Honors Thesis for the Undergraduate Research Program in the
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The Search
Issues of Play, Identification, Agency, and Deviance in the Absence
of Mainstream Sports: Towards a Discovery of the Social Meaning of
the *Sport* of Surfing.

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Acknowledgments

Surfing is a very personal thing. Even if you're surfing in a crowd, you're by yourself. You're always one on one with the wave, no matter how many people are out there. The act of surfing is a special form of interaction with life. Each wave is a life unit, and when you learn to flow gracefully with a wave, you're learning how to flow with life.

<div style="text-align: right;">Steve Pezman♦</div>

Introduction

A surfer speaks of a relationship with an abstract concept/ a tangible force/ the energy of the ocean that to most others may be but an abstraction. However, the anomaly of surf lingo/jargon/bro-phonics, which can be a distinguishing feature, allows surfers to communicate about the subtle nuances of swell direction, wind, tide, wave height, speed, texture, shape, and power in great detail. The language, lifestyle, and common experience of surfing constitute a membership for a unique subculture of individuals that are surfers.

 The physical manifestations of the aim and expression of surfing has been a dynamic one throughout its history and it has changed with advents in technology and imagination. Ideologically, however, surfing has remained static: To flow with the ocean and enjoy the ride.

Surfing is a unique Eco-sport whose form, purpose, ritual, and motivation are somewhat anomalous with respect to the battery of other activities recognized for their distinctive formal designation as competitive team or individual sports. It is not altogether surprising that there is not a wealth of theory and analysis about the surfing phenomena. Essentially, it is an ultimately elusive concept with a severe lack of concrete rules and statutes from which to extrapolate and analyze.

However, I believe its unregulated and dynamic structure should be of pressing interests for those who study the sociological implications of sport precisely because it

does not yield to formal definition and it does not facilitate the gathering of empirical data.

Since I have the benefit of my own autobiographical experience with surfing, I believe it is

appropriate to exercise mine own sociological imagination in order to prioritize the

importance and direction of various sociological considerations about this experience.

Surfing does something to a person after a while. It is difficult to exactly put one's

finger on it, but there is something certainly sociological about it. To attempt to describe

to experience of surfing to one who has never tried or observed it firsthand is an attempt

at abstraction. The medium and conditions of the environment are only tangible to the

participants and more dilutely to the spectators.

The "rules" and codes of conduct are virtually inexplicable too, being that they are

case specific and highly nuanced. Even the skills necessary, besides knowing how to

swim, are vague. Essentially, you cannot even teach someone else how to surf even if

you know how yourself--you can only introduce them to it. This implies and originates

from the fact that surfing waves is a dialectical relationship with the ocean that one must

develop personally.

Surfing, as an activity, transcends the bounds of common or mainstream sport.

Although it exhibits qualities of sport in its physicality and exertion, it remains, thus an

activity, being that it recognizes a logistical and regulatory structure for proper conduct

that is different, perhaps, from almost any other "sport". It is purely self-actualization in

an aquatic environment that is challenging and unpredictable in itself, not as part of a

larger structured routine. That is to say, it is autotelic: done for sake of the experience,

and for the enjoyment of the ride. While modernity has crept into surfing and introduced

contest surfing with large cash purses, the pursuit of riding waves remains an intrinsic one ultimately satisfied of its own experience.

Even the advent of competition surfing can only entice, by way of extrinsic reward, surfers to engage in a forum of comparative surfing, the essence and purpose of which still remains intrinsic in its pursuit. Additionally, there is a sharp divide among surfers on the merits of commercialization and competition. According to contemporary media publications dedicated to surfing, some see these elements as necessary and beneficial in promoting surfing as a legitimate activity. Still others, purists often, see those elements as a pariah and a corruption of what the essential nature of surfing and free expression is. " . . .example of a play-sport—surfboard riding—is no longer play . . .when it is sponsored by soft drink companies or when it is organized for TV production and beamed around the globe by Wide world of Sports"(Calhoun 56).

Previous Research

In reviewing the literature to gain an understanding of the social meaning of surfing, one notices that social scientists have concentrated primarily on the sociology of mainstream sports. Although surfing has gained popularity and there have been overt attempts within the last thirty years to bring surfing into the mainstream, through such forums as formal competition and commercial marketing, the essential nature of surfing has remained aloof from the rigid structure and commodification typical of more mainstream sports in large part due to the exclusivity and access that only 'qualified' surfers have in gaining top positions in industry productions and competitive tours. "The

surf industry is the holy grail for the working surfer. This is the only industry where being a surfer is often a prerequisite for the job."(Surfer 1999, 81).

Through this assemblage of insiders, the media message by industry professionals has remained one that encourages and markets self-determination and self-expression. Nonetheless, the battery of sociological literature about mainstream sport bears significant relation to surfing both in the subtle similarities and obvious differences that surfing exhibits in relation to more popular sports.

To generalize somewhat, several texts including *Sport and Postmodern Times* edited by Genevieve Rail, *Sport Culture and Ideology*, edited by Jennifer Hargreaves, *Sport Culture and Personality* by Donald Calhoun, *Class, Sport, and Social Developm*ent, by Richard Gruneau, *Making Sense of Sport*, by Ellis Cashmore, *Sport, Leisure, and Social Relations*, by Horne and Tomlinson, and *Sport, Power, and Culture*, by John Hargreaves induct issues pertaining to drug use, education, commercialization/commodification, politics, social stratification, Marxian theories of inequality and industrial labor forces, and Gramscian theories of hegemony and consent/docility in relation to structured mainstream sport. Jennifer Hargreaves (1994) states, "Much of the work tends to be descriptive, atheoretical, and void of critical analