peers of similar age and ability, who become their audience and an important source of validation (Messner, 1987). In fact, peer approval seems to be the most important motive for these boys (see Wheaton, 2000a, for similar observations in windsurfing culture). These groups are hierarchically organized based on snowboarding ability and the boys are often highly competitive with one another for positions within this hierarchy. As Kimmel (1994) writes, masculinity depends upon comparison; it “must be proved, and no sooner is it proved than it is again questioned and must be proven again” (p. 122). Grommets tend to be so focused on proving themselves to their peers and older males that they give little attention, or respect, to female snowboarders. For example, as a snowboarding instructor (2000-2003) I frequently taught boys, many of who were initially surprised and/or disappointed to meet their *female* instructor. In order to gain their respect it was often necessary to prove my superior physical prowess early on in the lesson. In contrast, my male counterparts automatically received the respect of their boy students.

Grommets tend to hero-worship professional male snowboarders. For example, writing about his years as a grommet in the snowboarding culture, Todd Richards (2003) described his adoration of an early professional male snowboarder:

I was in the crowd of gawkers on the sidelines when I saw him strapping into his red Terry Kidwell Signature Pro Model – the first pro model snowboard ever. The world stopped, and in my mind the theme song from *Chariots of Fire* came on as he slid slow motion toward the giant kicker and floated the most stylish, gigantic method air. He was airborne like twenty feet up with his back leg kicked out straight. He held the grab forever and then absorbed the landing on the steep downhill as effortlessly as though he was pumping the wall of a skateboard half-pipe. Kidwell was the first person I saw ride who looked like he should be doing it. He was made to be in the air on a snowboard – smooth, effortless, and *godlike*. I wanted that session to last forever so I could soak up every bit of his style. From that moment forward, *I wanted to be Terry Kidwell*. (p. 66; emphasis added)

This excerpt is representative of many grommets' cultural idolization of professional male snowboarders who demonstrate significant physical prowess.

Furthermore, the transition from grommet to one of 'The Bro's' can be an exciting experience for young male boarders particularly when it is based on recognition of their physical prowess, and thus 'manliness.' Todd Richards (2003) recalled two occasions in which he first started gaining acceptance into the snowboarding fraternity:

This session was just for fun but I still felt the *pressure to perform*. I waited for a gap in the action, dropped in, snapped into an Andrecht [hand-plant] on that little wall, stalled the living shit out of it, and then casually laid it down. I looked around and noticed Tucker and Kidwell were staring at me. Kidwell said, "Dude, that's messed up!" and Tucker followed with, "How did you do that? There's nothing there." Nothing compares to that moment in the shitty Donner halfpipe when Terry Kidwell and the Tahoe crew paid me a compliment for my riding. Nothing. (p. 89; emphasis added)

I'll never forget the smell of that pipe: crisp morning air mixed with the grease from the chairlifts overhead. I love that smell. I was allowed to session the pipe early by Burton police, along with *proven competitors* like Mike Jacoby, Craig Kelly, Kelly Jo Legaz and others. Normally, the *newer kids* had to wait and practice with the other open-class riders but *I was invited inside the fence* when they saw me watching. *I had graduated from the minors*, even though I still felt like [a] boy. (p. 98; emphasis added)

As these comments illustrate, for young male snowboarders to gain acceptance into the snowboarding fraternity, it is not simply enough to *be*: "A [young] man must do, display and prove" (Miles, 1991, cited in Macdonald, 2001, p. 103). Moreover, like in the broader youth culture, making claim to a masculine snowboarding identity also "depends upon public acceptance of that claim and social support for expressing that claim" (Emler & Reicher, 1995, p. 229).

The Bro's

A fraternity is a group of young men who compete for prestige through demonstrations of physical prowess, courage and gameness. Fraternity is the "rule of the brother-[hood]s" (Remy, 1990, cited in Loy, 1995, p. 265). Remy (1990) notes that fraternity: (1) "is a mode of male

domination which is concerned with a quite different set of values from those of patriarchy;” (2) “is based simply on the self-interest of the association of men itself;” (3) “reflects the demand of a group of lads to have the ‘freedom’ to do as they please, to have a good time;” and (4) “implies primarily the domination of the *age set*...of young men who have not taken on family responsibilities” (cited in Loy, 1995, p. 265). Across the social world, young men engage in action situations in which they display, test and subject their behavior to social evaluation. This fraternal behavior is also apparent in snowboarding, particularly at the core of the culture. As previously mentioned, more than 75 per cent of snowboarders are under the age of 24, and between 60 and 70 per cent of all participants are men. Thus, it is inevitable that young men in their late teens and early twenties, sometimes referred to as the “brotherhood” or “The Bro’s” (field-notes, 2003, 2004, 2005), constitute a dominant force at the core of the snowboarding culture. Young men in the snowboarding fraternity adopt a variety of covert and overt strategies to exclude and marginalize women and ‘other’ men, and reinforce their hegemonic position in snowboarding culture.

The *Whiskey* videos produced by core Canadian boarders Sean Kearns and Sean Johnson in the mid to late 1990s epitomize the snowboarding fraternity. They featured male snowboarders in their late teens and early twenties, many of whom were also skateboarders, consuming excessive amounts of alcohol, vomiting, performing violent acts against themselves and others (e.g., smashing empty beer bottles over their own heads or over their friends’ heads, often repeatedly), and engaging in destructive behavior (e.g., smashing windows). The only images of women were in the style of soft-pornography. The low-budget *Whiskey* videos were the first to document this aspect of the snowboarding lifestyle. “In those days, *Whiskey* was the dope shit,” recalled Sean Kearns, “fuckin’ smash, break and crash – that was it” (cited in LeFebvre, 2005, para. 9). In the first *Whiskey* video, a conversation between snowboarder Kris Markovick (who is seen vomiting

violently) and the unknown camera operator reveals the criteria for inclusion into this fraternal group:

Kris: "Someone told me the only way to get into the Whiskey videos was to throw up."

Camera operator: "It's either that or you smash a bottle over your head."

Camera operator: "You chose the easier way" [vomiting from excessive alcohol consumption].

Not wanting to appear 'weak' Kris replied: "I'll do the bottle later." (*Whiskey The Movie*, 1994)

The men in these videos show a complete disregard for their own, and their friends', safety and health. Despite the increasing professionalism in snowboarding since the production of these videos, many of the ideals promoted in the *Whiskey* videos retain some force within the contemporary snowboarding fraternity. For example, professional snowboarder Scotty Wittlake sarcastically described his relationship to his body: "My body's a temple, so only the finest fast foods enter it. And with a mug like this, you need beauty sleep, so I try to get at least six hours a week. When it comes to exercise...I try to do as many 40-ounce curls as I can" (How Do, 2003, p. 16). Moreover, the following excerpt from Todd Richards' (2003) autobiography highlights the excessive alcohol consumption and juvenile humor and pranks at the core of the contemporary snowboarding fraternity:

The secret was to pick the *weakest* animal in the herd and then patiently wait for him to drink himself to oblivion. After he passed out, someone would generally say a prayer to the effect of, "God help him." Then we would move in like hyenas, with magic markers, honey, duct tape, and anything else that was handy. It would begin innocently enough, with a large 'idiot' written on the forehead. A moustache would be added then a big red penis on the side of the cheek with the business end aimed right at the ol' kisser. Empty beer cans and beer bottles would be shoved ceremoniously down the victim's pants, honey massaged into his hair, and by the time we'd finished, his entire face, eyebrows, neck, and other exposed skin would be covered in 'non-toxic' ink. The coup de grace was duct-taping beer bottles onto both hands. Not like he's holding the bottles but with the bottles pointing in the same direction as his outstretched fingers. When he'd go to scratch himself, hopefully on the head or the balls, it would be with a thunk. (p. 176)

This comment also identifies strong elements of the hierarchy (i.e., the “weakest animal”) that is characteristic of the snowboarding patriarchy.

Much like the stars of the *Whiskey* videos, many young male snowboarders accept injury and risk-taking as part of the core snowboarding experience. The following narratives, shared with me proudly by young male snowboarders during interviews, are illustrative of the reckless relationships many young men have with their bodies:

In the 2002 X-Games at Whakapapa, I was competing. I came down to the medical bay; I had 4 cracked ribs and a twisted knee and I was the least injured guy there; fractured skulls, massive back injuries, guys with their calves ripped open, you name it. It was crazy. I was just like, “give me my two Panadols [painkillers] and I’ll be on my way.” *Accidents happen aye*. In the 2000 season I knocked myself unconscious three times and ski patrol banned me until I came back with a helmet (Hamish, personal communication, September 18, 2005; emphasis added).

I fractured my radial head in my elbow this season jumping off a 30ft cliff [in Whistler, Canada]. Putting my hand down straight, the impact rammed my radius into my humerus chipping the end off it. But it only had me out for 28 days (Colin, personal correspondence, August 24, 2004).

Not dissimilar from proving hyper-masculinity by smashing a bottle over your own head (as seen in the *Whiskey* videos), experiencing serious injury and demonstrating stoic courage in the endurance of pain is portrayed as simply part of the achievement of manhood and confirms particular forms of superiority in relation to other men (see Seidler, 2006; Whitehead, 2002). In the telling words of one male snowboarder, “catching an edge on hard pack [ice] will put hair on your chest. I’m a man!” (cited in Curtes, Eberhardt & Kotch, 2001, p. 6).

The importance of male bonding as an exclusionary practice, or of the extreme desire to differentiate themselves from women, should not be underestimated. Loy (1995) notes that the presence of women as objects of ridicule, humiliation and abuse helps strengthen fraternal bonds and reinforce male domination. While blatant abuse on snowboard fields is rare, snowboarding media representations frequently ridicule and humiliate women by promoting them as sex objects

(see Chapter Seven: Foucault and the Snowboarding Media). For example, an advertisement for Treble Cone resort in a recent edition of *New Zealand Snowboarder* featured a male snowboarder glancing back at a near naked female tied to his bed as he leaves to go snowboarding. The accompanying text reads: 'Sorry babe. Extremely big powder day.' An extreme case of female humiliation resulted in a court case in which two French boarders, Julian Joud (a former snowboard champion) and Jeremy Boissonnet, were found guilty of splicing pornographic footage into a snowboarding video. According to the press release, Joud admitted it was "a really bad idea to film the sex" that took place between his friend and the unwitting woman: "I did it as a laugh but it was a bad joke" (Porn Conviction, 2005, para. 15). The court found the men guilty of invading the woman's privacy and making pornography available to minors; they were fined a total of 5000 euros, to be paid to the woman in the video, and given suspended prison sentences of eight months. According to Whitson (1990), practices that ridicule and humiliate women, such as the examples mentioned above, "encourage male bonding and encourage the exclusion of women from the brotherhood" (p 25).

Gossip regarding the sexuality of female snowboarders is widespread in the snowboarding culture, and particularly in the snowboarding fraternity.¹³ Snowboarding journalist Kerri Miholme (2005) described it as an "inevitable fact that everyone in a mountain town knows everyone else's business" (p. 64). "As soon as you start dating someone in a ski-town," she warns, you are privy to being "drawn and quartered by the town grapevine" (Miholme, 2005, p. 64). This is especially true for top female snowboarders. Some professional female boarders currently hold very visible positions within the culture and are paid salaries higher than those of their male counterparts. In

¹³ In her study of masculinities in the windsurfing culture, Wheaton (2000a) observed the prevalence of young male windsurfers "developing reputations of heterosexual prowess by 'telling stories' about sexual conquests and/or by being seen to successfully 'chat up' women," and concluded that "peer approval seemed to be an important motive" (p. 441).

response, a subtle backlash puts these women in their sexual place via the strategies of story telling and gossip. As discussed in Chapter One (The Sociology of Female Physical Youth Culture), while completing fieldwork in Salt Lake City (Utah, USA) I was privy to scandalous conversations between a fraternal group of core male snowboarders that reduced professional female snowboarders to sexual objects. Snippets from the conversations included: “She’s probably the hottest female snowboarder and she rides really good but from what I hear, she’s gets a bit freaky in the bedroom;” “she was sleeping on my floor and asked whether my bed was comfortable, I knew she wanted me to invite her in... she really wanted it” (field notes, November 13, 2005). The group also declared another top female snowboarder “a butch lesbian” (field notes, November 13, 2005). A follow-up discussion with the only other female boarder present during these conversations was revealing:

X is a loud, strong woman and if she were here she would set these rumors straight. I think X must have [sexually] denied some guy along the way, he got mad, and started these rumors. Or maybe she just showed him up on the hill.

Guys wanna hump guys. Boys love themselves and other boys. Really, boys don’t want to be with girls that snowboard. If you’re a girl that *really* snowboards or skateboards then you are competition to them, and they don’t want competition. That’s why all these rumors are coming out about X being a bit kinky in her sex life and Y being a lesbian. They like girls who pretend to snowboard but if you’re a girl that actually skateboards and snowboards you’re kind of a threat to them, and boys aren’t used to threats. They are used to threats from boys but not from girls. I think boys are intimidated by a girl that can actually do it (personal communication, November 14, 2005).

Aspects of this comment, particularly “If you’re a girl that actually snowboards...then you are competition to them, and they don’t want competition,” “guys wanna hump guys” and “boys love themselves and other boys,” are illustrative of this woman’s critical awareness of the fraternal practices of young men in snowboarding culture. The key point here, however, is that the circulation of rumors regarding the sexuality of top female snowboarders can reduce these women to sexual objects and act to remove any threat they may pose to the snowboarding patriarchy.

While completing fieldwork in Whistler (November 2005) I overheard an interesting conversation that sheds further light on how some young men encourage male bonding and successfully discourage relationships with women that might ultimately threaten the brotherhood. A group of young males sitting at a local bus stop were chatting about a group of girls they had met the previous night. When one member of the group declared the girls “just a bunch of snow bunnies,” the others nodded and leered in agreement. But when one young man disagreed and admitted he was “interested in ‘Nancy’ and might call her back,” his friends immediately tried to dissuade him. They proclaimed loudly: “She would just be a distraction from your snowboarding man, and that’s what we are here to do, snowboard every day. Come on bro, we made a pact, no girlfriends, remember? She will just get in the way!” (field notes, November 11, 2005). Mark Stranger (1998) found similar sexist attitudes among male surfers where women seeking genuine companionship and shared relationships quickly discovered their expectations “clashed starkly with the pattern of a surfer’s life that prioritized the search for surf over virtually all else” (cited in Booth, 2002, p. 7). Like surfing, the fraternal structure of snowboarding culture devalues women as part of a process to help men define their masculinity.

However, some women refuse to be excluded and successfully negotiate spaces for themselves within the snowboarding patriarchy. There is, however, little room within the fraternal structures of the snowboarding culture for female boarders to express themselves as women. As Fine (1987) found in other male-dominated groups, “men set the standards that women must live up to and masculinity remains the yardstick against which women are judged” (cited in Macdonald, 2001, p. 131). It is accepted as ‘commonsense’ that to excel in snowboarding requires inherently male qualities. Thus, to be accepted into the snowboarding patriarchy, a woman must behave in a ‘masculine’ manner. She must demonstrate the same attributes that young men are thought to possess. For example, Hana, a top New Zealand snowboarder who rides, lives, works

and travels with a group of “guy friends,” is treated “like one of the boys” because she “ride[s] as hard as them” (personal correspondence, April 5, 2006). Hana admitted that to gain the respect of her male peers and inclusion into this group she has to “hit the same features as them, and don’t be a wimp. Sometimes I have to tell myself to stop being a pussy and just do it; I have to be able to take the crashes and falls” (personal correspondence, April 5, 2006). When Hana experiences injury, she says she will “swear and try to keep riding.... But if I can’t ride then I try not to cry and [try to] pull myself together, and then swear some more” (personal correspondence, April 5, 2006). Continuing, she explained that she negotiated her way into this “boys club” by “learning to snowboard fast, keeping up with the boys, and not being bothered by boy talk” (personal correspondence, April 5, 2006). By demonstrating physical prowess and commitment, and ignoring sexist banter, Hana *earned* a place among her male peers. Yet she was conscious that other women are excluded from this group: “They treat me like one of the boys but I’ve seen them treat their girlfriends much worse, like not inviting them to a kicker session” (personal correspondence, April 5, 2006).¹⁴ Similarly, core female snowboarder Moriah described her experiences within an all-male group:

We go out, and there will be 10 of us, and I’ll be the only girl, and I can keep up with them, and *I have to ride as hard as I can*. Sometimes I’m even better than some of those guys but we are all out there to have fun, to have a great day. All my friends are all supportive of one another. If you fall, big fucking deal, that’s fun. But I’m definitely the only girl. If I go riding with the girls, I feel like I’m always waiting on people but *when I’m riding with the boys I feel like they are waiting on me, so I have to get up, even if I’m hurting* (personal communication, November 14, 2005; emphasis added).

Women who spend a lot of time within the snowboarding patriarchy also tend to embody similar attitudes towards their bodies as their male counterparts. Top US snowboarder Annie Boulanger admitted to a short-range view on participation, explaining that she plans to continue

¹⁴ A ‘kicker session’ involves a group of mostly males hiking into the backcountry and building a jump. After completing the jump they practice maneuvers for the remainder of the day, often taking photos or filming the activity.

snowboarding “until Advil in the morning doesn’t do it anymore” (cited in Sherowski, 2003b, p. 155). “I’ve broken stuff in my back and I’ve broken my ankle, and bad strains and I’ve blown my knee out,” said Pamela, “but I have been quite lucky. I’ve been injury free, really” (personal communication, September 18, 2005). When questioned about her reckless relationship with her body, one core female boarder explained, “always snowboarding with boys has that effect on you; testosterone overload I guess” (Mel, personal correspondence, February 23, 2005). To be treated like “one of the boys” and to be accepted into all-male fraternal groups is seen as a clear sign of achievement. It indicates that the female snowboarder has behaved in a ‘male’ way and has, thus, diminished her distinction as a female. While male snowboarders work to prove they are ‘men,’ core female snowboarders must work to prove they are not ‘women.’¹⁵

Even for those women who do negotiate their way into the homo-social snowboarding fraternity, male boarders continue to subtly reinforce their difference. Mel, a top snowboarding judge, enjoys “hanging out with the boys” because “they are all out ruckus fun, and they ride harder, are easier to get on with, and there’s way more of them” (personal correspondence, February 23, 2005). In her words, “the boys are all pretty good, they give back as much as they get, so you respect them and they respect you. Our crew is pretty tight. They look after you if you ever need them; they’re always there for you, every last one of them” (personal correspondence, February 23, 2005). However, while her male friends treat her “like ‘one of the boys’ 98 per cent of the time” they treat her “like a girl two per cent of the time:” “The first percent when those guys are hungry [expecting her to prepare food], the second when some guy tries to [hit on] me in a bar” (personal correspondence, February 23, 2005). Mel was aware of these gendered practices but she opted to ignore them. Jamie, a core female snowboarder from America, admitted feeling frustrated

¹⁵ For similar observations in graffiti culture see Macdonald (2001).

by her male friends when they assume “I can’t keep up and sometimes say ‘oh Jamie, you don’t have to do this if you don’t want to.’ But that actually makes me want to do it even more when they say that” (personal correspondence, March 14, 2005). The following narratives from a novice Canadian female snowboarder are illustrative of how some women experience and explain their exclusion:

I went snowboarding with [my boyfriend] and a couple of his buddies. This was one of the worst experiences for me. If I was a better snowboarder I think it would have been ok. I really don’t think it was a gender thing, they are really nice guys and if I’d been able to keep up with them I would have been *allowed* to ride with them. But [my boyfriend] went riding with his friends, and I rode alone for the day. He either had to ride with them or me. He chose them and I had an awful day. There is a part of me that would love to be able to keep up with them.

I think those guys would always kind of protect me, they would be the ‘masculine male’ and watch out for me, that’s just how those guys would approach the situation. I think guys, intrinsically, are protective of their female friends; “Are you too cold, honey?” “Do you want to go inside for a bit?” They expect me to be more sensitive. They expect me to not be as tough as them, and assume I can’t handle it as much as them. If you get frostbite or are bummed out about something they are sensitive but *they are much harder on each other*. Sure females are gaining so much ground in snowboarding but the guys that have been snowboarding for ages still want it to be something that ‘the boys’ do together. So when there are girl riders around, them treating you that way, sort of babying you, I think, unconsciously gives them a sense of “ok, they are still not at our level, this is still something I’m doing with the guys” (Marie, personal communication, November 7, 2005; emphasis added).

As this comment suggests, women’s inclusion in, or exclusion from, the snowboarding patriarchy is based on male standards. As Wheaton (2000a) explains in her discussion of windsurfing masculinities, young male boarders successfully defend the ‘maleness’ of the activity by reinforcing difference and distancing “themselves from behavior or activity associated with femininity” (p. 440; also see Ford & Brown, 2006). Simply put, the snowboarding patriarchy adopts a variety of covert and overt strategies to exclude women and reinforce the existing gender order in the snowboarding culture. While some women recognize these strategies and act in ways

to undercut them, particularly by adopting practices characteristic of Connell's hegemonic masculine position, others accept their marginalization and in so doing support the patriarchy.

The snowboarding patriarchy not only excludes women, it also marginalizes 'other' men. As the following comments illustrate, the aggressive 'attitude' adopted by young male snowboarders frustrates some men, particularly older men and novices, who do not experience snowboarding in the same way:

I hate it when the young guys think they're too cool for school. Like too cool to wear a helmet. Too cool to apologize to an older man or woman whose skis they just ran over, too cool not to spit on people from chairs, too cool to ride an older board that's not a brand name, too cool... geez, I could go on. Snowboarding rocks but the majority of people in it suck! Mission [snowboard shop in Edmonton], The Source [snowboard shop in Calgary]... all the young guys working in these shops look at you funny when you come in looking for a new ride [snowboard]. Oh, I don't brag and talk myself up so I must not know anything about riding. The punky, rebellious, 'I don't give a damn' attitude has been around since day one, and I hate it (Kelsey, personal correspondence, September 7, 2004).

There is always gonna be rudeness in any context that involves predominantly 18-25 year old males. Young males on the mountain tend to act like pack animals, constantly attempting to reassert their dominance. But they are wasting all their energy shit talking and wouldn't be able to catch me anyways (Andrew, personal correspondence, March 27, 2006).

Snowboarding can get really macho when a group of young guys are trying to prove themselves to each other. This can also result in danger for the public because they are out of control when they are like that. It's such a young guy thing (Nick, personal correspondence, April 4, 2006).

During my fieldwork in the United States in November 2005, a discussion with Brian, a core snowboarder, shed some light on the power of the snowboarding patriarchy to exclude 'other' men. Brian had been happily working as a member of the park-crew at a ski resort in Oregon for a number of winters, but when he started dating the ex-girlfriend of a prominent local boarder, he was "pretty much run out of town" by the ex-boyfriend and his friends (field notes, November 11, 2005). "He made my life very difficult. He was friends with my boss who pretty much fired me, and he turned everyone against me" said Brian, who has since moved to another mountain town

because “that scene was too small and very cliquey” (field notes, November 11, 2005). The snowboarding patriarchy also has the potential to be violently homophobic. “I hate to think what the young hard-core boarders would do to a homosexual rider,” said Nick “I’m reasonably sure it would be abusive” (personal correspondence, April 4, 2006).

Fatriarchal cultures exclude women and some men, and can encourage aggressive and sexist behavior but, according to John Loy (1995), such modern tribal groups can also provide young men with comradeship, a sense of community, adventure and excitement, and a release of youthful aggression. As previously mentioned, much of the research on masculinities and sport ignores the potentially positive aspects of men’s sporting experiences. One key example is friendship among core male snowboarders. As Todd Richards (2003) explained, friendships between male snowboarders are an essential aspect of the culture:

We spent a lot of time together. We traveled together, destroyed rental cars together, slept in shitty hotel rooms, smelled one another’s gas, celebrated when one of us won, and shared disappointment when one of us lost. (p. 247)

It was a support group with bonds I hope will last forever. Josh and the rest of the Morrow team were like the brothers I never had. The camaraderie goes way beyond friendship. We became family. (p. 233)

Professional Canadian snowboarder Devun Walsh described the infamous ‘Wildcats’ team as “just a crew of friends. You don’t have to do some crazy trick to be on our team. We ride together and just support each other. The main theme of the Wildcats is fun and friendship. No one’s trying to outshine one another. [We] fail, fall, and overcome together” (cited in Dresser, 2003, para. 12).

Similarly, New Zealand snowboarder Gavin described snowboarding as simply, “good mates and good times” (personal correspondence, March 29, 2006). Friendships within the fraternal structure of snowboarding culture are based on sharing mountain experiences as well as the lifestyle. In conclusion, however, while the snowboarding patriarchy provides young men with friendship and a sense of community, it also fosters male domination in at least three ways: It brings young men

together, keeps young men together, and often works to put women down or to exclude them. In short, the snowboarding patriarchy, like all patriarchies, works to “develop male bonding, maintain sex segregation, and generate an ideology of male supremacy” (Loy, 1995, p. 267). In other words, young men in the snowboarding patriarchy adopt a variety of covert and overt strategies to exclude and marginalize women and ‘other’ men, and reinforce their hegemonic position in the snowboarding gender order.

The ‘Real’ Men

The third group of men that I identify in this thesis is the so-called ‘real’ men. Terrain and styles of participation separate the real men from the boys in snowboarding culture. For example, many boys, young men and women spend a lot of time snowboarding in terrain parks and half-pipes. Serious injury can, and does, occur in these artificially constructed playgrounds but risk tends to be perceived rather than real. Terrain parks and half-pipes are carefully constructed and maintained by trained professionals, they are positioned within ski-resort boundaries, rules and regulations are signposted and policed by resort employees, and, if injury should occur, the ski-patrol and medical facilities are only minutes away. In comparison, the risk involved in big mountain riding is very much a reality: “Big mountain riding is downright dangerous. Avalanches, sluffs, helicopter crashes, crevasses, rocks, and exposure to the elements take their toll on those who aren’t prepared or aren’t lucky” (Howe, 1998, p. 143).

It is in relation to riding big mountain terrain that the term ‘extreme’ has relevance in snowboarding. Alaska, “the fabled North Shore of snowboarding,” is the home of extreme snowboarding and offers some of the biggest and most celebrated terrain in the world; “it’s a place where mythic lines and narrow escapes give way to snowboarding legend” (Reed, 2005, p. 66). Courage, experience, education and skill cannot be feigned on top of an Alaskan peak. Big

mountain riding “separates the novices from those who have been around much longer;” ‘real men’ “prove their worth on the steeps” (Howe, 1998, p. 143). As the following excerpt illustrates, Tom Burt is widely regarded as one of these men:

With twenty years of professional snowboarding under his belt, Tom Burt is the sport’s ambassador to severe terrain, the humble master of impossibly steep lines – in particular, those where a mistake can and will cost you your life. What sets him apart from other big-mountain riders is technique. Burt has chalked up more than forty-first descents. Big ones: He and Jim Zellers are the first humans to have surfed Peru’s Cordillera Blanca, Nepal’s Mount Pumori, Mexico’s Mount Orizaba, and Alaska’s Mount McKinley among other 20,000 foot giants. (Reed, 2005, pp. 67-68)

Extreme, or big-mountain, riders tend to be physically different from freestyle snowboarders (e.g., terrain-park or half-pipe). According to Howe (1998), they are usually

four or five inches taller, with more bulk on them, so that they can ride a longer, stiffer type of board. They are mostly mountaineers, who spend years learning about snow conditions and behavior, weather patterns, emergency techniques, and rock climbing. (p. 140)

In his autobiography, Todd Richards (2003) recalled meeting Alaskan snowboarders Jay Liska and Ritchie Fowler, who he described as “a couple of big, tough looking guys;” they were “notorious big mountain snowboarders who rode big boards, wore their sideburns long, and drank whiskey like water” (p. 157). Big mountain riders are figuratively and literally the ‘big men’ of snowboarding culture. Big mountain riding ideologically separates the men from the ‘grommets’ and the ‘bro’s.’¹⁶ Furthermore, while a few women are big mountain riders (e.g., Julie Zell,

¹⁶ The following comments from Shaun White (one of the world’s top terrain park and half-pipe snowboarders) regarding his first experience of snowboarding in Alaska reveal his discomfort in this new ‘masculine’ environment: “This is going to sound really bad but I hated it. Alaska really wasn’t what I was looking for. It was really intense out there. Everything seems to be about dying out there. “Oh man, you go over the falls there and you’re dead.” “Don’t set that off, or you’re dead.” “You’re gonna die here.” “Oh, that’s death for sure.” Even getting ready to go up the mountain is sketchy. I’m wearing peeps [avalanche transceiver], I have their gnarly backpack survival kit with a shovel and probes and all this stuff in it, and then I’m wearing a harness. I’m like, “why do I need a harness?” They go, “Dude, if you fall in a hole and you’re dead we have to use it to drag you out.” What? I don’t want to deal with that! Are you kidding me? I thought knee surgery was bad, I don’t want to die” (cited in Bridges, 2005, p. 88). Older men, more confident in their abilities and knowledge, however, are excited by the challenges of big mountain riding. “There’s always a chance to die but you don’t go out and try to kill yourself,” says Tom Burt; “to say that what I do is

Footnote continued on the next page

Victoria Jealouse, Tina Basich), the activity continues to be the most heavily dominated by men. More than the masculinities expressed by grommets and the bro's, big mountain snowboarding is a symbolic and practical expression of hegemonic masculinity.

The Old Guys

The activity of snowboarding is more than thirty years old, and many of the early boarders continue to participate. The number of older male (and female) boarders is increasing, such that cultural commentators are now talking of the “graying” of snowboarding.¹⁷ As men take on more social responsibilities (e.g., marriage, children, mortgages, long-term employment, etc.), it is inevitable that their snowboarding experiences also change. No longer is snowboarding culture a site for proving their manhood. In the words of one ex-core snowboarder, “As you get older you become more comfortable and confident in your own skin. Proving yourself becomes less important but it still happens for some poor sons of bitches” (Nick, personal correspondence, April 4, 2006). As male boarders grow older, they tend to abandon fraternal groups and adopt a more individualistic approach to snowboarding. Older male snowboarders also tend to be more cautious in terms of their bodies and risk-taking.¹⁸ As “one of the old guys,” Gavin, a 35 year old snowboarder, described himself as “a real wimp” on the mountain these days (personal correspondence, March 29, 2006). Another ex-core snowboarder Andrew, also admitted to being “much more contemplative about the risks” involved in snowboarding (personal correspondence, March 27, 2006). Moreover, as they gain adult responsibilities, the importance of snowboarding in

the most dangerous aspect of snowboarding...well, it's a relative thing because of ability, training, and experience” (cited in Reed, 2005, p. 79).

¹⁷ There is even a website, “grays on trays,” that seeks to provide a support network for the growing number of snowboarders over the age of thirty (see www.graysontray.com).

¹⁸ With more than 75 per cent of snowboarders aged 24 years or younger (NGSA, 2005d), I use the term ‘older’ here in a relative sense.

their lives tends to wane. “Snowboarding is still important to me,” said Nick, “but I find it increasingly hard to get to the slopes nowadays, with work and stuff. We are also saving to buy a house next year, so no spare cash...I just can’t justify spending so much time and money on snowboarding anymore” (personal correspondence, April 4, 2006). This seems true for many female boarders also. “Snowboarding is now about sharing experiences with friends and less about achieving personal goals,” said ex-professional snowboarder Pamela, “I just don’t have the time on the snow now to be able to progress like I would like to be able to – so the focus has shifted” (personal communication, February 18, 2005).

For many, the focus shifts towards sharing the snowboarding experience with their partner. Many ex-core male snowboarders actively encourage their non-snowboarding girlfriends to take up the activity by buying them equipment and/or trying to teach them themselves. In the words of one female participant:

When I first started dating my boyfriend, he had been snowboarding since he was twelve and was really into it. So, it was a cool thing for us to do together, not too girly or anything. I was lucky because he was easy going and let me learn with him. At first it was really embarrassing because we hadn’t been together for a long time and I just wanted to keep up with him. But he was really supportive. To be perfectly honest, I don’t know if I would have kept going if my boyfriend hadn’t been so encouraging.

It’s very therapeutic to get away from the city and day-to-day life, and go into the mountains together. That’s a huge part of why we go. It is an escape for us, away from work and reality, and time to spend outside. Snowboarding has given me more time with Derek and is something we can do together (Marie, personal communication, November 7, 2005).

Participating with a partner has the potential to introduce new gender dynamics to the snowboarding experience. According to Nick, “I love snowboarding with Carissa. She is so stoked, and I love her energy” but he noted that, in general, girlfriends have the tendency to

get quite grumpy when things don’t go right, especially when they are learning. And generally girls get hurt more and bruise easier, and then they pack it in. The last few years I have ridden mostly with couples and there are always a few tears on icy days (personal correspondence, April 4, 2006).

The gender dynamics can become even more complicated when both partners are ex-core boarders. “Snowboarding is something that we can enjoy and do together,” said Jamie but she admitted that “sometimes I don’t want to hear his [boyfriend’s] criticism and it can turn into bickering” (personal correspondence, February 14, 2005). Another ex-core female snowboarder enjoys riding with her boyfriend in the weekends but acknowledged “there is always a bit of competition going on between us” (personal correspondence, March 6, 2005). Some women demonstrate more physical prowess than their partners and, in so doing, challenge traditional gender power relations where males are assumed to be ‘naturally’ physically superior. For example, when professional snowboarder Tina Basich dated David Grohl, member of the band the *Foo Fighters* and novice snowboarder, she felt she had to “pretend to look the other way when he would catch an edge and fall” to save him from embarrassment (Basich, 2003, p. 146). For some snowboarding couples, traditional gender roles are nullified, while for others they are reinforced. When snowboarding with his girlfriend, Nick admitted, “I’m kinda the protector...if some idiot smashes into her I’m going to wring his scrawny neck” (personal correspondence, April 4, 2006).

As this section has illustrated, men experience snowboarding in different ways as they move through different phases of their lives. But much of the previous research on men, masculinities and sport has given scant regard to age.¹⁹ By adopting a ‘third-wave’ perspective, I have shown that the gender relations of power are lived and experienced differently by boys, young males, and men in the snowboarding culture. Moreover, the relations between these masculinities and femininities also differ. Clearly, it is the brothers (or fratriarchy) rather than the fathers (or patriarchy) that are the bigger threat to female snowboarders seeking equality in the

¹⁹ There are, of course, exceptions, of which research by Laurence de Garis (2000), Richard Pringle and Pirkko Markula (2005), and Belinda Wheaton (2000a) on male identity and experiences in boxing, rugby, and windsurfing cultures respectively, are good examples.

culture. A ‘third-wave’ perspective that takes into consideration the different experiences of males from a variety of age groups and the relations between men and women, has the potential to “incorporate a more holistic understanding of gender hierarchy” and consider the “mutual conditioning of gender dynamics and other social dynamics” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 848).

A Critique of the Reformulation

Despite the potential of Connell and Messerschmidt’s (2005) and others reformulations for exploring multiple masculinities and the relationships between masculinities and femininities in a new social context, they provide few practical solutions or theoretical guidelines for implementing these reformulations. These absences raise the question of when we adopt the concept of hegemonic masculinity, “are we talking about cultural representations, everyday practices or institutional structures?” (Hearn, 2004, p. 58). Certainly, the ambiguity of the concept of hegemonic masculinity made explaining the complexities of masculinities and femininities in snowboarding culture a difficult task. How do cultural representations, such as snowboarding videos, reproduce hegemonic masculinity? How do the everyday practices of male snowboarders contribute to the broader patriarchal system of gender relations? Such questions remain unanswered. Moreover, despite proponents of a ‘third-wave’ approach making a number of pronouncements of what ‘needs’ to be done in terms of understanding and explaining contemporary masculinities, there is little explication of how this constitutes a new theoretical framework for the constitution of gendered identities and gender-relations. In this sense, ‘third-wave’ masculinities studies share similarities with third-wave feminism (see Chapter Four). Furthermore, the conceptual schema remains unchanged, and many of the critiques leveled at the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and gender order continue to hold sway.

When using the concept of hegemonic masculinity to analyze snowboarding culture, ‘masculinity’ emerges as just another social problem. Employing the concept of hegemonic masculinity, the only way to conceive of men’s snowboarding experiences, particularly those of young men, was as reproducing hegemonic masculinity. Connell’s reformulated conceptual schema continues to represent what Tomlinson (1998) calls an “all-or-nothing model” (p. 237) where male snowboarders are either seen as supporting or resisting hegemonic masculinity. I concur with de Garis (2000), who argues that the notion that sportsmen simply “either disrupt or contribute to the gender order” (p. 91) is problematic. Certainly, this bipolar conceptualization made it difficult to recognize admirable and positive practices by men in the snowboarding culture. Indeed, some men express feminist sentiments in their support of female boarders and occasionally publicly question their exclusion from magazines, videos, events and the industry. Such questioning seems particularly strong among those men who have witnessed their daughters, sisters, girlfriends, and friends experiencing sexism (in its various guises) in the snowboarding culture. For example, one male correspondent wrote to *Transworld Snowboarding* complaining about the lack of attention given to women in snowboarding: “And why the hell hasn’t Forum put a woman on their team? I am offended when people discriminate against women” (September 2002, p. 28).²⁰ As Giulianotti (2005) points out, “while modern sporting practices have been significant tools in the systematic reproduction of gender domination, sport is not a cultural zone of functional patriarchal closure. Both men and women critically interpret conventional gender roles and norms,

²⁰ Danny Burrows, editor of *OnBoard European Snowboarding Magazine* and self-proclaimed “manimist/feminist,” also publicly protested gender disparities in the snowboarding culture: “Sponsorship deals for girls are minimal in comparison to those of guys. They always draw the short straw when it comes to combined contests – either having to ride in the dark or once the boys have trashed everything. And even when all goes in their favor and they are riding well, they’re served up the ultimate sexist insult: ‘Damn, you ride like a guy.’ We boys might think this is a compliment but in reality it suggests that all boys ride better than most girls, which is just not true. There are plenty of boys out there who ride like complete pansies (not intentionally being anti-pansy here) and a hell of a lot of girls who have nuts of nickel whether that be on the rails, in the pipe or getting face shots [powder] in the backcountry. See, even the expression for being brave or good – having balls – is sexist. No-one goes around saying ‘Dude, you’ve got some serious tits,’ and if they did, they might earn themselves a good slap. Ride on girls!” (December 2005, p. 15).

to establish fresh gender identities and diverse aesthetic codes within sport” (p. 99). Simply put, the dualistic framework inherent in the concept of hegemonic masculinity is not representative of the lived complexities of men or women’s experiences in snowboarding culture (see de Garis, 2000).

The tendency to overstate the role of gender when employing the concept of hegemonic masculinity is also problematic. Certainly, a ‘third-wave’ perspective has the potential to highlight the way that gender operates “simultaneously at the levels of individual identity, group interaction, institutional structures, and cultural symbols and discourse” in contemporary sports cultures (McKay et al., 2000, p. 9). Nevertheless, I agree with Miller (1998a) who suggests, “although individuals are always gendered, it is not useful to think that gender can explain all behaviors” (cited in Pringle, 2005, p. 267). Drawing upon Miller (1998a), Pringle (2005) questions whether the concept of hegemonic masculinity directs “too much attention to the place of gender in the construction of subjectivities” and tends to “overlook or underestimate the constituting influences of other discourses” (p. 267). Explaining her partner’s preference to snowboard with his male peers rather than her, Canadian snowboarder Marie proclaimed, “but I don’t think it’s a gender thing” (personal communication, November 7, 2005). Of course, just because Marie doesn’t think gender is a problem in snowboarding, doesn’t mean that it is not; Gender tends to operate more ‘unconsciously’ than that. Nonetheless, Marie’s comment would be of little concern to researchers employing the concept of hegemonic masculinity who tend to see everything through a gender lens, even if it means excluding counter evidence. As highlighted in previous chapters, there is considerable evidence to suggest alternative gender relations in the snowboarding culture, yet the concept of hegemonic masculinity does little to explain such evidence. Despite adopting a reformulated version of hegemonic masculinity, the relevant concepts meant that this chapter ignored evidence suggestive of changing gender relations in the snowboarding culture.

Female snowboarding athleticism is now highly visible on the mountains and in the media, and there is some evidence to suggest that boys and men are adjusting and, in some cases, radically altering, their perceptions of what women are capable of (Messner, 1992). For example, Ste'en declared:

Of all the sports that I am aware of, snowboarding is the one where girls can compete on a level with the men. So the excuse is gone, you can't say we are all on different levels, because I've seen girls snowboard better than guys. I think it's great and I want to see more photos of girls in the magazines. A lot of snowboarding is about strength but it's also about balance and flexibility and state-of-mind, things that girls can excel at over boys (personal communication, October 18, 2005).

According to Messner (1992), "personally confronting the reality of female athleticism has caused some boys and men to question what sociologist Nancy Theberge has called 'the myth of female frailty'" (p. 160). This is certainly true in the snowboarding culture. Increasingly, male snowboarders are acknowledging the physical capabilities of their female counterparts and enjoy sharing the snowboarding experience with their female friends:

My favorite person to snowboard with would have to be my friend CC because she pushes me. I love riding with females, I can *usually* keep up with them (Chris, personal correspondence, August 22, 2004).

As far as riding with a group of guys or a mixed group...it's all the same to me. It comes down to ability level more than gender. I like riding with girls when they are stoked. I also like it when they are pushing themselves. *I think it's great when we can all ride together.* There aren't many sports or pastimes where you can do that and have that much fun. I treat my female friends like part of the crew, because that's what they are. I don't feel that I treat them any differently but I could be wrong. *I think it's a gender free sport* in a lot of ways because it's not about being the best; it's about challenging yourself. Honestly, I've been riding with girls in my crew for so long that I can't think of what it's like with out them (Nick, personal correspondence, April 4, 2006; emphasis added).

As these comments (i.e., "I love riding with females," "she pushes me," "it's great when we can all ride together") illustrate, gender hierarchies in the snowboarding culture are "being affected by new configurations of women's identity and practice, especially among younger women – which

are increasingly acknowledged by younger men” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 848). The key point here is that the concept of hegemonic masculinity, despite recommended reformulation by some ‘third-wave’ men and masculinities scholars and Connell herself, remains limited in its ability to explain the complex gender dynamics of difference, subjectivity, power and identity in contemporary society, and snowboarding culture more specifically.

Summing-Up

Despite their popularity among sports scholars, the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and gender order as propounded by Connell and colleagues display fundamental inconsistencies and weaknesses when it comes to understanding the dynamic and fluid relationships between political categories of gender, and between individual men and women in contemporary sporting cultures. Moreover, Connell’s relatively dualistic and reductionist model of power is insufficient for explaining the agency of young sportswomen, or the subjective gendered experiences of young men and women who have grown up in different social, cultural and political contexts, and gender and sexual orders. Seeking to “relate to different generations and cultural experiences of masculinities,” I felt it was necessary to “break with some of the inherited frameworks and ask new kinds of questions” (Siedler, 2006, p. xxvi). While adopting a ‘third-wave’ approach towards the study of men and masculinities facilitated a discussion of the diversity of masculinities, the interplay of masculinities and femininities within the snowboarding culture and, to a lesser extent, the relations between the different kinds of masculinities, ultimately, it failed to extend beyond the “exaggerated emphasis on aggression and violence in masculinity” typical of studies focusing on men and sport (Giulionotti, 2005, p. 99).

The emphasis placed on gender in Connell’s conceptual schema is also problematic, particularly in regards to snowboarding culture. Gender is not the sole factor structuring the

snowboarding hierarchy. Style, physical prowess, courage, and cultural commitment are highly valued within the snowboarding culture, such that the snowboarding 'gender order' cannot simply be divided into hegemonic men and subordinate, complicit, and marginalized 'other' men and women. Arguably, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual schema of social groups rather than gender is better equipped to explain the construction and maintenance of a hierarchical structure within the snowboarding culture. Thus, employing a selection of Bourdieu's concepts, the following chapter builds upon this discussion and illustrates how the embodiment of distinctive snowboarding tastes and styles help create a structured system of social positions within the snowboarding culture. The key difference between this chapter and the next is that the latter moves beyond gender hierarchy; females do not constitute a separate and marginal group in the snowboarding hierarchy but rather hold distinctive positions within each of the groups that make up snowboarding culture.

6. BOURDIEU AND 'BOARDING BODIES

The body is a symbol of status, a system of social marking, and a site of distinctions. In contemporary society, the symbolic values attached to bodily forms are critical to many people's sense of self. Pierced, tattooed, dieted, tanned, jeweled, trained, or perhaps surgically or medically enhanced bodies jostle on many urban streets. Bernard Rudofsky (1986) reminds us that many of these practices are not new; in fact different cultural (e.g., Egyptian¹) or tribal groups (e.g., Maori²) have long inscribed their identities on their members' bodies. However, in contrast to pre-modern societies, where traditional signs marked the body in ritualized settings, today people treat the body as a phenomenon to be shaped, decorated and trained as an expression of both individual and group identity (Shilling, 1993). A host of theorists (Bourdieu, 1971, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1990; Harvey, 2001; Shilling, 1993, 2003, 2005; Turner, 1988; Veblen, 1970/1899) point to these bodily differences as strategies for social distinction. Of particular interest here are the ideas of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. In his theory of distinction, Bourdieu assigns a central place to the body, and via a number of theoretical concepts provides insight into the distinctive bodily practices employed by individuals and groups within contemporary society. Complimenting the results of this approach, Connell (1983) writes: "[Bourdieu] is one of the very few systematic social theorists to have a way of talking about what living in the world is really like, its shadows and sunlight, its languors and teeth" (p. 153). In this chapter, I explore some of Bourdieu's most insightful concepts and

¹ Jewellery, make-up and wigs were an integral part of ancient Egyptian culture, worn for both decorative and symbolic purposes. Men, women and children, kings, queens and common people alike wore jewellery. The wealthy adorned themselves with magnificent bracelets, pendants, necklaces, rings, armlets, earrings, diadems, head ornaments, pectoral ornaments and collars of gold (Thomas, no date).

² The Moko, Mataora and even the Mata-kioere facials of Maori contain ancestral/tribal messages pertaining to the wearer. These messages narrate a wearer's family, sub-tribal and tribal affiliations and their placing within these social structures (Kopua, 2004).

their potential to explain the meanings and practices of female snowboarders especially with respect to practices of distinction and identity formation.

This chapter comprises two main parts. The first provides a critical overview of Bourdieu's theory of distinction and a description of his major theoretical concepts. This includes a critique of the efficacy of Bourdieu's conceptual schema for understanding the snowboarding body as a contemporary cultural phenomenon. This section concludes by identifying field and capital as his two most insightful concepts for this particular study. The second part then employs these concepts to shed light on snowboarding culture. I begin by applying Bourdieu's concept of field to an examination of how early snowboarders embodied distinctive dress practices to clearly distinguish themselves from skiers and each other. I also examine how embodied gender practices divide women into different social groups. Utilizing the concept of capital, I then explain how boarders earn *symbolic capital* through demonstrations of commitment, physical prowess and risk taking. In doing so, I expose the unequal distribution of symbolic capital based on gender status. The concepts of field and capital enhance my understanding of how the bodily practices of snowboarders create different levels of consciousness within social groups and help forge cultural and political alliances.

Interrogating Bourdieu

Undoubtedly the premier social analyst of distinction, Bourdieu gives particular attention to this concept in *Distinction: A Social Critique of Judgement* (1984). Bourdieu views what he calls social space, and the differences that emerge within it, as functioning symbolically as a space of life-styles, or as a set of groups characterized by different life-styles. In his theory of distinction, Bourdieu accords a central place to the body and embodied practices. He analyzes the formation and the reproduction of these practices and explains their significance as subtle social markers.

Bourdieu's insights into embodied practices are inextricably intertwined with his concepts of capital, field, class, taste and habitus. He calls these "open concepts:"

The use of open concepts is a way of rejecting positivism. It is, to be more precise, a permanent reminder that concepts have no definition other than systemic ones, and are designed to be *put to work empirically in systemic fashion*. Hence, such notions of habitus, field and capital can be defined but only within the theoretical system they constitute, not in isolation. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 95, italics in original)

These concepts remain deliberately vague and malleable, encouraging their questioning and their adaptation to the specific domain to which they are applied. These concepts are also relational in the sense that they only function "in relation to one another" (Wacquant, 1992, p. 19).

Attempting to illustrate the relationships between these major concepts, Bourdieu (1986) presents the generative formula: {(habitus) (capital)} + field = practice. At first glance this equation mystifies more than it clarifies; however, the equation becomes clearer when I examine these concepts individually and in greater detail, and reflect upon their relational nature.

Habitus

Habitus refers to a set of acquired schemes of dispositions, perceptions and appreciations, including tastes, which orient our practices and gives them meaning. Sport sociologist Suzanne Laberge (1995) defines habitus as both "the embodiment of the set of material conditions" and "the structure of social relations that generate and give significance to individual likes (or taste) and dislikes with regard to practice and action" (p. 136). According to Bourdieu (1986), lifestyles are "systematic products of habitus, which become sign systems that are socially qualified" (p. 173). Critically, the habitus is embodied, that is, "located within the body and affects every aspect of human embodiment" (Shilling, 1993, p. 129). Bourdieu generally uses the term *hexis* when referring to the embodied nature of the habitus. Hexis signifies "deportment, the manner and style in which actors 'carry themselves:' stance, gait, gesture, etc" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 75).

Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and hexis help me to understand the ways in which embodied practices construct identity, difference and given social orders in snowboarding culture.

The snowboarding habitus develops through practical engagement with, or rather socialization into, snowboarding culture. Socialization has been described as "an active process of learning and social development that occurs as people interact with each other and become acquainted with the social world in which they live, and as they form ideas about who they are, and make decisions about their goals and behaviors" (Coakley, 1998, p. 88). The distinctive practices of a snowboarding habitus are imprinted and encoded in a socializing process that commences during early entry into snowboarding culture.³ It is during this socialization process that the "practical transmission" of boarding "knowledge" via instructors' and peers' comments, observation, and magazines and films, become embodied (Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 123). Having observed new participants in the early stages of socialization into the Whistler (British Columbia, Canada) snowboarding culture, Marie, commented that:

There are lots of guys here for their first season, they are wearing Volcom hats for the first time, you can see it in their faces...they are so pumped. They are spending, spending, spending, to buy all the gear. They get on the bus with a new board, boots, etc, and they have an Ozzy accent, then they start talking so big, about all the jumps they are going to hit and all the videos they have watched. I don't think they realize how hard it actually is and how many years of practice and hard work that it requires. They come here and spend thousands of dollars on gear, they will learn to snowboard but they will never learn how to make it a part of their life (personal communication, November 7, 2005).

The habitus of core participants differs from imitation (as exhibited by the 'novices' in Marie's comment above) due to the "lack of conscious effort involved in the reproduction of a gesture or action" (Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 125). According to Bourdieu (1992), "what is 'learned by the body' is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished but something that

³ In the past this was primarily through participation but for many contemporary participants this is often via exposure to a variety of media sources, including snowboarding magazines, websites, videos, video games, or television coverage of the X-Games, the olympics and other major snowboard events.

one is” (cited in Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 125). Professional snowboarder Romain De Marchi offered some evidence of the snowboarding habitus among core boarders:

More random people are becoming snowboarders...it’s kind of a fashionable thing to do for these new people – not the same way it used to be. You know – fun, friends, and boards. But all the *real* snowboarders, they still have the passion and *know* the soul of snowboarding. (cited in Muzzey, 2003, p. 136, emphasis added)

Professional boarder Todd Richards (2003) also remarked:

Like surfing and skateboarding, snowboarding is something you have to figure out. You have to earn it. You have to make it over different hurdles before it reveals its soul. And when that happens, its soul becomes part of you. (p. 281)

Knowledge of the so-called “soul of snowboarding” is what Bourdieu (1971) calls “cultural unconscious” and it comes via “attitudes, aptitudes, knowledge, themes and problems, in short the whole system of categories of perception and thought” acquired by a systematic social apprenticeship (p. 182). Simply put, in snowboarding, the habitus or “cultural unconscious” derives from a systematic cultural apprenticeship, and the longer one spends immersed in snowboarding culture the more ingrained this habitus becomes. As Bourdieu (1986) explains, embodying cultural knowledge “costs time” and time amounts to an investment (p. 222). Thus, with many core participants dedicating years of their lives to snowboarding, it is inevitable that struggles occur when ‘outsiders’ and ‘new-comers’ endanger such cultural investments (an aspect that will be expanded upon below).

The socially constructed habitus of many core boarders is the primary influence on their snowboarding practices. For example, choices of equipment purchased, terrain selected, and the style of riding, are made on the “basis of practically oriented dispositions that have already been inscribed in the body and subsequently take place without overtly direct conscious awareness of the principles that guide them” (Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 126). As I will discuss in the second part of this chapter, this is translated into consumer practices. The snowboarding habitus is, as

Laberge and Sankoff (1988) conclude, “both the internalization of the conditions of existence and the practice-generating principle of social agents” (cited in Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 125). As Ford and Brown (2006) write in their discussion of surfing, the “practical logics” that sustain board-riding culture are, therefore, “embedded in the body in the form of habitus” (p. 126).

The social relations that create an embodied snowboarding habitus are relations of power. For Bourdieu, social power works through human bodies by “inscribing in them certain dispositions and capacities which enable people to act in certain ways, yet also set the limit upon their abilities and aspirations” (Burkitt, 1999, p. 108). Bourdieu is especially concerned with the power of the body to act in certain ways, powers instilled by social relations from infancy, which are the foundation for later forms of thinking and moral practices (Burkitt, 1999). Of particular interest here are the power relations that construct gendered bodies via a social habitus.

In most cultures, men and women are expected to use and manage their bodies in very different ways. In his work Bourdieu attempts to explain how body concepts between men and women vary, and he seeks to emphasize how this type of learning, which affects men’s and women’s perceptions of their bodies and selves, does not occur at the cognitive level but at the bodily level (see Burkitt, 1999). The confusion here, however, occurs when I try to understand how this gendered habitus, instilled from an early age, intersects with the snowboarding habitus, embodied later in life by many core female boarders. According to Bourdieu (1992), “the habitus which, at every moment, structures new experiences in accordance with the structures produced by past experiences” is “modified by new experiences...[to] bring about a unique integration” (p. 60). Early experiences, however, have particular weight because the habitus “tends to ensure its own constancy and its defence against change through the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information” (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 60). Thus, as alluded to in the following comment, the weight

of past experiences or, rather, the gendered habitus instilled from childhood, influence the way some female snowboarders think about their bodies:

We are girls...we still have that feminine aspect. I think it's really hard to overcome that, and you feel like you still have to be a lady. But in order to ride this stuff, you need to have a ball-sack. When I can't do something, I say that it's 'cos I'm not a boy but, really, fuck that, there should be no difference between girls and boys, right? We are capable of doing anything we wanna do, right? But sometimes it's just so hard to get over that negative way of thinking... sometimes you just can't do it (Moriah, personal communication, November 14, 2005).

Here, Moriah seemed to be experiencing confusion because new social messages about the potential of the female body (e.g., "girls can do anything") contradict her deeply entrenched gendered habitus (e.g., "I can't do something...cos I'm not a boy). Continuing, Moriah added:

But the young ten-year-old girls aren't going to be thinking like this. They've grown up with way more role models and stuff. These are the girls that are gonna be fucken doing it, and we are going to be the old ladies that will be like... "Yeah, we wanted to do it but it was just so hard" (personal communication, November 14, 2005).

As this comment implies, habitus is context specific. Young women will inevitably experience snowboarding in diverse ways based on the gendered habitus instilled during childhood in different historical periods and in different social, cultural and political contexts. These snowboarding experiences, and their material manifestations through the boarding habitus, will both be seen and given value by other snowboarders (i.e., peers, snowboard judges, potential sponsors, etc.) in ways that form part of what might be considered, at varying times, as either cultural, symbolic or corporeal capital.

Capital

The concept of capital sits at the center of Bourdieu's (1985) construction of social space: "The structure of the social world is defined at every moment by the structure and distribution of the capital and profits characteristic of the different particular fields" (p. 734) and it is important to

work out the correct hierarchy “of the different forms of capital” (p. 737). Capital refers to the different forms of power held by social agents. Bourdieu (1986) identifies various forms of capital (power), including economic (e.g., wealth), social (e.g., social connections), cultural (e.g., artistic taste), and symbolic (e.g., prestige). He also identifies linguistic (e.g., vocabulary and pronunciation), academic (e.g., tertiary qualifications), and corporeal (e.g., physical attractiveness) capital. These forms of power structure the social space and determine the position of social agents in the social hierarchy (Laberge, 1995). Of specific interest to this analysis are the concepts of cultural capital and symbolic capital as forms demarcating different kinds of snowboarders. For example, through display, awareness of significations, various visual, aural and embodied self-representations, and a sense of ‘hipness’ and ‘coolness,’ members of snowboarding culture accumulate cultural capital to distinguish themselves from the mainstream (see Ford & Brown, 2006, for similar observations in surfing culture). Thornton (1997) terms this “subcultural capital” and, in her study of a particular form of dance culture (i.e., rave/club-culture), she draws attention to the “micro structures of power” through which “young people jockey for social power ...social status and...a sense of self worth” (p. 208; also see Ford & Brown, 2006).

Bourdieu argues that cultural capital exists in three irreducible forms: In the objectified state (e.g., pictures and books which are the traces or realization of theories and bodies of knowledge), the institutionalized state (e.g., as academic qualifications conferred on those who reach a certain level of education) and the embodied state (e.g., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the body and mind) (see Shilling, 1993). Clarifying the latter, Bourdieu notes that, “most of the properties of cultural capital can be deduced from the fact that, in its fundamental state, it is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment” (1986, p. 244). Bourdieu (1978) also refers to this embodied form of cultural capital as physical or corporeal capital, which he treats as

a form of capital in its own right. Shilling (1993) views this as a particularly useful conceptualization that shares an important relationship with “all other varieties of capital” (p. 149). Hence, corporeal capital is one of a number of concepts employed in this chapter to provide insight into female snowboarding bodies, with a particular focus on clothing practices.

Symbolic capital is another name for distinction. It is a “unique form of motivation—a resource, a reward” (Booth & Loy, 1999, p. 4) closely tied up with the concepts of status, lifestyle, honor and prestige. Snowboarders gain prestige or symbolic capital via less visible characteristics, such as displays of physical prowess, risk-taking and commitment. For example, the number of years or ‘back-to-back’ seasons (following the winter between hemispheres) participating in the snowboarding culture signify the authenticity of an individual’s snowboarding identity, or habitus, and boarders receive symbolic capital for such demonstrations of commitment to the culture (see Wheaton, 2000b, for similar observations in windsurfing culture). In sum, capital, in its various forms, refers to the different forms of power held by social agents. These forms of power structure social space, or field in Bourdieu’s terminology, and determine the relative social positioning of agents.

Field

Field refers to a structured system of social positions occupied by either individuals or institutions engaged in the same activity (Tomlinson, 2002). Fields are structured internally in terms of power relations. “In order for field to function,” said Bourdieu (1993), “there have to be stakes and people prepared to play the game, endowed with the habitus that implies knowledge and recognition of the immanent laws of the field, the stakes, and so on” (p. 72). Within these fields individuals and groups constantly struggle to transform or preserve the configuration of power. Bourdieu (1977) refers to the “sport field” as a site that defines sport with respect to the

allocation of rewards, systems of rules and the social identity of participants. As a site of struggles, the sport field represents a context for the “monopolistic capacity to impose the legitimate definition of sporting practice and of the legitimate function of sporting activity” (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 826). The snow field, for example, consists of two main groups: Skiers and snowboarders. Although these groups must share the same mountain space and comply with the same sets of rules (e.g., ski-resort etiquette), they each have their own structures (e.g., associations, media, etc.), cultural rules, knowledge, practices and people. Over the past three decades, numerous power struggles have developed between these two groups (an aspect that will be expanded upon below).

A range of classes occupies each field. A class is a group of people whose “similar conditions of existence produce similar habituses and similar access to goods and power” (Jenkins, 2002, p. 140). According to Bourdieu, every class and its factions have distinct tastes or preferences for cultural goods and consumption. Taste, Bourdieu (1984) observes, “unites and separates” these classes or groups:

It unites all those who are the product of similar conditions while distinguishing them from others. And it distinguishes in an essential way, since taste is the basis of all that one has – people and things – and all that one is for others, whereby one classifies oneself and is classified by others. (p. 56)

In short, taste is one of the key signifiers and elements of social identity (Jenkins, 2002).

According to Bourdieu, taste is the source of distinctive features of each social space and an “expression of a particular class of conditions of existence, i.e., as a distinctive lifestyle” (cited in Booth & Loy, 1999, p. 5). Turner (1988) also identifies taste, the practical dimension of lifestyle, as a primary means of separating groups. He sees social groups distinguishing themselves from their competitors by adopting certain bodily gestures, speech, and deportment that are embodied

tastes that not only play an important role in identifying social groups but also function to accommodate and reinforce the existing structure of the social space or field.

While snowboarders as a group embody distinctive tastes in order to separate themselves from skiers (discussed next), various groups also exist within the snowboarding culture, including competitive athletes, big mountain riders or extreme snowboarders, jibbers or freestyle riders, alpine boarders, weekend warriors, novices and poseurs. While the dedicated big mountain boarder and the freestyle athlete exhibit similarities of habitus as a result of the physical and material inscription of snowboarding practice on the body, there are also significant differences. Therefore, just as the practice varies, so does the type of boarding body that results and some marked points of distinction are manifest as a result of using different boards, styles or techniques of snowboarding, styles of talk and dress, training methods, etc. (Ford & Brown, 2006). For example, as discussed in Chapter Five, big mountain snowboarders or extreme riders are “physically different than freestyle pros;” they tend to be “four or five inches taller, with more bulk on them, so that they can ride a longer, stiffer type of board” (Howe, 1998, p. 140). To paraphrase Ford and Brown (2006), the precise degree of value or symbolic capital that a big mountain boarder, halfpipe athlete, or any other kind of snowboarder may possess will differ in relation to the various groups of the field of snowboarding they occupy and the current value of these styles in relation to the dominant legitimate norm of the social period in question (p. 127). As Ste’en, a longtime snowboarder who has observed “all forms of snowboarding...going through in and out stages” explains, “slope-style is in focus now, jibbing has taken a bit of a backseat, and alpine seems to be struggling” (personal correspondence, October 18, 2005). Indeed, the alpine racer tends to receive very little symbolic capital in the current generation where freestyle is the most prized form of participation. In an article titled “The Outsiders,” for example, alpine racers are critically described as wearing “skin-tight speed suits and helmets, and

ride boards that hardly resemble anything you'd find on the racks at your local snowboard shop. They wear ski boots for crying out loud" (Berkley, 1998, cited in Heino, 2000, p. 183). New Zealand snowboarder Andrew Morrison also demonstrated the lack of symbolic capital allocated to alpine racers when he defined a participant as "someone... [who] carves, carves, carves and carves and carves," adding "I don't have much respect for those guys" (cited in Humphreys 1996, p. 17). The field of snowboarding, therefore, is comprised of a number of groups, all of which give value to the practiced, boarding body in subtly different ways. Moreover, these groups have distinct styles, practices, institutions and practitioners with subtle but important, distinctions in their habitus that command different degrees of capital conversion. These groups continue to struggle for embodied distinction and socio-cultural legitimacy, and as I illustrate below, "these struggles provide some of the tensions and disjunctures that lead to social change" in snowboarding culture (Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 128; also see Thorpe, 2004).

Practice

As Bourdieu's formula implies, the three-way relationship of habitus, capital and field generate practices. According to Wacquant (1993), "it is out of this perpetual and multi-leveled dialectic of field and habitus, position and disposition, social structures and mental structures that practices emerge that (re)make the world which makes them" (p. 4). These practical logics only make complete sense, however, in relation to the field of activity that produces and gives them value. Therefore, to paraphrase Ford and Brown (2006), the social logic of snowboarding revolves around snowboarding practices that, over time, inscribe or condition the body (habitus) in ways that then have social (relating to social institutions), cultural (relating to ways of living), economic (relating to material wealth) and symbolic (relating to something that is invisible) exchange value in a cultural economy of groups of people that share a common interest in these

practices (the field) (p. 122). In this way, boarding “practices, bodies and their relative values only make ‘real’ sense in practical relation to one another and to [snowboarding]” (Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 122; snowboarding substituted for surfing). In other words, it is through participation in social practices (which are orientated by a snowboarding habitus) that snowboarding culture is embodied and reproduced. Bourdieu’s understanding of practices, however, is utilitarian; he sees all practices as fundamentally ‘interested’ – that is, “oriented towards the maximization of material and symbolic profit” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 209), and he directs much attention to the formation and reproduction of symbolic practices. Of particular concern to Bourdieu are those practices that involve struggle among social groups trying to maintain or change their social position.⁴ These cultural practices are subtle markers of the differences of positions in social space; they manifest “a vision and a division of the world,” and bear particular symbolic value (Laberge & Kay, 2002, p. 243).

Underpinning Bourdieu’s conceptual schema is a number of key aims. According to Jarvie and Maguire (1994), his “central task is to transcend the ‘epistemological couples’ which have arguably bedeviled sociological research. These ‘couples’ include agency-structure debates, micro-macro linkages and the freedom and determinism dichotomy” (p. 206). Attempting to circumvent these dichotomies, Bourdieu focuses on the ‘dialectical’ relationship between objective structures and subjective phenomenon. Bourdieu’s approach provides a potential bridge between the micro-sociology of bodily expression and a wider sociology concerned with the relationship between culture (and, by extension, social structure) and agency (Jenkins, 2002). Hence, his concepts facilitate the exploration of both the theoretical project of understanding relations between the historical pattern of social relations within snowboarding culture (structure)

⁴ In this sense, there are some similarities between Bourdieu’s conceptualization of social space and practice, and the concept of hegemony. Bourdieu’s conceptual schema, however, is more useful because it is grounded in the ‘real’ and concerned primarily with the particular. See Chapter Five for a more detailed critique of hegemony.

and the everyday interaction by real boarders (agency). It is this concern with the particular within the context of the general that is one of the distinguishing features of Bourdieu's work. Bourdieu also challenges another dualism, that between theory and empirical work. For Bourdieu, theory should always confront the world of observable phenomena (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), and, as Jarvie and Maguire (1994) explain, he advocated a "two-way uninterrupted traffic between theory and evidence as the best way to comprehend the genesis of both the person and of social structures" (p. 185).

Despite the potential of Bourdieu's conceptual schema for understanding the complexity of embodied culture in contemporary society, critics argue that his work is "flawed by its internal contradictions and inconsistencies" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 180). Thus, in the remainder of this part I examine some of the contradictions and inconsistencies of Bourdieu's concepts for understanding the snowboarding body. Also, by highlighting my specific concerns with the concept of habitus, I hope to justify my decision to focus primarily on field and capital in the forthcoming discussions of the snowboarding body.

How does order within the snowboarding field, that is, the symbolic representation of a social structure, translate in the actions of the agents? Bourdieu believed that it was incorporated as part of an agent's habitus (Krais, 1993). Yet, in the case of snowboarding culture, the concept of habitus is problematic. It remains unclear how habitus works to generate practices; a problem "compounded by the fact that its existence can only be inferred from its putative practical effects" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 93). This is especially apparent when I try to explain how habitus and gender intersect to produce practices in snowboarding. Laberge and Kay (2002) argue that the concept of habitus is "so theoretically loaded and versatile" that it "becomes less effective for the empirical researcher who needs conceptual tools to identify specific dimensions of 'taste' and social practices as well as specific mechanisms at work in the internalization and externalization

of social structure” (p. 262). Given that this chapter is specifically looking for empirical insights into the boarding body, combined with the lack of clarity surrounding this concept, I do not overtly employ habitus as a key conceptual tool here.⁵ The concept of habitus will, however, be inherent in subsequent discussions of the snowboarding body because, as discussed, Bourdieu’s concepts only operate “in relation to one another” (Wacquant, 1992, p. 19).

It has also been argued that Bourdieu’s work reveals an “impoverished, two-dimensional model of individuals and agency” (Jenkins, 2002, p. 93). The emphasis on social reproduction in Bourdieu’s work affects the degree to which people are able to exercise agency. Arguably, this leads him inexorably into deterministic explanations. In Bourdieu’s (1985) own words:

The social world is, to a large extent, what the agents make of it, at each moment; but they have no chance of unmaking it and re-making it except on the basis of realistic knowledge of what it is and what they can do from the position they occupy within it. (p. 728)⁶

This is a social world “where behavior has its causes but actors are not allowed their reasons” (Jenkins, 2002, p. 97). The reasons a female snowboarder gives for her embodied practices would be of little concern to Bourdieu. For him, the actors’ own explanations of their practices are an illusion; the true explanation of behavior exists in the habitus. McCall (1992) argues that Bourdieu “stops short of realizing the potential of gendered dispositions because he considers female gender status imbued only with uncontested symbolic violence” (p. 845) (the notion of symbolic violence is discussed later in this chapter). Some female snowboarders actively resist

⁵ This is not to say however, that habitus does not have value for other sociological enquiries. Indeed, feminist scholars have recently begun to critically extend and develop Bourdieu’s notion of habitus to facilitate understandings of gender identity as a durable but not immutable norm (McNay, 1999; see also Chapter Eight).

⁶ Critical thought (Bourdieu’s “realistic knowledge”) is also at the core of Foucault’s understanding of technologies of self. According to Foucault, the critically self-aware individual questions what is seemingly ‘natural’ and inevitable in one’s identity, and it is only through this interrogation of the limits of one’s subjectivity that “the possibility of transgression emerges” and, with it, “the potential for creating new types of subjective experiences” within existing power relations (Markula, 2003, p. 102) (see Chapter Seven).

the male bodily hexis and make attempts to redefine the female snowboarding body. But with Bourdieu's concept of habitus, it is difficult to understand the source of such impulses.

However, despite some practical difficulties with the concept of habitus, Bourdieu's approach to understanding the complexity of performative culture in contemporary society, and more specifically the significance of the body in snowboarding culture, remains intact. Employing Bourdieu's concepts of field and capital, the remainder of this chapter illustrates the significance of the body as a symbol of status and for the construction of snowboarding identities. It is the intentionally vague, malleable and 'open' nature of these concepts that give them particular utility in the snowboarding domain and facilitate explanations of how snowboarders distinguish themselves from non-snowboarders, marginal participants, and each other, by means of embodying visual signifiers such as clothing and bodily deportment, and the less visual practices such as physical prowess, commitment and risk-taking. As this chapter illustrates, Bourdieu's concepts of field and capital provide insights into the role of the snowboarding body as a "mnemonic device in cultural coding and as an effective vehicle for the less-than-conscious communication or expression of these codes" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 179).

The Snow Field⁷

Bourdieu's notions of field, class and taste facilitate insights into snowboarding bodies as possessors of power, and the struggles over the legitimate use and meaning of the body (see Thorpe, 2004). From hereon, however, I substitute the terms field and class with culture and group respectively due to the macro-connotations of the former.⁸ This section analyzes embodied

⁷ Skiing is included in this discussion of the 'snow field.'

⁸ Ohl (2000) argues that societies continually produce new types of groups less strongly linked to social classes. Featherstone (1991) has also argued that "styles of life (manifest in choices of clothes, leisure, activities, consumer goods, bodily dispositions)" (p. 83) are increasingly appropriated in ways that transcend notions of fixed status

Footnote continued on the next page

dress practices in snowboarding culture and their contributions to the social construction and classification of group identities within the culture. Distinctions, expressed as the embodiment of tastes and styles, contribute not only to the construction of snowboarding identity and difference but also to the existing social order of snow culture by clearly distinguishing skiers from snowboarders, insiders from the outsiders, professionals from poseurs, and the core from 'girlies.' While snowboarding culture consists of numerous groups, professional boarders currently hold the most symbolic and cultural capital and thus, power to legitimize embodied dispositions via their relationships with snowboarding companies and the media. In the case of gender, few females yield the power to reconstruct meanings and legitimize embodied styles. Simply put, symbolic struggles over the power to produce and impose 'legitimate' dispositions continue unabated in snowboarding.

This section is divided into two main parts. First, I examine the embodiment of inter-group divisions between skiers and snowboarders. Second, I consider the horizontal internal structuring of snowboarding culture and hence the basis of intra-group conflicts between different groups of snowboarders, and different groups of female participants. Ultimately, this section illustrates the multidimensional picture of snowboarding "social space" (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 140).

Embodied Inter-Group Divisions

Skiers and snowboarders share the same social space, from car parks, to chair lifts, to slopes. However, since the beginning, the two groups have been separated by age, fashion, etiquette, lingo and per capita income (Williams, Dossa & Fulton, 1994). As one journalist commented, the

classes. See Chapter Two: The Political Economy of Snowboarding for a brief discussion of class and snowboarding.

skier and the snowboarder typically “ride up the mountain together in chilly silence” (Wulf, 1996, p. 69). According to Bourdieu (1991), when two groups occupy the same social space, it is more likely that members will establish collective identities to distinguish themselves. Emerging in opposition to the then dominant ski culture, snowboarders, as the newcomers to the slopes, sought “difference, discontinuity and revolution” and employed a variety of “strategies to create space for themselves and displace the established” (Featherstone, 1991, p. 92). Fights between skiers and snowboarders occasionally occurred as the two groups fought for territory and eminence. Labeling skiers the “enemy” and “slope scum,” some snowboarders called on their peers to use “violence and discrimination” to “end the reign of the skier” (The Snowboard, no date, para. 2). Tom Burt, CEO of Sims Sports remembers artists sending him “graphics with snowboarders stabbing skiers” and spraying “blood everywhere” (cited in Howe, 1998, p. 96). These overt displays of physical, verbal and symbolic violence clearly distinguished the two groups, but faced with the very real risk of losing access to mountain facilities, many snowboarders abated their unruly behavior, opting instead for symbolic and embodied practices to emphasize their distinctiveness. The most obvious practices involved clothing.

Clothing constitutes an important symbolic marker of group membership. Bryan Turner (1988) theorizes that, “dress symbolizes and states one’s wealth and political power by indicating one’s superior sense of taste and distinction” (p. 68). Similarly, Barnes and Eicher (1992) note that “dress serves as a sign that the individual belongs to a certain group but simultaneously differentiates the same individual from all others: it includes and excludes” (p. 1). As snowboarding olympian and clothing company owner, Pamela, explained: “Personal style in snowboarding is so important. You can read a person by what they’re wearing, before they even strap in [to their board]. Everything in snowboarding is a full expression of who you are... that’s why we wear clothes” (personal communication, September 18, 2005). Over the past three

decades, snowboard clothing has gone from “garish to grunge to gorgeous, from incredibly impractical to highly technical, from something for the outlandish few to the standard for the majority of snow sliders” (Snow Sports Industries, 2003-2004, para. 1). Here I will examine the significance of dress practices for distinguishing snowboarders from skiers, and how different meanings have been bestowed on these embodied practices at different historical junctures.

During the late 1970s early 1980s snowboarders were only concerned with their clothing as far as it kept them dry. Trevor, an early snowboarder, recalled getting “on the bus in Utica, New York to go to the ski hill, wearing wetsuits” (Howe, 1998, p. 24). It wasn’t long, however, until snowboarders began adopting clothing styles to distinguish themselves from skiers. One early reporter described, “conservative skiers in dull blue and red outfits clutch[ing] their poles and watch[ing] aghast” (Hughes, 1988, para. 1) as two boarders rode past, one wearing a “green leopard-spot bodysuit” and another wearing a “lilac snow jacket, red pants and neon-green glasses” (Hughes, 1988, para 3). Male and female snowboarders both readily adopted this dress style. The early clothing practices of wearing bright and mismatched colors helped unite this marginal group of snowboarders and clearly distinguish them from skiers.

The first signs of division among boarders emerged in the early 1990s: “There were the experienced alpine snowboarders...and there were the scrub skater guys...who wanted to get as much air as possible, mimicking skating heroes of the day” (Richards, 2003, p. 64). The majority of snowboarders adopted the ‘skater’ look, which sharply distinguished them from skiers. Rebelling against the ski industry, boarders wore “giant cut off jeans covered in ice, huge chain wallets, big hooded sweatshirts, backwards baseball caps, and windbreakers” (Troy Bush, cited in Howe, 1998, p. 85). In addition, snowboarders in the early 1990s exhibited stoicism and strength by wearing clothing that offered no protection from the snow and cold temperatures. Holly, a participant in an early study, remembers snowboarders “wearing pants that sag down to

their knees and flannels...covered in snow... they care more about the way they look than if they are freezing their butts off” (Anderson, 1999, p. 63).

Not only did these unconventional and oversized clothing styles separate snowboarders from skiers, but they also contributed to marginalizing some female participants. Anderson (1999) concluded that “oversized clothing,” “baggies” and “flannels” were an attempt to shore up snowboarding as a masculine domain (p. 63). The masculine image of snowboarding certainly discouraged some female participants, as Marie described:

I remember being intimidated by snowboarders. I think my initial opinions were influenced by the fact that pretty much everyone that was doing it back then was male. I don't remember seeing girls...I mean they were probably there. But when I was 10-12 years old, the people that would snowboard past you were 15-25 year old males. There was the odd time when you'd see a chick, and you'd think, 'oh, that's kinda cool.' But a lot of the time, these girls weren't the most feminine girls, they wore guys' clothes and were all hanging out with boys, and that's kinda why I thought snowboarding was a guys' thing (personal communication, November 7, 2005).

Because most women avoided this style, male boarders looked like they were part of a select clique. The few females who did participate in this era gained acceptance by adopting men's clothing styles. This style posed particular problems for women, as early boarder Tina Basich (2003) explained:

I always wore guys' snowboarding outfits because there was no other choice and nothing ever fit[ted]. I'd have to roll up the sleeves and the pants and wear a belt to hold them up. This was the 'baggy pants big stance' era, meaning oversized jackets and pants were the in style but we were wearing guys' oversized gear that was twice as big. My pants would get stuck in my bindings and sometimes I'd do a trick in the pipe only to have my coat ride up and blind my view for landing. (p. 102)

Males constructed the snowboarder 'look' during the early years, and for the few women participants it seemed that there was no other option to this style.

Male snowboarders embodied elements of the masculine images of skateboarders, gangsters (e.g., baggy clothing, low riding pants with exposed boxer shorts, gold chains) and

punks (e.g., Mohawks, body piercings, studded belts, brightly colored hair), and manipulated these into the stereotypical snowboarder style of the mid to late 1990s. The appropriation of clothing styles from the male dominated gangster and punk cultures clearly distinguished snowboarders from skiers, and although these styles may have discouraged some female participants, they definitely did not discourage all. For example, a number of female riders mirrored their snowboarding ‘brothers’ by wearing baggy pants, bandanas and, notwithstanding the often extremely sexually degrading language, listened to the same hip hop music. Some women also wore punk-inspired studded belts, safety pins, leather wristbands and body piercings as fashion accessories.

By aligning themselves with the styles of historically⁹ and contemporary underclass groups, the mostly white and privileged snowboarder attempted to make authentic the claim to being marginal, deviant and poor and, most importantly, different from the upper class skier (see Kusz, 2003). While historically the middle classes have “differentiated themselves sharply” from the lower classes and have mimicked upper-class style (Jenkins, 2002, p. 139), snowboarders in the 1990s preferred to emulate lower classes styles.¹⁰ I suggest, however, that this was a reflection of youth rebellion against parents, many of whom were skiers, rather than a class (or race) issue.

⁹ The punk movement was most prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s. Elements of the punk culture can still be observed in contemporary society (e.g., music, clothing) but the appropriation of this alternative youth culture by mainstream marketers has reduced the movement to another form of t-shirt politics.

¹⁰ Kyle Kusz (2003, 2007) argues that extreme sports, such as snowboarding, were popularized during the 1990s at a particular historical conjuncture when cultural diversity and white privilege were made visible to white America. According to Kusz (2003) white people developed a number of ways to disavow their investment or connection to white privilege during this period. He explains that many white people frequently downplayed the security or comfort of their economic position, or they claimed working class, poor, or ‘white trash’ roots. Indeed, the ‘white trash’ identity was embraced by many snowboarders during this period, as were the punk, skateboarder, and urban gangster identities. According to Kusz (2007), “extreme sports served as a cultural means through which white dominance could be restored ironically through the promotion of stories and ideas which implicitly denied and disavowed the existence of social and economic white privilege” (p. 361). While Kusz’s argument is insightful in relation to snowboarding in North America, it is less relevant for explaining the emulation of underclass styles by privileged snowboarding youths in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Asia, where snowboarding developed in different social, cultural and racial contexts.

Within snow culture, skiers and snowboarders constantly struggle to preserve and/or transform the configuration of power. It is ironic, especially since skiing has held the dominant position for so long, that in the early 2000s snowboarding holds the most power to allocate rewards, and to allocate the systems of rules and the social identity of participants in the snow field. Ski resorts that once banned snowboarders are now investing heavily in personnel, equipment and marketing to attract boarders. An advertisement for Heavenly Resort (Lake Tahoe, California) featured in *Transworld Snowboarding* magazine, for example, boasted “\$200 million in improvements” including “three new terrain parks with 29 rails, 20 tables [jumps], 13 fun-boxes and sick designs like the Dual C Boxes and Wall Ride” (Resort Guide, 2005, pp. 48-49). The ski industry has also re-tooled to not only cater to snowboarders but also to a new skiing niche market, the freestyle skier. Young skiers are drawing inspiration from the styles of participation and fashion of snowboarders, as American core boarder and ski and snowboard cinematographer Zane observed:

Snowboarding has gained so much respect from the ski world; much of this has to do with Americans taking top three at the olympics. Now kids are trying to emulate snowboarding on skis. There has been a rebirth in skiing with freestyle, and skiers are dressing like snowboarders, and snowboarders and skiers are hanging out together. This goes all the way to the films too; the ski films are copying the snowboard films. I think it’s a good thing, as long as skiers remember that they were hating on [hated] snowboarders for a long time (personal communication, November 14, 2005).

Thus, the contemporary snow field no longer consists of two clear-cut opposing groups, skiers and snowboarders. Rather, it is increasingly being divided into styles of participation (i.e., freestyle, big mountain, alpine) with each group sharing terrain as well as styles of talk and dress, training methods, etc. Although this is occurring predominantly at the core level of the culture, that is, among the most committed snowboarders and skiers, this trend is filtering into the broader snow field, and relations between the majority of skiers and snowboarders are becoming more amicable.

Embodied Intra-Group Divisions

In contrast to the united beginnings, the rapid commercialization and popularization of snowboarding during the late 1990s and early 2000s fuelled many divisions within the culture.

Andy Blumberg (2002a), editor of *Transworld Snowboarding* magazine, observed this trend:

Snowboarding is not *so* cool that riders should act like the educated do among the ignorant, the rich among the poor. It's not *so* tough that people need to represent it like hoods on a corner, disrespecting anyone on the mountain outside their little crew. Once united we seem today divided, excluding and ignoring those not hip to what's the new hype this season. It almost pains some snowboarders to acknowledge others on the chair next to them; they stare forward, through their goggles up the hill, consciously silent. They clown style, equipment, and ability. (p. 16)

While the most obvious division in the contemporary snowboarding culture is between insiders and newcomers, various identities also exist within the group of core participants. As previously discussed, there are those who prefer big mountain riding which may involve dropping off rocks, riding down chutes, and steep and deep snowboarding in powder and amongst trees; others prefer the half-pipe, or jibbing, and ride on jumps and rails in terrain parks. In contrast to core boarders, less committed snowboarders – including male and female novices, poseurs or weekend warriors – have lower cultural status. While numerous qualities underscore the social hierarchy in snowboarding, bodily disposition, style, and clothing are critical markers. It is also important to note, however, that gender does not divide the snowboarding hierarchy; core female boarders share many of the same values and identities with core males. Thus, in the remainder of this section I will examine how clothing practices reinforce divisions between various groups within a highly fragmented snowboarding culture, and how some women appropriate various practices to negotiate space within the snowboarding culture.

Initially, the distinctive clothing styles of the gangster and punk clearly distinguished core snowboarders from skiers and non-participants. Yet, during the late 1990s, this alternative snowboarder look became fashionable among the scores of new participants. No longer did these

clothing styles perform the function of producing and reproducing clear social boundaries between insiders, newcomers, and outsiders. Graham, a New Zealand snowboard shop owner, has witnessed a cultural shift:

In the early days, it was lots of surfers because they weren't interested in skiing. So for a number of years we had a surf culture mentality. But today, lots of people just go out and shop. You see the poseurs getting out of their cars in the car-park [across from the snowboard shop], they pull down their pants to get the baggy look going on, put their goggles back on and tilt them to the side, and put their boots back on, then start walking down the road...looking as *cool* as possible. It's hilarious (personal communication, September 18, 2005).

New Zealand snowboarder Pamela also proclaimed:

I will never forget coming back from Whistler and walking round town and thinking, "Oh cool, all these people are snowboarders, or they must be because they're all dressed like snowboarders," and then working out that no one snowboarded, they just dressed like this, and I remember the fakeness of it all hitting me, and I had a really hard time with that.

When I started snowboarding it wasn't cool. I had a hard time with all these Aucklanders coming to Queenstown and they were just doing it because it was cool and I remember thinking, "you fake asses, what are you doing, this is *our* sport." Some people would just turn up for a season in Queenstown, and be "oh yeah, I'm a snowboarder." There's something quite fake about it. That element has grown in snowboarding, and that is something that I find quite unsavory really (personal communication, September 18, 2005).¹¹

As a core participant, Bell's distinctive snowboarding identity was threatened by newcomers who did not demonstrate commitment to the activity itself but, rather, embodied what Becky Beal and Lisa Weidman (2003) have called a "prefabricated version" of a boarding identity by consciously displaying name-brand clothing and equipment (p. 340; also see Wheaton, 2000b).

In an effort to regain authenticity, it is ironic that many core snowboarders moved away from the traditional 'rebellions' of piercing and tattooing and toward a more conservative and mainstream stance, with less visual signification and more technically functional clothing (Howe,

¹¹ The irony here is that Pamela established Fruition, a snowboarding apparel company, in an attempt to benefit financially from the influx of new-comers/"fake asses."

1998). “There is no set snowboarder look anymore,” said Graham; “clothing is a lot mellower... but there is a cult following with some brands” (personal communication, September 18, 2005). Certainly, the central issue today is branding.

Today, more than one hundred companies provide snowboarding-specific clothing in an abundance of styles. Snowboard clothing carries status based on understanding the nuances of the culture. To the initiated member, decoding a combination of t-shirt graphics and other visual signifiers is an automatic process (Howe, 1998). For example, while Volcom Stone’s distinctive fashions appeal to ‘alternative’ youth, more conservative, older snowboarders prefer the quality of Helly Hansen outerwear.¹² According to Ford and Brown (2006), concern with authenticity of various boarding clothing brands may be viewed as a response not only to the increasing levels of participation in the board-sports but, more importantly, to the global appropriation of boarding fashion by mass youth culture. As discussed, the owners and managers of these companies are very aware of this concern among core participants and work hard to maintain an authentic image (see Chapter Two and Chapter Three).

With the increasing number of participants, turnover rates in fashion trends have accelerated. According to Mike Featherstone (1991), “the constant supply of new, fashionably desirable goods” has produced a “paperchase effect in which those above will have to invest in new (informational) goods in order to re-establish the original social distance” (p. 18). Having worked in the snowboarding industry for many years, American snowboarder, Moriah, is acutely aware of the importance of the latest fashions among core boarders, “if you’re not wearing the coolest gear, or what the top riders are, or rocking the newest bindings and board, then you’re wack [uncool]” (personal communication, November 14, 2005). In this context, knowledge of

¹² Interestingly, Dart (2002) has highlighted the ways in which Volcom Stone’s “oppositional and ‘underground’ image” also appeals to “younger but committed surfers” (cited in Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 69).

the snowboarding culture becomes critical; cultural insiders need knowledge of new goods, their social and cultural value and how to use them appropriately. Snowboarding magazines, websites and videos play key roles in communicating these new culturally and socially valuable styles and tastes; the snowboarding media is an important bearer of embodied snowboarding style (an issue discussed in depth in Chapter Seven: Foucault and the Snowboarding Media). For example, *Transworld Snowboarding* recently informed readers “goggle tans are no longer considered a status symbol in snowboarding” (Sherowski, 2003c, p. 58).¹³ Ironically, the homogeneity of the contemporary snowboarder’s visual appearance, especially among the young, core and elite, is conspicuous in any snowboard magazine and at most mountain resorts. As noted by the editor of *Transworld Snowboarding*, “everyone looks the same in snowboard clothing” (Coyle, 2002, p. 128). As a result, many core members are once again reappropriating unconventional clothing to reinforce difference; tight jeans (inspired by the punk culture) were the fashion in 2005 (Urban Trends, 2004-2005). However, professional US snowboarder J. P. Solberg questions this trend, asking: “Why would anybody go snowboarding in jeans so tight they don’t even come over your boots?” (What Sucks, 2004, p. 48).

While snowboarding may be associated with a certain ‘cool’ style by members of the wider society and mass youth culture, the ways that such an appeal has been used in the commodification and commercialization of snowboarding culture is regarded with considerable ambivalence and even distain by some snowboarders. Not all snowboarders align with specific groups or subscribe to the latest fashions. Some snowboarders lodge concerns with *Transworld Snowboarding*:

¹³ In the late 1990s and early 2000s, goggle tans were perceived as visual demonstrations of an individual’s commitment to the activity. This was particularly evident in places where summer snowboarding is popular (e.g., Mt Hood, Oregon), such that some over zealous boarders would even wear their goggles on sun-beds to further enhance their tan lines (field notes, 2005).

I was cut off and laughed at, clowned, and left to ride the lift alone by those who wouldn't ride with just anybody. It seems it's no longer about riding but how tight your button-up looks with your bandana hanging off your tattered jeans. I've been riding for six years and have never felt such dismay. (Cody, *Sensitive In*, 2002, p. 28)

I get pretty pissed when [friends] are always dissn' on my old Kemper 165 and neon-green and purple jacket. Gone are the days when people were cool to one another because they were all snowboarders. Judge people by how they ride, not how they look. (Charlie, *Antifashion*, 2002, p. 30)

Although many marginal participants, and some core participants, refuse to buy into the snowboarding fashions, they are acutely aware of the implications of such decisions for their status within the culture. One marginal participant admitted feeling "like a muppet when I wear trackies with waterproof hiking over-trou[sers] over the top and sunnies, oh, plus my ripped up mitts. But then again, the rest of that stuff is so damned expensive that I just don't care" (James, personal correspondence, May 10, 2004). Relatively older participants, who presumably have more identities beyond snowboarding, tend to express such attitudes more frequently. As another marginal participant explained, "I'm one of those geeks who wears old geeky stuff, and just wants to have fun. I don't think image matters if you are comfortable with who you are" (Dan, personal correspondence, May 12, 2004). However, it seems that even those unconcerned about the latest snowboarding fashions and their marginal position in the snowboarding field are aware that clothing styles influence their cultural positioning (e.g., "I feel like a muppet;" "I'm one of those geeks"). As Bryan Turner (1988) explains, "social status involves practices which emphasize and exhibit cultural distinctions and differences which are a crucial feature of all social stratification" (p. 66). Clothing is one such practice that has always been a crucial feature of social-stratification in snowboarding culture.

Snowboarding culture produces never ending symbolic struggles over the power to produce and impose legitimate styles and tastes. With the growing differentiation of the snowboarding culture, individuals and groups increasingly clash over the meaning of their social

identity, and the legitimate use of the body. In the struggle to impose legitimate forms of embodiment, agents yield power proportionate to their position in the culture. In an increasingly mediatized culture, professional snowboarders are iconic; they hold the highest position within the culture and, thus, they have the most power to define the latest snowboarding styles. According to Zane, professional snowboarders have a “ridiculous influence on the kids” (personal communication, November 14, 2005). Continuing, he provided the following examples:

My friend Robbie [professional snowboarder] started wearing jeans [while snowboarding], and now everyone wears jeans on the mountain.

A couple of days ago we went up to Brighton [Salt Lake City, Utah] and you could tell who each little kid’s favorite pro rider was because of what they were wearing, some even had the same haircut as their favorite pros, it was that easy to tell. It was kinda funny but it made me realize how much these pro riders influence the kids (personal communication, November 14, 2005).

Typically, it is male professional snowboarders who define the snowboarding styles of dress and participation. As in other realms of physical culture, these individuals become “agents of transmission and reconstruction of practice, style and valued forms of capital to the next generation” of snowboarders (Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 130). However, as the position of women within the culture has improved they too have gained access, albeit limited, to define their own snowboarding styles.

Female boarding bodies

In the early years, female snowboarders were in the minority with little symbolic capital, and they tended to imitate their male counterparts who defined and legitimized snowboarding tastes and styles. American female snowboard instructor Jackie recalled wearing a jacket “two sizes too big” that “was soooo ugly...I looked like a total gaper” (personal correspondence, June 11,

2003). Her non-snowboarding friends thought she was “crazy” and called her a “tomboy” (personal correspondence, June 11, 2003). As the following quote from professional snowboarder Tina Basich’s (2003) autobiography illustrates, some women were finding it difficult to combine their physical skills and snowboarding identity, and maintain their perceptions of femininity:

As a girl, and the only girl on the team, I felt like I had to at least do everything the guys were doing to stay in the game. Not only did I have to get big air jumping cliffs and ride fast and hang with the guys but be cool, pretty and feminine. For example, I liked riding with my ponytail flying behind me so there was no question of my femininity. I was so proud to be a snowboarder girl. But the balance between being a great rider and a girl was schizophrenic, and there were only a handful of girls out there who were supposedly doing that dance right. (p. 70)

During the mid to late 1990s, however, committed core female boarders increasingly gained symbolic capital from their snowboarding abilities and commitment to the sport, and set about exercising this power.

In the mid 1990s, some core female snowboarders made overt attempts to redefine the female snowboarding body. Professional boarder Tina Basich (2003) recalled, we “were ready to look like girls” (p. 103). Understanding that “new girls would not be into the dark browns, blacks, and big oversized jackets and pants,” Basich and fellow professional Shannon Dunn established the female snowboard clothing company ‘Prom’ to offer more varied identities for female boarders (Basich, 2003, p. 103). They designed snowboard clothing specifically for women, with slimmer cuts, pastel colors, and butterfly logos. Prom also broke new ground by featuring female riders wearing ball gowns, roller-skates and makeup with a sense of irony in their advertisements (see Figure 1.7). Wearing “pink and pigtails...with confidence” (Basich cited in Howe, 1998, p. 118), these women openly resisted the dominant representations of the snowboarding body as primarily male and, in so doing, helped construct an alternative and empowering version of participation in which female snowboarders no longer had to relinquish

their femininity to participate and gain cultural status. By redefining the legitimate practices of the female snowboarding body, these core female boarders provided an image for girls to emulate, girls who might never have snowboarded “out of the fear of seeming too boyish” (Howe, 1998, p. 125).



Figure 1.7 In this 1995 Prom advertisement, professional snowboarders Shannon Dunn (left) and Tina Basich adopt feminine snowboarding fashions with a sense of irony.

This example illustrates how new meanings of the snowboarding body are produced in and through the struggles within the field of cultural production. According to Bourdieu (1985), “the symbolic power of agents, understood as the power to make things seen...and to make things believed,” depends on the “position occupied in the space (and in the classifications potentially inscribed in it)” (p. 729). Hence, the female boarder’s success at resisting the previously male-defined female snowboarding body suggests improvement in the position of women in the snowboarding culture. During the mid 1990s, core female boarders gained access to power, albeit limited, to contest the legitimate principles of embodiment in snowboarding. But it is important to note, that such examples of overt contestation remained sparse during this period.

By the 2000s, however, many more female snowboarders had proved themselves ‘worthy’ of core status. They had created space within the snowboarding culture based on their snowboarding abilities alone. Tina Basich captured this change well with her comments, “we used to get respect for trying, now we get respect for being a good snowboarder” (cited in Gottesman, 2001, p. 115). In the current cultural moment, core female snowboarders embody subtle practices to create a distinctive space within the snowboarding culture and further distinguish their own taste from what has increasingly become the mass snowboarding taste. For example, core female boarders are reinterpreting and feminizing the images of the gangster and punk, which were originally an attempt to preserve snowboarding as a masculine activity (Anderson, 1999). While many male snowboarders imitate the urban gangster by wearing bandanas on their heads, some female snowboarders make and wear crocheted headbands. Underneath their headbands, bandanas, and beanies, many females wear their hair long as another subtle marker of femininity. Although the punk-inspired studded belt is a standardized accessory among male snowboarders, female snowboarders have feminized this style, wearing

bright pink studded belts. While many female boarders wear the same baggy pants and exposed boxer shorts as their male counterparts, some add feminine flair by wearing a slightly shorter top exposing a pierced or tattooed midriff (See Figures 1.8 & 1.9). By reappropriating these styles in different ways to men, female boarders are creating hybrid identities based on the mixing and movement of cultures. The resulting fusion or creolization of femininity with the punk and gangster styles is not the assimilation of one culture or cultural tradition by another but the production of something new, a new distinctly female snowboarding identity.¹⁴ In so doing, women are establishing their own space within the snowboarding culture. Moreover, some of these young women are becoming “agents of transmission” of practice, style and “valued forms of capital” to the next generation of female boarders (Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 130). This is especially true for those professional female snowboarders (e.g., Torah Bright, Gretchen Bleiler, Erin Cromstock, Tara Dakides, Jana Meyen) who have been embraced by the snowboarding industry and media, and thus have become iconic. This example of women’s creative dress practices illustrates how the work of producing and imposing meaning is carried on in and through the everyday struggles within the snowboarding culture.

¹⁴ Perhaps feeling threatened by women’s reappropriation of their styles, or perturbed that female boarders were not dressing to accommodate the interests and desires of men, a group of young male interns for *Transworld Snowboarding* recently complained: “It would be just our luck that there are finally some beautiful women in the snowboarding world but they all dress like food-court gangsters. Nothing is less attractive than a girl sagging her pants with a visor beanie and a waist full of danglers. C’mon, we know that you’re getting away from the sex-object thing but it’s getting a little outta hand” (Things Not, 2006, p. 170). However, physical attractiveness is always subjective and some male participants in my study articulated that they find this female snowboarding style “sexy.” The key point here, however, is that core female boarders who are adopting and reappropriating punk and gangster styles, and snowboarding proficiently, are not doing so to accommodate the interests and desires of males but rather for their own pleasure.

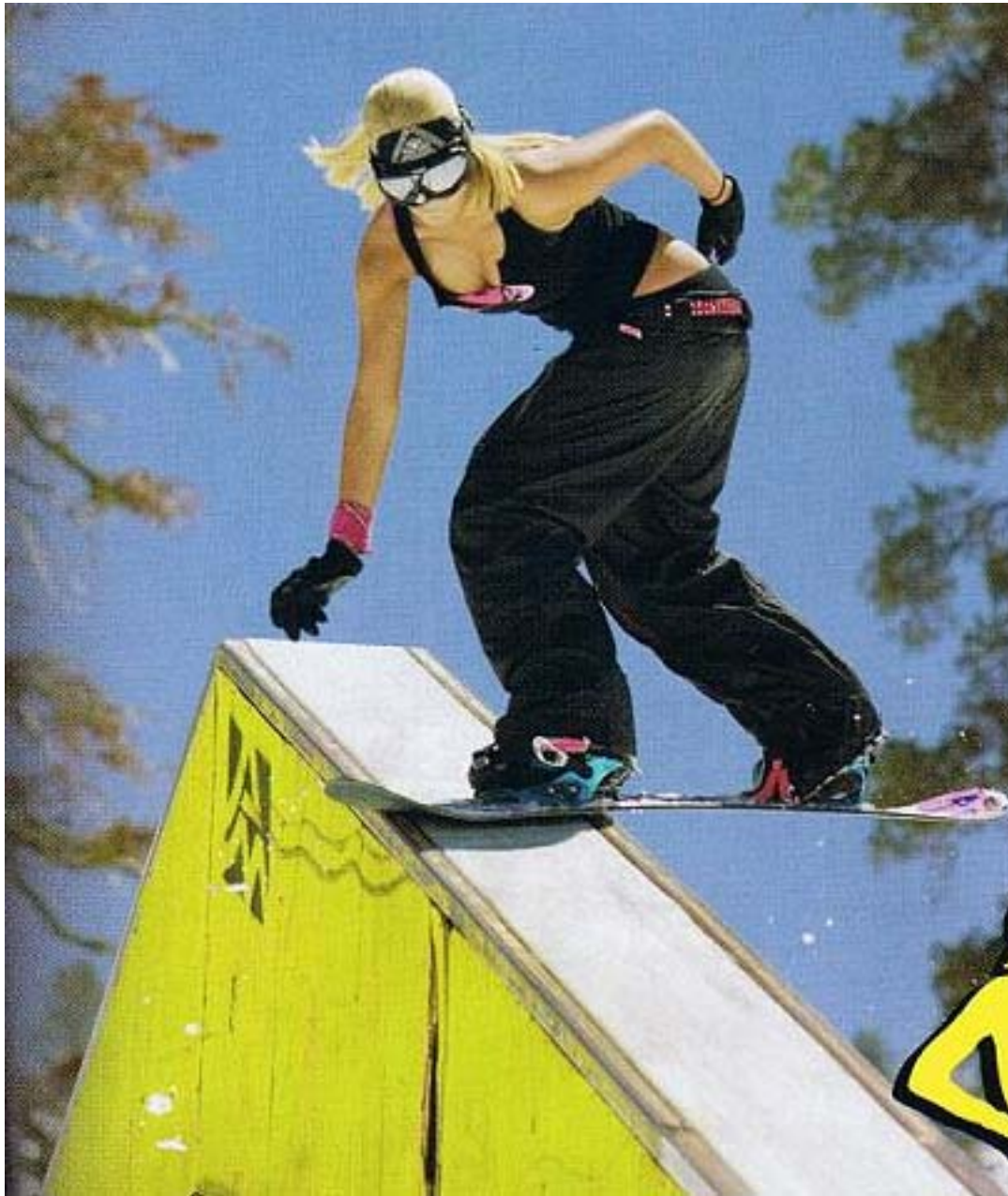


Figure 1.8 This photo of Lauren Kreysar, featured in the 2007 *Transworld Snowboarding Buyer's Guide*, illustrates the distinctly female snowboarding style described above; she wears a black bandana, a pink bandana as a wrist band, a pink studded belt, a body-hugging singlet, and is seen demonstrating physical prowess on a rail in a US terrain park.



Figure 1.9 Wearing boxer shorts, a studded belt, a short top and a pierced midriff, Tara Dakides demonstrates how female boarders in the late 1990s and early 2000s reconstructed a new, distinctly female, hybrid snowboarding identity. Indeed, Dakides was a key “agent of transmission” of the distinctive female snowboarding style during this period.

Divisions between different groups of female boarders, however, further complicate struggles over definition. As with snowboarding more generally, the influx of new female participants in the late 1990s and 2000s threatened the identities of core female boarders. Of most concern to core female boarders were those new participants who embraced the overtly ‘feminine’ snowboarding style *but did not engage in active participation*, and struggles developed between these two groups. A comment posted on a snowboard forum by Jenni indicated the hostility: “Girls who do things like stare at boys and sit in the pipe and on the

sidelines of the park are just f**king poseurs. They need to get a life and go have a sleepover in their thongs” (Girls And, 2003, no page or para.). Jackie observed these cultural changes: “When I started it seemed like only girls like myself rode. The preppy girls skied. Now even the preppiest of girls want to ride, at least just to try it. I always see girls in the bathrooms on the hill putting on more make up and shit. Maybe they will take a couples of run’s during the day, but they are really just there to hang-out in the lodge, look cute, and either wait for their boyfriends or find boyfriends” (personal correspondence, June 11, 2003). Moriah, a committed snowboarder who proudly claims to have been riding for nine years and snowboards more than 100 days per year, dismissed women who embrace the overtly ‘feminine’ snowboarding clothing style but do not engage in active participation as “lodge bunnies.” “Snowboarding,” she said, “is something that comes from the heart, something that you want to do for yourself, not something you’re doing to *be cool* or to get a boyfriend” (personal communication, November 14, 2005). This comment alludes not only to the divisions between groups of female boarders but also to a dominant mode of thinking among ‘core’ male and female boarders; that is, that the ‘core’ snowboarder who demonstrates commitment to the activity itself, not just the snowboarding style, is the only ‘authentic’ cultural identity. The important point here is that divisions between different groups of female snowboarders are not unique. Rather they represent struggles within the broader snowboarding culture, between all core boarders and all marginal participants and poseurs. In this sense snowboarding culture is a set of forces, or objective power relations that impose themselves on all who enter the culture. Within the culture, symbolic struggles over the power to produce and impose the legitimate bodily disposition continue apace between different groups of snowboarders. These group divisions are, to some extent, founded on levels of participation and dedication to the activity, rather than gender.

In this section I have explored some of the ways snowboarders embody and display their cultural affiliation through the choice of symbolic goods and their subsequent customizing. Clothing and bodily deportment provide the “small number of distinctive features which, functioning as a system of difference...allows the most fundamental differences to be expressed” (Bourdieu, 1984, cited in Kew, 1986, p. 311). The snowboarding culture, or ‘field’ in Bourdieu’s terminology, has increasingly become a structured system of social positions, and the embodiment of distinctive snowboarding tastes and styles helps reinforce the position of ‘established’ groups and the marginal status of ‘outsider’ groups. The key point here is that females do not constitute a separate and marginal group but rather hold distinctive positions within each of the groups that make up the snowboarding culture. In Bourdieu’s (1984) own words:

Sexual properties are as inseparable from class properties as the yellowness of a lemon is from its acidity: a class is defined in an essential respect by the place and value it gives to the two sexes and to their socially constituted dispositions. This is why there are as many ways of realizing femininity as there are classes and class fractions.... (pp. 107-108)

Hence, this examination of the interaction of gender and social group distinction through the lens of embodied cultural capital seems to support Bourdieu’s claim that gender is a secondary principle of division. The embodied practices of snowboarders suggest that an individual’s initial capital is gender-neutral, being fundamentally defined by their relative position in the structure based on their commitment to the activity and lifestyle. However, as illustrated by the ‘core’ female boarders and ‘girlies,’ the legitimate forms of snowboarding femininity differ between groups. Of the two groups, it seems that ‘core’ females have the most space to define and redefine cultural meanings pertaining to the female boarding body.

In the following section I will explore how the “volume and composition of capital is given specific form and value to gender properties within each social group” (Laberge, 1995, p.

137) and, more specifically, how core boarders distribute symbolic capital. It is important to note here that the pursuit of boarding experience and competence is at the core of the snowboarding culture. The fashion stylistic attributes of snowboarding, although an important aspect of the culture, are epiphenomena to the experience of snowboarding itself. Thus, the following discussion focuses on the physical experience and its function in the distribution of symbolic capital.

Capital in the 'Boarding Culture

The most relevant type of capital varies according to one's position in snowboarding culture. While many novices and marginal boarders privilege style and taste, physical ability is most highly valued among core boarders. Thus, in this section I explore how core boarders distribute symbolic capital. I argue that less visible characteristics, such as displays of commitment, physical prowess and risk-taking are highly valued among core snowboarders and are particularly important for gaining capital and cultural status. Yet, this analysis reveals gender disparities in the distribution and transferability of symbolic capital, and highlights the need for further consideration of gender as a potential form of capital.

Social status in the snowboarding culture derives from the accumulation of symbolic capital. Although taste and style play an important part in constructing a distinctive snowboarding identity, members cannot 'buy' their way into the core of the culture. As *New Zealand Snowboarder* put it, respect has "to be earned, usually with a lot of blood, sweat and tears" (Onset: Respect, 1995, p. 9). In snowboarding, the only usable and effective capital – symbolic capital – is "prestige" or "authority," and, as Bourdieu (1980) argues more generally, the "only legitimate accumulation consists of making a name for oneself, a known, recognized name" (p. 262). Among core participants – as distinct from novices, poseurs, and outsiders – less

visible characteristics are more important in building cultural status. According to Colin, a core Australian snowboarder who has spent many years living and working in Whistler (Canada), “when people first get into snowboarding image becomes important, because they want to be recognized on the mountain as knowing what they are doing. But as you get better you either go one of two ways:”

you get swept up in the fashion/lifestyle aspect of it and make that as important as the riding itself, or you don’t believe the hype and let your snowboarding do the talking. I know guys and gals that don’t give a shit about how they look and kill it in the backcountry and big mountain riding. To me, image is not that important at all. I wear clothing that fits me, keeps me dry and warm, and won’t inhibit my riding (personal correspondence, August 22, 2004).¹⁵

While core snowboarders can still clearly demarcate themselves from the popular tastes and cultural practices of outsiders, marginal participants, and poseurs, they can only enhance their status (symbolic capital) by performing for their peers (Honneth, 1986).

Prestige is shaped partly by appearing in the snowboarding media and films, and success in contests. But in contrast to more explicitly competitive sports, symbolic capital or “performance capital” as Dart (2002, cited in Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 77) terms it, is assessed more subjectively by snowboarders in terms of style, commitment to snowboarding, capability on challenging terrain, difficulty and range of maneuvers (also known as your “bag of tricks”) able to be performed, and so on. Only one’s peers confer prestige and honor in the snowboarding culture (Midol, 1993). In his recent autobiography, olympic snowboarder Todd Richards (2003)

¹⁵ Ford and Brown (2006) make similar observations in the surfing culture: “matters of taste, as displayed or expressed in the panoply of subcultural signifiers such as surfing fashion, decrease in personal significance as years of involvement in the surfing lifestyle increase. It is not that the more experienced surfers do not wear surf apparel (after all, people have to wear something) but rather that surfing fashion is just not a significant or important aspect of their lives” (p. 74). Williams’ (2002) study of surfing culture also shows that for the beginners there is a preoccupation with the fashion and group identity aspects of surf culture, which serves to visually distinguish surfers from non-surfers, signifying subcultural membership to the outside world. In time such aspects of clothing and argot are taken for granted and, reflecting the shift of orientation to wishing to be valued as an insider in the world of surfing, the focus is increasingly on performance (cited in Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 76). For similar observations in the windsurfing culture, see Wheaton (2000b, 2003).

identified the importance of symbolic capital for gaining peer recognition. “Gaining respect from my friends” he said, is “way more important than the prize money or the trophy” (p. 166).

Snowboarders compete amongst themselves, via the symbolic practices of physical prowess, commitment, skill, courage and risk-taking, for marks of ‘distinction’ (Bourdieu, 1984). In the words of one male participant, snowboarders earn respect by going “bigger and fatter than everybody”¹⁶ (cited in Anderson, 1999, p. 55). These are, of course, practices exclusive to only the most committed males, and a select few females.

Being seen to perform is clearly connected with the process of ascription of symbolic capital in snowboarding. The chairlift ride, for example, provides snowboarders with the opportunity to watch the performances of others below. In fact, a recent trend has been for ski-resorts to build terrain parks and half-pipes directly under chairlifts, thus providing passengers with entertainment in the form of boarders (and skiers) jumping, sliding, spinning, flailing, grabbing, landing and crashing. With a large group typically gathered at the top of the park awaiting their turn, and the steady stream of passenger’s overhead, terrain parks and half-pipes have become spaces of extreme exhibitionism. Although the majority of boarders are preoccupied with their own performances,¹⁷ they are also ‘gazing’ at the performance of others. This aspect of the snowboarder’s gaze involves an appraisal and social comparison of skill and style. “Good style,” for olympic snowboarding judge Ste’en, is “a funny one, you know it when you see it – strong basic stance, centered over your board, not sketchy, not flailing,” and he added that “I like good style, and hate seeing ugly riding” (personal correspondence, October 18, 2005). Although there is a general consensus of good and bad style, individual variation also plays a part of what impresses. “Style is purely subjective,” said Cody Dresser (2006), editor of

¹⁶ ‘Going bigger’ translates to more amplitude. ‘Going fatter’ means to perform the most technical maneuvers with style.

¹⁷ Exceptions include those male and female boarders who prefer to socialize in these spaces rather than participate.

Transworld Snowboarding magazine, “there’s nothing more discussed and debated in snowboarding: the good, the bad, the authentic, contrived, or played out” (p. 106).

The snowboarding ‘gaze’ is not merely aesthetic but also informs an informal social ranking system in relation to ‘performance capital,’ which in turn has functional implications in terms of respect and access. Australian core snowboarder Emily, for example, described the importance of a good “first run” through the half-pipe or terrain-park to “gain respect” from your peers, otherwise you will be forced to “drop-in on people and piss them off all day just trying to get a turn” (personal correspondence, August 28, 2004). Canadian boarder Marie was also keenly aware of the critical ‘gaze:’

When I first started, the most intimidating thing was getting on and off the chairlift. The whole chairlift ride I’d be petrified of getting off and crashing into people, and when that happens, the looks you get from other people.... it really bothered me. The whole way up, you know people are judging you on the chairlift, and then when you push them over and fall over yourself...it is just sooo embarrassing (personal communication, November 7, 2005).

Snowboarders subconsciously and consciously gaze at the physical and cultural (e.g., clothing, language, bodily deportment, interactions) performances of other boarders in terrain parks and half-pipes, on the slopes, in the lift-lines, and in the ski-resort cafés and car parks, and they ascribe symbolic and cultural capital accordingly. In this way, each of these social spaces becomes a “stage” on which “embodied identity performances are played out” (Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 137). The following subsections briefly examine snowboarders’ value systems to illustrate some of the different ways in which core participants create, signify and embody symbolic capital in these social spaces.

Physical Prowess

Snowboarders earn prestige and respect from their peers through displays of physical prowess, which include finely-honed combinations of skill, muscular strength, aggression, toughness and, above all, courage (Morford & Clarke, 1976). *Transworld Snowboarding's* introduction to professional boarder Roman De Marchi highlighted the value of physical prowess, courage and risk taking in gaining cultural status:

How many people do you know who live life like there's no tomorrow? He'll look at something and say, "I'm gonna do that. Get out your camera." And everyone else will be like, "are you f--king nuts? Shit that doesn't look doable," he'll stomp it nine out of ten times...his riding is going bigger, harder, and gnarlier then everybody else's. (Muzzey, 2003, p. 126)

Male boarders also praise their female counterparts for displays of physical prowess, skill, aggression and courage. Recalling his first experience riding with a top female boarder in the late 1980s, professional boarder Todd Richards (2003) admitted:

...my expectations of her skills were pretty low. Amy had photos in magazines...but magazines or not, she was a girl, and all the girls I'd seen ride were pretty bad. There were girls who could race and girls who could carve pipe but as far as freestyle tricks went, I hadn't seen much. Amy, on the other hand, hit big jumps and grabbed airs: rocket airs, mutes, methods. She used skate terminology, which I thought was pretty rad. She knew what she was doing and what she was talking about, which made me really nervous around her. She'd earned my respect. (pp. 64-65)

After performing a 720 degree spin maneuver at the 1998 Winter X-Games, Tina Basich (2003) remembers a few male pro snowboarders "telling me that they couldn't yet do that trick. They looked at me a little differently – they were truly impressed" (p. 134). It should be added here, that the criteria upon which female snowboarders are judged by males and females alike, often tends to be different from that of male boarders. Displays of high performance by a female snowboarder are often met with surprise, "whoa, you're a girl? That's amazing" (Moriah, personal correspondence, November 14, 2005). The key point here, however, is that female

boarders who embody the legitimate traits of physical prowess, skill, risk-taking and courage can earn symbolic capital in the snowboarding culture.

Risk-Taking

Sport fosters a culture of risk that encourages male (and ever increasingly, female) athletes to ignore or deny injuries and pain, and where admitting injury or suffering is tantamount to confessing weakness (Nixon, 1993). Engaging in risk and injury proves dedication and toughness, and athletes who perform while injured gain “kudos within peer groups” (Young et al., 1994, p. 176). Snowboarders and spectators alike internalize this philosophy. Like their male counterparts, top female riders embody the cultural values of courage, and risk-taking and experience their share of injuries. Professional snowboarder Tara Dakides has “fractured [her] back, dislocated elbows, and torn ligaments in both knees,” and in 2002 she had whiplash “six or seven times” as well as numerous concussions (Ulmer & Straus, 2002, para. 16). Victoria Jealous once found herself “caught [in an avalanche] above a 1,000-foot chute with car-size rocks in the middle and house-size rocks at the bottom” and “had to do two back-flips and then cling on some rocks to avoid falling in” (Ulmer & Straus, 2002, para. 20). Continuing Jealous admitted, “breaking bones is the least of [my] worries” (Ulmer & Straus, 2002, para. 20). Although these women gain respect from their peers, the snowboarding media directs very little attention to their exploits and injuries. Yet it happily glorifies male risk-taking with extensive coverage of male injuries.

The glorification of male injuries is an emerging trend in the snowboarding culture. Interviews in magazines usually include ‘worst injury’ questions with replies reported in detail. Likewise, most (male-dominated) snowboard films have a ‘slam-section’ featuring crashes and injuries (see, e.g., *Shakedown*, 2004; *Notice to Appear*, 2002). Snowboard magazines regularly

include photos of male riders proudly displaying their gashes, black eyes, bruises, stitches, swelling and broken bones. These photos reinforce snowboarding as an activity requiring ‘manly’ courage (see Chapter Five). The snowboarding media insists on revealing the gory details, prompting male riders for the particulars of their injuries. For example, “So did they rip it straight out of you?” “They just stuck it back on?” “It took off the cartilage?” “You cut off your tongue as well?” “Did you pass out?” (Coyle, 2002, p. 134). In another representative example, *Transworld Snowboarding* narrated the injury of professional rider Scotty Wittlake:

A brutal knee to face contact completely shattered his cheekbone. Apparently, Scotty’s eye was so distended that doctors had to come up with a temporary fix to hold it in until the swelling went down. His eyelid became so swollen it turned inside out and oozed pus. (Yellow Snow, 2002, p. 206)

The article bestowed hyper-masculine status on Wittlake, praising his commitment to snowboarding: “Just a few weeks after the surgery, Scotty headed up to Oregon to help Whitey film using his one good eye. Now *that’s* punk” (Yellow Snow, 2002, p. 206). These mediated accounts construct male riders as heroes for risking physical injury and tolerating pain. The acts of riding while injured and resuming full participation quickly provide symbolic evidence of a male rider’s dedication to snowboarding, and thus his corporeal capital.

Snowboarders do not always avoid death; on the contrary, it is often the object of a strong unconscious attraction (Bataille, 1985). For example, a recent trend among “passionate snowboarders” is to hike into the backcountry and provoke an avalanche to ride: The boarder who “surfs” the avalanche the longest is the “winner,” while those who “drown” are obviously the losers (On The, 2004, para. 2). Another trend is extreme terrain parks built by ski resorts eager to attract the snowboarding patron. A direct consequence is increasingly severe injuries. Ste’en observed that the “consequences of pushing your limits have changed...we never used to

do jumps that could kill you... people are dying now” (personal communication, October 18, 2005). Similarly, snowboarding cinematographer Zane sees the sport

...becoming more and more dangerous because people have to keep pushing the limits to get *more recognition*... kids don't *respect* anything if someone's not going 100 feet [size of jump] and doing a 1080 [degree spin]; it is way harder to *get noticed*. I think a lot of these guys [professional snowboarders] are taking these risks with confidence but who is going to suffer is the kids that think to be good they have to do the craziest thing ever, and eventually that is going to catch up...I think more people are going to start dying soon (personal communication, November 14, 2005; emphasis added).

Philosopher Georges Bataille (1985) links honor and wealth to a willingness to lose all. In other words, snowboarders achieve real capital not by accumulating (e.g., clothing) but by risking their lives, careers, injury and equipment.

Although both male and female snowboarders have died, including several top snowboarders (e.g., Craig Kelly, Jeff Anderson, Tristan Picot, Line Østvold, Josh Malay), the snowboarding media approaches the two genders differently. Craig Kelly (male) and Line Østvold (female) were both World Champion snowboarders. After 36-year-old Kelly died in an avalanche the media glorified him as “the sport’s greatest legend” (Richards, 2003, p. 276), “the embodiment of snowboarding” who had “defined the progression and the soul of the sport” (*Transworld Snowboarding*, April 2003, p. 11), and “the single most influential rider in the history of snowboarding” (*New Zealand Snowboarder*, May/June 2003, p. 126). By contrast, when 26-year-old Østvold died from a fall during an official boarder-cross training practice, the media remembered her as “strong and beautiful,” the “coolest chick ever,” “a friend to everyone she met,” and “always riding for fun, smiling, and winning” (Hoy, 2004, para. 4). Whereas Østvold “will be missed for her humility, her positive outlook, and her love of life” (Hoy, 2004, para. 4), Kelly was glorified for his skill and transformed into a snowboarding deity. Traditional gender stereotypes it seems remain in place.

The symbolic practices of physical prowess, courage and risk-taking, and the media representation of these practices, reinforce the snowboarding hierarchy, and clearly distinguish pros from poseurs, and men from women. Committed male and female boarders are prepared to ‘pay their dues’ and, to varying extents, experience loss (e.g., equipment, injury, career and life). Male and female boarders both earn symbolic capital from their peers for such displays of physical prowess. However, by lionizing the physical injuries, and sometimes death, experienced by male riders, and silencing or marginalizing those of female boarders, the snowboarding media strengthens the image of the dedicated core male boarder, as one who takes more risks and, by default, is tougher and more courageous than most females, and hence more deserving of corporeal capital. It seems that Bataille’s (1985) claim, that glory and honor will only be experienced through loss, holds truer for male snowboarders. More importantly, however, a system that encourages the experience of loss (e.g., injury, life) is highly problematic for both male and female participants.

Converting Symbolic Capital into Economic Capital

Snowboarders gain cultural status through exhibiting commitment, physical prowess and risk-taking; some convert this symbolic capital into economic capital. The relationship between economic capital and cultural capital, however, is more complex than a direct exchange (Bourdieu, 1984). With bigger-than-life snowboarding personalities, professionals including Mark Frank Montoya, JP Walker and Tara Dakides have been labelled cultural “superstars” by both the mainstream and snowboarding specific media (Is Snowboarding, 2002, para. 3). Bourdieu (1980) notes that to “‘make one’s name’ means making one’s *mark*, achieving recognition (in both senses) of one’s difference from others...” (p. 289). Professional snowboarders attempt to make their name through a combination of physical prowess and

distinctive and marketable identities. Although physical prowess plays a key role in determining the symbolic capital possessed by a snowboarder, image is also crucial for converting this symbolic capital into economic capital. Top male snowboarders work hard to create distinctive identities based on characteristics such as hedonistic lifestyles, gangster identities or, in the words of one participant, “shitty attitudes” and “booze [and] drugs” (Kelsey, personal correspondence, September 7, 2004). For some top snowboarders the accumulation of symbolic capital merges with the accumulation of economic capital. However, only those who can embrace the prerequisites of professional snowboarding, that is, demonstrate physical prowess, commitment, a marketable identity, and avoid career-ending injuries, “can reap the full economic profits of their symbolic capital” (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 263) (See also Chapter Two). In an effort to convert symbolic capital into economic capital, some women construct a marketable snowboarding identity by drawing on their gender and femininity as a unique source of capital.

Gender Capital

Cultural capital and economic capital are central to the structuring of Bourdieu’s conception of social space. Gender, however, does not appear in his fundamental structuring principles. Bourdieu (1986) does acknowledge that, “certain women derive occupational profit from their charm(s), and that beauty thus acquires a value on the labor market” (p. 245). Yet, according to Laberge and Kay (2002), Bourdieu’s (1984) treatment of gender as a ‘secondary’ constituent of social division contradicts claims elsewhere in his work that gender is a major principle of social stratification.¹⁸ In light of Laberge and Kay’s (2002) critique and the importance of gender in the

¹⁸ Bourdieu argues in *Masculine Domination* (2001) that his method and concepts do indeed provide a way of analyzing gender and sexual difference. Feminist critiques of this text, however, have been prolific and cogent, arguing that it is “largely restricted to analyzing the structural constraints of masculine domination” (Fowler, 2003, p. 479). According to McLeod (2005), Bourdieu’s recent attempt at gender analysis is highly problematic and has

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construction of snowboarding culture, this section attempts to provide a more coherent approach to gender and to give it equivalent status in Bourdieu's conceptual system (Laberge, 1995; McCall, 1992).

Abundant evidence demonstrates that gender is a potential form of capital in snowboarding. For example, professional boarder Michele Taggart remembered female snowboarders in the 1980s being "included [in media coverage] because of their cuteness and their beautiful hair flowing down the mountain:" At the time "everyone wanted to include a *cute* girl on their [snowboard] team" (cited in Howe, 1998, p. 64). According to *EXPN.com*, Tara Dakides combined a courageous and powerful riding style with a "rad SoCal style, gnarly fashion sense, *lovely looks*, and sense of humor" to become "one of snowboarding's most prominent divas" (Athlete Bios, 2002, para. 1, emphasis added). Moriah observed that female snowboarders are "getting paid because they are beautiful and marketable" (personal correspondence, November 14, 2005). Femininities, like masculinities, are assets in the snowboarding market, tradable for economic if not symbolic capital. Committed Australian boarder Colin's response to the question, "what qualities does a female snowboarder need to become a professional" is enlightening here:

Determination and the ability to huck it with the boys. Looks help...to get recognized from a marketability standpoint. As female boarders generally don't make the same prize money or are held in as high regard within the media, looks may help finance their travels and make a fulltime career of snowboarding, ie. Tara Dakides sponsored by Cambells' Soup or Torah Bright advertising for 1800 reverse (phone service). However, Janna Meyen has got to the top of the game without relying on looks, by showing as much balls and determination, throwing down on the rails and slope-style course as any guy (personal communication, August, 2004).

little new to offer feminist scholarship: "In *Masculine Domination*, Bourdieu writes defensively, and appears somewhat oblivious to the diverse range of important feminist work that has historicized sexual division. Moreover, his insights into gender reproduce standard binaries of masculine domination and female subordination as if these structures are unitary, coherent and unchanged by and in contemporary social life" (p. 53).

As this comment suggests, not all female snowboarders have access to, or the ability to employ, gender capital. Instead, many female snowboarders (e.g., Janna Meyen, Michelle Taggart) are able to capitalize only symbolic capital by demonstrating physical prowess, risk and commitment. “Taggart never had to worry about being media savvy or cute,” said writer Susanna Howe (1998), because “she was a winner” (p. 130).

Ultimately, however, different women take different views of gender capital and their opinions are often shaped by context.¹⁹ In the snowboarding culture, some women (e.g., girlies, some professional snowboarders) overtly employ their gender capital, whereas others privilege traditionally masculine traits as forms of symbolic capital. The embrace of stereotypical ‘feminine’ traits, however, tends to distract the attention of male boarders and the snowboarding media away from female boarders’ physical skills and towards their physical appearance. For example, *Transworld Snowboarding* admitted, “Torah is so cute it’s easy to overlook her talent on the snowboard” (Check Out, February, 2005, p. 101). Some core female boarders denounce the trend towards the privileging of professional female snowboarders’ gender capital over symbolic capital in the contemporary snowboarding industry:

Kids that are looking at these girls in the magazines and thinking they rip are the weekend warriors. These weekend warriors, who ride four times a month, look at these girls and think, “wow, look at this girl, she’s gorgeous and she snowboards.” But *real* snowboarders, that ride 100 plus days a year, ride every day of the week, look at these girls and think, “what a fucken joke, she’s only getting paid because she’s cute. I’m not getting paid, I can spin 1080’s and she can’t even spin a 360” (Moriah, personal correspondence, November 14, 2005).

¹⁹ Two examples of the importance of context in relation to gender capital include Moi’s (1991) analysis of femininity in France in the 1920s, and Skeggs’ (1997) study of young working class girls. Whereas Moi explained practices that are culturally understood to be feminine as having negative implications for women’s social status, Skeggs described femininity as a potential form of cultural capital. More recently, Lovell (2000) argued that femininity as a form of cultural capital is beginning to have broad currency in the contemporary labor market due to an increase in demand for feminine skills.

Like Moriah, American snowboarder Jamie prefers male boarders treating her like “a snowboarder” rather than “a girl,” and thus actively avoids adopting ‘feminine’ traits, such as wearing make-up, on the mountain (personal correspondence, February 10, 2005). Recently, another group of women who appear to embody third-wave feminism have emerged who blur the boundaries that divide the two. “There’s nothing wrong with being an athlete and a beautiful woman” proclaimed Tara Dakides (cited in Ulmer & Straus, 2002, para. 17; see Figure 1.9).

The key issue here, however, is that whatever form of capital female snowboarders possess in one respect, they lose in others. For example, women choosing to privilege gender capital are often written-off as ‘snow bunnies’ uncommitted to the activity itself, while those who prioritize symbolic capital and position themselves in opposition to the culturally valued discourse of “emphasized femininity” (Connell, 1987, p. 188), may experience ideological constraints (e.g., accusations of being “butch lesbians,” field notes, 2005), and/or difficulty converting their symbolic capital into economic capital (e.g., sponsorship, media coverage).

McCall (1992) describes the contradictory nature of this situation for women in general:

On the one hand, the multiplicity of gendered dispositions in the form of capital contributes to the construction of positions: gendered dispositions are multiple and not, of course, attached only to the sexed biological bodies, yet they become attached to the body in the form of embodied gendered dispositions shaping individuals trajectories. Yet on the other hand, the dichotomous action of gender acts to constrain and subordinate meaning of women’s activity, whatever the content of the so-called capital. (p. 846)

The difficulty of explaining female snowboarders’ capital preferences and accumulating abilities is, perhaps, because Bourdieu, despite recognizing that women play a significant role in the processes of the gendered accumulation of capital, rarely considers women as subjects with capital-accumulating strategies of their own. Female snowboarders do have the ability to

accumulate capital (symbolic, gender and both), yet the distribution of capital remains limited and determined by a male valuation system.²⁰

Bourdieu's theories of symbolic violence and misrecognition help explain the subordination of women's activity, and the subsequent unequal distribution of symbolic capital in the snowboarding culture. According to Bourdieu, symbolic violence is the imposition of systems of symbolism and meaning upon groups or classes in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate (Jenkins, 2002). This has been achieved through a process Bourdieu calls "misrecognition," whereby "power relations are perceived not for what they objectively are but in a form which renders them legitimate in the eyes of the beholder" (Jenkins, 1992, cited in Booth & Loy, 1999, p. 7). For example, although endowed with all the appearances of neutrality, the dangerous and exhibitionist styles of contemporary snowboarding reproduce pre-existing cultural classifications. Those male snowboarders who demonstrate the most physical prowess and courage gain the most symbolic capital, as well as economic capital (i.e., sponsorship deals), and cultural capital (i.e., media coverage) and, thus, have the most power to define the legitimate forms of participation. These boarders tend to favor styles of participation that reproduce existing symbolic power relations. In particular, high cultural value is currently placed on boarding styles that privilege the extremes of the male body (i.e., Big Air competitions), and professional male snowboarders are eagerly trying to establish records for the 'longest' and 'highest' jump.²¹ In the words of one core male snowboarder, "now, more than ever, there is a fixation, fascination and fetishization with BIG. Jumps are measured, and bigger is always better" (Andrew, personal

²⁰ See Chapter Five (Hegemonic Masculinity and the Snowboarding Culture) for a more detailed discussion of how this value system is constructed, and reconstructed, by male and female snowboarders.

²¹ For example, on May 9, 2005, professional Norwegian snowboarder Mads Jonsson (nicknamed 'Big Nads') set a world record when he jumped a distance of 187 feet in Hemsedal, Norway. Further records were set at June Mountain (California) later that year when US professional snowboarder Josh Dirksen reached a height of 33 feet when jumping off "a hip [type of jump] of enormous proportions" (Dresser, September 2005, p. 135).

communication, March 27, 2006). Regardless of the physical prowess and courage embodied by female boarders, they continue to participate in the shadow of their male counterparts. Moreover, these power relations have been so successfully obscured that many female snowboarders experience them as legitimate. For example, “Girls will always be a step behind...boys are always going to be leading in snowboarding” said Moriah (personal correspondence, November 14, 2005). As Chris Shilling (1993) explains, more generally, irrespective of their social location, “many women have far fewer opportunities than men to turn any participation they may have in physical activities into social, cultural or economic capital” (p. 147). However, it is important to bear in mind that some female snowboarders are creating new social, cultural and financial opportunities for themselves within this system (see Chapter Three and Chapter Four).

Bourdieu and Beyond

Snowboarding offers a good case study of contemporary embodiment. Like many other youth cultures, snowboarders dress, speak and behave in distinctive ways. Initially, devotees identified themselves through their practices which they contrasted to those engaged in by skiers. Today, the activity comprises a range of sub-group practices – backcountry boarders, half-pipe jocks, terrain park jibbers, and alpine racers – who rely heavily on embodied markers (e.g., clothing, physical prowess) to distinguish themselves. The distinctive value of these practices has changed during snowboarding’s short history but the symbolic values attached to these bodily forms remain crucial to many snowboarders’ senses of self.

However, the distinctive tastes and styles in the snowboarding culture conceal differences in power. The embodied practices of male and female snowboarders act as mechanisms that control access to the culture by selecting and rejecting new members according to overt (e.g., owning the latest snowboard equipment, wearing clothing from ‘authentic’ snowboarding

brands) and covert (e.g., demonstrations of cultural commitment and physical prowess) criteria. This analysis implicitly viewed the body as a social phenomenon, that is, it conceptualized the body as a possessor of power, a form of status, a bearer of symbolic value and a form of *physical* and *symbolic capital*.

Female snowboarding bodies are important sites for distinctions. Not only are female snowboarding bodies different from their male counterparts, they are also distinct from other female bodies. This chapter has explored the female snowboarding body as signifier through an examination of numerous cultural practices used by snowboarders, male and female, to distinguish themselves from non-snowboarders, the opposite sex, and each other. The practices of dress, bodily deportment and other less visible commitments (e.g., displays of physical prowess, risk-taking) are linked to definite systems of dispositions; they contribute to status differences and, thus, have social and political significance for the identities of female snowboarders.

Bourdieu's conceptual schema enables an examination of the intricate cultural details surrounding the meaning and use of the body in the snowboarding culture, and how such practices influence the everyday experiences of male and female participants. Bourdieu's conceptual framework is, to paraphrase Ford and Brown (2006), "particularly useful because it provides an explanation of the body as constituted in [snowboarding] practice and also contextualizes the value of the practical body in an embodied cultural economy of [snowboarding] practices" (p. 122, snowboarding substituted for surfing). Moreover, Bourdieu's concepts of field and capital were "good to think with" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 176) and offered useful and suggestive insights into how socially competent behavior is achieved within snowboarding culture. It is Bourdieu's proposal that key areas of culture are embodied, rather than simply 'in the mind,' that has been the most challenging and relevant to this particular analysis. As Rojek

(2000) acknowledges, “Bourdieu does succeed in revealing the complexity of performative culture in contemporary society” (p. 88). Indeed, having tested the efficacy of Bourdieu’s concepts for understanding the contemporary cultural phenomena of the snowboarding body, it appears that Rojek’s claim holds some truth.

Building on the knowledge of the female boarding body gained from Bourdieu’s concepts of field and capital, the following chapter employs a Foucauldian perspective and demonstrates how the circulation of mediated discourses of femininity become implicit in shaping the experiences of female boarders. This theoretical approach acknowledges the micro-forms of power arrangements at work within the cultural space of snowboarding and explores the complex, interrelated, and fluid character of these power relations, and their effect on female snowboarders’ subjectivities. In contrast to Bourdieu’s theory of distinction, the Foucauldian perspective adopted in Chapter Seven privileges the agency of female boarders, who are not envisaged as “trapped and condemned to defeat no matter what” (Foucault, 1980, pp. 141-142) but as actively resisting the subjectification of discursive constructions of femininity.

7. FOUCAULT AND THE SNOWBOARDING MEDIA

Many scholars regard Michel Foucault as one of the “most influential thinkers of contemporary times” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 5). His writings, according to Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982), represent “the most important contemporary effort both to develop a method for the study of human beings and to diagnose the current situation of our society” (p. xiii). Indeed, Foucault’s tools have helped shape the social sciences. His influence “is clear in a great deal of post-structuralist, post-modernist, feminist, post-Marxist and post-colonial theorizing” (Mills, 2003, p. 1). Foucault’s work has influenced the fields of anthropology, history, sociology, English studies, gender studies, politics, queer studies, indigenous studies, management, economics, pedagogy, psychology, cultural studies and, of most relevance here, sports studies (Markula & Pringle, 2006). Foucault’s “discourses of discipline and pleasure that surround the body in modern societies,” says Whitson (1989), have “much to offer students of sport” (cited in Andrews, 1993, p. 149). Moreover, Foucault has had a major influence on understandings of power in contemporary sports studies. The theories examined in this thesis thus far, for example, all paint a predominantly negative view of power. A Foucauldian approach, however, enables me to look at power in a new light. His concepts support a way of thinking about forms of power relations between men and women which do not fit neatly into the types of relations described in conventional theories of power; the latter of which tend to focus on the role of the state or structural forces such as ideology or patriarchy (Thornborrow, 2002). For example, as well as standing in marked contrast to Marxist and hegemonic interpretations of power (Pringle, 2005), Foucault’s understanding of power offers fresh insights into the relations between, and within, various forms of media such as mass media and niche media. These forms

of media lie at the heart of many popular cultures and provide a focus for examining social relations within those cultures including snowboarding. A Foucauldian approach to power and the media, and the discursive constructions of femininity in the snowboarding culture, are thus the subject of this chapter.

However, while Foucault's work is often insightful, "it is sometimes difficult to know how best to use it" (Mills, 2003, p. 110). Perhaps this is because he does not develop one fully thought-out theory but, instead, tries to "think through ways of thinking without the constraints of a systematized structure" (Mills, 2003, p. 110). Foucault (1975) encourages readers to make what they can of his work rather than slavishly following his ideas:

All my books are little toolboxes. If people want to open them, to use this sentence or that idea as a screwdriver or spanner to short-circuit, discredit systems of power, including eventually those from which my books have emerged...so much the better. (cited in Mills, 2003, p. 7)

Following this recommendation, many theorists and critics have used Foucault's ideas as a way of approaching a subject rather than as a set of principles or rules. I, too, adopt this approach, employing a selection of concepts from Foucault's toolbox to facilitate an analysis of the media and the production of cultural knowledge, and discourses of femininity, in snowboarding culture.

This chapter consists of two main parts. The first provides a critical overview of some of Foucault's most influential concepts, particularly those that facilitate an exploration of the snowboarding media. These include his key concepts of power, power/knowledge and discourse, each of which sheds light on the role of the media as a producer of 'regimes of truth' in snowboarding culture, as well as the multiple discursive constructions of femininity in the snowboarding media. The second part then focuses on Foucault's later work, particularly the concept of 'technologies of self.' In so doing, it gives greater consideration to the agency of

female boarders and examines how women make sense of the multiple and contradictory mediated discourses of femininity in snowboarding culture. Not only does this part examine the likelihood of social transformation given the actions of female boarders, it also critically evaluates the sexualized images of women in the snowboarding media and the discursive effects these have on women's snowboarding experiences.

Power, Discourse and the Snowboarding Media

Foucault did not write specifically about the media. Nonetheless, as others have argued, his understanding of power, power/knowledge and discourse, offer “a variety of insights into the media's current strategies for communicating with their publics” (Macdonald, 2003, p. 2). Here I concur with Myra Macdonald (2003), one of the few to explore media discourse from a Foucauldian perspective, who argues that Foucault contributes to our understanding of media operations through his attention to “the historical evolution of discourses; shifting discursive constellations, and relation between these and socio-cultural change; [and] the relation between media discourses and wider public discourses” (p. 25). Thus, in this part I critically evaluate the efficacy of Foucault's concepts of power, power/knowledge, and discourse, as vehicles for understanding snowboarding culture and the discursive constructions of female boarders.

Power

Foucault has had a major influence on contemporary understandings of power, as often as a subject of criticism as of inspiration. Foucault's model of power caught the attention of many scholars and activists, because it radically reconceptualized earlier notions.¹ Traditionally,

¹ Cultural studies practitioners, for example, have drawn extensively upon Foucauldian theorizing, particularly his unique conceptualization of power and anti-essentialist understanding of subjectivity (see Khan, 2004). But it is important to note that Foucault and cultural studies have a “restless relationship” (Bratich, Packer & McCarthy,

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many scholars thought of power in solely repressive terms whereby the powerful repress the powerless (Althusser, 1977; Poulantzas, 1973, 1978, 1986; Weber, 1978). Foucault, however, moved beyond this one-sided view of power by examining the operation of power within everyday relations between people and institutions. Power, he suggested, is not a possession that can be “acquired, seized, or shared” (Foucault, 1978, p. 94); power is not a “group of institutions...that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state” (p. 92), nor is it a manner of subjugation that operates via laws or a “system of domination exerted by one group over another” (p. 92). While governments, social institutions, laws and dominant groups are commonly assumed to hold power, Foucault (1978) emphasized that they represent “only the terminal forms” of power (cited in Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 34). Foucault (1978) rejected the idea that power was easily locatable and that a binary division existed between the ruled and rulers; there is “no such duality extending from the top down and reacting on more and more limited groups to the very depths of the social body” (p. 94). Rather, Foucault recognized power as “a relational effect of a network of localized social practices which shape the conduct of everybody but belong to nobody” (Crossley, 2005, p. 220).

Foucault’s concept of power as relational presupposed multiple forms of power. Of particular interest to Foucault (1991[1977]) was “disciplinary power;” a form of power that focuses on the control and discipline of bodies and that is exercised fundamentally “by means of surveillance” (p. 104). Foucault (1991[1977]) saw “the existence of a whole set of techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal” (p. 199). These techniques and institutions are architecturally embodied in the “panopticon” (Foucault,

2003, p. 4). While Foucault’s work has facilitated many insights in cultural studies, “this current brand of scholarship has instrumentalized Foucault within the traditional paradigm of cultural studies while leaving the fundamental [neo-Gramscian] framework intact” and in so doing, works to “extend the shelf life of [the problematic] neo-Gramscian notions of hegemony, resistance, and the State” (Bratich et al., 2003, p. 4).

1991[1977], p. 200). The panopticon refers to Jeremy Bentham's design for a building that maximizes the working of power. Subjected to the "omnipresent gaze of authority" in specially designed buildings, individuals scrutinize their own behaviors in a manner that "renders them docile: they become their own supervisors" (Pringle & Markula, 2006, p. 43). Although Western states never implemented Bentham's design, Foucault identified panoptical power as a critical dimension of modern society. For Foucault (1991[1977]), panopticism refers to a "political anatomy" where the mechanisms of surveillance and discipline are no longer locked within specific buildings or institutions but "function in a diffused, multiple, polyvalent way throughout the whole social body" (pp. 208-209).

Inspired by Foucault's concept of panopticism, a number of sports scholars have examined the disciplining of the sporting body into a docile body (e.g., Chapman, 1997; Cole, 1998; Duncan, 1994; Dworkin & Wachs, 1998; Markula, 2000). More specifically, they have explored how sport and fitness practices act as technologies of domination that draw individuals "into a discursive web of normalizing practices" (Markula, 2003, p. 88). Of particular interest here are those studies that have examined how the media functions as part of the 'apparatus of technologies of domination' (Pringle & Markula, 2006). Duncan's (1994) textual analysis of fitness magazines is a particularly good example of the workings of panopticism. According to Duncan (1994), these glossy magazines (replete with stories of dieting and exercise successes combined with pictures of slender and glamorous models) help expose women to a panoptic gaze, one that Pringle and Markula (2006) argue "encourages women to survey, with degrees of distress, their own bodies for signs of abnormality against an unrealistic body image" (p. 43). Many sport feminists who have adopted Foucauldian tools, including those examining the media, have tended to illustrate how a disciplinary power acts to "constrain female sport and exercise practices" (Pringle, 2005, p. 263). Observing this trend,

Markula (2003) states that such studies have focused on the sport, fitness, and health industries as discursively constructed disciplines that limit possibilities of existence and subsequently act as “vehicle(s) of women’s domination” (p. 88).

While these studies (e.g., Duncan, 1994) have contributed much to our understanding of the mass media as a technology of domination, some scholars express concern that research focusing on “technologies of dominance” results in “pessimistic representations of sport and exercise practices” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 48). Gruneau (1993), for example, proclaims that such a focus “can too easily deflect attention from analyzing the creative possibilities, freedoms, ambiguities, and contradictions also found in sport” (cited in Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 48). Moreover, such an approach does not adequately explain the media in physical youth cultures such as snowboarding; it overlooks the various forms of media (mass, niche and micro) and their production and reproduction of multiple, and often conflicting, discourses of female snowboarding. Furthermore, this top-down understanding of power ignores the dialectical relationship between the media and the snowboarding culture. Hence, rather than focusing on the media as a ‘technology of discipline’ (which is only one form of power discussed by Foucault), I seek to draw more broadly upon Foucault’s unique conceptualization of power and, in so doing, facilitate a discussion of the media in snowboarding culture as not only repressive but also positive and productive. Let me now outline five key assumptions underlying Foucault’s distinctive theories of power that will inform the analysis in this chapter.

Firstly, Foucault conceptualized power as *omnipresent* as it was “produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another” (Foucault, 1978, p. 93). “Power is everywhere,” declared Foucault (1978), “not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere” (p. 93). He focused on the microforms of power exercised at the level of daily life and stressed the importance of local,

specific struggles. As Harvey and Sparks (1991) note, according to Foucault, “power...arises in a capillary-like fashion from below, expressed in people’s concrete knowledges, dispositions, interactions and relations” (cited in Andrews, 1993, p. 157).

Secondly, power, from a Foucauldian perspective refers to relations between people. Foucault (1983) defined a relationship of power as one person acting upon the actions of another, rather than directly on the other person. One example of such power relations in the snowboarding culture is a heterosexual female boarder who follows online zine journalist Rachel Cotton’s (no date) counsel, “no boyfriends on a powder day,” and chooses to ride solo, or in Cotton’s words, “wait for no one and leave all dead weight behind to get fresh tracks” (para. 1). “Like your mood swings, inability to be a morning person and aversion to doing dishes, ‘The Rule’ is just another condition of loving you that he’ll have to learn to accept,” declared Cotton (no date, para. 2). However, an individual’s actions within a relationship of power do not determine or physically force the actions of others. This example alludes to the third important aspect of Foucault’s (1983) understanding of power relations, that is, the way power is exercised. In his words, “power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free” (Foucault, 1983, p. 221).² The male snowboarder is, of course, free to respond to his partner’s departure however he chooses.

Fourthly, rather than simply viewing power in a negative way, as constraining and repressing, Foucault argued that even at their most constraining, oppressive measures may be productive, “giving rise to new forms of behaviors rather than simply closing down or censoring” others (Mills, 2003, p. 34). Power produces particular types of behaviors, by regulating people’s everyday activities. Foucault (1975) describes this as the “microphysics of

² By freedom, Foucault means the “possibility of reacting and behaving in different ways” (O’Farrell, 2005, p. 99).

power” (cited in O’Farrell, 2005, p. 101). Furthermore, Foucault claimed that what allows power to exert such a grip is that it is not merely a repressive force but it is also creative: “What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t weigh on us as a force that says no but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse” (Rabinow, 1984, cited in O’Grady, 2005, p. 15).

Fifthly, the existence of power relations depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance. “Where there is power, there is resistance,” Foucault (1978, p. 95) declared. It is important to note here that while most social theorists think of resistance as a reaction to power, Foucault understood resistance as a power form in its own right. Continuing, he explained that within relations of power “there is necessarily the possibility of resistance, for if there were no possibility of resistance – of violent resistance, of escape, of ruse, of strategies that reverse the situation – there would be no relations of power” (Foucault, 1987, p. 12).

Snowboarders, for example, demonstrate resistance at the local level when they voice their concerns in the editorial pages of specialist snowboarding niche magazines, on snowboarding websites, and in everyday conversations. Charles’ analysis of the relationship between niche snowboarding magazines and the boarding culture in a ‘letter to the editor’ published in *Snowboarder Magazine* is particularly insightful:

For a snowboarding magazine to be profitable, it has to sell magazines and ads. In other words, snowboarding magazines must market a ‘lifestyle’ and ‘attitude’... That is why a certain snowboarding magazine is filled with personality-centric interviews with pro-riders, plus articles of music, fashion, and snowboarding culture. In turn, corporations appreciate the magazine’s efforts to sell (as in SELLOUT) the snowboard lifestyle to the mainstream and these companies respond by filling the magazine with ads for street shoes, cologne, rock bands, and fashion accessories, as well as traditional snowboarding equipment. People in the mainstream who aren’t a natural part of snowboarding culture will then, of course, buy a snowboard magazine to try to learn how to be part of this lifestyle. (February 2003, p. 42)

Others challenge the cultural meanings promoted by snowboarding magazines. For example, writing to *Transworld Snowboarding*, PJ asked: “Why do half the snowboarders in advertisements throw ghetto poses and directional hand signs” when there are no “ghetto kids on the mountain?” (Mail, 2005, p. 48). The editor’s response highlights the significance of the broader social context (and the mass media) on snowboarding culture: “Because it sells...turned on MTV lately? Hip-Hop has the world by the balls” (Mail, 2005, p. 48). Snowboarders have also expressed concern over the recent recruitment efforts by the United States Army: “You guys are letting the military pay to put pictures of soldiers standing in the snow wearing snowboard goggles and beanies complete with machine guns in your magazine... and you’re advertising this to teens all over the country...this is wack [uncool]!” (Mike Johnson, Mail, 2005, p. 48). Simply put, micro-politics between the media and members of the snowboarding culture are ‘everywhere’ and continually being played out (Foucault, 2000).

Certainly, Foucault’s unique conceptualization of power has the potential to facilitate my understandings of the two-way relationship between the media and snowboarding culture. Much of Foucault’s work has, however, provoked critical debate among theorists who argue that he failed to clearly map out the exact mechanics of resistance to power relations. Yet, despite such criticisms, Foucault’s understanding of power has attracted a favorable response from numerous feminists (see Chapman, 1997; Diamond & Quinby, 1988; Hekman, 1996; Markula, 2003; Markula & Pringle, 2006; McNay, 1992; O’Grady, 2005) and other critical theorists. They are excited by the potential of his thinking for explaining power relations between men and women, especially those that do not fit neatly into the types of relations described by conventional theories of power which tend to focus on notions of ideology or patriarchy (Thornborrow, 2002). According to Mills (2003), Foucault’s “bottom-up model of

power,” that is, his focus on the way power relations permeated all relations within a society, “enables an account of the mundane and daily ways in which power is enacted and contested, and allows an analysis which is focused on individuals as active subject, as agents rather than passive dupes” (p. 34). Certainly, Foucault’s unique conceptualization of power has the potential to shed much light on the ways the media produces discourse and knowledge in snowboarding culture because, unlike a top-down understanding of power (e.g., Marxism, hegemonic masculinity), it facilitates a discussion of the dialectical relationship between the media and snowboarding culture.

Power/Knowledge

In a number of his writings, Foucault explored the interconnectedness of power and knowledge, and power and truth. He described knowledge as a combination of power relations and information seeking which he termed ‘power/knowledge’ (Foucault, 1980; also see Gordon, 1980). In developing this concept, Foucault moves us away from seeing knowledge as objective and dispassionate, and towards a view that sees knowledge “always working in the interest of particular groups” (Mills, 2003, p. 79). Foucault’s ‘knowledge’ is always a “partial, localized version of reality” (Rail, 2002, cited in Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 27). Stated simply, the production of knowledge invariably excludes other, equally valid forms. We must be “very suspicious of any information which is produced” warns Mills (2003), because “even when it seems most self-evidently to be adding to the sum of human knowledge, it may at the same time play a role in the maintenance of the status quo and the affirming of current power relations” (p. 72). Foucault argued that so-called ‘facts’ or ‘regimes of truth’ are constructed and reproduced through a wide range of practices that “support and affirm” them and which “exclude and counter alternative versions of events” (Mills, 2003, p. 76). Foucault was not

particularly interested in the sum of knowledge in any one period but rather the processes which led to certain facts being known rather than others (Mills, 2003). Such workings of power can be observed in the production of cultural knowledge in snowboarding culture, and more specifically in the construction of the history of snowboarding.

In recent years a palpable sense of nostalgia has emerged among ageing snowboarders. Snowboarding magazines include as standard fare images and stories from the (not so distant) past, snowboarding museums feature early equipment and other artefacts, and a plethora of films and books describe and illustrate the history of snowboarding. At the fore of much of the nostalgia stands Jake Burton, a snowboarding pioneer whose company, Burton Snowboards, currently holds approximately 40 per cent of the global snowboarding market (see Chapter Two). Jake Burton, arguably one of the most influential men in the snowboarding industry, has ensured his central position in these histories via a wide range of subtle, and not so subtle, strategies. For example, he eagerly provides interviews and photos to those creating narratives and representations.³ In fact, every historical source in my collection acknowledges the assistance given by Burton Snowboards and/or Jake Burton (see Curtes, Eberhardt & Kotch, 2001; Howe, 1998; Reed, 2005). Furthermore, Burton Snowboard's website (www.burton.com) hosts a 19-page document, readily accessed by journalists, students and snowboarders, which details the integral role of Jake Burton, and Burton Snowboards, in snowboarding's cultural and sporting development. Burton Snowboards also recently entered into a partnership with media conglomerate Mandalay Entertainment to "capitalize on and showcase Burton's position as the *leader and true innovator in snowboarding*, detailing the evolution of the sport and culture" (Press Release, October 2004, para. 4; emphasis added).

³ In November 2005 I visited *Salty Peaks Snowboard Museum* (reputed to be the world's largest snowboarding museum) in Salt Lake City (Utah, USA). Burton Snowboards has donated a significant proportion of the early equipment featured in this display, and Jake is acknowledged for his 'generous' contributions.

According to the press release, the development plans included a range of media (i.e., theatrical features, television programming, reality and event coverage), and through these varied forms, the partnership would “bring both events and activities as well as *showcase Burton’s vast history and knowledge to new and expanded audiences*” (Press Release, October 2004, para. 3; emphasis added).

Burton has been so successful at writing himself into the history of snowboarding, that he is popularly known as the ‘creator of snowboarding.’ Certainly, he played a key role in the technical development of snowboarding but so did many others who are now being written out of the sport’s history. “It’s ironic...that so many of the early pioneers of the sport have gone by the wayside,” lamented snowboarding pioneer Tom Sims. The history of snowboarding is, he said, being “written by the winners” (cited in Reed, 2005, p. 41). The construction of the history of snowboarding, and particularly the centrality of Jake Burton in these narratives is a good example of the power/knowledge complex which, of course, has important political and economic effects. As discussed in Chapter Two, to core boarders – the most savvy of consumers – the ‘authenticity’ of a snowboarding company is central to their consumption choices. Jake Burton’s centrality in the history of snowboarding works to connect his company to its cultural roots. As explained in Chapter Two, reinforcing the company’s ‘authenticity’ is critical to deflecting charges of industry domination and is, therefore, integral to the company’s economic success. The construction of the history of snowboarding is also a good example of the role of discourse in relaying the power/knowledge relationship.

Discourse

Foucault linked his schema of power and its exercise to the workings of discourse; “it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together” (Foucault, 1978, p. 100). Discourse,

he continued, “transmits and produces power; it reinforces it but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it” (p. 101). While discourse is one of the most frequently used terms from Foucault’s work, it is also one of the most ambiguous (Mills, 2003). Foucault himself defines it in a number of different ways. Here, however, I will explore the way he used the term in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) and in *The Order of Discourse* (1981) because it is here, particularly in the former, that he attempted to refine and clarify his concept of discourse.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault (1972) said that he used the term discourse to refer to “the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements” (p. 80). By the “general domain of all statements,” he referred to those utterances and statements, which have meaning and some effect. By effect he meant the “production,” however brief, of “objects, subjects or concept[s]” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 29). Occasionally Foucault also used the term to refer to “individualized groups of statements;” that is, utterances which seemed to constitute a concept, such as the discourse of femininity or masculinity. However, while some discourses appear to refer to the same phenomenon, discourses are not entirely cohesive since they always contain conflicting sets of statements.⁴ For example, discourses of snowboarding masculinity contain descriptions of hyper-masculinity and alternative masculinities, although they both characterize male and female snowboarders as fundamentally different and downplay similarities between the two groups (see Chapter Five). Thus, while not necessarily unified or consistent, discourses “should be seen as groups of statements which are associated with institutions, which are authorized in some sense and which have some unity of

⁴ The ‘statement’ is a primary tool of analysis used by Foucault in his work on discourse, and is discussed in detail below.

functions at a fundamental level” (Mills, 2003, pp. 65-66). Foucault (1972) has also used the term discourse to refer to “regulated practices that account for a number of statements” (p. 80); that is, unwritten rules that produce and regulate particular utterances and statements. For example, there are no written rules that define how to ‘be a female snowboarder,’ and yet somehow many women adopt this identity (or one of the various identities) within the framework of snowboarding culture. For Foucault, this set of structures and rules would constitute a discourse, and “it is the rules in which Foucault is most interested rather than the utterances and text produced” (Mills, 2003, p. 54). Therefore, adopting a Foucauldian understanding of discourse, this chapter examines the role of the media in producing ‘conceptual understandings’ of female snowboarders, ‘individualized groups of statements’ or discourses of femininity in the snowboarding culture, and ‘unwritten rules and structures’ which produce and regulate particular utterances and statements of female snowboarders.

The primary tool of analysis and the building blocks of discourse used by Foucault in his discursive method was the *enounce* or, as his translators put it, the ‘statement,’ which embraced “uttered and/or transcribed sets of signs or symbols to which a status of knowledge may be ascribed” (Blair, 1987, cited in Andrews, 1993, p. 153). The *enounce* establishes or maintains “unique relationships among individuals and groups, and which enact a particular view of self” (Blair, 1987, cited in Andrews, 1993, p. 153). According to Andrews (1993), “by viewing statements as representing more than spoken or written symbols, Foucault expanded upon Saussurian structural linguistics” (p. 153). For Foucault, statements are human constructions that can “only be understood in relation to each other within a particular, and hence unique, temporal context” (Andrews, 1993, p. 153). Furthermore, statements – as components of discursive formations – should be thought of primarily as “functional units” (McHoul & Grace, 1998, p. 37). As McHoul & Grace (1998) explain, groups of statements

(discourses) “do things,” they “bring about effects rather than merely ‘represent’ states of affairs,” and they “act to both constrain and enable what we can know” (p. 37).

It should be noted that not all statements are taken seriously. Some statements carry greater authority than others, in that they are more associated with those in positions of power or within institutions. In particular, Foucault emphasized the role of ‘science’ in the production of discourses or ‘truths.’ Foucault (1981) suggested that:

there is in all societies, with great consistency, a kind of gradation among discourses: those which are said in the ordinary course of days and exchanges, and which vanish as soon as they have been pronounced; and those which give rise to a certain number of new speech acts which take them up, transform them or speak of them, in short, those discourses which, over and above their formulation, are said indefinitely, remain said, and are to be said again. (p. 57, cited in Mills, 2003, p. 59)

For example, not even American snowboarder Lindsey Jacobellis could summon the authority to explain her actions near the end of the boarder-cross course in the 2006 olympic final.

Rather, the mass media commanded definitive explanations by calling in psychological experts to explain why an athlete willingly risked a certain gold medal by performing a showy stunt in the final stages of the race. Some sport psychologists described this incident as a ‘classic’ case of distraction and loss of attentional focus, leading to a mistake (Harrison, 2006; Sachs, 2006).

Such statements were widely circulated via newspaper and television coverage. Jacobellis’s explanation – “I was having fun. Snowboarding is fun. I wanted to share my enthusiasm with the crowd” (cited in Jenkins, 2006, para. 18) – amounted to naught, even though some snowboarding greats endorsed her justifications. Professional snowboarder, commentator, and ex-olympian, Todd Richards (2006), for example, commented: “I would have probably done the same thing. Snowboarding is all about style” (para. 2; see also Snowboard Culture, 2006).

However, in the context of the discourse of the olympics, Jacobellis was a national disappointment. The dominant discourse was propounded by expert (i.e., qualified and

supposedly learned) sport psychologists who convinced the majority of those who listened that only they understood the rules of human behavior in snowboarding.⁵

Of particular interest to Foucault in his analysis of discourse were the processes by which some statements gain currency and others evaporate. Thus, rather than seeing discourse as simply a set of relatively coherent statements, we should look at it as something that exists due to “a complex set of practices which...keep them in circulation and other practices which...fend them off from others and keep those statements out of circulation” (Mills, 2003, p. 54). The notion of exclusion is important in Foucault’s thinking of discourse, particularly in ‘The Order of Discourse’ (1981). Here he described a range of external and internal procedures that constrain some discourses while highlighting and producing others. These procedures, he argued, are all concerned with “classifying, distributing and ordering discourse, and their function is ultimately to distinguish between those who are authorized to speak” (i.e., the sports psychologists cited above) and “those who are not” (Mills, 2003, p. 58).

Blunt magazine, for example, was established in 1993 by US snowboarders Ken Block and Damon Way, and gained more cultural authenticity among core snowboarders than any other magazine because it was seen as providing a ‘truthful’ representation of snowboarding culture. Professional snowboarder Todd Richards (2003) described the *Blunt* formula as “alcohol, party, party, party, oh, and snowboarding,” and added, “it was really popular among snowboarders and really unpopular among ski resorts, parents, and snowboarding companies because of its blatant disregard for authority. It also covered the most progressive snowboarders and turned down advertising from big companies like Burton and Morrow” (p. 162). However, in 1998 *Blunt* folded under political and economic duress. According to one

⁵ Foucault was particularly critical of the “immature” sciences such as psychology.

industry insider “distributors and advertisers wanted mainstream readers, while mainstream readers’ parents wanted a more subdued, politically correct publication” (Blehm, 2003, p. 33). This example highlights the micro-politics involved in producing knowledge in the snowboarding culture. Despite *Blunt*’s appeal to core snowboarders, the magazine challenged authorities within the snowboarding industry, particularly those snowboarding companies (e.g. Burton Snowboards), and organizations (e.g., United States of America Snowboarding Association [USASA] and the International Ski Federation [FIS]) that were actively promoting snowboarding as a legitimate sport, and touting participants as ‘responsible athletes’ in the lead up to the 1998 winter olympics (see Humphreys, 1996). Thus, *Blunt* was subjected to what Foucault (1981) termed the processes of ‘exclusion’ that effectively removed it from circulation.

The concept of discourse is central to Foucault’s understanding of the “material connections” between “power, knowledge of self, and regimes of truth” (Cole, Giardina & Andrews, 2004, cited in Pringle, 2005, p. 260). More specifically, it aids our examination of the particular way “power/knowledge complexes operate at a micro-level in order to produce regimes of truth” (McNay, 1992, p. 27). Foucault’s work on discourse and power is useful in helping theorists to consider “the way we know what we know; where that information comes from; how it is produced and under what circumstances; whose interests it might serve; how it is possible to think differently; the way that information that we accept as ‘true’ is kept in that privileged position” (Mills, 2003, p. 66). Certainly, Foucault’s key concepts of power and discourse have the potential to expand my understanding of the role of the media, as a social institution, in producing and reproducing cultural knowledge of female snowboarders. Therefore, in the following section I explain how female boarders are subject to the workings

of various mediated discourses, which ultimately help to shape their identities as ‘female snowboarders.’

Discursive Constructions of Female Snowboarders

While a plethora of media forms currently cover women’s snowboarding, the mass media (television, newspapers, mainstream magazines), niche media (snowboarding magazines, films, websites), and micro media (flyers, posters, homemade videos, online zines) cater for different audiences and have different consequences and “markedly different cultural connotations” (Thornton, 1996, p. 122) for women in snowboarding culture.⁶ In this part I illustrate how the mass media and niche media create and recreate multiple discourses of female snowboarders respectively.

Although this discussion proceeds by analyzing discourses of femininity, its approach diverges from the methodology known as ‘discourse analysis’ (Schiffrin, Tannen & Hamilton, 2001). Developed primarily by linguists, discourse analysis concentrates on verbal texts and on forms of social interaction (Macdonald, 2003). “While discourse analysis details the intricacies of communicative practices for their own sake, the methodology that has become known as ‘critical discourse analysis’ (CDA) explores what these reveal about power relations” explains Macdonald (2003, p. 3). My approach here shares the critical discourse analysts’ aims of

⁶ The *mass media* tends to be produced by non-snowboarding journalists and producers for a mass audience with little knowledge of snowboarding, whereas *niche media* tend to be created by journalists, editors, photographers and film-makers who are, or were, active snowboarders. Niche media communicate snowboarding discourses and cultural knowledge, and are the most instrumental to snowboarders’ cultural identity construction. Snowboarding historian Susanna Howe identified photographers and filmmakers as “the real image makers” because their work “creates the dream that is snowboarding” and “sells lifestyle” (1998, p. 107), and Doug Palladini, publisher of *Snowboarder* magazine, described snowboarding magazines as the “bible” for core boarders (cited in Howe, 1998, p. 104). For a discussion of the “different cultural connotations” of mass and niche media in club-cultures, windsurfing and skateboarding cultures, and snowboarding culture, see Thornton (1995), Wheaton & Beal (2003), and Bruce, Falcous & Thorpe (2007), respectively.

relating discourse to power. However, drawing upon Macdonald's (2003) idiosyncratic conceptualization of discourse, it also differs in method in a number of ways.

Instead of focusing solely on the detailed structuring of individual texts, I focus on the evolving patterns of discourse traceable across the various forms of snowboarding media (e.g., magazines, websites, films, television, newspapers). Whereas discourse, historically, refers to verbal communication strategies, my approach to discourse includes consideration of visual (e.g., photos of snowboarders in magazines), as well as verbal (e.g., television interviews with snowboarders, dialogue in snowboarding films), and written (e.g., interviews and editorials in magazines and on websites) texts. While I examine the micro-politics of the discourses of femininity in particular texts, I also map broader trends across the various forms of media. According to Macdonald (2003), a Foucauldian inspired focus on media discourse “avoids both the narrowness of semiotic analysis, with its tendency to focus solely on the text, and the broad generalizations that often characterize ideological analysis of media representations” (p. 2). “Where ideological analysis begins with a specific issue (such as race, or gender, or sexuality) and works back through the evidence of media texts,” continues Macdonald (2003), an analysis of discourse “starts its enquiry with an ear to the texts themselves, and in a spirit of openness to the patterns that may emerge” (p. 2). Indeed, I have had ‘an ear’ to snowboarding texts for the past 10 years; that is, I have consumed, read, watched, and occasionally produced,⁷ snowboarding magazines, films, websites, and television coverage, throughout this period. For the purposes of this study, however, I further refined many of the emergent themes based on

⁷ During my snowboarding career in the late 1990s and early 2000s, I occasionally co-produced, and featured in, short snowboarding films, one of which aired on *XSTV*, a New Zealand extreme sports television program, in 2003. I am also currently a senior contributor for *Curl*, a New Zealand female surf, skate and snowboarding magazine and website, where I am continuously working to increase the visibility and raise the profile of New Zealand's female snowboarders. I also use this as a space to share some of my research with a broader audience. My involvement with *Curl* continues to be an insightful experience (see Chapter Eight).

my 10-year analysis of snowboarding texts with a more purposeful investigation of the portrayal of women in snowboarding through the text and images presented in the various forms of media. Furthermore, I integrated this analysis with participant-observation and informal interviews, which further enabled me to examine the way in which discourses of femininity and female snowboarders are created, reinforced, amplified, interpreted and negotiated. In other words, I focused on both the content of the texts and “the everyday life of media representations, their contexts of production and circulation, and the practices and discourses of reception that envelop them” (Spitulnik, 1993, cited in Frohlick, 2005, p. 177).

Unlike many other media analyses, this discussion does not focus on the “key movers and shakers” such as media moguls (e.g., Rupert Murdoch), decision-makers (e.g., editors), or those who produce words, images, and sound effects for the increasing number of media outlets. When Foucault (1972) asked, “How is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another?” (p. 27), he was not searching for originating sources. Rather he was looking for the implicit rules governing the production of a statement. Hence, I have focused on the frameworks within which cultural knowledge is produced in the snowboarding culture, and pay “[less] attention to questions of authorial influence, choosing instead to examine *what* is being communicated, and *in whose interests*” (Macdonald, 2003, p. 22).

Although Foucault rarely wrote about the media,⁸ his approach to discourse suggests that attempts to investigate the truthfulness of media representations of female snowboarders can produce “only a wild goose chase” (Macdonald, 2003, p. 17). Thus, the following

⁸ Notably, Foucault did briefly discuss the important role of magazines in the communication and development of cultures and lifestyles. In relation to the homosexual culture, he wrote: “something well considered and voluntary like a magazine ought to make possible a homosexual culture, that is to say, [make available] the instruments for polymorphic, varied and individually modulated relationships” (Foucault, 2000, p. 139). In other words, magazines can playfully make suggestions about lifestyles, or in Foucault’s terms ‘mode of life,’ without being overly prescriptive. Certainly, snowboarding magazines (as well as films and websites) are efficient communicators of cultural knowledge within snowboarding culture.

discussion is not a search for a singular ‘truthful’ representation of the female boarder but rather an examination of multiple and competing discourses of femininity being produced in the snowboarding media. This discussion is guided by Foucault’s (1978) ‘cautionary prescriptions’ for understanding the workings of discourse. Foucault was opposed to binary conceptualizations of power, and thus precluded the possibility of ‘dominant’ discourses ranging against other sets of relatively powerful ‘alternative’ or ‘oppositional’ ones. He warned that it was not a simple task to identify a specific discourse, and explained that discourses are difficult to decipher, in part, because “multipl[e] discursive elements...can come into play in various strategies” (Foucault, 1978, cited in Markula & Pringle, 2005, p. 215). Indeed, identifying with any certainty the ‘prevailing’ or ‘dominant’ discourses of female snowboarding is a difficult task. Compounding this difficulty is the rapid expansion of media outlets and distribution channels. Cultural understandings surrounding the identities of female snowboarders cannot be divided into accepted and excluded discourses. Rather, audiences confront numerous and even contradictory discourses. Put simply, while the mass and niche media undoubtedly influence the negotiation of femininities in the snowboarding culture, these negotiations “do not produce a simple dominating discourse” (Pringle & Markula, 2005, p. 472) of femininity. In the remainder of this section I examine the discourses of snowboarding femininity produced in the mass media and niche media respectively.

Mass media

When the mass media first started reporting on snowboarding in the late 1980s it tended to describe participants as young, white, hedonistic, rebellious males. Women rarely appeared and, when they did, journalists typically cast them as token ‘tomboys’ or ‘wild-women,’ and in so doing, reinforced the discourse of snowboarding as an activity best suited to young males.

For example, in one of the first mass media articles on snowboarding in 1988, *The Wall Street Journal* reported:

Not many women think it is something for them to do. One of the best-known women in snowboarding circles is Lauri Asperas, a 25-year-old former schoolteacher from New York who lives in France and often takes her small dog, Toodles, along on the ride downhill. Last April, Ms. Asperas, who has a wild mane of dark hair and a tanned, freckled face, had her body painted and then donned a bikini, gloves and fur coat before hitting the slopes of Copper Mountain Resort in Colorado. On the way down, she shed the gloves and the coat before spinning a 360-degree turn in the air. "It was cool," she recalls. (Hughes, 1988, para. 16)

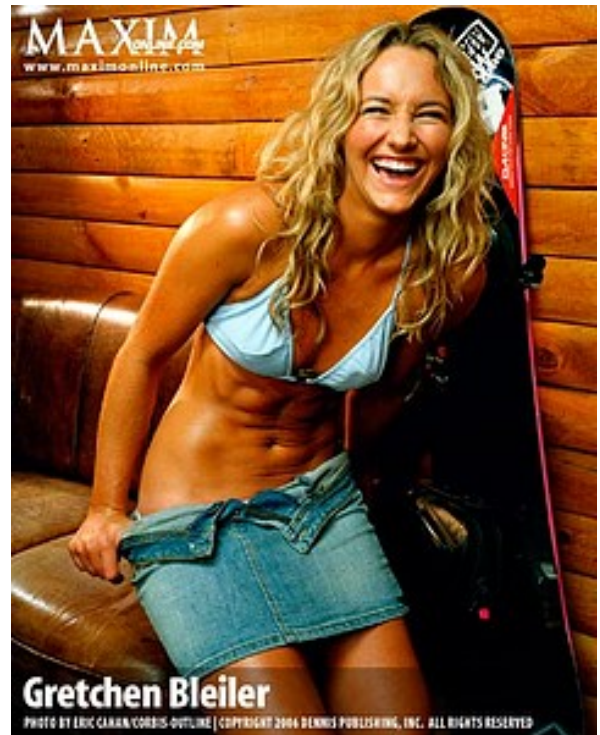
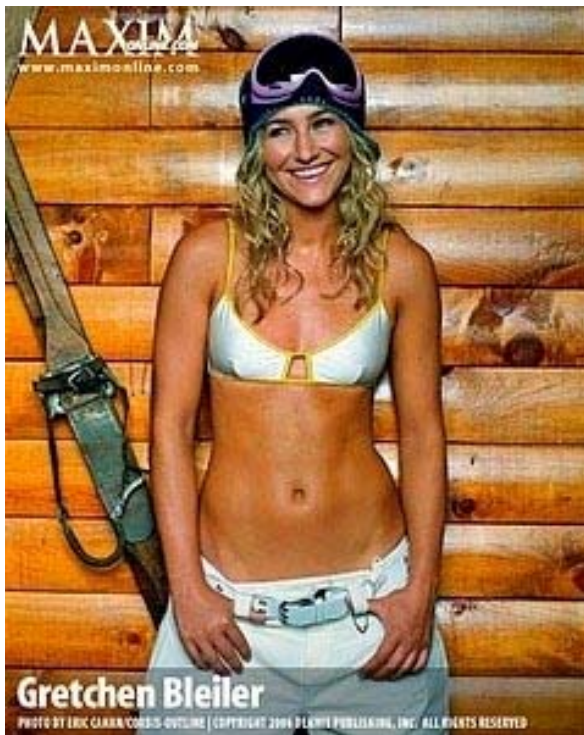
Today, with increased participation rates and the rapidly closing performance gap between the top female and male boarders, the mass media pays female snowboarders greater attention. However, despite well-meaning strategies to promote snowboarding for girls and women, the widespread practice of foregrounding heterosexually attractive women tends to symbolically erase women who appear lesbian, bisexual, queer, or 'unfeminine.' In so doing, the mass media's representation of female boarders tends to be a routine manifestation of wider public and sporting discourses of femininity.

The sports media and associated commercial interests occasionally seize images of female athletes and place them at the "center of cultural discourse, at least temporarily" (Messner, 2002, p. 109). As Messner (2002) explains, the media "seem most likely to do so when there is high profit potential (and this usually means that the women can be neatly packaged as heterosexually attractive)" (p. 109). Torah Bright and Gretchen Bleiler exemplify such 'selective incorporation.' Their roles as snowboarding superstars rest on a combination of athletic skill and marketability. Torah Bright is widely acknowledged as "one of Australia's most recognized snowboarders" (Bliston, 2003, p. 111) and the "most exciting young snowboarder in the world" (Irish, 2003, para. 12). Among Bright's high profile mainstream sponsors are Boost Mobile (USA), Samsung (Australia), and Roxy (Quicksilver International);

she regularly features in mainstream newspapers, magazines, and on billboards, and is a character in the Microsoft X Box games *Amped 2* and *Amped 3*. One sports management and marketing firm even identified Bright as the “most photographed snowboarder in the world” (Leading International, no date, para. 3). While her newfound success is “a testament to the fact that she is much more than a pretty face,” her “fresh-faced good looks” have propelled her to “one of the hottest properties in the extreme sports world” (Press Release, 2002, para. 3).

American snowboarder Gretchen Bleiler is also a hot commodity in contemporary popular culture and after winning a silver medal in the 2006 winter olympic half-pipe event she featured for the second time in *FHM* and *Maxim* magazines. In these photographs she interestingly combines snowboarding icons (e.g., beanie, goggles, snowboard, snowboard boots) with symbols of traditional femininity (e.g., bikini, passive and sexually suggestive poses) (see Figures 2.0, 2.1 and 2.2). It should be noted, however, that in these images Bleiler does not submit to the male (or female) viewer but engages directly with him/her; Bleiler challenges the traditional male gaze by looking directly at the viewer (i.e., Figures 2.0 and 2.2), and laughing (i.e., Figures 2.1 and 2.2).

It is important to reiterate here that these women are aware of their commodity value and, like the third wave feminists described in Chapter Four, have no qualms about marketing their femininity to boost their public profile and image, and reap the financial benefits. However, media representations that emphasize female snowboarders’ physical appearances work to reinforce dominating discourses of hyper-heterosexual femininity in snowboarding, and promote responses that position female boarder’s as sex symbols. After ogling over Bleiler’s *FHM* and *Maxim* spreads, one culturally naïve or satirical journalist wrote: “Who knew snowboarders were as hot as America’s Gretchen Bleiler? I thought they were all 5-foot tall Tomboys” (Beyond Hollywood, 2006, para. 1).



Figures 2.0 (top) 2.1 and 2.2 After winning a silver medal at the 2006 winter olympics American snowboarder Gretchen Bleiler featured in the February 2006 editions of *FHM* (top) and *Maxim* magazine.

Fashion magazines (e.g., *Seventeen*, *Glamour*, *Cosmo*) often depict female models wearing boarding attire, posing with snowboards or playing in the snow. *Dash*, “the essential read for the healthy [New Zealand] woman,” recently attempted to promote female snowboarding in an article “Babes on boards” (2003), while the cover displayed a fashion model in snowboard clothing standing with a snowboard. By using flawlessly beautiful unathletic models, and placing them in static positions, magazines send the message that appearance rather than skill is the essential quality for judging women. This commonly promotes snowboarding as a fashion, rather than a fulfilling physical activity. *Transworld Snowboarding* journalist Tracey Fong (2000) expressed her distress at the appropriation of female snowboarding by “mainstream money mongers” (para. 5) and complained of phone calls from fashion magazines and music, video, and art directors who “want...the latest trends” and boarding clothes to show off in their layouts and shoots (para. 5). When Fong (2000) asked whether the girls will be snowboarding, she received the same predictable replies: “No, we will have the girls wearing the clothes while playing in the snow looking cute” or “We’re going to have some really cool shots of the girls looking sexy and hanging out with some guys who just finished a hard day’s work riding the mountain” (para. 6). Such discursive constructions promote snowboarding as a fulfilling activity to be engaged in by men and a ‘cute’ fashion to be consumed by women.

Some women’s magazines also reinforce snowboarding as an activity best suited to heterosexual pursuits. For example, an article featured in *CLEO* magazine (New Zealand) about journalist Tiffany Dunk’s (2000) first snowboarding experience during a trip to the Canadian Rockies included the following comments: “I knew I’d look cooler if I just stood around holding the board and smiling a lot” (p. 20); “I’m given a hand by hunky instructor Derek. Desperate to impress, I give him a breezy smile” (p. 20); “Rico is my kind of teacher,

helping me up when I fall and, most importantly, playing along with my incessant flirting” (p. 20); “I may have had a few problems finding my feet during the day but I had no trouble getting the hang of things at night. Good food, buckets of wine, and lots of men to flirt with – perfect” (p. 21). Mass media representations of female snowboarders typically support prevailing assumptions that “any girl on a board is either looking for a guy, there because her guy is, or trying to be one of the guys” (Blum, 1994, p. 9). In other words, the representation of female snowboarders and women’s snowboarding in the mass media tends to promote a discourse of heterosexual femininity in which women’s participation is based solely on consumption and the search for male approval.

Niche media

In contrast to the mass media, which typically portrays female snowboarders and women’s snowboarding as a hetero-sexy style or activity to be consumed, the discourses of female snowboarders in the niche media are diverse. Discursive constructions of femininity in the snowboarding niche media range from respected female athletes and cultural participants to female models in sexually suggestive poses. Indeed, the niche media is not a homogenous category; various forms of niche media exist in snowboarding culture. While the majority target young ‘core’ male and female participants committed to the snowboarding lifestyle (e.g., *Transworld Snowboarding*, *Snowboarder*, *OnBoard Europe Snowboarding Magazine*, *New Zealand Snowboarder*, *Australian Snowboarder*, *Snowboard Canada*, www.boarderzone.com), others cater to smaller niches, including young male enthusiasts (e.g., *Blunt* [now defunct], the *Whiskey* videos), female boarders (e.g., *Curl*, www.powderroom.com), or more mature audiences (e.g. *Snowboard Life*, www.greysonstrays.com). Here I focus on the

discourses of femininity in snowboarding niche magazines, particularly core snowboarding magazines and female-specific magazines.

Contemporary core snowboarding magazines currently tend to represent female snowboarders as respected participants in the boarding culture (see Wheaton, 2003, for similar observations in the windsurfing culture). However, this has not always been the case. “In the 1980s,” said US professional snowboarder Michele Taggart, “women were only included in the magazines because of their cuteness and their beautiful hair flowing down the mountain” (cited in Howe, 1998, p. 64). Similarly, snowboarder and online zine journalist Alaina Martin (1994) wrote, “with the exception of some occasional tits and ass, there weren’t many girls [in the snowboarding magazines], maybe a token girl here or there but basically nothing” (para. 6). In fact she “felt so left out. I needed someone to look up to, something to let me know I wasn’t the only one” (para. 6).

Thus, female boarders were initially subjected to what Foucault (1981) terms the processes of exclusion. However, with the recent growth of the women’s market (see Chapter Three), advertisers and publishers have embraced the female boarder, featuring her in more advertisements, editorials and photos. Jennifer Sherowski, senior contributing editor for *Transworld Snowboarding*, observed this trend: “Most companies are keen to [access] the new (or expanding) market area that female snowboarding provides, especially considering women really do enjoy things like shopping and spending money;” hence “we are making a really big effort to include women in our editorial, and that’s including but not limited to, women’s columns” (personal communication, November 22, 2005). The “Exposure-O-Meter” compiled annually by *Transworld Business* magazine, which calculates the total yearly editorial and advertising coverage in the two major snowboarding magazines (*Transworld Snowboarding*

and *Snowboarder Magazine*) supports such claims.⁹ For the 2003/2004 winter season, Gretchen Bleiler ranked 16th in overall coverage and 10th in advertising coverage (Stassen, 2004). More recently, of the 100 most frequently featured boarders, female snowboarders constituted 11 in the 2004/2005 (Crane, 2005), and 13 in the 2005/2006, winter seasons (Crane, 2006). In contrast, no female skateboarders ranked in the skating equivalent of this study (summary of *Transworld Skateboarding*, *Skateboard Magazine*, *Skateboarder*, and *Thrasher Magazine*), and only two women (Serena Brooke and Holly Beck) featured in the surfing 'Exposure-O-Meter' (summary of *Transworld Surf*, *Surfer*, and *Surfing Magazine*) also conducted by *Transworld Business Magazine*.

The strength of the female market has created new space in niche magazines for a variety of representations of female snowboarders. When compared to advertisements featuring male boarders it appears that images of female and male snowboarders tend to share similar styles of photography (e.g. camera angles) and design. Women often adopt similar poses to their male counterparts, with both sexes starring at the reader, challenging their gaze (see Figures 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5, at the end of this chapter). Very rarely do female snowboarders appear in revealing clothing or sexually suggestive poses. Rather, many of the female snowboarders featuring in advertisements and editorials appear without make-up or other traditionally feminine markers. Furthermore, female snowboarders regularly feature in action photos in editorials and advertising that reinforce their physical prowess rather than physical appearances (see Figures 2.6 and 2.7, at the end of this chapter). Journalists also tend to show greater respect to female boarders than they did less than a decade ago, and are increasingly using

⁹ Scores for the 'Exposure-O-Meter' are calculated using the following system: cover (2000 points), pull-out poster (2000 points), three-fold action gatefold (1500 points), spread (1000 points), full-page column (700 points), full-page (500 points), half-page (200 points), half-sequence (200 points), quarter-page-or-less action shot (125 points), and lifestyle or 'mug shot' (100 points) (see <http://www.twsbiz.com/twbiz/archive/exposure>).

gender-neutral language to describe their achievements (e.g., “Tara Dakides is the toughest and most fearless rider...right now,” Tara-bly Dangerous, 2000, para. 3; “Juliane Bray has more focus and determination than any other snowboarder I know,” Butt, 2006b, p. 58). In so doing, representations of female boarders in snowboarding niche magazines challenge traditional discourses of female athletes as passive and heterosexually available to the male viewer.

Yet the discourses of female snowboarders offered in niche magazines are not homogenous. Rather, much like the female snowboarding population, the images of female boarders in advertisements and editorials are diverse. Some advertisements, for example, feature women solely in skill shots, others combine skill shots with ‘lifestyle’ photos of the female rider; the latter may or may not emphasize her femininity or physical appearance (see Figure 2.8, at the end of this chapter). Further, whereas some professional female boarders opt to overtly employ their femininity or gender capital in such advertisements and images, others demonstrate traditionally masculine traits (e.g., aggression) and prefer to emphasize skill rather than gender (see Chapter Six). Other images show women blurring the traditional boundaries of masculinity and femininity (see Figure 2.9, at the end of this chapter; also see Chapter Four). The key point here, however, is that with the growth of the women’s niche market, female snowboarders are gaining greater control over their representation in niche magazines.

“There is a lot more legit coverage of women riders now than there used to be, and more focus on seeing all snowboarders as just ‘snowboarders,’ not girl snowboarders and guy snowboarders,” stated Jennifer (personal communication, November 22, 2005). But, increasing the coverage of women in core snowboarding magazines “will always be a struggle,” she admitted (personal communication, November 22, 2005). Despite huge market potential, female snowboarders still face a number of constraints. Coverage of female snowboarders continues to be limited in some niche magazines. As Ste’en, editor of *New Zealand*

Snowboarder magazine, confessed, “we occasionally get criticism, inevitably it is from a girl, that we don’t have enough girl coverage” (personal communication, October 18, 2005). However, he also points out the economic realities of photograph selections. Although Ste’en “keeps reminding the photographers to get good images of girls” he also acknowledges that most of them “know from experience that a photo of a one foot air is not going to get picked [and paid for] over a 13 foot air” (personal communication, September 18, 2005). Ste’en’s (and apparently the photographers’) assumption that women will typically perform at a lower standard (performing a one foot air) than their male counterparts (performing a 13 foot air), and thus are less deserving of photographic coverage, illustrates the constraints female snowboarders continue to face; that is, women should only be included in the niche media when they perform to male standards.

While many niche magazines do cover female snowboarders and are offering an alternative discourse of femininity based on active participation and cultural commitment, the same sources also reinforce traditional discourses of heterosexual femininity by including advertisements that feature female models (as distinct from female snowboarders) in sexually suggestive poses (see Figures 3.0, 3.1 and 3.2, at the end of this chapter; also see Rinehart, 2005; Wheaton, 2003). Furthermore, magazines and websites feature images of heterosexually appealing females in non-snowboarding situations including bars, hot tubs, parties, or as fans of male boarders. Editors often insert humorous, yet demeaning, comments on the physical appearance and sexual desirability of these women.¹⁰ In contrast, the sexual status of men or male snowboarders is almost never compromised.

¹⁰ One such example appeared in a recent article in *Snowboarder Magazine* (April 2003). “Defending champs and Hooters girls look good on opening day” carries a photo of nine teenage females smiling and posing on the snow, as if for a cheerleading team photo (retrieved from <http://www.snowboardermag.com/superpark/03cuttersopeningday>).

The strength of the women's market has not only created new spaces for alternative discourses of femininity and female boarders in niche magazines, it has also supported the emergence of female-specific boarding magazines (e.g., *SG* [Surfer Girl], *Curl*). These niche magazines provide important spaces for women to display their skills and voice their opinions. However, these female specific magazines tend to reinforce traditional discourses of femininity by privileging fashion, emphasizing the pursuit of heterosexual gender social relations, and relying on young, uniformly thin girls to model the board wear (Booth, 2002).¹¹ Although these magazines have proved popular among younger, and less committed female participants, they are the sites of some contention for many committed female boarders. According to some cultural commentators, the recent dissolution of *SG* magazine, which ran from 2000-2006, can be attributed to its failure to cater to the diversity of the female board-sports market. "The hardcore girl," said Don Meek, president of Primedia Action Sports Group (ASG), is a "niche of a niche" and would rather read the "men's magazines" such as *Transworld Snowboarding* or *Surfer* (cited in Fishing A, 2006, para. 6, emphasis added). On the other hand, "the bulk of the market" constitutes those girls who go snowboarding or surfing once a year and read "*Teen Vogue*, *Teen People*, *Cosmo Girl*, or *ELLE girl* like they are the bible" (Randy Hild, Roxy senior vice president of marketing, cited in Fishing A, 2006, para. 11). Simply put, female snowboarders do not constitute a homogenous group. In an attempt to communicate with these various groups of women, advertisers and editors include multiple, and sometimes competing, representations of women. The fragmentation of female snowboarders, and the divergent representations of women in the niche media, illustrates the inter-relationships between the media, board-sports industry, and snowboarding culture. The niche media is both producing

¹¹ For a brief discussion of similar contradictions in *Hardcore Candy*, a niche television program that claims to showcase women's extreme sports culture, see Donnelly (2003).

and reflecting multiple discourses of women's snowboarding identities, including the female boarder as active and respected cultural participant, and women's snowboarding as a 'cute' fashion to be consumed by heterosexually-attractive young women. Certainly, "few texts offer a single, unified discursive position" (Macdonald, 2003, p. 25) of female snowboarders. Professional female snowboarders, for example, frequently feature in advertisements in niche magazines that reinforce both their physical prowess and their physical appearances. It seems that Foucault's "perception of the difficulty, and indeed sometimes the impossibility, of disentangling the precise origins of a discourse" (Macdonald, 2003, p. 21) is apt in this context.

As illustrated above, the mass and niche media help produce and reproduce numerous, even contradictory, discourses of female snowboarding. While the niche media provides space for a range of discursive constructions including women as respected athletes and cultural participants, the mass media tends to focus on heterosexually attractive female boarders and promotes snowboarding as a fashion for consumption. The key point here is that these discourses then help shape women's snowboarding practices and snowboarding bodies. The multiple discourses produced by the media systematically inform women's knowledge of snowboarding, and play a role in governing their statements and perceptions of snowboarding and gender. It is important to note, however, that these discursive constructions of femininity do not bend all females into a coherent snowboarding femininity (see Foucault, 1977; Markula & Pringle, 2006). Rather, the multiple discourses of femininity communicated via the snowboarding media might be regarded as what Foucault (1977) called "dividing practices" among female boarders. As Pringle & Markula (2005) explain, "Foucault (1977) asserted that dividing practices were constructed via the use of particular discourses to justify social and, at times, spatial divisions between various categories of humans" (p. 477). The dividing practices in the snowboarding media justify the fragmentation of female boarders, and in so doing,

support new niche markets essential for the continual economic growth of the boarding industry (see Chapter Three).

As well as influencing women's manifestations of cultural meaning, the mediated dialogues surrounding female snowboarders also influence the way "we frame our cultural understandings of future actors walking onto the stage" (Sloop, 1997, cited in Andrews, 2000, p. 126). Foucault terms the process in which humans get tied to particular identities, 'subjectivation,' and, as Markula and Pringle (2006) explain, "he was particularly troubled with how being 'known' or categorized can act to constrain and subject people to certain ends, identities and modes of behavior" (p. 8; also see Butler 1997, 2004; Foucault, 1983, 1988a).¹² Mediated discourses that promote snowboarding as a fashion for young women, for example, might work to limit some women's cultural membership to consumption rather than active participation. Some feminist scholars might reason that such discursive constructions of femininity in the media have a normalizing effect on female snowboarders, producing docile female bodies. However, I am cautious of such interpretations. I believe it is necessary to question the extent to which discourses of femininity, and particularly discourses of sexism, in the snowboarding media, really do have a "discursive effect"¹³ on women's snowboarding experiences: How do men and women make meaning of discourses of femininity and sexism in the snowboarding media? How do such discourses influence gender relations in the snowboarding culture?

¹² Foucault (1983) says of the relation between productive power and the subject, and the subject's location in productive power: "This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects" (p. 212).

¹³ Here "discursive effect" refers to "a momentary production of a phenomenon, such as the production of objects, subjects or conceptual understandings" (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 29).

While some scholars argue that the sexualization and trivialization of women in the media reinforces male domination via the workings of ideology (e.g., Duncan, 1990; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Messner, 2002), this interpretation sits at odds with a Foucauldian perspective. Foucault did not conceptualize discourses and relations of power as essentially positive or negative; thus, “it is important not to pre-assign any practice as ‘liberating’ or ‘oppressive’ without a careful consideration of the cultural context where an individual women’s identity is formed” (Markula, 2003, p. 104). Indeed, adopting a Foucauldian approach, it would be erroneous for me to assume that sexualized images of women in the snowboarding media inherently repress female boarders. Rather, the ‘effect’ of these images depends upon the discursive lens through which men and women read them. Thus, in order to understand the effect of mediated discursive constructions of women in the snowboarding culture it is essential to consider the interpretations applied by boarders themselves.

In relation to the consumption of media texts, current thinking within media studies opposes the idea of mediated discourses having “extensive unconscious powers” over audiences, spectators, or readers (Macdonald, 2003, p. 23). Most scholars agree that “any study of meaning in the media” must incorporate “audience or reader responses” (Macdonald, 2003, p. 25). While the mediated cultural industries “have the power to rework and reshape what they represent, and, by representation and selection, to impose and implant such definitions...[that]...fit more easily the descriptions of the dominant and preferred culture” (Hall, 1981, cited in Scherer, 2004, p. 96), there are no guarantees that every individual will interpret such representations in the same manner (Hall, 1980). For example, while American snowboarder Jamie proclaimed that the overt sexualization of women in snowboarding advertisements “kinda pisses me off” (personal correspondence, February 14, 2005), New Zealand snowboarder Pamela was apathetic; “it’s like water off a duck’s back, I barely register

it” (personal correspondence, February 18, 2005). If the media help to construct versions of reality for female boarders, then how do women, as subjects of discourse, decide their response? While all discourses communicate knowledge, argues Macdonald (2003), “it is mistaken to elevate discourses to the position of being the sole originator of knowledge. We also arrive at knowledge through experience, through observation and through the evaluation of one discourse against another. Our experience is, of course, filtered through discourse but it is not contained by it” (p. 37). Agents constantly make choices about competing versions of reality, and such choices involve the process of “weighing up the competing (and incomplete) versions of reality on offer within our cultures” (Macdonald, 2003, p. 24). This is certainly true for female snowboarders, many of whom demonstrate a critical awareness of the multiple discourses of femininity being produced by the media.

Foucault’s early work, however, does not necessarily facilitate an explanation of how women make meaning of, or resist these discourses. On the contrary, Foucault’s understanding of individuals, principally in terms of the operations of power and discourses on the body, has the effect of keeping female snowboarders in the position of passive victims to the snowboarding media. The concerns raised here echo critiques aimed at Foucault’s conceptualization of power more broadly. Some scholars contend that Foucault’s understanding of power is deterministic and does not allow space for individuals to create change through resistance. Discursive power relations, they argue, dominate to the exclusion of agency, and Foucault has been charged with ignoring the role of the individual. “The emphasis that Foucault places on the effects of power upon the body,” says McNay (1992), reduces “social agents to passive bodies and does not explain how individuals may act in an autonomous fashion” (p. 3). Possibly in response to such criticisms, Foucault (1988b) acknowledged that he had not focused enough attention on how humans influence power

relations. “Perhaps I’ve insisted too much on the technology of domination and power,” pondered Foucault (1988b), adding that “I am more and more interested in the interaction between oneself and others and in the technologies of individual domination, the history of how an individual acts upon himself, in the technologies of self” (cited in Pringle & Markula, 2005, p. 478). Therefore, in Foucault’s final work individuals are “no longer conceived as docile bodies in the grip of an inexorable disciplinary power” but as “self-determining agents who are capable of challenging and resisting the structures of domination in modern society” (McNay, 1992, p. 4). Foucault’s understanding of how power relations influence the behavior of individuals underwent a significant methodological shift as he moved his focus from the “constitution of subjectivity via the workings of discourse, to constitution via lived practices” within power relations (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 20). This shift introduced new tools for theorizing sport, “notably sport as a space where technologies of the self and processes of subjectification are constantly at play” (Rail & Harvey, 1995, p. 169). Moreover, Foucault’s conceptualization of ‘technologies of self’ has the potential to facilitate new understandings of female snowboarders within media power relations.

Technologies of Self and Female Snowboarders

In his later years, starting with the second volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1985) became particularly interested in the process by which individuals “think about themselves, act for themselves, and transform themselves within power relations” (Rail & Harvey, 1995, p. 167). Foucault (1985) labels this process ‘subjectification.’ In the third volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1986) expanded on the notion of subjectification and how it can be realized through what he calls the ‘technologies of self.’ Such technologies

permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (Foucault, 1988b, cited in Markula, 2003, p. 88)

Thus, in contrast to the objectifying process Foucault described in relation to technologies of power, technologies of the self emerge in the process of subjectification, the forming of oneself as a subject within power relations. However, Foucault's work does not indicate that an engagement in the technologies of self necessarily leads to a transformation of power relations or discourses. Rather, to paraphrase Markula and Pringle (2006), Foucault's analysis examined how individuals react and make sense of 'moral' codes around them, not necessarily how they change them (p. 145). For Foucault (1978), while the strategic co-ordination of resistance, like the co-ordination of power relations, is necessary to effect institutional changes, such changes will only ever "reconfigure – not dissolve – power relations" (Maguire, 2002, p. 305).

While technologies of self can act as practices of freedom, that is practices that an individual can use to transform him or herself within power relations, "certain conditions apply" (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 153). According to Foucault (1983), the first step in the technologies of the self involves the individual gaining an ability to problematize their identity and the codes that govern them. Only after such problematization can the individual engage in ethical work, practices of freedom, and develop practices of transformation (Markula & Pringle, 2006). In relation to the former, Foucault argued that ethical work – that is, the work that "one performs on oneself" in an "attempt to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one's behavior" (Foucault, 1985, p. 27) – is inherently political, because "caring for the self implies caring for others also" (Pringle, 2005, p. 271). Foucault stressed, however, that the ability to care for the self, as opposed to knowing thy self, "revolves around a critical awareness of the various effects of regimes of truth" (Pringle, 2005, p. 271). Armed with

knowledge of both the rules of play and an ethics of practice, the individual can then attempt to minimize harmful modes of domination within relations of power (Foucault, 1988b, 1988c; also see Maguire, 2002). Furthermore, while Foucault (1987) was interested in the way in which the subject constitutes herself in an active fashion, by the ethical practices of self, “these practices are nevertheless not something that the individual invents [her]self. They are patterns [she] finds in [her] culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on [her] by [her] culture, [her] society and [her] social group” (cited in McNay, 1992, p. 61). Such a conception of the self represents Foucault’s attempt to “attribute a degree of agency and self-determination to the individual without jettisoning his anti-essentialist view of the subject” (McNay, 1992, p. 62).

While Foucault analyzed the technologies of self through the sexual ethics of the Ancient Greeks and Romans, his “teleology of the self” is, according to Markula and Pringle (2006), still relevant today among those individuals who seek to “re-create an identity within the... apparatus of domination” (p. 143). A growing number of researchers are exploring how athletes “negotiate sporting experiences and understandings of self with respect to technologies of self and technologies of domination” (Pringle, 2005, p. 264; see Chapman, 1997; Guthrie & Castelnuovo, 2001; Johns & Johns, 2000; Markula, 2003; Markula & Pringle, 2006; Shogan, 1999). “Without an equal emphasis on the technologies of self, Foucauldian analyses of physical cultures seem overly deterministic,” argues Maguire (2002, p. 294). Thus, the second part of this chapter draws upon Foucault’s notion of “technologies of self” to examine how female snowboarders learn to recognize the discourses (or knowledge) that the media produces, and how some women have engaged in ethical work and acted upon this knowledge via the production of their own media forms (i.e., women-only snowboarding videos). Not only does this discussion consider the likelihood of social transformation given the action of a select few

female snowboarders, it also critically evaluates the sexist discourses prevalent in the media and the effects these have on women's snowboarding experiences. According to Foucault (1985), "there are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all" (p. 8). For Foucault, such reflection was the essence of social change. For me, it provides the basis of voicing a long ignored question: Are sexualized images of female snowboarders *really* at the heart of gender problems in the snowboarding culture?

Drawing upon Foucault's concept of technologies of self, the remainder of this chapter constitutes two sections. First, I explain how some women problematize the discourses of femininity in the snowboarding media, their identities, and the codes that govern them. Second, I illustrate, via the case study of women-only snowboarding videos, how some female boarders are investing in a double trajectory of critique and ethically informed practice. In so doing, these women are engaging in practices of freedom, practices that may ultimately create change within the discourses of femininity in the snowboarding culture.

Technologies of Self and Critical Awareness

Critical thought is at the core of Foucault's understanding of technologies of self. Foucault (1984) was particularly interested in how people learn to problematize their identities by becoming more self-reflexive:

Thought is not what inhibits a certain conduct and gives it its meaning; rather, it is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and question it as to its meaning, its conditions, and its goals. Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem. (p. 388)

The critically self-aware individual questions what seems ‘natural’ and inevitable in their identity; through this interrogation of the limits of one’s subjectivity emerges the “possibility of transgression” and with it the “potential for creating new types of subjective experiences” (Markula, 2003, p. 102).

Some snowboarders articulate conscious, problematizations of the boundaries of the dominant female snowboarding identities promoted in the mass media and niche magazines.

Moriah, for example, complained:

Women are sadly more models than anything else. Most ads do not show girls riding, even if the woman featured is a top rider. Most ads just show girls posing in cute clothes, and if they are riding, they are most likely doing [non-technical maneuvers such as] a mute grab or a backside silly slide (Moriah, personal correspondence, October 4, 2006).

Similarly, Hana expressed “disappointment” at the “lack of coverage of *real* chick snowboarders:”

I hate it how Nikita ads always have a picture of a chick standing there (fully clothed) looking pretty, with the slogan “For Girls that Ride.” But they never have a sick photo of them actually riding. More snowboarding photos, less posing photos would be better (personal correspondence, September 28, 2006).

An advertisement for a New Zealand ski-resort featuring three young women with only snowboarding-related stickers covering their nipples dismayed Sophie to the extent that she refused to “ever buy a season’s pass there again” (personal correspondence, October 10, 2006).

While Jaime thought it was “great to see lots of pics of tough snowboarder girls” in the magazines, “chicks wearing make-up, tank-tops and posing with their snowboards” angered her (personal correspondence, September 29, 2006).

Some male snowboarders also question the limitations of discursive feminine identities produced in the media. Ste’en explained that “the purpose of advertising is to get your attention and have that attention associated with a product” and “sexy images get the attention of most

readers” (personal correspondence, October 9, 2006). Continuing, he admitted a possible effect of such images: “When women are represented in a sexual way (in any form of media), yes, I can feel excited” (personal correspondence, October 9, 2006). However, when reading a snowboarding magazine Ste’en would rather see “hard-core action shots” and when he sees sexual images of women in a boarding magazine his typical response is: “Ho hum, flick the page” (personal correspondence, October 9, 2006). Furthermore, when asked to comment on an advertisement in a snowboard magazine that featured a naked female taped to the floor with snowboarding stickers (see Figure 3.3), Ste’en stated that, while this image “might be [sexually] exciting,” he interprets it as “degrading” and would refuse to “support the company” (personal communication, October 9, 2006). Derek is also aware that “lots of ads featuring women snowboarders are sexualized” but explained, “these ads do not make me think less of female riders. There are many women who outperform the boys out there [on the mountain] and I recognize it, and I’m sure the other guys do too” (personal correspondence, October 4, 2006).

Mediated images of female athletes that emphasize their sexuality tend to be interpreted differently by women (and men) from different social and cultural backgrounds and in different historical contexts. Women who view such images through a second-wave feminist discursive lens, for example, typically interpret them as “diminishing women’s power, trivializing their strength, and putting them in their sexual place” (Burstyn, 1999, p. 3). Many contemporary young women, however, applaud such images as celebrating women’s sexuality. Among the latter are committed female snowboarders who express a critical ‘third-wave’ feminist attitude toward sexual images of female boarders in the media (see Chapter Four). Hana believed that images promoting female boarders as “hot” (such as Figures 2.0, 2.1 and 2.2) are “good for the sport;” they promote snowboarding as “cool for chicks” and could even “encourage young girls

to try snowboarding” (personal correspondence, September 28, 2006). Similarly, Mel applauded Tara Dakides and Gretchen Bleiler who featured on the cover of *FHM* in body-paint: “Good on them! If you’ve got it, which they clearly do (how hot is Tara’s lil’ butt!), flaunt it I say. It certainly doesn’t damage the industry or women’s snowboarding in any way, so go nuts ladies!” (Mel, February 23, 2006). Mel also commended Gretchen Bleiler for her recent appearance in *FHM* and *Maxim* magazines: “Awesome Gretchen. YEAH!! Both of these publications are pretty much saying ‘snowboard chicks are hot. Here is an example,’ and it’s true, snowboard ladies are so hot! If publications choose to portray female riders as lil’ hotties, go nuts. Because we ARE hot. Every last one of us...” (personal correspondence, October 9, 2006, emphasis in original). Olympic snowboarder, Pamela, also supported Bleiler’s decision to pose for *FHM* and *Maxim* magazines: “I have to say ‘good on her.’ She has a strong, fit and athletic body, so it’s probably good for guys and other women to see that she is not a stick figure with balloon boobs” (personal correspondence, October 10, 2006). Here Pamela demonstrates a critical awareness that Bleiler’s “athletic” body offers an alternative to discursive constructions that tend to celebrate the thin physique with large breasts as the contemporary feminine ideal. Pamela argued that such images do not undermine the snowboarding culture: Male and female snowboarders “often have fantastic bodies” of which they should be proud (personal correspondence, October 10, 2006). Moreover, snowboarding “is a sport with lots of young people and an emphasis on the nightlife – it is already overtly sexual – so to deny that would be lying” (Pamela, personal correspondence, October 10, 2006).

Second-wave feminist researchers have typically argued against images that sexualize female athletes on the grounds that they reduce women to docile bodies for the consumption of the male gaze. In contradistinction, many young female snowboarders, confident in both their sexuality and physical prowess, enjoy being (active) objects of the male gaze. As one New

Zealand snowboarder put it: “Guys are always checking out girls on the hill, and I like checking out the boys. I think it’s nice to be good to look at” (Abby, personal correspondence, October 4, 2006). Another New Zealand boarder also welcomed the male gaze: “Yeah boys, you can peep this. Go right ahead” (Mel, personal correspondence, October 9, 2006). Similarly, Moriah, a core American boarder, proclaimed “to be honest, I love boys and I really like it when I know they are checking me out on the mountain” (personal correspondence, October 4, 2006). She described drawing the attention of “cute boys” via displays of physical prowess: “I love it when I ride up and [jump] over them. That makes it even better. Then they *really* like what they see” (personal correspondence, October 4, 2006).

Nonetheless, as the following comments illustrate, some women are cautious of discourses that caricature a particular form of femininity in both mainstream women’s magazines and snowboarding magazines:

Most women featured in fashion magazines are perfect pencil thin, and perfectly made-up. But in snowboarding I think those things are frowned upon. I think snowboarding is more about being yourself, being natural, and having your own style, and I think the magazines sort of portray this. I think snowboarding lets you be yourself, be beautiful just how you are. I like wearing hoodies, sneakers, hats and beanies. Yeah, I rock that look. But, I guess there is an ideal image of a ‘shred Betty.’ And I suppose I do kinda live my life under that shadow. I definitely feel pressure to look good and I do feel like I need to keep up and have the new gear every year. But I don’t feel pressure to do anything except the things I want to (Moriah, personal correspondence, October 4, 2006).

All girls grow up wondering why they didn’t turn out like Barbie or the chicks in the magazines. Models constantly reinforce a thin image, which we all carry around in our heads but we all learn to deal with it in different ways. Self-confidence is key and this comes from age, independence, and finding something in life where you can excel and feel proud – for some girls, like me, this is snowboarding. There is a media image of the ‘ideal’ female snowboarder but it is definitely different from the models in most women’s magazines. In snowboarding, there is a media image of a freestyle chick with long hair out of a beanie, matching snowboard outfit, a bit grungy, and riding hard with all the boys, etc. My specialty was racing and freeriding, so I felt like I never matched this image. So I always felt like I was just doing my own thing but heaps of young girls appear to feel they need to conform to

this snowboarder 'image' to fit in (Pamela, personal correspondence, October 10, 2006).

The magazines definitely promote a snowboarding feminine ideal; that is, women are expected to look cute in baggy snowboard gear. There is some pressure to look the part, wear up-to-date outerwear, etc. But at least snowboard chicks don't have pressure to be really thin, perfect, etc., because snowboarding gear covers it all up anyway! (Hana, personal correspondence, September 28, 2006).

Sophie is also very aware of the "social pressures" to conform to "girly" and "ladylike" stereotypes on and off the mountain. But she finds solace in the backcountry where "there are no rules. All you need to worry about is making the most of the fresh un-tracked snow in front of you. It is real freedom" (personal correspondence, October 5, 2006). Simply put, some female snowboarders have become aware of the limitations of discursive femininity in society and snowboarding culture more specifically, and consciously negotiate their own subjectivity within these discourses. However, the question is, where have these individuals (both women and men) gained this ability to critically evaluate the snowboarding media and their own identities within the culture?

Discourses are not the sole sources of knowledge. They are social constructions; thus "we also arrive at knowledge through experience, through observation and through the evaluation of one discourse against another" (Macdonald, 2003, p. 37). Indeed, snowboarders constantly choose between competing versions of reality, and such choices involve "weighing up the competing (and incomplete) versions of reality on offer within our cultures" (Macdonald, 2003, p. 24). It seems that the more snowboarding experience and cultural knowledge an individual has, the more likely they will develop the ability to weigh up the competing versions of femininity and problematize some of these. Committed snowboarders are more likely to observe inconsistencies between their experiences on the mountain as active cultural participants, and the representations of women in the media as passive and sexualized

subjects. Hana illustrated how some core boarders distinguish between images and advertisements of women in the media that they perceive as ‘truthful’ representations of their experiences as female boarders, and those that are not: “I mostly only look at photos of REAL women” in snowboarding magazines, those “female snowboarders doing sick moves.”

As for the odd cheesy ad that sexualizes women, well, that doesn’t really bother me. Almost every sport tries to use sex to sell, and I don’t think it overshadows the *real* women of snowboarding. Sometimes those cheesy naked shots disappoint me; they make it seem like girls are only good for looking naked, not snowboarding. But it doesn’t really bother me because *I know different*. At the end of the day, *the only women snowboarders that get real respect are the ones that can ride well* (personal correspondence, September 28, 2006; emphasis added).

Similarly, Canadian core boarder, Jaime, admitted to being “disappointed” with advertisements that feature women “dressed in skimpy clothing and tons of makeup, because you don’t see any *real* mountain girls looking like that.” However, she reasoned, these images “don’t really matter because on the mountain guys only admire girls who are good athletes and snowboard aggressively” (personal correspondence, September 29, 2006). Similarly, Moriah, explained: “I don’t really care about ads that show models in little or no clothing posing with a snowboard, because I ride and those ‘babes’ don’t. These ads don’t change the fact that I love snowboarding” (personal correspondence, October 4, 2006). As these comments highlight, there is a discourse of authenticity pertaining to ‘real’ female snowboarders. While core female boarders tend to reject images that position women as passive and sexual beings, they celebrate those that show women as athletes in action. “It is awesome to see women going hard. I love seeing women riding big, steep mountain terrain. It makes me want to seek out the big stuff,” said Sophie (personal correspondence, October 9, 2006).

Clearly, some core female boarders negate the discursive effect of overtly sexual images by drawing upon “reverse discourses” (Foucault, 1978, p. 101).¹⁴ Committed female boarders differentiate themselves from the “skanky,” “slutty,” “dirty” female models in the advertisements, who they reason are not “real” female snowboarders. In so doing they are engaging in a technology of self that acts to transform each woman’s sense of self to help her “attain a certain state of happiness” (Foucault, 1988, cited in Markula & Pringle, 2005, p. 486). The key point I am suggesting here is it appears that women who have experienced snowboarding as a fulfilling physical activity and view their bodies as powerful and athletic are the ones best able to problematize images in the boarding media. Committed female boarders are the most likely to weigh up the competing discourses of femininity in the culture and to distinguish between those who are representative of their own snowboarding experiences and those who are not (e.g., the passive and sexualized). In so doing, these women are able to effectively negotiate discursive constructions of femininity that might otherwise limit their subjectivity. It seems that many of these women are drawing upon discursive resources from third-wave feminism (rather than second-wave feminism) to critique these images (see Chapter Four).

However, while the majority of female participants interviewed for this study articulated a critical awareness of the representations of women in the snowboarding media, not all core boarders develop a critical consciousness. Mel, for instance, is a passionate New Zealand boarder who has worked in the snowboarding industry for more than a decade. She admitted to reading snowboarding magazines “almost everyday” without ever noticing “anything wrong” with the representation of women. Mel believed that if a female boarder

¹⁴ A reverse discourse often uses “the same vocabulary” as a dominating discourse but produces an opposing strategy or social effect (Foucault, 1978, p. 101).

“doesn’t like ads that sexualize women, then they probably should not get into snowboarding. If you can’t deal with a couple of photos, then there is no way you’ll deal with the social scene that is snowboarding” (personal communication, October 9, 2006). Women in the snowboarding culture “have to have a very open mind and accept a lot of things that you may not agree with,” insisted Mel (personal communication, October 9, 2006). As this example shows, not all core female boarders adopt a critical awareness of the discursive constructions of femininity in the snowboarding media; some even internalize the attitudes held by many of their male colleagues.

It is interesting to compare how women read the same images and advertisements.¹⁵ For example, when asked to respond to an advertisement featuring a male professional snowboarder surrounded by female models dressed in revealing nurse uniforms (see Figure 3.2 at the end of this chapter) Hana, a semi-professional boarder, proclaimed, “I think these sorts of ads are funny. I know these chicks don’t represent ‘women snowboarders,’ so it doesn’t really matter” (personal correspondence, September 28, 2006). Similarly, Pamela described this advertisement as “just another teenage boy’s fantasy.” “I barely notice these sorts of ads,” said Pamela, because “I don’t associate myself” with the female models featured in them. Jokingly she asked, “Are they really women?” (personal correspondence, October 10, 2006). Jaime, however, responded very differently:

I’ve definitely got issues with this one, because I’m a nurse! I mean, come on, this ad is totally brutal towards the nursing population, and there is nothing about snowboarding in this ad. Now that I’m a nurse, whenever there are images of a

¹⁵ The majority of snowboarders interviewed for this study found an advertisement for a snowboarding website that featured a naked female taped down with stickers of prominent snowboarding companies (e.g., Burton, DC) offensive (see Figure 3.3 at the end of this chapter). Sophie, for example, is disappointed that respected snowboarding companies such as Burton and DC are “supporting pornography” in this way, and declares she “will never buy these brands again” (personal correspondence, October 9, 2006). Abby, on the other hand, admits that while this advertisement is “slutty,” she is “not offended too much” because she accepts that “we [women] are in a guy’s world in snowboarding and skateboarding and they love that shit, it’s just fantasy” (personal correspondence, October 4, 2006).

‘naughty nurse,’ we all take a stand. I guess I’ve sort of always been like that. Maybe that’s from being involved with a male dominated job – forest fighting – for so many years. I have always had to stick up for myself, and snowboarding is no different really (personal correspondence, September 29, 2006).

Moriah, on the other hand, found the advertisement amusing in the way that it parodies an unspoken cultural truth, that is, “once a guy becomes a dope-ass [highly proficient] rider he’s got pro-ho’s [female groupies] on his jock [seeking sexual relations with him]” (personal correspondence, October 4, 2006). As this example highlights, the ability to develop a critical awareness of the discourses of femininity depends on the individual’s experiences.¹⁶ In sum, while they are the subjects of discourse, female snowboarders are not necessarily its victims. Female boarders confront numerous and even contradictory discourses but in everyday life they actively participate in deciding which discourses activate them; the act of doing this is a matter of individual agency.

Through a conscious critique, some female and male boarders find the dominant discourses of femininity promoted in the snowboarding media problematic. However, mere critical thinking does not transform these discursive constructions of femininity. Thus, it is also important to consider how this critique works in practice. While many of the boarders interviewed for this study articulated a critical awareness and problematization of discourses that sexualize women, the majority simply adopted “coping mechanisms” (Markula, 2003, p. 103). In order to preserve their enjoyment of core snowboarding magazines they may ‘ignore’ problematic advertisements. Asked how she felt about seeing sexual exploitation of women in advertisements in snowboarding magazines, professional snowboarder Sondra Van Ert replied:

¹⁶ It should also be added that women interpret mediated discourses differently during various life phases. Pamela, for example, explained that when she was a professional snowboarder she was “mortally offended” by images that sexualized women in the snowboarding media but now that she has retired, she no longer “feel[s] as strongly” about such images (personal communication, October 10, 2006).

I don't see it, because I choose not to see it. I don't purchase those magazines or contribute to that. The majority of these magazines are targeted at a certain populace of 17-year-old males. These advertisements keep perpetuating snowboarding's [hard-core, rebellious] reputation. And there's definitely a group that wants to hang on to that reputation. But there are a few magazines like *Snowboard Life* that cater to my targeted market, and that's what I buy. (cited in Murray, 2001, para. 5)

Van Ert is critically aware of advertisements in snowboarding magazines that sexualize women but she chooses "not to see it" and refuses to purchase "*those* magazines." Some snowboarders, however, are more vocal in their critique.

While the 'sex sells' discourse pervades contemporary snowboarding niche media, particularly the magazines, advertisements that sexualize women are becoming less frequent. This is partly due to the political responses of some boarders. Male and female snowboarders, journalists and editors frequently voice their discontent about such advertisements. In 1994 *Flakezine*, a website dedicated to analyzing the snowboarding media, called an advertisement for Alpina Goggles 'sexist.' The ad featured a large-breasted white woman in a black body suit, blue flannel and Alpina Darksite goggles. According to *Flakezine*, Alpina's marketing director subscribed to the "big boobs and beer" school of advertising which substitutes to the formula, "give 14-year-old boys a boner and they'll buy your product." The website added, "while this style may work selling pay-per-view Wrestle Mania bouts to inbred white trash, it won't work here in the snowboard world, thank God" (Sex Rot, 1994, para. 17). At the same time as condemning sexism, *Flakezine* commended the shoe and snowboard boot company Airwalk, saying that, "it's nice to see that some companies appreciate the athletic abilities of the women in their ads" (Women We, 1994, para. 21). Overt sexualization of women in snowboarding magazines appears to be fading. Tracey Fong (2000) noticed fewer "tasteless" images of "naked woman in bondage" (para. 2), and *Transworld Snowboarding* no longer publishes the infamous 'Reef' advertisements, which featured near naked models in a thong,

their backsides turned to the viewer, and their faces turned away.¹⁷ Responding to a disappointed male voyeur's queries about the disappearance of the Reef girls, the editor explained Reef did not want to offend girls who also subscribe to *Transworld Snowboarding* (Dresser, 2002). Females such as Tory, a correspondent from Big Sky, Montana, remind editors that they will not accept overt or covert forms of sexism: "What does a girl in a thong have to do with selling shoes?" (Mail 15.5, 2002).¹⁸ More recently, in an article featured in *Transworld Snowboarding* titled "things not welcome in the 2006/2007 season" (April 2006), a group of young male journalists, "the angry interns," warned advertisement executives against using bikini- or thong-clad women in the magazine: Not only are you "insulting the people you're trying to sell to by assuming they'll fall for your sophomoric crap" but you falsely assume that snowboarders are "a bunch of sex-crazed goons" (p. 170). These voices of cultural discontent appear to have persuaded decision-makers in the media (e.g., editors, marketing directors): Such images continue to decline in frequency.

Technologies of the Self and Practices of Freedom

Snowboarders are not docile bodies who allow the media to constitute their subjectivities. Rather, many engage in conscious, active critique of the discursive constructions of femininity propounded by the snowboarding media and, in so doing, have taken the first step of technologies of the self. According to Foucault, it is only after such questioning that one can engage in ethical conduct or practices of freedom. Certainly, for some boarders, snowboarding

¹⁷ For examples of reef advertisements see 'Miss Reef' at http://www.reefbrazil.com/reefgirls_index.html

¹⁸ Pamela also admitted to being "incensed enough to react to sexist media a few times" (personal correspondence, October 10, 2006). In particular, she recalled writing to "Phil Erikson [director] at *New Zealand Snowboarder* in the mid 1990s when he ran a particularly appalling ad (for something that he was importing at the time) with a bare-breasted mermaid. My point was that the ad didn't have much to do with snowboarding. I kinda got brandished as a bit of a 'feminist' but then, that is the backlash that you just have to deal with I guess" (personal correspondence, October 10, 2006).

experience and cultural knowledge seem to allow for the critical thought required for practices of freedom and, thus, create the foundation for individual transformation in the discursive condition of the snowboarding media. However, Foucault's concept of technologies of the self is complex and it is difficult to determine what practices of freedom might mean for the critically aware female snowboarder. Foucault was reluctant to talk about 'resistance,' and he has been widely criticized for not offering clear guidelines on how to challenge the limitations of existing identity formation (see, e.g., Smart, 1986). Other scholars have, however, read his work with 'liberational' intent. For example, feminist scholars have embraced Foucault's understanding of technologies of self for the "feminist analysis of transgressive practices for women" (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 150). As Markula and Pringle (2006) explain, Moya Lloyd (1996) is at the forefront of this research.

While Foucault offered only vague ideas as to how individual practices of freedom might change dominant discursive practices, Lloyd (1996) contends that his later writings suggest a two-pronged strategy for action. Lloyd (1996) maintains that the technologies of self, when invested in what she calls a double trajectory of critique and self-stylization, can motivate political activity and, thus, act as practices of freedom. In her words,

In the case of the production of gender...individuals are subject to a range of practices, some of which are capable of inversion, subversion, perversion, while others operate more or less rigidly. My argument is that it is the activity of critique that makes possible the differentiation between them. This, I contend, is what offers a radical edge to the stylistics of existence. It is not the activity of self-fashioning in itself that is crucial. It is the ways in which that self-fashioning, *when allied to critique*, can produce sites of contestation over the meanings and contours of identity, and over the ways in which certain practices are mobilized. (Lloyd, 1996, cited in Markula, 2003, p. 103)

According to Lloyd's (1996) interpretation, any practice of femininity has "the potential to operate transgressively" (cited in Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 152) if it is embedded in the "double act" of critique and self-stylization (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 152). For example, if

an individual woman's conscious critical efforts to make a political statement through dress can provoke "a critical, querying reaction" (Lloyd, 1996, cited in Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 152) from others, she has potentially problematized women's present cultural condition, which may ultimately have an impact on power relations (Markula, 2003; Markula & Pringle, 2006).

Indeed, some (not all) women in the snowboarding culture demonstrate a critical consciousness of their positioning within media discourses and engage in active self-fashioning to "produce sites of contestation over the meanings and contours" (Lloyd, 1996, cited in Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 152) of the female snowboarding identity. Snowboarding olympian Pamela Bell took delight in "shocking" her interviewers:

I would turn up and be really organized and wouldn't dress like a snowboarder. They would be like "oh, we wanted you to have pink hair and heaps of piercings in your eyebrows and stuff." And I was like, "sorry to disappoint you but I'm really boring." There's this crazy misconception of what a female snowboarder is, and I used to kind of delight in not being that just to really piss them off (personal communication, September 18, 2005).

The following comments from Tina Basich also highlight how some women's acts of self-stylization are allied to critique in the snowboarding media. Basich opposed "selling snowboarding stuff with images of girls in makeup and no shirts" (cited in Howe, 1998, p. 125). In the mid 1990s, Basich and fellow professional snowboarder Shannon Dunn featured in a series of advertisements parodying the dominant discursive constructions of femininity by wearing overtly feminine dresses and roller skates (see Figure 1.7). "Our Prom ads were completely revolutionary," said Basich (2003), because they "show[ed] we weren't afraid to be feminine" and "represented who we were becoming" (p. 104); that is, respected cultural participant's with the confidence and ability to publicly question discourses of femininity in the snowboarding media. Thus these women have consciously problematized the dominant discursive construction of the female snowboarding identity and attempted to expand the

limitations of this identity. In so doing, they have engaged in ethical work and practices of freedom.

In the following subsection I employ Lloyd's interpretation of technologies of the self in an analysis of female-produced snowboarding films. I argue that these films constitute practices of freedom as strategic alternatives to dominant male versions of snowboarding culture and riding styles. The following case study illustrates how some female snowboarders are "thinking about themselves, acting for themselves, and transforming themselves within power relations" (Rail & Harvery, 1995, p. 167).

Practices of freedom: Women-only snowboarding films

Niche snowboarding films provide an important space for riders to display their skills and gain recognition from peers and the industry. However, filming requires time and resources, both of which are expensive and limited. Photographers and sponsors have tended to privilege male footage. The attitude expressed by Dave, a committed Canadian snowboarder and part-time snowboard filmmaker, prevails within the snowboarding culture: "I only think that there should be female parts in videos if the girls can step it up to the next level" (personal correspondence, September 9, 2004). Simply put, filmmakers, male colleagues, and the viewer, expect female boarders to perform to male standards if they are to be included in these videos. Shannon Dunn called filming a "nightmare" because "you pretty much have to be like a guy and that's no fun" (Shannondunnsnow.com, August 18, 2002, para. 4). Dunn believed the big three production companies (Mack Dawg Productions, Kingpin Productions, Standard Films) "want girls to go off, and if they do, then they will film them" (cited in Blumberg, 2002b, p. 167). "But," she added, "it kind of has to be on [their] terms" (cited in Blumberg, 2002b, p. 167). Similarly, professional boarder Victoria Jealous finds it

really hard always filming with only the best guys. They do everything bigger, so even though I'm totally pushing myself, I'm going to look bad next to the boys. I know it's worth it but I feel like my hands and feet are tied sometimes. (cited in Howe, 1998, p. 128)

Top female snowboarder Tina Basich admitted that finding people willing to film her is “one of the hardest things” because “when you go out and film and you're with a group that's all top guys, they'll want to build an 80 foot jump where I'd rather build a 40 foot jump” (cited in Hakes, 2000, para. 107). Only a select few women earn invitations to film with male crews, and male filmmakers and boarders set the criteria for participation. Furthermore, these videos celebrate hyper-masculinity as the dominant discursive construction, as they culturally exalt those male snowboarders who engage in risky behavior and sustain injury (see Chapter Five; also see Frohlick, 2005). The key point here is that the select few women who are invited to feature in these videos are constrained within such discursive constructions; they must embody a hyper-masculine approach to snowboarding and risk-taking or, as Shannon Dunn put it, they have to “be like guys and that's no fun” (Shannondunnsnow.com, August 18, 2002, para. 4). Thus, the dominant discursive construction of hyper-masculinity celebrated in these videos excludes women as active participants in high performance snowboarding (see Frohlick, 2005; Wheaton, 2003).

Some female snowboarders are critically aware of the exclusionary practices involved in the production of snowboarding films. Having spent two years working for Teton Gravity Research, an action-sports film production company, Tiffany Sabol was well aware of company personnel simply ignoring an “abundance” of film that captured female talent (cited in Berkley, 1999, para. 2). Sabol weighed up the competing versions of femininity she observed in the snowboarding media and on the mountain, and, in so doing, she found women's invisibility in snowboarding films inconsistent with her own experiences and, more

specifically, women's visibility on the mountain. This critical awareness led her to a transformational practice: She co-founded the first women's snowboard film company, Misty Productions – later renamed XX Productions – and co-produced *Empress* (1999), *Our Turn* (2000) and *Hardly Angels* (2001). Similarly, Lauren Graham, producer of the all-female snowboarding video *Shot in the Dark* (2003), admitted that while “it’s awesome...for a girl to get a couple of shots in a guy’s video...something really needed to be done with all of the film ending up on the cutting-room floor” (cited in Buckley, 2003, para. 2).

In an attempt to rectify the lack of female coverage in snowboarding films, some women, including Sabol and Graham, are engaging in practices of freedom, to improve women's situation in the niche media via the production of ‘all female’ snowboarding videos. Arguably, these films provide women with the opportunity to define their own criteria for inclusion, exhibit skills, create new meanings and values for women's snowboarding, and challenge dominant gender discourses. Sian Hughes, producer of the female snowboarding video *Dropstitch* (2004), wanted “to inspire girls to really follow their dreams:”

We want girls to experience the feeling of absolute freedom and exhilaration that comes from being on the mountain, and how much fun it all is. (cited in Webster, 2004, p. 135)

According to its website, *Dropstitch* aimed to

document girls who have taken a male dominated sport and made it their own against all the odds. Snowboarding brings out the best in them and helps them fulfill their aspirations and live their lives in an independent unconventional way – mirroring how modern women look at life in general. The film will celebrate the achievements of those girls at the forefront of the sport. It's about bringing talent, inspiration and devotion to the general population, introducing snowboarding to girls who have never tried, and inspiring those who have, to follow their dream. (www.dropstitch.chunkyknit.com, 2004, para. 2)

The goal of Misschief Films, another female production company, as described by professional snowboarder Alexis Waite, was “to help change people's perception of women's

snowboarding” (cited in Team Report, 2004, para. 9). The production company website offered “girls looking for happiness that you can’t buy at the mall” the following solution: “It’s time to try Misschief Film’s where double-black diamonds are a girls’ best friend” (cited in Stassen, June 2005b, para. 1). According to co-founder Fabia Grueebler, Misschief Films is not only seeking to offer an alternative to male-dominated snowboarding films; it is also attempting to advance the careers of professional female snowboarders, allowing them to earn a living from boarding in films (Stassen, 2005, para. 3). Misschief’s first film, *As If...* (2005)¹⁹ certainly had the desired effect. This film features the most respected female snowboarders, and offers a platform for the display of female athleticism without being judged against male standards.

While the women in *As If...* do not attempt to emulate male boarders, the film still celebrates their athleticism and their femininity. The introductory scene to Alexis Waite’s film part is a good example of women confidently displaying distinctly feminine cultural identities. Dressed in a purple and black 1980s style outfit (i.e., purple leg-warmers, black hot-pants, purple headband, and purple off-the-shoulder shirt) Waite performs an energized modern/jazz dance to the electronic ‘feminist pop’ song “I’m So Excited.”²⁰ The following scene shows Waite executing a series of spectacular maneuvers on her snowboard (in a pink snowboarding outfit). With creative design and animation, a playful soundtrack, and an innovative approach that emphasizes the fun, friendships and enjoyment inherent in women’s snowboarding experiences (in contrast to aggressive and competitive displays of physical prowess demonstrated in male-dominated films), as well as outstanding displays of female athleticism, *As If* became the “top-selling girls’ video of all time” in North America, Europe and Japan after

¹⁹ The back-cover of the *As If...* DVD states: “No, we’ll just watch the boys fit the jumps...AS IF!”

²⁰ Le Tigre produced “I’m So Excited” in 2004. For more information on this ‘feminist pop band’ see www.Letigreworld.com

only three months of sales, and almost out-sold the top selling male snowboarding video (Press Release, 2006, para. 4). One reviewer, present at the premiere night acclaimed the occasion:

The place was packed. Yeah, all the girls were there but so were all the snowboarder dudes, the industry heads, and the media. It was the place to be at night's end. The movie didn't disappoint. The editing was tight, the personalities of the girls came through in their parts, and most importantly the riding was impressive and solid. The movie got the crowd hyped, left us wanting more and f—king stoked. The movie is entertaining and legit. (Fast, 2005, para. 2)

Similarly, Mel described the Misschief girls as “sick” [awesome]: “They get me so amped to go riding. After watching their video you know for sure that being a female is no excuse to limit your riding” (personal correspondence, October 9, 2006). There is, of course, an interesting contradiction here with Mel, who was above cited as being apolitical in her interpretation of the snowboarding media, yet espouses a gendered position when discussing female-only snowboarding videos.

As the example of women-only snowboard films illustrates, female snowboarders are not simply ‘victims’ of media discourses. Rather, *some* female boarders have engaged in the “double act” of critique and self-stylization (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 152), to shape and reshape cultural images and meanings of the individual and collective female snowboarder. In so doing, these women have provoked “a critical, querying reaction” (Loyd, 1996, cited in Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 152), as seen in Mel’s comment above and in the following comments from Zane, an American male snowboard cinematographer:

Before this Misschief thing, girls pretty much just did competitions, and they never filmed like the boys do, and never went into the backcountry and did heli, and sure there were a couple of exceptions like Victoria [Jealousie] but they never really filmed or were a part of that aspect of the industry. But, ya know, we never really questioned this... it was just the way it was. Then, with this film, a lot more girls are getting to film video parts and getting to be creative with the things the guys have done for the past few years. I think the Misschief girls did a super good job this year and it's just going to get better and better, they'll get way more sponsorship dollars next year because of how stoked everyone was on it this year. I

also think we will start seeing more women in the men's videos (personal communication, November 14, 2005).

By provoking "a critical, querying reaction" (Lloyd, 1996, cited in Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 152), women-only snowboarding videos have problematized women's current cultural condition, particularly the expectation that female boarders must behave "like guys" and perform to male standards if they are to be included in snowboarding films, which may have an impact on power relations in the snowboarding media and culture.

With only a few women engaging in practices of freedom in relation to the snowboarding media, it is also necessary to consider who are the most likely to do so. Markula and Pringle (2006) ask a similar question in their study of the fitness industry. Following Foucault (1983, 1988) who rejects the notion of individuals "possessing an innate ability to...problematize their identities and to develop practices to change it" (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 170), Markula and Pringle (2006) locate "critical awareness of discursive practices" and the drive towards "alternative practices" in "knowledge and experience" of one's immediate world (p. 170). This also seems to hold true in snowboarding culture. While all female boarders are part of creating discourses, not all women have an equal opportunity to maneuver within the power relations of the snowboarding media. Marginal, less committed participants are not necessarily the key creators of change because they have limited knowledge and opportunity to shape the actual media and, consequently, their comprehension of alternative practices is rather small. A marginal female snowboarder angered by an overtly sexist advertisement, for example, can do little more than refuse to purchase the products of the particular snowboarding company, or write to the editors of the snowboarding magazine in which the advertisement appeared. More experienced and professional female snowboarders, on the other hand, have more knowledge and opportunity to shape the snowboarding media by

creating their own media forms, using interviews, photo-shoots or advertisements as opportunities to publicly question discourses of femininity in the snowboarding culture, or discussing their concerns with colleagues in the snowboarding industry, including niche media editors, journalists, and photographers. The women most likely to develop a critical awareness of the exclusionary practices in niche films and engage in alternative practices tend to be those who have spent many years in the sport, culture, or industry. However, as previously discussed, not all women with the opportunity to maneuver within these power relations choose to do so. The key here is critical awareness, and the likelihood of a female boarder developing such a consciousness is highly dependant upon both her life (e.g., education, parental and peer influences, generation, occupation) and snowboarding experiences. Simply put, the margin for resistance varies depending on each individual female boarder's life experience (see, also, Markula & Pringle, 2006).

In problematizing women's current cultural position in the niche media, some female snowboarders have engaged in practices of freedom and produced a "site of contestation over the meanings and contours of identity, and over the ways in which certain practices are mobilized" (Lloyd, 1996, cited in Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 152), which may, in turn, have an impact on power relations in the snowboarding media, and the broader boarding culture. But, it is important to reiterate that the technologies of the self are always "based on the models made available by one's culture" (Chapman, 1997, p. 218). Of course, producing female-specific media is not new a strategy per se but a practice that enables women to experience agency within the limits of the snowboarding context. In particular, although women-only snowboard films offer an alternative discourse of femininity in the snowboarding culture, they are produced with the financial support of snowboarding companies that continue to see female snowboarders primarily as consumers and a key niche market. Thus, while female

snowboarding films can act as a practice of freedom by expanding the limitations of the discursive female snowboarding identity, the dominant discourses of femininity in the snowboarding media continue to hold sway. In summary, Foucault's thoughts on technologies of the self, and the positive model of power, help me appreciate the agency and autonomy of female snowboarders "without falling into idealist fantasies of sovereign subjects and pure, utopian freedom" (Maguire, 2002, p. 311).

Fresh Questions with Foucault

Employing Foucault's concepts of power, power/knowledge and discourse, the first part of this chapter illustrated how the snowboarding media, as a social institution, helps regulate the production and circulation of statements and perceptions of what it means to be a female snowboarder. However, the media is not simply a judicial mechanism that limits, obstructs, refuses, prohibits and censors. Rather, the media is only "one terminal form power takes" (Foucault, 1978, p. 92) in the snowboarding culture. Thus, in the second part I employed Foucault's concept of technologies of self to examine the ways power operates within everyday relations between people (snowboarders) and institutions (the media). In other words, Foucault's unique conceptualization of power enabled an account of the mundane and daily ways in which power is enacted and contested in the snowboarding culture, and allowed an analysis that focused on female snowboarders as active subjects. Ultimately, the goal of the second part of this chapter was to embrace Foucault's challenge, "to detach from established knowledge, ask fresh questions, make new connections, and understand why it is important to do so" (Cole, Giardina & Andrews, 2004, p. 207). In so doing, I have illustrated that representations typically deemed sexist in the snowboarding media are not inherently oppressive. While young women (and men) are not united in their readings of the

snowboarding media, it is clear that they are interpreting the media through third-wave, rather than second-wave, feminist discourses; when combined with female athleticism, they are embracing rather than shunning women's sexuality. As Hana put it: "If the magazines include a sexy shot of a pro woman snowboarder, then it's fine because it shows that she's a talented snowboarder – and cute too – so, one up on the boys I say" (personal correspondence, September 28, 2006). Based on this discussion, it might be argued that the time has also come to begin asking 'fresh questions' (Cole et al., 2004, p. 207) about sexism in the sports media, and its effect on the gender relations in contemporary sport more broadly. If this were so, a Foucauldian perspective could certainly facilitate such a task.

This discussion was not intended as an uncritical endorsement of Foucault's analysis, for his work is "littered with readily apparent weaknesses and vagaries" which critics have subjected to lengthy deliberations (Andrews, 1993, p. 149; see Baudrillard, 1987; Callinicos, 1990; Gane, 1986; McNay, 1992, 1994). Among the many criticisms leveled at Foucault's theorizing are concerns about his underdeveloped concept of resistance, an absence of the analysis of the state, ambivalence in his discussion of the relationship between the discursive and the non-discursive, an underestimation of the significance of social class and class struggles, and a neglect of the role of the law and physical repressions (see McNay, 1992; Mills, 2003; Sarup, 1993).²¹ However, rather than seeing these problems as flaws in Foucault's argument, many theorists see these contradictions as "theoretical stepping stones, ways of moving Foucault's work onwards, so that it may more adequately describe a world which has

²¹ Critiques leveled against Foucault often focus on his earlier work, and do not hold up when considered in relation to his later works. For example, while Foucault's understanding of resistance remained underdeveloped in his earlier work, he became particularly interested in the process by which individuals "think about themselves, act for themselves, and transform themselves within power relations" (Rail & Harvey, 1995, p. 167) in his later writing.

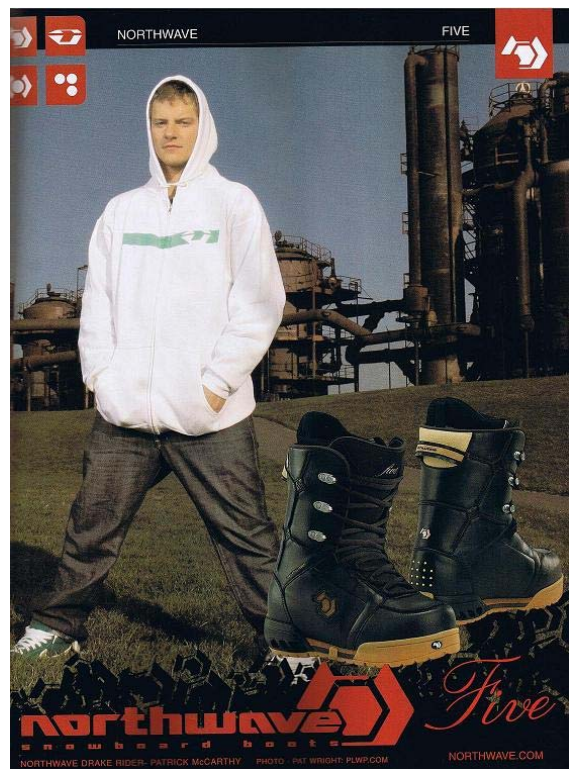
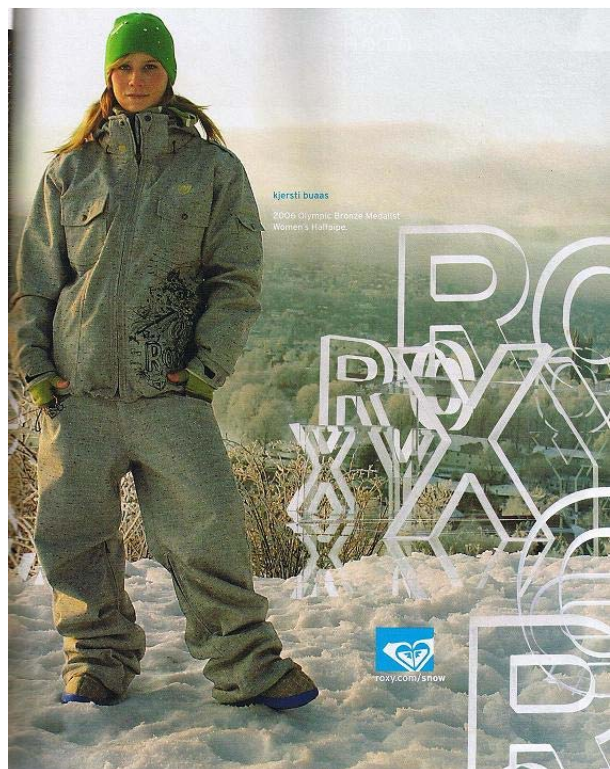
changed since Foucault wrote” (Mills, 2003, p. 125). It is among the work of poststructuralist feminists that most can be learned about appropriating Foucault’s concepts (Andrews, 1993).

One critique of Foucault’s work that has particular relevance to this study was his limited attention to gender and women. In her article on disciplinary power and the female subject, for example, Bartky (1988) characterizes Foucault’s treatment of the “undifferentiated or gender neutral” body as narrow because it fails to explain how men and women relate differently to the institutions of modern life” (cited in McNay, 1992, p. 33). Yet, although accused of not addressing women, Foucault was “highly interested in the questions of power, gender, and sexuality” and many critical feminist scholars consider his work relevant to the feminist project (Rail & Harvey, 1995, p. 174). Consequently, Foucault’s analysis has been modified and extended to suit the “emancipatory goals of feminism” (Theberge, 1991, cited in Andrews, 1993, p. 159). As discussed, Moya Lloyd (1996) – who maintains that the “technologies of self, when invested in a double trajectory of critique and self-stylization, can motivate political activity and transgress women’s condition and, thus, act as practices of freedom” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 152) – is at the forefront of this research. The appropriation of Foucauldian theorizing by feminist scholars such as Lloyd (1996), and sports scholars such as Markula & Pringle (2006), supports Mills’ (2003) contention that we should not “imagine that Foucault can offer us simple solutions to the problems which face us now but we may be able to draw on his approach and methods in order to construct our own solutions” (p. 125). Indeed, Foucault may have paid scant attention to the media and rarely discussed women,²² but his concepts of power, power/knowledge and discourse helped me illuminate the media’s role in constructing and reconstructing cultural knowledge of female snowboarding.

²² It should be noted that Foucault did talk, at times, about Victorian women, mothers and Greek women. He also intended to write about women in one of the later volumes of the History of Sexuality collection.

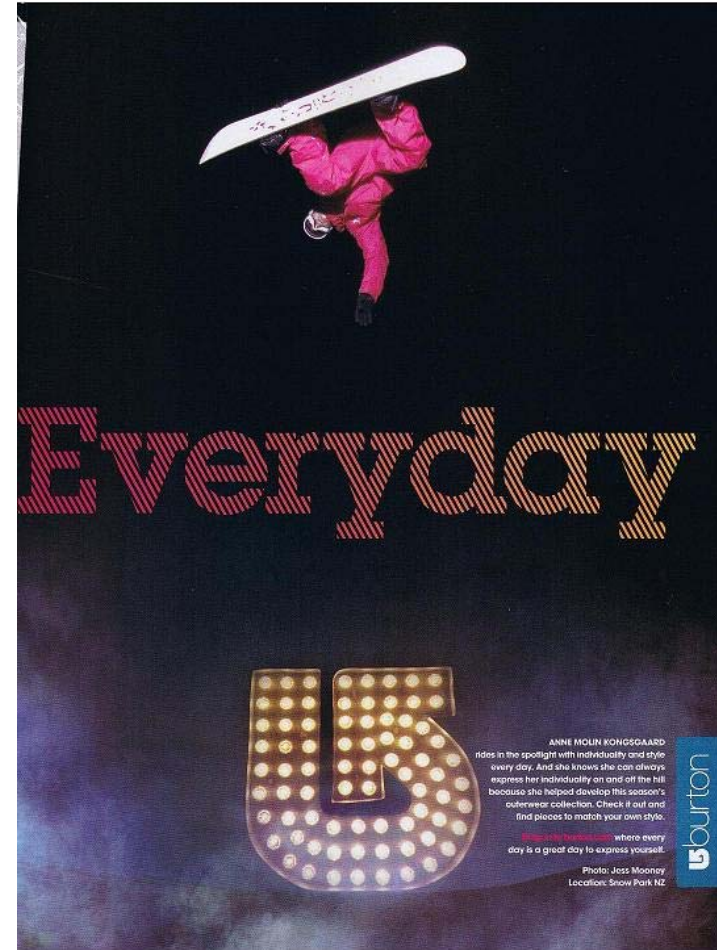
Furthermore, Foucault's conceptualization of technologies of self facilitated my analysis of the complexities of the construction and negotiation of gendered knowledge and identities in snowboarding culture.

Foucault's notion of technologies of self also has important implications for academic practices. As Markula and Pringle (2006) explain, "Foucault understood the life of an academic as a continual transformation of one's self through one's knowledge" (p. 191). The knowledge I have gained from engaging with Foucault's work, and the various other critical social theories adopted in this thesis, has assisted me in interpreting my immediate world and female physical youth culture, and thus contributed to my personal transformation. In the following chapter I discuss my experiences of theorizing and researching the contemporary phenomenon of women in snowboarding culture. In this concluding chapter I also bring the six social theories – Marxist political economy, post-Fordism, feminism, hegemonic masculinity, Bourdieu's theory of embodiment and Foucauldian theorizing – into conversation and explore their contributions to illuminating the complexities of social life and female snowboarding per se.



Figures 2.3 (left) and 2.4 (center) These advertisements for Roxy (women's outerwear) and Northwave (snowboard boots) both featured in the September 2006 issue of *Transworld Snowboarding* magazine (p. 31 and p. 52 respectively). Snowboarders Kjersti Buass and Patrick McCarthy appear in similar poses and positions, with both sexes starring at the reader, challenging their gaze. While it is difficult to see in this image, the Roxy advertisement further promotes the status of female boarder Kjersti Buass by stating her latest achievement: 2006 Olympic Bronze Medallist Women's Half-pipe.

Figure 2.5 (right) This NFA (snowboard clothing) advertisement appeared in the April 2005 issue of *Transworld Snowboarding* magazine (p. 57). Professional snowboarders Travis Williams and Yukie Ueda appear in similar body positions and facial expressions; they both demonstrate the embodiment of confidence and engage directly with the viewers gaze.



Figures 2.6 (left) and 2.7 (right) These advertisements for Anon goggles (featuring Hannah Teter – 2006 olympic gold medallist women’s half-pipe) and Burton Snowboards (featuring Anne Molin Kongsgaard) appeared in the December 2005 issue of *Snowboarder* magazine (p. 77 and p. 97 respectively). These are examples of advertisements featuring women solely in skill shots. Here skill is privileged over gender. Some might argue that Molin Kongsgaard’s pink snowboarding outfit clearly marks her gender. However, as I discussed in Chapter Five, pink is not a female-exclusive color in the snowboarding culture; many male snowboarders wear pink snowboarding outfits and feature in advertisements with pink color schemes. Teter and Molin Kongsgaard’s gender is marked primarily by the use of their names in small print.

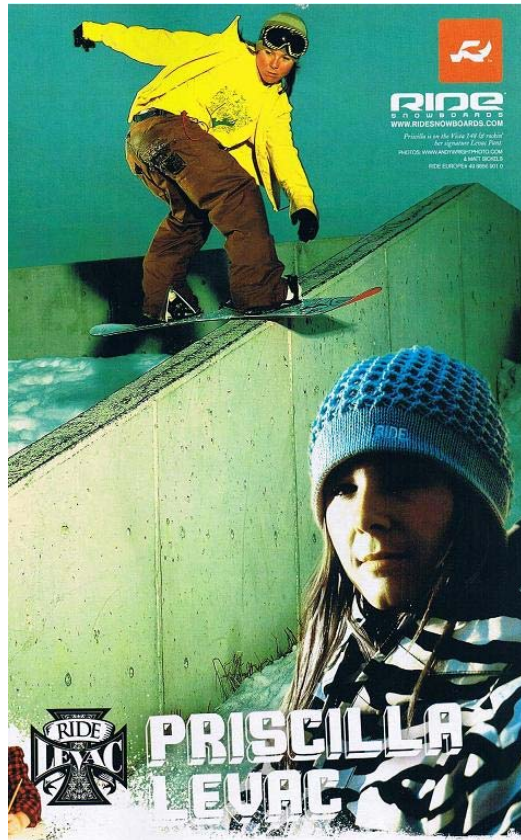


Figure 2.8 (left) This advertisement for Ride Snowboards using professional snowboarder Priscilla Levac featured in *OnBoard European Snowboarding Magazine* (December 2005, p. 39). This advertisement, which combines a skill shot with ‘lifestyle’ photo of Levac, emphasizes skill rather than gender.



Figure 2.9 (right) This double page advertisement for Vans signature Tara Dakides snowboard boot appeared in *Snowboarder* magazine (November 2004, pp. 30-31) and *Transworld Snowboarding* magazine (December 2004, pp. 18-19). This advertisement combines a series of photos that illustrate Dakides’ physical prowess and a lifestyle photo that promotes Dakides’ alternative heterosexual femininity (i.e., upper-lip piercing, pink and black body-hugging outfit). This is a good example of how some women are blurring the traditional boundaries of masculinity (e.g. athletic abilities and aggressive riding style; also note the toolkit in the lifestyle shot) and femininity (e.g., feminine appearance; also, Dakides’ gaze away from the camera might invite the voyeuristic gaze of the male reader) in the niche media.

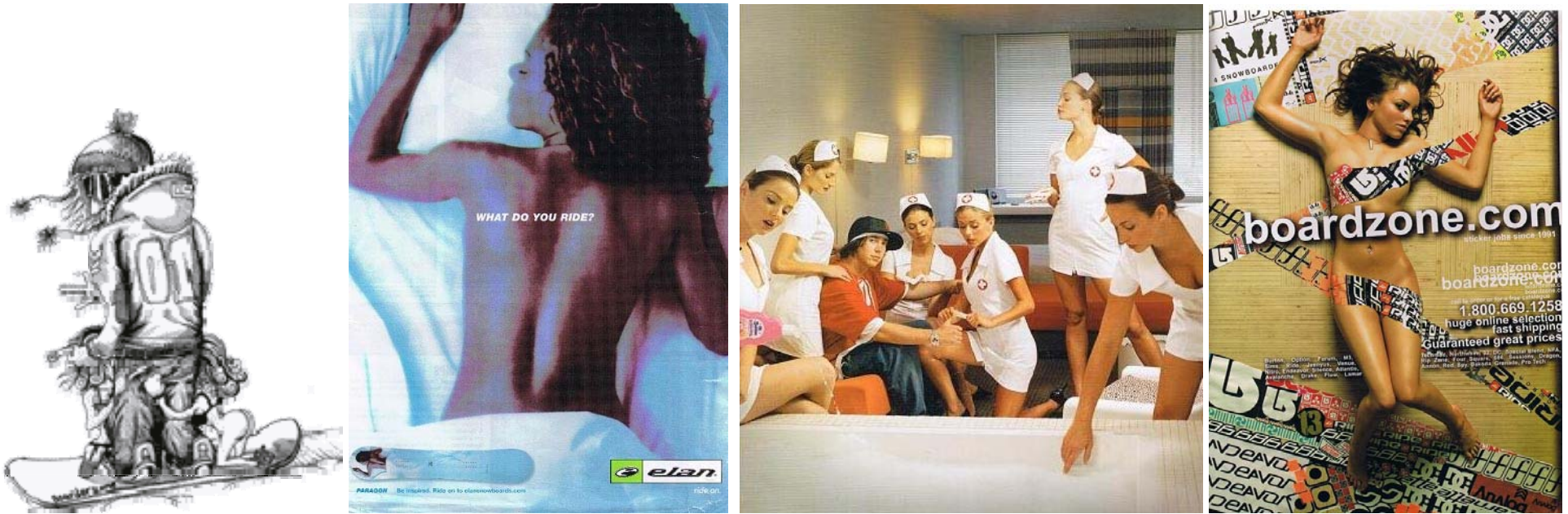


Figure 3.0 (left) This illustration of a male snowboarder with two scantily clad women in sexually titillating clothing clinging to his legs was retrieved from a snowboarding website (www.boardzone.co.nz). This icon appears alongside members' comments in the online chat-room.

Figures 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 (right) The advertisements for Elan Snowboards (centre left), Forum Snowboards (centre right) and snowboard website www.boardzone.com (right), are good examples of advertisements objectifying women as sexual objects (also notice the overtly sexual graphics on the Elan snowboard). Moreover, the Forum advertisement (Figure 3.2), much like the illustration in Figure 3.0, promotes women as 'pro-ho's' – providing sexual reward – for 'deserving' male snowboarders.

8. A THEORETICAL ADVENTURE: UNDERSTANDING WOMEN IN POPULAR PHYSICAL CULTURE

In this final chapter I draw together, and interrelate, the main findings, conclusions and directions that emerged from the foregoing chapters. By interlinking these parts the implications of the individual social theories become fully apparent. This chapter consists of three main parts. First, I expound the conversations between theory and research that have been ever-present in this study. I argue that future studies of young women in popular physical culture should adopt a self-questioning and reflexive attitude towards the relationship between theory and empiricism. Second, I engage in dialogue between the various theoretical perspectives in order to “discover commonalities and convergences” (Waters, 2000, p. 4). This part is organized around the interweaving strands or themes of contemporary social theory that I regard as central to female snowboarding, viz., structure, agency, culture, the body and embodiment, gender, and power. These guiding concepts are the “foci of theoretical debate” (Waters, 2000, p. xi) and facilitate an open-ended conversation between the various social theories. While the six social theories adopted in this study offer different perspectives, and often complementary insights, into the multidimensional phenomenon of young women in contemporary popular physical culture, no single theory could adequately explain all dimensions of female youth culture. Furthermore, because all “theories are created by individuals in their search for meaning” in response to concrete material conditions (Alexander, 1995, pp. 79-80), some theories proved more suitable for explaining female physical youth culture in the current historical moment than others. While this thesis expanded existing knowledge of female physical youth culture by painting a fuller, more complete, picture of women in snowboarding culture than would have been possible by focusing on one theory, this does not mean that I have sealed all the gaps. Lastly, I offer four suggestions for understanding social phenomena such as young women in popular physical culture.

Theory and Research

Balancing theory and empirical research is a prime goal of sociology, yet its practice is “all too rare” (Waters, 2000, p. 4). Critical social theories not only often appear as a “clash or confrontation of ideas,” they rarely involve “a productive interchange [of] empirical evidence” (Layder, 2004, p. 118). Concerned that many intellectual products have lost their analytical dynamism and openness, and remain bent on “illustrating the applicability of *their* framework” (Baert, 2004, p. 362, emphasis added), philosopher Richard Rorty (1980) pleads for a critical approach that challenges “accepted taxonomies and lenses rather than merely reiterating them” (cited in Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 146). Baert (2004, p. 367) believes that Rorty is especially concerned by the contemporary trend that measures theory-inspired research by the “extent to which a theory...neatly...fits the data...and to which the various components of the theory...weave easily into the myriad of empirical experiences.” Instead, he proposes that the success of such research should be measured by its ability to “see things differently” (Baert, 2004, p. 367). This was one of the goals of this study. Rather than employing one theoretical perspective to frame the phenomenon of female snowboarding, I attempted to make multiple theoretical ideas “live” through “empirical discussions” (Alexander, 2003, pp. 7-8) with the culture.

Throughout my study I “move[d] back and forth between theorizing and researching, between interpretations and explanations, between cultural logics and pragmatics” (Alexander, 2003, p. 6). In other words, I placed dialogue between theoretical knowledge and cultural knowledge, gained from previous and current cultural participation combined with multiple modes of data generation, at the center of this thesis. Inherent in such a task, of course, was the selection of theoretical concepts that remained flexible enough for appropriation and application to the multidimensional phenomenon of female snowboarding. Yet, some concepts

were more readily accessed and implemented than others. For example, whereas Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical schema offered a number of distinct concepts (e.g., field, capital, and habitus); post-Fordism was a more holistic approach without any clear-cut concepts. I am not, however, advocating accessibility as the sole criterion of good critical social theory. In acknowledging that the search for an "exact theoretical fit" is futile (Slack, 1996, cited in Andrews, 2002, p. 116), this thesis became a personal 'struggle' with a range of critical social theories to enhance understanding of women in snowboarding culture. Ultimately, I found some of the less accessible social theories and concepts, that is, those that required the most 'struggling,' or as Hall (1992) terms it "wrestling with the angels" (p. 280), to be the most fulfilling for this research project because they challenged me to think differently about the social world and snowboarding culture (e.g., Foucauldian theorizing).

For Waters (2000), too many social theories are "guilty of the common fallacy of not adapting theory to reality" (p. 349). Rather than revising existing theories in light of changing social conditions, the tendency is to develop new theories (Waters, 2000). Bryan Turner (1996) adds that contemporary "social theory is prone to a constant cycle of fashion and whimsicality whereby social theorists continually reinvent the theoretical wheel" (p. 12). The result has been "theoretical fragmentation" (Turner, 1996, p. 9), a condition that Rojek and Turner (2000) attribute to "contemporaneous analysis:"

every time a new major revolution is claimed ('digital technology,' 'globalization,' 'post-Fordism,' 'post-nation-state,' 'hybridity,' 'network society,' 'web-world') the conceptual battery powering existing research traditions must be disconnected and replaced with a new energy source. There is an endless and infinite transformation of theory paradigms. (p. 639)

In light of such concerns, I concur with Waters (2000) who calls for more "reformulations" and "revisions" of the claims made by social theories (p. 353). In this thesis I worked with a variety of theoretical concepts, some of which might be considered unfashionable, but which in my

view still have value for explaining aspects of contemporary cultural phenomena (e.g., Marxism). Furthermore, when other concepts failed to adequately deal with contradictory empirical evidence I attempted reformulation (e.g., hegemonic masculinity), and when theoretical concepts or perspectives did not facilitate my analysis of women in the snowboarding culture, I abandoned them (e.g., second-wave feminism). Simply put, the insights into women in popular physical culture provided in this thesis were facilitated by an ongoing conversation between theoretical and cultural knowledge and empirical research. My key argument here is that if the study of young women in popular physical culture is to remain conceptually and empirically dynamic, researchers must adopt self-questioning and reflexive attitudes towards the relationship between empiricism and theory.

Theoretical Contributions

Sociology often appears as “a multiplicity of competing, even conflicting, schools of thought or paradigms, each of which has a finished argument” (Waters, 2000, p. 2). Such paradigmatic pluralism concerns some scholars. Mouzelis (1993), for example, proclaims that social theory has “degenerated into an anarchical cacophony” with “a total lack of communication between warring theoretical schools” (p. 691). Sociological theory should “not aim [to] establish... some sort of monolithic paradigmatic unity,” says Mouzelis (1995) but must attempt to “strengthen the present pluralism” by

removing the obstacles that are a hindrance to open-ended communication between the differentiated sub-disciplines or paradigms. While boundaries and distinctions should not be rejected dogmatically or mindlessly, sociological theory should also make sure that boundaries are not turned into impregnable barriers, and that distinctions do not become dichotomic essences. (p. 10)

Jeffrey Alexander (2003) concurs, arguing that “to remain healthy as a discipline,” sociology must support “theoretical pluralism” and “lively debate” between different disciplines and paradigms (p. 26).

In this part I enter into such debate and open up such a dialogue. It is only by bringing the six social theories adopted in this study into conversation that I can begin to thoroughly explore the contributions of various theoretical perspectives for illuminating the complexities of social life and female snowboarding per se. Such a task is greatly facilitated by the central guiding theoretical concepts: Structure, agency, culture, the body and embodiment, gender and power. Waters (2000) identifies these concepts as the “foci of theoretical debate” which must always be mobilized in seeking to theorize substantive social phenomena (p. xi). Because the six social theories adopted in this thesis dealt, to varying degrees, with each of these guiding concepts, they offer an effective means of exploring the contributions of the various theoretical perspectives for revealing the complexities of social life and women in the snowboarding culture per se. It should be noted here that I am not proposing an evaluation of social theory based solely on primary concepts. Rather, I am employing these guiding concepts because they facilitate the task of engaging in an open-ended communication between Marxist political economy, post-Fordism, feminism, hegemonic masculinity, Bourdieu’s theory of embodiment, and Foucauldian theorizing, and, in so doing, they “support theoretical pluralism and lively debate” (Alexander, 2003, p. 26). Organized around the key concepts of structure, agency, culture, the body and embodiment, gender and power, this discussion specifically rejects arguments that sociological theory should be understood as a “multiplicity of competing, even conflicting, schools of thought or paradigms” (Waters, 2000, p. 2). Instead it recognizes that “open-ended communication between the differentiated sub-disciplines” (Mouzelis, 1995, p. 10), is an integral part of the theorizing process (Waters, 2000). Moreover, inherent in this

conversation between snowboarding, the six social theories and the key concepts of structure, agency, culture, the body and embodiment, gender and power, is a more holistic view of the cultural phenomenon of female snowboarding.

Structure

There are, in principle, three different ways in which the concept of structure enters sociological theory: “As a property of social relationships which emerges from human agency; as a set of analytic categories which can capture the patterned characteristics of social life; or as a real and underlying set of relationships which determines the appearances of social life” (Waters, 2000, p. 104). These correspond with constructionist, functionalist, and critical structuralist approaches respectively (Waters, 2000). The majority of theories adopted in this study derived from Waters’ category of critical structuralism, and thus gave structure “an ontological status which privileges it over agency” (Waters, 2000, p. 12). Yet, these theories can be further divided into two groups, depending on the extent to which they privilege structure over agency; some view structures (economic, gender or culture) as determining action independently of the will of human agents (i.e., Marxism, radical feminism, hegemonic masculinity), while others give consideration to both structure and agency (i.e., third-wave feminism, Bourdieu, Foucault). In this thesis the theories of Karl Marx and to a lesser extent, hegemonic masculinity, sit most firmly in the structuralist paradigm and, thus, I focus on these theories here; approaches that consider both structure and agency will be discussed in the next section (agency).

From a structural perspective, female snowboarders appear to have penetrated the male-dominated snowboarding culture. The obvious indicators are participation figures; in 2006, a third of the 22 million people participating in board-sports (surfing, skateboarding, and

snowboarding) in the United States were female (For the Ladies, 2006). The enhanced opportunities for individual female snowboarders to win equal prize monies, participate in events and competitions, earn media approval, and obtain sponsorship deals and industry support might also seem signs of progress. However, the observation that women have penetrated the male-dominated snowboarding sphere, is “considerably different than the claim of equality or wholesale changes” in boarding cultures (Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 100).

Economic, patriarchal, cultural (e.g., media) and ideological structures still constrain female snowboarders’ agency, such that olympic New Zealand snowboarder Pamela Bell complained of “unfair expectations of girls’ abilities, as if there is only one scale of judgment – the boys’ scale” (cited in Webster, 1996, p. 43), and professional American boarder Roberta Rodger declared snowboarding “a male-dominated sport – on the slopes, in the magazines, and in the management of every snowboard company” (cited in Rodgers, 2001, para. 4). Structuralist theories such as Marxism and hegemonic masculinity facilitate understanding of the structural constraints (i.e., economy, patriarchy) alluded to by Bell and Rodger, which continue to limit women’s snowboarding experiences. In Chapter Two, for example, I employed a traditional Marxist perspective to facilitate discussion of the political economy of snowboarding and illustrate how snowboarding and female snowboarding per se, reflect the key aspects of capitalism: Growth, competition and exploitation. However, while that chapter illuminated capital’s penetration of snowboarding culture, economic reductionism infuses structural Marxism and stands as an obstacle to understanding the relationship between culture and economy in female physical youth cultures. Adopting a reformulated approach to R. W. Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity in Chapter Five, I was able to illustrate how the snowboarding patriarchy adopts a variety of covert and overt strategies to exclude women and reinforce the existing gender structure (i.e., gender order) in snowboarding culture. In both

Marxist and gender formulations, however, structures (i.e., economy, patriarchy) tend to determine the content of lived experience such that the female boarder as active agent seems to disappear.

In the 1980s structuralist theories withered under a radical poststructuralist attack. The leading figure in this attack was the literary theorist Jacques Derrida, although Waters (2000) identifies Michel Foucault as the “most sociologically influential poststructuralist” (p. 122). Foucault rejected the image of society as an organism or system and instead viewed the social field as consisting of heterogeneous forces, institutional orders, processes and conflicts. Foucault highlighted the importance of smaller, discrete social units (e.g., hospitals, mental asylums, schools); rather than subsuming these social units under some unifying global structure or process (e.g., capitalism), his objective was to analyze their specific social logic and local effects (Seidman, 2004). Employing Foucault’s concepts of power, power/knowledge and discourse, allowed me to focus on the snowboarding media as a social institution that helps regulate the production and circulation of statements and perceptions of what it means to be a female snowboarder. This Foucauldian perspective also helped me see that the media is not simply a judicial mechanism that limits, obstructs, refuses, prohibits and censors. Rather, the media is only “one terminal form power takes” (Foucault, 1978, p. 92) in snowboarding culture. Unlike the structuralist perspective of Marxism and hegemonic masculinity, a Foucauldian approach facilitated my examination of the ways power operates within everyday relations between institutions (the media) and people (snowboarders).

Structuralist theory (e.g., structuralist Marxism) has virtually disappeared from contemporary sociology. Waters (2000) deems it a failure “trapped in a circularity of simplicity and complexity:”

It is insistently reductionist, claiming to conflate all the myriad complexities of behavior to a single, general set of principles. But then it finds that the details of

human action simply will not be reduced. The subject refuses to lie down and die and engages in behavior not predicted by the theory. To accommodate this detail the theory becomes subjected to auto-critique and distortion. It elaborates to allow for complexity and thus denies its own foundations.... (p. 127)

Furthermore, an increasingly changing world where “structures and actions are continuously transformed” undermines the very relevance of social structure (Lawson, 1997, cited in Newton, 2003, p. 445). Social structures are traditionally seen as “mechanisms that withstand the march of time” (Braudel, 1972, cited in Newton, 2003, p. 445), but, if social structures are fleeting, structuralist theories may continue to “lose much of their traditional meaning” (Newton, 2003, p. 456). Nonetheless, as I have illustrated, the economic system and patriarchy remain powerful structures in the contemporary snowboarding culture; the female snowboarder is “never completely free but always constrained and enabled by [her] structural and ideological situation” and her life experiences (Lloyd, 1988, cited in Booth, 2003, p. 119). Yet female snowboarders are not simply victims of these economic and social structures. And thus I concur with Giulianotti (2005) who proclaims that social theory must put “greater emphasis” on the “social actor’s critical reflexivity” and agency (p. 29).

Agency

Agency, the process of acting in relation to a set of meanings, reasons or intentions, implies that “individuals are not the products or even the victims of the social world but rather are thinking, feeling and acting subjects who create the world around them” (Waters, 2000, p. 15). Traditionally, agency has troubled sociologists. As a discipline, sociology “looked toward the totality of the ‘social’ realm...and downplay[ed] what it regards as ‘particulars’ – individual actors, their actions and experiences and so on” (Howson & Inglis, 2001, p. 312). The recent ‘reflexive turn’ in social theorizing, however, has emphasized the relationships between identity, reflexivity and choice, and thus has given agency greater consideration within the

context of changing social structures (Adams, 2006). While the claim that contemporary social life demands reflexive forms of action remains strongly debated in the social sciences (see Alexander 1996; Pellizzoni, 1999), it has become the “centerpiece of a thoroughgoing framework for understanding late-modern societies, that of reflexive modernization or reflexive modernity” (Adkins, 2003, p. 22; see Beck, 1994; Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994). For example, Adkins (2003) identifies Beck (1994) as neatly summing up the thrust of his framework and cites his claim that “the more societies are modernized, the more agents (subjects) acquire the ability to reflect on social conditions of their existence and to change them accordingly” (cited in Adkins, 2003, p. 22). Some social theorists link the increased capacities for reflexivity – that is, for “critical reflection on prevailing social arrangements, norms and expectations” (Adkins, 2003, p. 23) – to a decline in the significance of socio-cultural structural forms of determination. As a consequence of the “retrocession of the structural,” scholars have “unleashed” agency (Adkins, 2003, p. 22). While the ‘reflexive turn’ in sociology enjoys wide-ranging currency, it is certainly not without its critics, many of who balk at “setting agency free from structure” (Lash, 1994, p. 119). Certainly, such concerns came to the fore in this thesis. The conceptions of agency employed in this thesis range from traditional structuralist approaches that give little attention to agency (i.e., Marxism, hegemonic masculinity), to those that gave greater consideration (i.e., post-Fordism, third-wave feminism, Bourdieu, Foucault).

Despite the pervasiveness of structural constraints (as discussed above), those theories that consider – to varying extents – both structure and agency (i.e., post-Fordism, third-wave feminism, Bourdieu, Foucault) allowed me to see abundant evidence of the agency of female snowboarders; women are entering the sport, industry and culture of snowboarding with a sense of enthusiasm and entitlement to participate. As illustrated in Chapter Four (feminisms),

many of the new generation of top female boarders have immersed themselves in commercialization. They are aware of their commodity value and have no qualms about marketing themselves, and their sexuality, to boost their public profile and image, and reaping the financial benefits. Unlike earlier generations of women, members of this younger generation know their economic worth and are not afraid to take what they feel they deserve. Some may argue that, while the individually focused, self-defined and self-oriented ambitions and aspirations of professional female boarders might benefit a select few women, this group has done little to instigate major structural changes. However, as explained in Chapter Three (post-Fordism), Chapter Four (feminisms) and Chapter Seven (Foucault), some women have responded to their experiences of gender inequalities by creating snowboarding organizations, and reconstructing and recreating new meanings of female snowboarding that promote both individual and collective change. For example, some women are active agents who have embraced new economic and cultural opportunities to establish female-specific clothing (e.g., Betty Rides) and equipment companies (e.g., Chorus), magazines (e.g., *SG*, *Curl*), websites (e.g., www.xgirlsport.com, www.powderroom.net), female-only videos (e.g., *Our Turn*, *As If*, *Dropstitch*), women-only competitions and clinics (e.g., *Queen of the Mountain*, *Roxy Chicken Jam*) and camps (e.g., Wild Women Snowboard Camp, USA; Nikita Girls Only Sessions, New Zealand; MGT Snowboard Camps, Canada; Girlie Snowboard Camps, Switzerland and France). While female snowboarding has increasingly been assimilated into mainstream sport and situated within a commercialized variant of heterosexual femininity, post-Fordist, third-wave feminist and Foucauldian perspectives alerted me to a set of conditions where female boarders are not simply victims of commercialization. Rather female boarders are active agents who continue to “shape and ‘reshape’ the images and meanings circulated in and by global consumer culture” (Wheaton, 2004, p. 14; also see Thorpe, 2006). In sum, theories that

consider both agency and structure (i.e., post-Fordism, third-wave feminism, Foucault) enabled me to shed light on the various ways in which female boarders practice their agency within economic, social and gender structures and power-relations.

Liberal feminism was the only theory considered in this study to give primacy to the conscious human agent. However, a liberal feminist perspective proved insufficient for explaining women's snowboarding because it overlooks deeper and more serious structural issues. Perhaps even more problematically, liberal feminists tend to grant social agency to all women without due appreciation of the "variable capacities," or powers, of individual females (Layder, 2004, p. 10). As illustrated in Chapter Three (post-Fordism), Chapter Four (feminisms), Chapter Six (Bourdieu) and Chapter Seven (Foucault), a woman's opportunity for agency in snowboarding depends on her life (e.g., education, parental and peer influences, generation, occupation), embodied and boarding experiences. The remainder of this discussion expands upon the insights into the agency of female snowboarders within existing social, economic and cultural structures, as offered by Foucault, Bourdieu and third-wave feminism, respectively.

Arguably, the shift in Foucault's understanding of the subject is a good example of the reflexive turn in sociological theorizing. In his early work Foucault attacked the view that the individual subject has an innate capacity to think and act with any degree of autonomy and instead sought to illustrate how identity is structured in, or constituted through, discourse. In his later years, starting with the second volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1985) began to indicate greater scope for human agency (or subjectivity) and became particularly interested in the process by which individuals "think about themselves, act for themselves, and transform themselves within power relations" (Rail & Harvey, 1995, p. 167). Foucault's thoughts on technologies of the self, and the positive model of power, helped me appreciate the

agency and autonomy of female snowboarders “without falling into idealist fantasies of sovereign subjects and pure, utopian freedom” (Maguire, 2002, p. 311). As illustrated in Chapter Seven, female snowboarders are not cultural dupes. Many women are tacitly and consciously aware of the caricatures and stereotypes painted of them by the media. However, the responses by female snowboarders ultimately depend on their position within snowboarding culture, and the broader society. The various cultural positions (e.g., poseur, weekend warrior, core, professional boarder) thus give rise to a range of cultural responses, including passive consumption, reflexive consumption, and cultural production. Similarly, utilizing a post-Fordist approach also allowed me to see that not all female boarders are in a position to benefit, or be empowered, by economic and cultural changes. In contrast to a Foucauldian approach, however, post-Fordism did not facilitate an explanation of the different levels of access female snowboarders have to reflexive consumption and cultural production. Foucault (1983, 1988) rejected the notion of individuals “possessing an innate ability to...problematize their identities and to develop practices to change it” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 17), and located critical awareness and the drive towards “alternative practices” in “knowledge and experience” of ones immediate world (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 170). Adopting Foucault’s unique understanding of power and subjectivity in Chapter Seven led me to see that the women most likely to develop a critical awareness of the exclusionary practices in niche films, and engage in alternative practices, tend to be those who have spent many years in the sport, culture or industry. In contrast to marginal, less committed participants, more experienced and professional female boarders have more knowledge and opportunity to shape the media by creating their own media forms (e.g., women-only videos, magazines and websites), and using interviews, photo-shoots or advertisements as opportunities to publicly question discourses of femininity in snowboarding culture. It is important to note, however,

that not all women with the opportunity to maneuver within these power relations choose to do so.

In response to the reflexive turn in sociology, some scholars assert the necessity for a more sophisticated account of reflexivity, freedom and constraint in relation to the contemporary context where social structures are changing but not disappearing (see Chapter One; also see Craib, 1992; Lash, 1994). In seeking to provide an alternative relationship between structure and agency, a number of writers have turned to and extended the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu, and especially his understanding of practice (Adkins, 2003). Bourdieu identified social action as neither entirely determined nor entirely arbitrary. The notion of habitus is crucial here. As discussed in Chapter Six, the habitus concerns a dynamic intersection of structure and action; habitus both generates and shapes action. For core snowboarders, the culturally constructed habitus is a principal influence on their snowboarding practices. For example, choices of equipment and clothing, terrain, and style of riding are made on the “basis of practically oriented dispositions that have already been inscribed in the body and subsequently take place without overtly direct conscious awareness of the principles that guide them” (Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 126). Simply put, the snowboarding habitus refers to “both the internalization of the conditions of existence and the practice-generating principle of social agents” (Laberge & Sankoff, 1988, cited in Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 125). Through the concept of practice, Bourdieu attempts to “go beyond the conventional dichotomies of action and structure by developing notions of accomplishment, strategy and rules” (Rojek & Turner, 2000, p. 641). Whether Bourdieu achieves this task, however, remains moot. Jenkins (2002), for example, dismisses Bourdieu’s theoretical schema as an “impoverished, two-dimensional model of individuals and agency” (p. 93). I concur that the emphasis on social reproduction in Bourdieu’s work affects the degree to which people are able to exercise agency, thus leading him inexorably into deterministic explanations.

The reasons a female snowboarder gives for her embodied practices would have been of little concern to Bourdieu. For him, the actors' own explanations of their practices are illusionary; the true explanation of behavior exists in the habitus. While some female snowboarders actively resist the male bodily hexis and try to redefine the female snowboarding body, Bourdieu's concept of habitus did not help me reveal the source of such impulses. Bourdieu "stops short of realizing the potential of gendered dispositions because," argues McCall (1992), "he considers female gender status imbued only with uncontested symbolic violence" (p. 845). Thus, in contrast to Bourdieu's theory of distinction, I argue that Foucault's later work offers a more sophisticated account of female boarders as active subjects within power relations; from a Foucauldian perspective, female snowboarders are not envisaged as "trapped and condemned to defeat no matter what" (Foucault, 1980, pp. 141-142) but as actively resisting the subjectification of discursive constructions of femininity.

While critical social theory has given greater consideration to agency since the 'reflexive turn,' it continues to largely overlook the conditions that facilitate individual agency – space, encouragement, and legislation. Third-wave feminists, however, recognize these as the critical material conditions of the current cultural moment. As shown in Chapter Four, a new generation of young women are thriving in a new historical conjuncture in which the material conditions are very different from those of previous eras; contemporary female snowboarders, for example, have the opportunity to participate alongside their male counterparts, win equal prize monies, participate in – and create their own – events and competitions, earn media approval and establish their own media outlets, and secure significant sponsorship deals and industry support. Having recognized the critical material conditions that facilitate young women's agency in the twenty-first century, I argue that third-wave feminists have largely escaped the prison of the material conditions on which critical social theory is built.

Culture

Classical sociology largely neglected the cultural sphere, concentrating instead on social structures and institutions, which were conceptualized as separate from culture. Contemporary social theory, by contrast, has done an analytical about-face to give cultural phenomena and cultural relations “prominence and priority” (Turner, 1996, p. 5). As discussed in the introductory chapter, the ‘cultural turn’ – a recognition that “cultural practices are as constitutive of the ‘real world’ as the political and economic processes” that formerly occupied the attention of sociologists (du Gay, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 1997, p. 1) – is especially pronounced in the explosion of intellectual interest in the cultural studies discipline. While a cultural studies approach has the potential to shed much light on the circumstances, relationships, forces, values, and behaviors surrounding snowboarding culture and female snowboarders, there is a tendency among practitioners of cultural studies to “forget” their theoretical and methodological roots (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 44; see Thorpe, 2006). Thus, I argue that the critical social theories adopted in this thesis facilitate more theoretically informed and detailed cultural insights into the phenomenon of female snowboarding.

All of the theories in this study dealt, to varying degrees, with culture. For some theories, culture was an essential part of the analysis (i.e., post-Foridism, Bourdieu); others acknowledged the relevance of culture but consigned it to the periphery (i.e., Marxism, hegemonic masculinity, feminisms, Foucault). Of all the theories adopted in this thesis, however, traditional Marxism proved the most problematic for analyzing culture. As discussed in Chapter Two, for all the evidence supporting snowboarding as a model of capitalist enterprise, many aspects of the culture run contrary to the capitalist model. For example, although a select few professional snowboarders embrace commercialized forms of snowboarding and have benefited from them, the majority of participants view money as

merely a means to an end – the snowboarding lifestyle. The determination of the superstructure by the base limits the potential of traditional Marxism to explain snowboarding culture, particularly cultural ideologies and politics, and the relationship between culture and economy. However, while adopting a Marxist perspective may have restricted my ability to explain the cultural element of the snowboarding industry, it provided a good foundation upon which the subsequent theoretical discussions of culture, particularly Kumar's post-Fordism and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of distinction, could build.

With equal consideration given to changes in the economy, politics and industrial relations, and culture and ideology, post-Fordism is a particularly insightful theoretical framework for analyzing cultural phenomena such as snowboarding because it broadens the locus of power away from economic classes to social classes and their cultural attributes. Indeed, employing Kumar's theoretical approach helped me highlight aspects of the two-way relationship between the snowboarding market and culture. This proved particularly important when examining the women's niche market in snowboarding. Adopting a Kumarian approach enabled me to explain how, in the logic of post-Fordism, female snowboarders have become an important consumer group whose cultural desires and aspirations must be acknowledged and catered for. Not only are companies accommodating the needs of female boarders by designing women-specific equipment and clothing, they are also investing heavily in women's snowboarding by sponsoring female athletes, and women-specific events and media. The financial and cultural success of the female niche-market has also helped women find new spaces within the snowboarding industry as manufacturers, CEOs, filmmakers, publishers, journalists and event organizers. Some women have further embraced the individualistic and entrepreneurial *Zeitgeist* of post-Fordist culture by establishing their own companies (e.g., Betty Rides, Chorus, Fruition). Thus, in the post-Fordist system, some women have found

space to earn incomes and reconstruct and recreate new cultural meanings for female snowboarding. It is important to reiterate, however, that these women (like most female snowboarders) tend to be among a very small middle class core, and such opportunities are limited. In sum, Kumar's post-Fordism facilitated a description of the economic and cultural changes in the broader social context and directed my attention to new developments in the women's snowboarding niche market. The general appeal of post-Fordist theorizing is its sensitivity to historical change and time, and its transcendence of academic disciplinary boundaries (Kumar, 1995). While post-Fordism appears to share holistic tendencies with the radical contextual strand of cultural studies (referred to in the introductory chapter), one important difference remains: The former offers a causal explanation and the latter does not. This, of course, provides further support for my earlier argument (see Chapter One) that it is sociologists rather than radical contextual cultural studies theorists who are better equipped to deal with change over time through their theories (e.g., post-Fordism) that identify potential motors of change.

Like Kumar's post-Fordism, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of culture draws together cultural and economic fields. For Bourdieu, the "categories of the social and the economic are interlinked but not reducible to the cultural" (Rojek & Turner, 2000, p. 642). Moreover, Bourdieu's conceptual schema of social groups facilitated an explanation of the construction and maintenance of a hierarchical structure within the snowboarding culture. Employing a selection of Bourdieu's concepts in Chapter Six, I illustrated that the snowboarding culture, or 'field' in Bourdieu's terminology, has increasingly become a structured system of social positions. Divisions have developed between core boarders (male and female) who are committed to the physical activity of snowboarding, and marginal and less-committed boarders whose participation is often based solely on cultural consumption rather than active

participation. Moreover, Bourdieu's theory of distinction facilitated a discussion of embodied snowboarding tastes and styles that reinforce the positions of 'established' groups (e.g., core) against marginalized 'outsider' groups (e.g., poseurs, skiers, etc.). It is also important to note that, in contrast to R.W. Connell's theory of social stratification (i.e., gender order), Bourdieu's conceptual schema moves beyond gender hierarchy: Females do not constitute a separate and marginal group but rather hold distinctive positions within each of the groups that make up the snowboarding culture. The embodied practices of snowboarders suggest that an individual's initial capital is gender-neutral, being fundamentally defined by their relative position in the culture based on demonstrations of physical prowess and commitment to the activity and lifestyle. Yet, as Bourdieu's theory of social stratification illustrates, female snowboarders are not a homogenous group; women experience snowboarding in diverse ways (As explained further in Chapter Three [post-Fordism] and Chapter Seven [Foucault], the fragmentation of female boarders supports new niche markets essential for the continual economic growth of the boarding industry). Ideological differences have caused divisions between committed and recreational participants and those whose participation centers on fashion, social status and heterosexual pursuits. Of the two groups, it seems that 'core' females have the most space to define and redefine cultural meanings pertaining to the female boarding body. In sum, Bourdieu's theoretical concepts helped me offer key insights into structural, embodied and gendered dimensions of the snowboarding culture.

The parallels between Bourdieu's notions of field and habitus and the radical contextual strand of cultural studies discussed in the introductory chapter are particularly striking and deserve further comment. As a key proponent of radical contextual cultural studies, Lawrence Grossberg (1992) understands context as a "structured field, a configuration of practices" (p. 60) and, like Bourdieu (2000, in Pileggi and Patton, 2003, p. 317), talks of a "field of forces"

(Grossberg, 1998, p. 214). Habitus and radical contextualism are similar in the sense that both locate cultural practices and the articulation of cultural meaning in their material conditions and social relations. The significant difference is that habitus gives greater consideration to corporeality, or more precisely, the “embodiment of the set material conditions” (Laberge, 1995, p. 136). In fact, Andrews and Loy (1993) criticize the majority of cultural analysts for overlooking the “realm of corporeality” (p. 270). Too many cultural analyses, they argue, are disembodied to the extent that they “ignor[e] the corporeal reality of the human agent” (Andrews & Loy, 1993, p. 265). While this concern holds true with both Kumar’s post-Fordism and a radical contextual cultural studies approach, Bourdieu does give the body due consideration.

The Body and Embodiment

Since the mid 1980s, the body has become a major domain for sociological inquiry and it remains “one of the most contested concepts in the social sciences” (Shilling, 2005, p. 6). The analysis of the body and embodiment has produced “an intellectual battlefield” over which “the respective claims of post-structuralism and post-modernism, phenomenology, feminism, socio-biology, sociology and cultural studies have fought” (Shilling, 2005, p. 6; also see Howson & Inglis, 2001). The theories adopted in this thesis offer a range of positions on the body and embodiment. While Bourdieu’s theory of embodiment facilitated the most comprehensive discussion of snowboarding bodies, Marxism, post-Fordism, feminisms, hegemonic masculinity and Foucauldian theorizing also offered various insights into the multidimensional female boarding body. Using a Marxist perspective allowed me to view the snowboarding body as a source of economic relations and consider the destructive effects of capitalism on the bodies (i.e., alienation) of professional snowboarders who own their labor-power, as well as a

degree of creative capital unknown to the factory worker. Utilizing a post-Fordist perspective enabled me to view the female boarding body as a surface phenomenon, a malleable marker of commercial value subject to the fragmentation of the snowboarding market and the vagaries of fashion. Using the concept of hegemonic masculinity meant that I highlighted biological reductionism as an ongoing feature of male dominance in snowboarding culture. Adopting feminist and Foucauldian approaches helped me shed light on the constant flow of commodified, fetishized, and idealized images of heterosexual femininity in the snowboarding media. Third-wave feminist and Foucauldian perspectives also allowed me to suggest that while the female body is subject to social power, it is not simply a passive recipient of that power. In each of these chapters, however, various aspects of embodiment in snowboarding were fore-grounded, and others “fade[d] into the background” (Shilling, 2005, p. 6). While Marxist political economy, post-Fordism, and hegemonic masculinity perspectives enabled me to yield key insights into the place of female boarding bodies in the “reproduction of social and sexual structures” (Shilling, 2005, p. 198), the “lived, material body” remained “elusive” and often disappeared “behind its discursive, textual representations” (Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 120; also see Radley, 1995; Shilling, 2005). In other words, these theories tended to “obfuscate” the lived female boarding body (Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 120).

Given the richness and cultural significance of the images, narratives, representations and meanings so powerfully associated with snowboarding as a cultural form, it is sometimes “easy to forget that these are all epiphenomena” (Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 149). Boarders frequently reiterate that the embodied and immediate experience of snowboarding is the key to the cultural practice and words cannot articulate the experience. According to one cultural commentator:

Trying to talk about it is like trying to explain why you like your favorite song. It feels good. It makes you happy. To snowboarders, snowboarding is not a book. It’s

not a symbol or a fashion or an attitude either. It's an awesome, personal experience that's better left unarticulated. (Howe, 1998, pp. ix-x)

In her autobiography *Pretty Good For a Girl*, professional snowboarder Tina Basich (2003) attempted to describe “one of the most memorable runs of [her] life” which she experienced while snowboarding with a friend in Cortina (Italy) (p. 118), and in so doing, alluded to the emotional, sensual and aesthetic aspects of the snowboarding experience:

Shannon and I took the gondola up to the very top. We scouted out a run that was untracked powder. We had to traverse on our boards around this cliff range to get to it. We kept going around the mountain and at one point I looked up and thought, “Oh my God!” I told Shannon to stop and look up. We couldn't believe the mountain and this cliff we were standing under – it was about 600 feet above us and we were right underneath it so the view was breathtaking. Down below looked like the perfect run...wide, open, diamonds of powder. We thought, let's do this run together – we'll do doubles instead of going down one at a time. Fresh powder turns that were perfect, snow flying in plumes with each turn, and we were yelling to each other the whole way down. At the bottom, we high-fived and hugged each other and were crying. We were so wrapped up in this feeling of a powder day in a beautiful place with friends. It was incredibly emotional. (p. 118)

Clearly, the lived experience is integral to women's snowboarding, but few of the theoretical approaches in this study facilitated analysis of this dimension.¹ Indeed, social scientists traditionally subordinate issues of lived experience beneath a concern for the determining power of social structures (Howson & Inglis, 2001). Despite the recent turn to corporeality in sociology, Witz (2000) argues that the emphasis remains on the disciplined, exploited, and controlled body, that is, the body which serves as a “screen for the social” (Evers, 2006, p. 233). Similarly, Howson and Inglis (2001) observe, that while sociology may have done much to illuminate the “Körper (structural objectified body),” it has yet to come to grips fully with the “Lieb (living, feeling, sensing, perceiving and emotional body subject)” (cited in Ford & Brown, 2006, p. 146). However, scholars are increasingly calling for greater acknowledgement of the experiential dimensions of embodied life (Ford & Brown, 2006; Hargreaves &

¹ A narrative approach has the potential to facilitate this aim of revealing the lived experience of snowboarding (see, for example, the Prologue to this thesis).

Vertinsky, 2007; Howson & Inglis, 2001) and some are now valorizing the emotional, sensual and aesthetic sense of embodiment (see e.g., Burkitt, 1999; Rail, 1992; Shilling, 2005).

Certainly, a whole host of fruitful research directions might emerge from the attempt to understand the sensual experience of snowboarding. Social theory, however, may not be the key framework for these studies. As Ankersmit (2005) suggests, experience is moving some scholars away from theory:

Meaning now tends to weaken its ties with 'theory,' that is, with the theoretical instruments we traditionally relied on to courageously expand the scope of cultural, narrative, textual meaning; it now preferably draws its content from how the world is given to us in experience. 'Theory' and meaning no longer travel in the same direction, meaning has now found a new and more promising travel companion in experience. (p. 2)

Evers (2006), in his recent study of surfing culture, highlights the affective turn for researching gendered performances and physical experiences. For research to “begin to get across what it actually feels like to [engage physically] and do masculinity,” we need to conduct more research at the “embodied level,” suggests Evers (2006, p. 239). According to Evers (2006), “sensual research,” in which the researching body is “penetrated by and feels the field it is investigating,” can be a “productive, contagious, and affective exchange” and a “move away from the sovereign researching body” (p. 239). Simply put, some scholars are moving away from theory and toward more embodied forms of research in their attempts to better understand and explain experience (see e.g., Denison & Markula, 2003).

Some sociologists of the body have also turned to phenomenology. A phenomenological approach may have provided various insights into the lived experience of snowboarding but the “methodological ‘bracketings’ and ‘reductions’ it employs tend to exclude from view the emergence and effects of power relationships on the contexts in which

people live their lives” (Shilling, 2001, p. 329).² This critique is particularly relevant for understanding female snowboarding because, as I highlighted (e.g., Chapter Five), very few women can engage in snowboarding simply as and when they like; most are “constrained by circumstances and social inequalities, by ideologies, politics, and in ways that relate directly to the physical body” (Hargreaves & Vertinsky, 2007, p. 10).

Despite providing the field with alternative lines of development, phenomenologically informed theories tend to “occlude the effect of structures on the experiences of individuals,” while theories of the ordered body “let the individual’s active and experienced body fade from view” (Shilling, 2005, p. 69). In so doing, these approaches replicate what many see as a long-standing and debilitating division between theories of structure and agency. As Shilling (2001) contends:

Attempts to separate a ‘sociology of the body’ concerned with the body as objectified within society from a ‘carnal’ or ‘corporeal’ sociological concern with the body as lived subject, are seeking to institute a false dualism within the subject. The aim should instead be to construct an embodied sociology in which the discipline takes full account of the corporeal character of social life. (p. 341)

Arguably, Pierre Bourdieu (1984), who sought to combine a phenomenological interest in experience within an account of the reproduction of social fields and class relationships (Wacquant, 1996), provides an alternative approach to understanding the body and embodiment.

Certainly of the theories adopted in this thesis, Bourdieu provided the most refined perspective of the lived snowboarding body. His conceptual schema was particularly useful in a discussion of the body and embodiment in snowboarding because, to quote Ford and Brown (2006), it provided “an explanation of the body as constituted in [snowboarding] practice and

² There are, of course, exceptions. In particular, scholars have recently begun to write critical autoethnographies and ethnographic fiction that shed light on people’s lived and embodied sport and exercise experiences, as well as the effects of relationships of power on the contexts in which individuals participate (see, e.g., Bruce, 2000, 2003; Pringle, 2001; Rowe, 2003; also see Denison & Markula, 2003).

also contextualizes the value of the practical body in an embodied cultural economy of [snowboarding] practice” (p. 122; snowboarding substituted for surfing). However, while Bourdieu’s snowboarding body was a recipient of social and cultural practices *and* an active creator of its milieu, it was ultimately subordinated to the imperatives of social class (Shilling, 2005). Bourdieu’s (1984) conception of the habitus does not neglect experiences but it views them as “structurally determined by the social location of the occupant, thus allowing little room for a phenomenological understanding of the ‘lived body’” (Turner, 1992, cited in Shilling, 2001, p. 331). While Bourdieu’s conceptual schema may not offer a solution to the challenge of the structure-agency dualism so evident in social science approximations of the body, it does “advance a more orthodox argument connecting body cultures to social stratification” (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 104). In particular, Bourdieu’s conceptual schema helped illustrate how distinctions, expressed as the embodiment of tastes and styles, contribute not only to the construction of snowboarding identity and difference but also to the existing social order of the snowboarding culture by clearly distinguishing insiders from the outsiders, professionals from poseurs, and core from ‘girlies.’ Core female snowboarders, for example, embody creative dress practices (e.g., pink studded belts) to demonstrate their difference from their male counterparts and less committed female boarders, and establish their own space within the snowboarding culture.

Structuration theories, such as that propounded by Bourdieu, facilitate many insights into the body, but in their attempts to combine a concern with the body’s significance for structure *and* agency, they “frequently collapse these together in analyses when the body tends to oscillate between the dead weight of structure and the lightness of reflexive choice” (Shilling, 2005, p. 69). Ford and Brown (2006) agree with Shilling (2005), and point to the body as a multidimensional phenomenon, that is “at once a source, location and means for

society” (p. 148). Arguably, contemporary studies have yet to provide a theoretical approach that satisfactorily explains the various dimensions of the body. Yet, while constrained by significant theoretical limitations, studies adopting structuration theories (e.g., Bourdieu), phenomenological perspectives or narrative approaches, nonetheless “heighten our sensitivity to various aspects of the body’s multiple dimensional relationship with society” (Shilling, 2005, p. 71). Indeed, the multiple theoretical perspectives adopted in this thesis offered insights into various aspects of female boarding bodies. Thus, I concur with Shilling (2005) who argues that there is merit in strategically juxtaposing a selection of conceptual perspectives from commensurate paradigms (e.g., critical structuralism) in order to construct a better and more multidimensional representation of the social, cultural, political, biological, practical, lived, and interacting body. It is regrettable, however, that the six theories adopted in this thesis gave scant regard to the sensual female snowboarding body.

Gender

Before the emergence of second-wave feminism in the 1960s, most scholars assumed that gender was a ‘natural’ phenomenon that did not require explanation (Waters, 2000).³ Thus, for much of the history of sociological theory, gender remained under analyzed. Second-wave feminists put gender on the map of social theorizing. The theories adopted in this thesis developed in different historical, cultural and political conjunctures and, thus, they approach gender in different ways; for some theories gender is central (i.e., feminisms, hegemonic masculinity), others recognize gender as important (i.e., Kumarian post-Fordism), while some only briefly acknowledge gender (e.g., Marxism, Bourdieu, Foucault). As these various

³ There are, of course, some notable exceptions. In the 1890s and early 1900s, for example, Sigmund Freud argued that gender and sexuality were socially constructed; the Frankfurt School then adopted his ideas in the mid twentieth century. In the 1960s and 1970s, Michel Foucault also argued that all humans were social constructs – an argument that feminists adopted in the 1980s and 1990s with a Foucauldian stance.

theoretical perspectives helped me illustrate, gender operates simultaneously at levels of individual agency (i.e., third-wave feminism, post-Fordism), group interaction (i.e., Bourdieu, hegemonic masculinity), institutional structures (i.e., Marxist political economy, hegemonic masculinity, Foucault), cultural symbols (i.e., Bourdieu) and discourses (i.e., Foucault), in snowboarding culture. Some theories, however, largely ignored gender. The Marxist approach adopted in Chapter Two, for example, gave little attention to the gendered nature of the political economy of snowboarding beyond the experiences of elite level female snowboarders. While a traditional Marxist perspective allowed me to shed much light on the capitalist dimensions of snowboarding, the post-Fordist approach employed in Chapter Three offered a more fruitful examination of the intersection of political economy and gender in snowboarding culture. However, a post-Fordist approach for explaining female snowboarding was also limited because it gave little consideration to the broader gender context. While Kumar's post-Fordist approach did give some consideration to micro-politics, it didn't focus on gender questions. Arguably, micro-politics based on gender can be better explained by those theories that give gender due consideration: Feminisms and hegemonic masculinity.

Feminist theory is the intellectual foundation of the modern women's movement that seeks to change the existing gender order and its discriminatory practices against women. The key foci for such feminist theories are "accounts of gender differences and accounts of gender inequality and oppression" (Waters, 2000, p. 13). Adopting a third-wave feminist perspective in Chapter Four, I explained contemporary female boarders as situated within a contradictory context of commercialized mainstream heterosexual femininity and a fragmented culture and market where women have space to create and recreate their cultural identities. In that same chapter I also discussed the quest by some female snowboarders to redistribute power and improve their opportunities by cleverly exploiting the resources of contemporary societies

(technology, popular culture, and the media). Third-wave feminism also proved a useful heuristic device for explaining how some young women are redefining their bodies as points of celebration, which become visible symbols of their agency and power. The concept of hegemonic masculinity (Chapter Five) developed in response to men engaging with feminist ideas. Feminists also enthusiastically embraced the concept of hegemonic masculinity in the late 1980s and 1990s because it offered them a way to explain women's complicity in their own subjectification, and an opportunity for men to "deconstruct their own sexual politics" (Ingham & Donnelly, 1997, p. 390). Adopting a third-wave interpretation of the hegemonic masculinity concept in Chapter Five, allowed me to explore the diversity of masculinities, and the interplay of masculinities and femininities within snowboarding culture.

While feminism, and to a lesser extent hegemonic masculinity, revolutionized understandings of power and subjectivity, and opened up themes of marginality, difference and sexual orders, feminist theory "never achieved the transcendence it promised" (Rojek & Turner, 2000, p. 636). According to Waters (2000), this is because social theories of gender have tended to originate from the practical concerns of the women's movement, rather than within academic sociology. Continuing, Waters (2000) argues that this has two major consequences. First, sociological theories that focus on gender tend to be "fragmentary and short (unlike the extensive philosophical feminist literature)" (Waters, 2000, p. 250). While members of the women's movement have always held to different models of feminism – each with its unique images of woman, explanations for the source of oppression, and strategies for self-fulfillment and autonomy – "generational divisions" have rendered "the agenda and common ground in feminism more disputed than ever before" (Rojek & Turner, 2000, p. 636; also see Stevens, 1998; Turner, 1996). Second, many feminist analyses of gender no longer posit theorizing as a key tenet (Waters, 2000). While social theory was once a rich resource for

feminist theory, feminists have increasingly “disengage[d] with social theory” in preference to various forms of cultural analysis (Adkins, 2004, p. 4). The situation is such that McLeod (2005) calls for the reprioritization of theorizing among contemporary feminists:

The most pressing political and analytical challenge is attempting to *theorize* both change *and* continuity, intervention *and* repetition, and understanding the forms they take today. (p. 24; emphasis in original except *theorize*)

Similarly, Walby (2005) argues that “rather than rejecting the sociological canon” in feminist theorizing, “it needs to be deepened” (p. 376):

The way to theorize gender is to deepen and develop the classical heritage, not to dismiss or ignore it. While some have claimed that feminism must do this by rejecting old methods, that the ‘master’s house cannot be rebuilt using the master’s tools,’ [I argue] that these are everybody’s tools, and can be used to good effect. The ontology of gender needs to be deepened using classical sociological theory, rather than flattened through disproportionate focus either on agency or through the use of cultural theory. Only then can we adequately compare the forms of gender regime, not merely micro-level patterns of gender relations. (pp. 376-377)

These concerns have particular relevance to third-wave feminism. Despite pointing to some interesting developments and new directions for feminism (i.e., diversity, tolerance of difference and contradiction, multiple-level praxis), third-wave feminism tends to leave these concepts under theorized.

The omission of gender from some general critical theorizing might be partly attributed to the fact that many prominent social theorists (e.g., Marx, Bourdieu, Foucault) have had little to say about women and gender or even feminism (see Gerhard, 2004).⁴ But, while the disavowal of gender on the part of many contemporary theorists is “lamentable,” Adkins (2004) reminds us that social theories which ignore gender “should not necessarily be read as limiting the possibilities of a dynamic engagement between contemporary feminist and social theory” (p. 4). The fact that many social theories do not place gender at the core of their

⁴ Of course, there are notable exceptions (e.g., Judith Butler, R. W Connell, Elizabeth Grosz, Julia Kristeva).

projects has not stopped some feminists deploying, rethinking and critically developing them for their own ends (Adkins, 2004). As discussed in Chapter Seven, for example, feminist scholars have embraced Foucault's technologies of self as transgressive practices for women (Lloyd, 1996; Markula & Pringle, 2006). Furthermore, while Bourdieu's social theory had relatively little to say about women or gender (c.f. Bourdieu, 2001), feminist scholars have recently begun to extend and develop Bourdieu's social theory to address key issues in contemporary feminist theorizing (see Adkins, 2004; Lovell, 2000, 2004; McLeod, 2005; McNay, 1999; Skeggs, 1997). For example, arguing for a positive engagement between Bourdieu's social theory and contemporary feminist theory, Lovell (2000) recognizes femininity as a form of cultural capital that has broad currency in the contemporary labor market. As highlighted in Chapter Six (Bourdieu and 'Boarding Bodies), abundant evidence demonstrates this to be the case in snowboarding. Femininities, like masculinities, are assets in the snowboarding market, tradable for economic if not symbolic capital. But, not all female snowboarders have access to, or the ability to employ, gender capital. Furthermore, within the snowboarding culture, different groups of females privilege different forms of investment. Whereas some female boarders (e.g., girlies and some professional snowboarders) overtly employ their gender capital, others acquire traditionally masculine traits via demonstrations of physical prowess, risk and commitment, as forms of symbolic capital. While there needs to be much more sustained attention to the gendered dimensions of Bourdieu's conceptual schema, I believe third-wave feminist engagements with his work offer new ways to productively reconceptualize the relationship between gender, power, culture and embodiment in the early twenty-first century. The key point here is that by opening up a space between third-wave feminist theory – which tends to originate from the practical concerns of women and ignore some key sociological debates – and a social theory which does not place the concept of gender

as central to its vision of the social, feminist scholars are able to work to renew the “synergy between feminist and social theories” (Adkins, 2004, p. 5). Indeed, given that third-wave feminism has yet to posit theorizing as one of its key tenets, I believe that theoretical syntheses with feminism and Bourdieu, or feminism and Foucault, provide many fruitful opportunities for analyzing gender in contemporary society, and popular physical culture per se.

Power

In the opening chapter, *The Sociology of Youth Culture*, I advocated for a multi-faceted approach to power in recognition of its differential effects on female snowboarders. As Lukes (1974) points out, existing discussions of power are inadequate because no single theory covers all its aspects. Thus, rather than examining female snowboarding from one theoretical perspective, I set out to construct a holistic view of the various and numerous power relations in snowboarding by systematically contextualizing, exploring and interrogating the lived experiences of female snowboarders through six social theories. In so doing, I hoped to extract the different ways that power emerges and is articulated in snowboarding and to provide a more nuanced understanding of the cultural phenomenon of female snowboarding. Indeed, the various conceptions of power offered by these six social theories ranged from oppressive (i.e., Marxism, hegemonic masculinity) to optimistic and liberatory (i.e., post-Fordism, third-wave feminism, Foucault), and facilitated different and often complimentary (and sometimes contradictory) insights into the multiple sources of power – economic, gender, body, discourse, media, and culture – in snowboarding culture.

The top-down, oppressor-victim, view of power offered by traditional Marxism, and the concept of hegemonic masculinity, facilitated insights into the ways in which the capitalist system and male-dominated industry and culture exploit and oppress female professional

snowboarders. Marx viewed power as an aspect of the economic relationships that fundamentally determine the shape of society. The relationship of material resources to the acquisition of power is circular: “The more material resources one has the more one can control others, and the more one can control others the more material resources one can acquire” (Waters, 2000, p. 220). Within this general orientation, power is applied and experienced not by specific individuals but by classes and groups. In capitalist societies, Marx understood power as highly concentrated in the relationship between capitalists (e.g., Burton Snowboards) and workers (e.g., professional snowboarders), and limited to capitalists. In this system, ownership of capital defines the capitalist and capitalism does not discriminate on the basis of gender. In this sense then, female capitalists in the snowboarding market (e.g., company owners) have access to economic power. However, as illustrated in the subsequent theoretical chapters, power in snowboarding culture and female snowboarding more specifically, extends beyond the means of production. The concept of hegemonic masculinity employed in Chapter Five, for example, helped me signal the existence of dominant and subordinate patterns of male behavior in snowboarding culture, and indicate how female snowboarders have been excluded from snowboarding videos, sexualized in snowboarding media, and reduced to sexual objects in everyday conversations and interactions. However, the dualistic, oppressor-victim model of power underpinning the concept of hegemonic masculinity proved insufficient for explaining complex gendered power relations in snowboarding culture. For example, this bipolar conceptualization made it difficult for me to recognize admirable and positive practices by men in the snowboarding culture; some men express feminist sentiments in their support of female boarders and occasionally publicly question their exclusion from magazines, videos, events and the industry. Thus, I argued that the dualistic understanding of power inherent in the concept of hegemonic masculinity is not

representative of the lived complexities of men's or women's experiences in snowboarding culture. In sum, while the top-down model of power inherent in both traditional Marxism and the concept of hegemonic masculinity facilitated understanding of the ways in which male and female snowboarders are oppressed by social structures (e.g., economy and patriarchy), this understanding of power was insufficient for explaining the agency of sportswomen, or the subjective experiences of young male and female snowboarders who have grown up in different social, cultural, economic and political contexts, and gender and sexual orders.

Other visions of power as a two-way relationship – albeit with more power seen as belonging to dominant groups (e.g., institutions, men, etc.) – such as post-Fordism, feminisms and the work of Pierre Bourdieu, allowed me to make sense of female snowboarding as a dynamic relationship between structure and agency. A Kumarian post-Fordist perspective offered the opportunity to explore power outside ownership of the means of production. More specifically, it allowed me to examine the locus of power in social classes and their cultural attributes, and examine the roles of young women as consumers and entrepreneurs in a highly fragmented snowboarding culture and economy. In this post-Fordist system, female snowboarders are more than passive consumers, or cultural dupes; rather they appropriate space to dictate what is produced and consumed. The third-wave feminist perspective adopted in Chapter Four also incorporated the voices of individual women and viewed female snowboarders as active agents with the potential to construct and change their social reality through ventures such as women-only events and organizations. Yet, post-Fordist and third-wave feminist interpretations of female snowboarding seemed to raise more questions than they answered. How does a signature snowboard equate to empowerment? How do consumption choices improve one's power? How much power lies in choosing a particular board, pair of boots or a jacket over another? Or, alternatively, how much power lies in posing

in men's magazines? Are young women's use, celebration, and self-definition of their bodies a visible symbol of their agency and power? While post-Fordism and third-wave feminism point toward positive change in terms of young women's agency and power as consumers and producers in a new economic and gender context, at present, they leave these changes largely under theorized.

Bourdieu also attempted to “transcend” the “freedom and determinism dichotomy” (Jarvie & Maguire, 1994, p. 206) by explaining power as a dynamic two-dimensional relationship. Whether he achieved this task, however, is questionable. For Bourdieu, social power works through human bodies “inscribing in them certain dispositions and capacities which enable people to act in certain ways, yet also set the limit upon their abilities and aspirations” (Burkitt, 1999, p. 87). The concept of habitus is, of course, integral to such an understanding. Bourdieu furthers his discussion of power with the notion of capital, which refers to the different forms of power held by social agents (e.g., cultural, symbolic, economic, academic, gender capital). These forms of power structure social space and determine the relative positions of agents. Adopting Bourdieu's conceptual schema in Chapter Six allowed me to see how the distinctive tastes and styles in the snowboarding culture conceal differences in power; the embodied practices of male and female snowboarders act as mechanisms that control access to the culture. For example, those male snowboarders (and a select few female boarders) whom demonstrate the most physical prowess and courage gain the most symbolic (e.g., prestige), economic (e.g., sponsorship), and cultural (e.g., media coverage) capital, and thus have the power to select and define the legitimate forms of participation. These boarders then reproduce the existing symbolic power relations in the snowboarding culture by imposing styles and tastes of participation that typically privilege the extremes of the male body (e.g., Big Air competitions). While Bourdieu's conceptual schema helped me explain the

subordination of women's activity, and the subsequent unequal distribution of capital (power) in snowboarding culture, the emphasis on social reproduction, particularly apparent in the concepts of symbolic violence and misrecognition, made it difficult for me to explain the agency of female snowboarders. Indeed, the ongoing and successful reproduction of relationships of domination lies at the heart of Bourdieu's social theory and, although there might be struggles, these occur within an enduring hierarchical social space. In other words, Bourdieu's understanding of power excludes an account of social change at the level of the system and does not allow for meaningful agency or process at the individual level, or as Jenkins (2002) puts it: "There is rebellion in this model but, alas, no revolution" (p. 137).

In comparison to visions of power as a uni-directional (i.e., Marxism, hegemonic masculinity) or two-way (i.e., Kumarian post-Fordism, third-wave feminism, Bourdieu) relationship, a Foucauldian approach enabled me to look at power in a new light. Foucault's understanding of power as multidirectional supported a way of thinking about forms of power relations between men and women which does not fit neatly into the types of relations described in conventional theories of power. For example, Foucault's concept of power facilitated a discussion of the media in snowboarding culture as not only repressive but also positive and productive. More specifically, Foucault's conceptualization of power, particularly his understanding of technologies of self, enabled an account of the mundane and daily ways in which power is enacted and contested in the snowboarding culture between people (snowboarders) and institutions (the media). In particular, adopting a Foucauldian perspective in Chapter Seven facilitated an examination of the conditions under which female snowboarders learn to recognize and distinguish between different types of media discourses, and the different ways that women act upon this knowledge, including the production of their own media forms (i.e., women-only snowboarding videos). Simply put, Foucault's

conceptualization of power allowed an analysis that focused on female snowboarders as both object and subject to power relations.

The various theoretical perspectives adopted in this study offered different insights into the multiple sources of power. While employing Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity and Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence helped me shed light on snowboarding as a male dominated sport in which male views tend to have the most power to construct experiences and opportunities, my adoption of other theoretical approaches, including third-wave feminism, post-Fordism, Bourdieu and Foucault offered contradictory insights of female snowboarders as active agents who, in some cases, are able to define and redefine snowboarding as consumers, professional snowboarders and coaches; some are also able to critically reflect and take action as producers of media, owners of snowboarding companies, and organizers of women-only events and organizations. However, "theories which contradict one another cannot all be correct or true" argues Waters (2000); "at least, they cannot be unless one accepts that the diversity is found not only in theory but also in social experience, that is, to take the view that the social world, rather than sociological theory, is intrinsically problematic" (p. 345). As the foregoing chapters have illustrated, the phenomenon of female snowboarding is multidimensional, complex, variegated, fragmented and often contradictory. Indeed, it is in light of such diversity that I became cautious of making broad, sweeping statements about female snowboarders, because, if one looks closely enough, contradictions are always present and alternative explanations ever possible. As such, I concur with the view that diversity is found in theory *and* social experience. In fact, the various theoretical interpretations of power adopted in this study reflected, and facilitated a more holistic understanding of the "intrinsically problematic," multidimensional, complex, variegated, fragmented and often contradictory social world of female boarders. However, I am not advocating the simple

merger of all perspectives and constructs of power. A comprehensive understanding of power cannot be accomplished by simply amalgamating theories and concepts from “incommensurate paradigms” (Shilling, 2005, p. 71). The key point here, of course, is that the majority of the theories adopted in this study are underpinned, to varying extents, by a critical structuralist view of society that understands power differences as emanating from a structural pattern (distribution) of material resources (Waters, 2000). Thus, the various theoretical frameworks adopted here helped me extract some of the different ways that power emerges and is articulated in snowboarding, and thus facilitated my goal of providing a more nuanced explanation of young women in popular physical culture within critical social theory.

In sum, it has not been my intention to subject the various theoretical perspectives to exhaustive evaluative critique. Rather, I sought to bring the six social theories – Marxist political economy, post-Fordism, feminisms, hegemonic masculinity, Bourdieu’s theory of embodiment and Foucauldian theorizing – into conversation. The dialogue was structured by the interweaving strands or themes relevant to female snowboarding – structure, agency, culture, the body and embodiment, gender, and power – and explored the contributions of the various theoretical perspectives for illuminating the complexities of social life and female snowboarders per se.

Despite each theory claiming to best interpret the facts it identifies as significant, no single theory was adequate to deal with the multidimensional phenomenon of female snowboarding. Each of the six social theories had strengths and shortcomings in relation to the key themes of structure, agency, culture, the body and embodiment, gender and power. Despite shedding light on some of these themes, no one theory could illuminate all dimensions of women’s snowboarding. Thus, I argue that instead of narrowing down our understandings of social reality by “insisting that it can be represented and explained by singular unifying

principles,” we need to “unpack and open up the explanatory range and power of social analysis” (Layder, 2004, p. 9). According to Layder (2004), this can only be accomplished by “identifying the elements forming the variegated, layered and multidimensional nature of social reality. In short, we must veer away from the reductive force of singularities and adopt a more expansive and inclusive view of the social universe” (p. 9). Contemporary female youth cultures are multidimensional social phenomena, and future theoretical investigations seeking to construct more nuanced social explanations must embrace theoretical and conceptual reflexivity, and analytical dynamism and openness. Instead of employing one theoretical perspective to frame a particular social phenomenon, I believe there is much to be gained by experimenting with a range of theoretical perspectives. Social theorizing should be an “adventure in the dialectics of cultural thought” (Alexander, 2003, p. 6), in which we set out to “see things differently” (Baert, 2004, p. 367) and from multiple perspectives. Indeed, I believe that herein lies my key contribution to knowledge; in my theoretical adventure I have painted a fuller, more complete, picture of female physical youth culture than would have been possible by focusing on a single critical social theory.

Final Thoughts

Fredrick Jameson has suggested that we “learn theories like languages, and explore as every good translator does the expressive gaps between them – what can be said in one theory and not another” (cited in Leane & Buchanan, 2002, p. 254). In this study I have attempted to shed light on some of the omissions in and gaps between six social theories, and highlight some areas where social theorizing of young women in popular physical culture might be advanced. Herewith I make four suggestions pertaining to a) the potentially fruitful strategy of theoretical synthesis, b) the importance of socially responsible sociology, c) the need to explore the

affective impact of ‘doing theory,’ and give greater consideration to pleasure and experience in our research, and d) the potential of social theory for shedding light on our immediate social worlds.

Theoretical Synthesis

Arguably, theoretical synthesis provides a fruitful strategy for analyzing multidimensional social phenomena such as female youth cultures.⁵ As Giulianotti (2005) writes, “the research object of sociologists – human societies – can be better explained through working relationships with other disciplines rather than insisting upon the hypocritical, asocial conceit of splendid isolation” (p. 211). Interestingly, in recent years there has been a significant abatement of hostility and a fundamental shift towards synthesis in the humanities, even while fundamental disagreements remain: “The borrowing and intertwining of once rival traditions is readily apparent in recent empirical work. It is also the new agenda for a wide range of robust and ambitious efforts in sociological theory” observes Alexander (1991, p. 152).⁶ As suggested above, I believe theoretical syntheses between feminism and Foucault, and feminism and Bourdieu, hold exciting possibilities for future investigations of young women in popular physical culture, and female snowboarding per se.⁷ Such theoretical syntheses have the potential to facilitate theoretical interrogations of the social, cultural, gendered, *and* embodied dimensions of such phenomena. In so doing, such syntheses may also help us avoid the very

⁵ Of course, theoretical synthesis is not a new idea for feminists, some of whom have been combining the insights of two or more theoretical traditions for many years (e.g., Marxist feminism).

⁶ However, as previously suggested, the practice of theoretical synthesis is not unproblematic, it “cannot be accomplished by ‘taking together’ incommensurate paradigms” (Shilling, 2005, p. 71). Indeed, we should be cautious of combining different theoretical lenses that reflect different ontological takes on reality. It is important to reiterate here, however, that most of the theories adopted in this thesis derive from Waters’ category of critical structuralism, and thus broadly share assumptions about the nature of constitutive elements (objective) and terms of explanation (holistic) (see Chapter One: The Sociology of Female Physical Youth Culture).

⁷ It should be noted here that feminist scholars have been engaging in fruitful syntheses of Foucault and feminism (e.g., Bordo, 1993; Butler, 1993; Cole, 1993; Markula, 2003; Sawicki, 1991) and Bourdieu and feminism (e.g., Adkins, 2004; Lovell, 2000, 2004; McLeod, 2005; McNay, 1999; Skeggs, 1997) for a number of years.

real danger of being lulled into a “false sense of conceptual security” (Andrews, 2002, p. 116), in which researchers see only what fits into their pre-existing theoretical schemas and downplay, miss or ignore conflicting evidence. Theoretical syntheses between feminism and Foucault, and feminism and Bourdieu, for example, offer strengths in relation to multiple key concepts of particular relevance to young women in popular physical culture, including gender, the body and embodiment, power, culture and agency. Simply put, theoretical syntheses that embrace analytical and conceptual dynamism and openness, and theoretical reflexivity in relation to contradictory empirical evidence, may further facilitate the task of providing more nuanced explanations of young women in popular physical culture within critical social theory.

Socially Responsible Sociology

Theory is the heart and soul of sociology and central to the discipline’s contribution to “the development of self-knowledge and the guidance of human society” (Waters, 2000, p. 1).

While this thesis has privileged theory, it is also important to consider the social responsibility and/or ethics of social theory: What constitutes socially responsible sociology? Here we might recall Marx’s observation that “philosophers have interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it” (cited in Coakley & Dunning, 2000, p. xxxii). While sociologists seek to both understand society and change discriminatory practices within society, I believe that social theorists need to make their theories more accessible so that the general public can use them to reflexively interpret the social conditions of their existence and to change them accordingly. While the various social theories embraced in this study have much to offer in terms of providing frameworks for a range of descriptions and explanations of the contemporary social world, in their current form, they are inaccessible to the majority of those outside academe. For example, as discussed in Chapter Four, personal experiences of

what it is like to be a woman in a male-dominated sport tend to provide the basis for female boarders to critique their culture and develop strategies for change, rather than feminist theory. Thus, I argue that the answer to the question – what constitutes socially responsible sociology? – lies not in how much change sociologists can personally initiate, but in their ability to explain and present theories and concepts in an accessible manner. In so doing, social researchers can increase the capacity for reflexivity and enable people to make sense of their experiences and inform their involvement in related practical and political issues. For example, while writing this thesis I shared my research with the broader boarding culture as a regular columnist for *Curl*, a New Zealand female-specific glossy surf, skate and snowboarding magazine. My columns enabled me to ascertain whether my research findings were consistent with the perspectives of cultural participants, and to promote reflexivity among the readership. According to the editor, Lynne Dickinson, a recent article deriving from my Foucauldian informed research on the snowboarding media (see Appendix 1.2) “really made people think” and prompted “plenty of discussion and feedback” from male and female readers (personal communication, March 19, 2007). My article, she said, also provoked considerable “discussion around the office...[among] lots of keen boarders and skiers” (personal communication, March 19, 2007). In the subsequent issue, Dickinson (2007) commented that my article had even impelled Cris Hatton-Carr, a New Zealand male snowboarder, to write an article for the magazine: “Since the last issue we have had a huge response to Holly’s article on the virtues and vices of all girls snowboarding DVD’s. This got Cris thinking about whether girls preferred to snowboard with their girl or guy friends...” (p. 54, emphasis added; see Hatton-Carr, 2007). As this example suggests, accessible, theoretically informed research can encourage people – in this case, male and female boarders – to reflexively interpret the social conditions of their existence and act upon related practical and political issues.

The Pains and Pleasures of Social Theorizing

In light of my theoretical and research experiences, I believe there is much room for exploring the affective impact of ‘doing theory.’ In the introductory chapter I explained that there is often a sense, particularly strong among young scholars, that they should align themselves with one theoretical school, or even one theorist. Of course, in the process of drawing from this work, the scholar *defines him or herself as a particular type of researcher*. During this research I did not align myself with only one theoretical school or theorist, although in developing a solid understanding of each theory I immersed myself in the work of each social theorist. In so doing, I analyzed the snowboarding culture, and the data that emerged from it, through a particular theoretical lens. Interestingly, however, as I shifted between theoretical lenses I underwent what might be termed a mild ‘theoretical identity crisis.’ The theoretical shift unsettled me because I had grown comfortable looking at the world, and analyzing the snowboarding culture, through this theoretical lens. Notwithstanding the fact the theories adopted in this thesis fall into Waters’ category of critical structuralism and share broad assumptions about the nature of constitutive elements (objective) and terms of explanation (holistic), they differ in relation to the key concepts of structure, agency, culture, the body and embodiment, gender and power. Thus, each theory challenged me to view the social world and snowboarding culture slightly differently. However, while exchanging one theoretical perspective for another was, at times, disconcerting, it proved worthwhile in raising my awareness of the “false sense of conceptual security” (Andrews, 2002, p. 116) that emerges from aligning oneself with a particular social theory; it also reminded me to pay attention to the “conceptual blind spots” inherent in each theoretical approach (Salter, 1997, p. 249). The key point here is that theorizing is an affective process and there is room for greater reflexivity in

relation to how our theoretical perspectives affect our sense of identity and belonging in both the academic and social realms and, more importantly, how this sense of “conceptual security” influences our use of critical social theory.

Another important question to consider when theorizing popular culture, sport or physical youth cultures such as snowboarding, is whether critical social theorizing and leisure can be enjoyed at the same time. According to Barcan (2002), there is an “intellectual bias towards pessimism” in critical theorizing, such that it is a practice marked by “suspicion of hope or joy” (p. 345). Indeed, Leane and Buchanan (2002) report that, some, not all, students experience theoretical analysis as “a form of robbery of unselfconscious pleasure” (p. 257) and a “theft of enjoyment” (p. 254; also see Barcan, 2002). Similarly, Grossberg (1992) explains that his students regularly oppose theoretical analyses on rock music because, in some sense, they know that “too much intellectual legitimation will redefine the possibilities of its effectiveness; it will become increasingly a meaningful form to be interpreted rather than a popular form to be felt on one’s body and to be lived passionately and emotionally” (p. 79). Admittedly, at various stages in this study, I struggled to keep in mind the pleasures inherent in the snowboarding experience. During my participant-observation phases, for example, I occasionally found it difficult to switch off my theoretically informed critical analyzing and simply enjoy the thrill and excitement of snowboarding down a mountainside. Yet, social theorizing does not have to be a gloomy experience. “Despite the intellectual allure of pessimism, there is, in fact, nothing intrinsically or inevitably pessimistic about critical theory at all,” says Barcan (2002, p. 346). Describing cultural critic and landscape architect Dean MacCannell’s use of theory, for example, Lucy Lippard (1999) writes:

[H]e deploys the speculative nature of theory in the service not of nitpicking cynicism but of freedom to dive in, to question everything about everything – especially those concrete phenomena that he has seen, experienced, and pondered firsthand. (cited in Barcan, 2002, p. 346)

Certainly, while I regretted the loss of some of the “unselfconscious” pleasures inherent in my snowboarding experiences prior to commencing this study, the adoption and application of the six different theoretical frameworks changed the way I see the world, and I have found this theoretical journey immensely liberating. Rather than adopting a position of ‘cognitive estrangement,’ in which we seek to separate ourselves from our thoughts and feelings, we should instead begin to explore the potential space in critical theorizing for affective processes including “hope and joy” (Leane & Buchanan, 2002, p. 257), and in so doing move toward a more self-reflexive engagement with social theory.

Furthermore, I think we need to find new ways to integrate pleasure into our research. When asked why he keeps returning to the slopes, professional Norwegian snowboarder Terje Haakonsen replied, “It’s just a joy, the joy of...playing” (cited in Galbraith & Marcopoulos, 2004, p. 83). This thesis, like any other study of popular physical culture, would be lacking if it ignored such pleasures. Thus, throughout this thesis I constantly struggled against the “intellectual bias toward pessimism” (Barcan, 2002, p. 345) in critical theorizing, and made numerous attempts to keep in mind the pleasures integral to snowboarding. As discussed in the introductory chapter, my continual active participation in the snowboarding culture was particularly important in this regard. Nonetheless, while I did not ignore the physical, cultural and social pleasures of the snowboarding experience, this remained an under analyzed aspect of this thesis. It is particularly regrettable that none of the six social theories adopted in this thesis facilitated an in-depth discussion of the physical pleasures of snowboarding, and I believe that this an aspect of critical social theorizing that requires greater analytical attention. Based on my own theoretical and research experiences, I argue that we need to be reflexive of the tendency toward pessimism when adopting critical theoretical perspectives and go to greater lengths to also see hope and joy in the social world, and in the experiences of individual

agents. Simply put, I believe theory, research, and leisure can, and should, be enjoyed at the same time. Moreover, the integration of pleasure and sensual experience into our critical social theorizing also has the potential to further aid its accessibility.

Thinking Differently with Social Theory

In summary, sociological theory can only be a legitimate and socially important enterprise if, according to Jeffrey Alexander (1991), it can “make a claim to reason” (p. 147). To make a claim to reason is to suggest that sociological theory can “achieve a perspective on society which is more extensive and more general than the theorist’s particular life-world and the particular perspective of [her] social group” (Alexander, 1991, p. 147). Embracing a variety of theoretical perspectives and engaging these in extensive dialogue with one another and with empirical research, certainly helped me make meaning of my immediate world and the snowboarding culture per se. That is, this approach enabled me to make explicit what I previously unquestioningly accepted in my culture, to challenge deep-seated beliefs, and to “imagine socio-political scenarios other than the ones that are currently present” (Baert, 2004, p. 367). Ultimately, this thesis not only provided a critique of the efficacy of numerous social theoretical concepts for understanding female snowboarding as a contemporary social phenomena, it also facilitated my attempt to “think differently than one thinks” and “perceive differently than one sees” (Foucault, 1985, cited in Mills, 2003, p. 6). This should, of course, be a goal of all social theorizing.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1.0: ETHICS INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Social Theory and the Female Snowboarder

Brief Outline of the Research Project

I have spent eight consecutive winters snowboarding in New Zealand and North America, and this study is my attempt at gaining a deeper understanding of the snowboarding culture and the role of women within it. To gain such knowledge I am studying snowboarding specific documentary and visual sources (e.g., magazines, websites, newspapers, videos). However, because this research project aims to discover the attitudes, ideas and perceptions of snowboarders, it is important that I also hold interviews with ‘cultural insiders,’ including snowboarders and industry workers.

This research is part of the requirements of a Doctoral of Philosophy.

Contacting the Researcher

If you have any concerns about ethical matters or other issues related to the research, please contact either/or:

Holly Thorpe
Department of Sport and Leisure Studies
University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105, Hamilton
Ph: 07 825 8541
Email: hollythorpe2000@yahoo.co.nz

or

Professor Douglas Booth
Department of Sport and Leisure
University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105, Hamilton
Ph: 07 8384500 ext. 7957
Email: dbooth@waikato.ac.nz

Confidentiality

As a participant, you may choose to remain anonymous (full confidentiality), to be partially identified (occupation) or to be fully identified (full name and occupation). The data collected will be used in a dissertation, research articles, and presentations. The dissertation is an approximately 400 page unpublished text and will be read by a small group of academics. Research articles will be published in academic journals and will be read mostly by university students, researchers and academics. The data will be presented to groups within universities and perhaps at academic conferences.

Participants' Rights

As a participant you have the right to

- Refuse to answer any particular question, or withdraw from the study at any time
- Ask any further questions about the study which occur during your participation
- Be given access to your individual transcript and to a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.

Records

All records from the interviews will be kept confidential. They will be archived indefinitely according to University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Regulations. The audio recordings will be kept in a secure location for the duration of the research process. Any other use of audio recordings will not occur without your permission.

APPENDIX 1.1: INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Social Theory and the Female Snowboarder

I have read the **Information Sheet for Participants** form for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to participate under the conditions set out below:

- 1) Holly Thorpe will conduct either a face-to-face, telephone or email interview with me relating to the snowboarding culture. Interviews conducted in person will be recorded on audiotape and it is likely to take a minimum of 30 minutes. I, the participant, have the right to refuse discussion on any issue or to refuse the recording of any part or whole of the interview. After having read the transcript, I have the right to request the erasure of any record with which I am uncomfortable.
- 2) I understand Holly Thorpe will keep all records from the interview confidential. The audio recording will also be kept in a secure location for the duration of the research process. I understand that all data will be archived indefinitely according to University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Regulations.
- 3) The transcribed audio or written data collected by Holly Thorpe will be used in her dissertation, research articles, presentations and teaching. I consent to the data being used for teaching purposes. I understand that any use of the audio recordings, such as in teaching, will not take place without permission from me.
- 4) I understand the implications of choosing full disclosure, partial disclosure or full confidentiality, as conditions of confidentiality.
- 5) I understand that I can withdraw from this study anytime prior to 1st August 2006.
- 6) I understand that if I have any ethical concerns I can contact either the primary researcher, Holly Thorpe (ph: 07 825 8541, email: hollythorpe2000@yahoo.co.nz) or her supervisor, Professor Douglas Booth (ph: 07 8384500 ext. 7957, email: dbooth@waikato.ac.nz).

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular question in the study. I agree to provide information to the researcher under the conditions of confidentiality set out below:

I choose: Full disclosure [] Partial disclosure [] Full confidentiality []

Complete the relevant details below, adding pseudonym and other adapted information where required

Signed:

Date:

Name (or pseudonym): Age:

Position (or generic descriptor)..... Employer (or pseudonym).....

APPENDIX 1.2:
Women-Only Snowboard Videos: Virtue or Vice, featured in *Curl* magazine
 (Thorpe, November/December, 2006, pp. 58-59)



Image by Steve Dickinson - Pacific M

Woman-Only Snowboard Videos: Virtue or Vice?

By Holly Thorpe

A few months back we were invited to the launch of the all girls snowboarding movie, *Last Winter*, at Alta store in New Market. The evening was a great opportunity for us girls to all get together and enjoy a few wines, meet some new people and of course get in a little shopping. We then sat down to watch the latest release by Chunkyknit productions, *Last Winter*. We had a great night and thumbs up to ALTA for yet another fantastic event. Watching the movie you couldn't help but think how far women have come in the sport of snowboarding. It was not that long ago that girls didn't get a look in on the slopes let alone get a movie made solely about them. NZ snowboarder, Holly Thorpe, also recognizes the leaps and bounds made by snowboarders today and shares with us her thoughts on the pros and cons of women doing it for themselves.

Not only are snowboarding films a great source of entertainment and inspiration, they also provide an important space for riders to display their skills and gain recognition from peers and the industry. But filming requires time and resources, both of which are expensive and limited, and traditionally, photographers and sponsors have privileged male footage. The attitude expressed by Dave, a committed Canadian snowboarder and part-time snowboard filmmaker, prevails within the snowboarding culture: "I only think that there should be female parts in videos if the girls can step it up to the next level". In other words, filmmakers, male colleagues, and the viewer, expect female boarders to perform to male-standards.

Professional and legendary big-mountain boarder Victoria Jealous finds it "really hard always filming with only the best guys. They do everything bigger, so even though I'm totally pushing myself, I'm going to look bad next to the boys. I know it's worth it, but I feel like my hands and feet are tied sometimes". Similarly, professional American snowboarder Shannon Dunn calls filming a "nightmare" because "you pretty much have to be like a guy and that's no fun". Traditionally, only a select few women have been invited to film with male crews and their inclusion has been further limited by the criteria set by male filmers and boarders. The key point here is that the male domination of these films reinforces the idea that snowboarding is an activity better suited to men. While many of us know this is absolute rubbish, women's exclusion from these videos has the potential to influence new comers' expectations of the sport. While it is

impossible to measure the broader cultural implications of women's exclusion from these videos, the following quote is insightful. After watching a recent New Zealand snowboarding video, a father turned to his four-year-old daughter and asked whether she would like to try snowboarding one day. Miria responded matter-of-factly, "No daddy, snowboarding is a man's sport".

Dissatisfied with women's exclusion from snowboarding videos, some female boarders are attempting to initiate positive change. Lauren Graham, producer of the all-female snowboarding video *Shot in the Dark* (2003), states that while "it's awesome and a huge honour for a girl to get a couple of shots in a guy's video...something really needed to be done with all of the film ending up on the cutting-room floor". In an attempt to rectify the lack of female coverage in snowboarding films, some women are producing 'all female' snowboarding videos. Arguably, these films provide women with the opportunity to exhibit skills, create new meanings and values for women's snowboarding, and challenge assumptions about what girls can and can't do. Sian Hughes, producer of the female snowboarding video *Dropstitch* (2004), wants "to inspire girls to really follow their dreams". "We want girls to experience the feeling of absolute freedom and exhilaration that comes from being on the mountain, and how much fun it all is" she says.

The goal of Mischief Films, another female production company, as described by professional snowboarder Alexis Waite, is "to help change people's perception of women's snowboarding". Mischief's first film, *As If...* (2005) certainly had the desired effect. This film features the most respected female snowboarders, and offers a platform for the display of female athleticism without being judged on male standards. It should be added here that women-only snowboard films are not a new

phenomena. Female snowboard videos were being produced in the mid to late 1990s (e.g., *Hera*, 1995; *Trade Out*, 1998), but they tended to lack funding and suffered from inferior production quality. In contrast, the strength of today's female market has provided new opportunities for women wanting to create snowboarding videos. *Dropstitch*, for example, secured sponsorship from Roxy, Nikita, Billabong, Salomon, Burton, Oakley, Vans, White Lines magazine, Powderroom.com, Method Magazine, and Peugeot. Following the success of *Dropstitch* in 2004, Chunkyknit productions gained major corporate sponsorship from Volvo, Nike ACG, and RedBull, to produce *Transfer* in 2005 and *Last Winter* in 2006. Mischief Films also receives significant corporate support and is sponsored by Transworld Snowboarding, Salomon Snowboards, COAL, HCSC, Nitro, Vans, Bonfire, Nikita, Burton, Roxy, and Oakley. Today's women-only snowboard videos have gained industry support and are now high quality, entertaining, and inspiring representations of female shredding at its best. If you haven't checked them out already, I highly recommend heading down to your local board store and grabbing yourself the latest snowboard chick flick. As if... is my personal favorite, but *Last Winter* is hot off the press and should be in a store near you very soon.

Okay, so it seems as if the lack of women in snowboarding videos is no longer a legit complaint; Women are producing and featuring in top-selling all-girl snowboarding videos. It's all good, right? Well, while the situation seems to be changing for the positive, the debate continues to rage in some snowboarding circles. Ex-professional snowboarder and Transworld Snowboarding journalist Jennifer Sherowski, for example, makes a very good point: "I think their needs to be less segregation. Production companies need to see women as a viable, valuable thing in this sport and start filming with them, and women need to work harder to make that happen instead of just segregating themselves."

What do you think?

This is definitely a sticky topic with as many views as there are videos. Do women-only snowboard (and surf or skate) videos "solve the problem" or should there be "less segregation" in boarding films more generally? We'd love to hear your opinion, so write in to us at lymne@curl.co.nz, tell us what you think and go in the draw to win a bag of goodies from CURL.

...into a lifestyle thing 59

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1.0: ETHICS INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Social Theory and the Female Snowboarder

Brief Outline of the Research Project

I have spent eight consecutive winters snowboarding in New Zealand and North America, and this study is my attempt at gaining a deeper understanding of the snowboarding culture and the role of women within it. To gain such knowledge I am studying snowboarding specific documentary and visual sources (e.g., magazines, websites, newspapers, videos). However, because this research project aims to discover the attitudes, ideas and perceptions of snowboarders, it is important that I also hold interviews with ‘cultural insiders,’ including snowboarders and industry workers.

This research is part of the requirements of a Doctoral of Philosophy.

Contacting the Researcher

If you have any concerns about ethical matters or other issues related to the research, please contact either/or:

Holly Thorpe
Department of Sport and Leisure Studies
University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105, Hamilton
Ph: 07 825 8541
Email: hollythorpe2000@yahoo.co.nz

or

Professor Douglas Booth
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Ph: 07 8384500 ext. 7957
Email: dbooth@waikato.ac.nz

Confidentiality

As a participant, you may choose to remain anonymous (full confidentiality), to be partially identified (occupation) or to be fully identified (full name and occupation). The data collected will be used in a dissertation, research articles, and presentations. The dissertation is an approximately 400 page unpublished text and will be read by a small group of academics. Research articles will be published in academic journals and will be read mostly by university students, researchers and academics. The data will be presented to groups within universities and perhaps at academic conferences.

Participants' Rights

As a participant you have the right to

- Refuse to answer any particular question, or withdraw from the study at any time
- Ask any further questions about the study which occur during your participation
- Be given access to your individual transcript and to a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.

Records

All records from the interviews will be kept confidential. They will be archived indefinitely according to University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Regulations. The audio recordings will be kept in a secure location for the duration of the research process. Any other use of audio recordings will not occur without your permission.

APPENDIX 1.1: INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Social Theory and the Female Snowboarder

I have read the **Information Sheet for Participants** form for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to participate under the conditions set out below:

- 1) Holly Thorpe will conduct either a face-to-face, telephone or email interview with me relating to the snowboarding culture. Interviews conducted in person will be recorded on audiotape and it is likely to take a minimum of 30 minutes. I, the participant, have the right to refuse discussion on any issue or to refuse the recording of any part or whole of the interview. After having read the transcript, I have the right to request the erasure of any record with which I am uncomfortable.
- 2) I understand Holly Thorpe will keep all records from the interview confidential. The audio recording will also be kept in a secure location for the duration of the research process. I understand that all data will be archived indefinitely according to University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Regulations.
- 3) The transcribed audio or written data collected by Holly Thorpe will be used in her dissertation, research articles, presentations and teaching. I consent to the data being used for teaching purposes. I understand that any use of the audio recordings, such as in teaching, will not take place without permission from me.
- 4) I understand the implications of choosing full disclosure, partial disclosure or full confidentiality, as conditions of confidentiality.
- 5) I understand that I can withdraw from this study anytime prior to 1st August 2006.
- 6) I understand that if I have any ethical concerns I can contact either the primary researcher, Holly Thorpe (ph: 07 825 8541, email: hollythorpe2000@yahoo.co.nz) or her supervisor, Professor Douglas Booth (ph: 07 8384500 ext. 7957, email: dbooth@waikato.ac.nz).

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular question in the study. I agree to provide information to the researcher under the conditions of confidentiality set out below:

I choose: Full disclosure [] Partial disclosure [] Full confidentiality []

Complete the relevant details below, adding pseudonym and other adapted information where required

Signed:

Date:

Name (or pseudonym): Age:

Position (or generic descriptor)..... Employer (or pseudonym).....

APPENDIX 1.2:
Women-Only Snowboard Videos: Virtue or Vice, featured in *Curl* magazine
 (Thorpe, November/December, 2006, pp. 58-59)

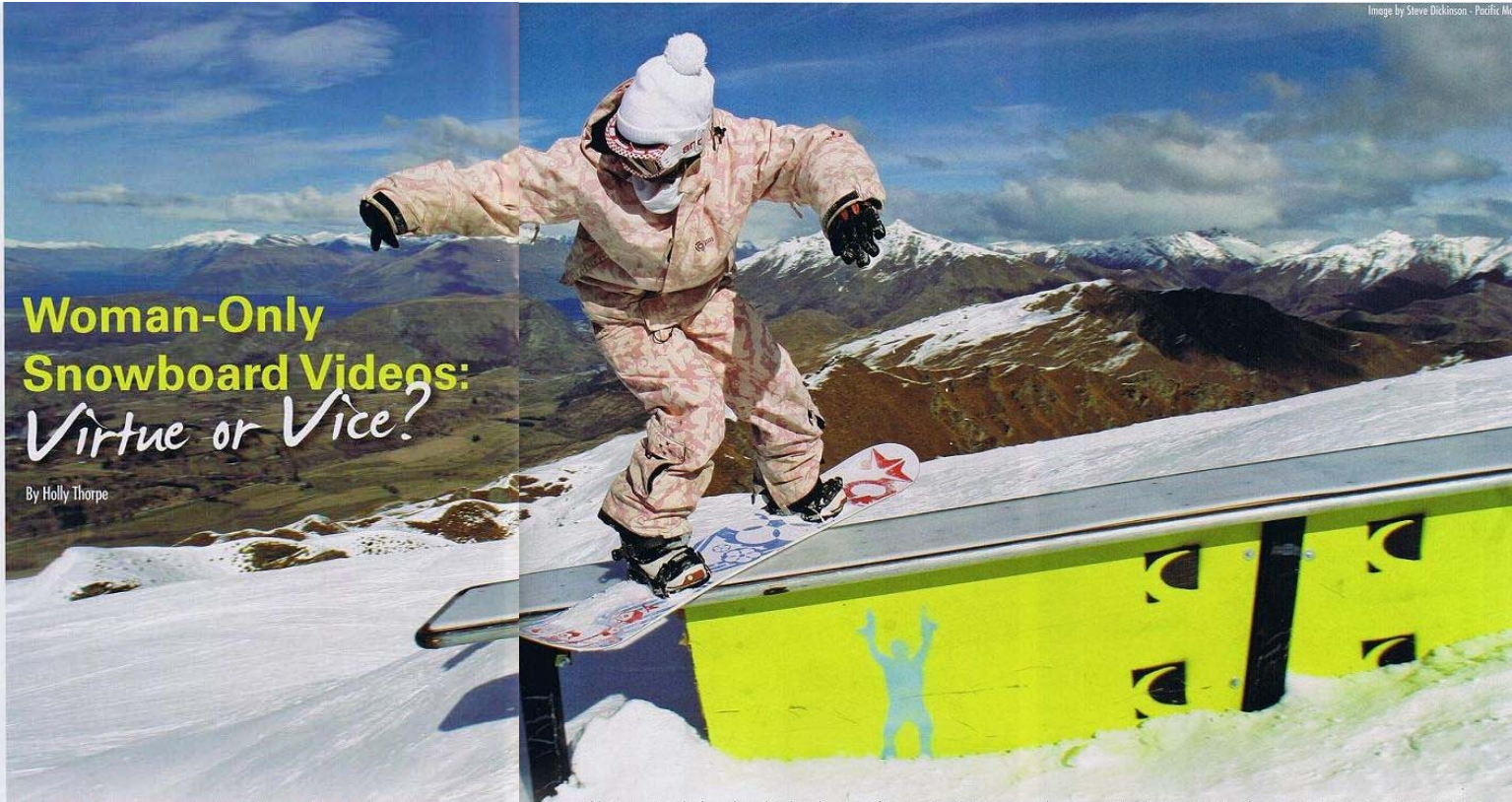


Image by Steve Dickinson - Pacific M

**Woman-Only
 Snowboard Videos:
 Virtue or Vice?**

By Holly Thorpe

A few months back we were invited to the launch of the all girls snowboarding movie, *Last Winter*, at Alta store in New Market. The evening was a great opportunity for us girls to all get together and enjoy a few wines, meet some new people and of course get in a little shopping. We then sat down to watch the latest release by Chunkyknit productions, *Last Winter*. We had a great night and thumbs up to ALTA for yet another fantastic event.

Watching the movie you couldn't help but think how far women have come in the sport of snowboarding. It was not that long ago that girls didn't get a look in on the slopes let alone get a movie made solely about them. NZ snowboarder, Holly Thorpe, also recognizes the leaps and bounds made by snowboarders today and shares with us her thoughts on the pros and cons of women doing it for themselves.

Not only are snowboarding films a great source of entertainment and inspiration, they also provide an important space for riders to display their skills and gain recognition from peers and the industry. But filming requires time and resources, both of which are expensive and limited, and traditionally, photographers and sponsors have privileged male footage. The attitude expressed by Dave, a committed Canadian snowboarder and part-time snowboard filmmaker, prevails within the snowboarding culture: "I only think that there should be female parts in videos if the girls can step it up to the next level". In other words, filmmakers, male colleagues, and the viewer, expect female boarders to perform to male-standards.

Professional and legendary big-mountain boarder Victoria Jealous finds it "really hard always filming with only the best guys. They do everything bigger, so even though I'm totally pushing myself, I'm going to look bad next to the boys. I know it's worth it, but I feel like my hands and feet are tied sometimes". Similarly, professional American snowboarder Shannon Dunn calls filming a "nightmare" because "you pretty much have to be like a guy and that's no fun". Traditionally, only a select few women have been invited to film with male crews and their inclusion has been further limited by the criteria set by male filmers and boarders. The key point here is that the male domination of these films reinforces the idea that snowboarding is an activity better suited to men. While many of us know this is absolute rubbish, women's exclusion from these videos has the potential to influence new comers' expectations of the sport. While it is

impossible to measure the broader cultural implications of women's exclusion from these videos, the following quote is insightful. After watching a recent New Zealand snowboarding video, a father turned to his four-year-old daughter and asked whether she would like to try snowboarding one day. Miria responded matter-of-factly, "No daddy, snowboarding is a man's sport".

Dissatisfied with women's exclusion from snowboarding videos, some female boarders are attempting to initiate positive change. Lauren Graham, producer of the all-female snowboarding video *Shot in the Dark* (2003), states that while "it's awesome and a huge honour for a girl to get a couple of shots in a guy's video...something really needed to be done with all of the film ending up on the cutting-room floor". In an attempt to rectify the lack of female coverage in snowboarding films, some women are producing 'all female' snowboarding videos. Arguably, these films provide women with the opportunity to exhibit skills, create new meanings and values for women's snowboarding, and challenge assumptions about what girls can and can't do. Sian Hughes, producer of the female snowboarding video *Dropstitch* (2004), wants "to inspire girls to really follow their dreams". "We want girls to experience the feeling of absolute freedom and exhilaration that comes from being on the mountain, and how much fun it all is" she says.

The goal of Mischief Films, another female production company, as described by professional snowboarder Alexis Waite, is "to help change people's perception of women's snowboarding". Mischief's first film, *As If...* (2005) certainly had the desired effect. This film features the most respected female snowboarders, and offers a platform for the display of female athleticism without being judged on male standards. It should be added here that women-only snowboard films are not a new

phenomena. Female snowboard videos were being produced in the mid to late 1990s (e.g., *Hera*, 1995; *Trade Out*, 1998), but they tended to lack funding and suffered from inferior production quality. In contrast, the strength of today's female market has provided new opportunities for women wanting to create snowboarding videos. *Dropstitch*, for example, secured sponsorship from Roxy, Nikita, Billabong, Salomon, Burton, Oakley, Vans, White Lines magazine, Powderroom.com, Method Magazine, and Peugeot. Following the success of *Dropstitch* in 2004, Chunkyknit productions gained major corporate sponsorship from Volvo, Nike ACG, and RedBull, to produce *Transfer* in 2005 and *Last Winter* in 2006. Mischief Films also receives significant corporate support and is sponsored by Transworld Snowboarding, Salomon Snowboards, COAL, HCSC, Nitro, Vans, Bonfire, Nikita, Burton, Roxy, and Oakley. Today's women-only snowboard videos have gained industry support and are now high quality, entertaining, and inspiring representations of female shredding at its best. If you haven't checked them out already, I highly recommend heading down to your local board store and grabbing yourself the latest snowboard chick flick. As if... is my personal favorite, but *Last Winter* is hot off the press and should be in a store near you very soon.

Okay, so it seems as if the lack of women in snowboarding videos is no longer a legit complaint; Women are producing and featuring in top-selling all-girl snowboarding videos. It's all good, right? Well, while the situation seems to be changing for the positive, the debate continues to rage in some snowboarding circles. Ex-professional snowboarder and Transworld Snowboarding journalist Jennifer Sherowski, for example, makes a very good point: "I think their needs to be less segregation. Production companies need to see women as a viable, valuable thing in this sport and start filming with them, and women need to work harder to make that happen instead of just segregating themselves."



What do you think?
 This is definitely a sticky topic with as many views as there are videos. Do women-only snowboard (and surf or skate) videos "solve the problem" or should there be "less segregation" in boarding films more generally? We'd love to hear your opinion, so write in to us at lymne@curl.co.nz, tell us what you think and go in the draw to win a bag of goodies from CURL.

...is a lifestyle thing 59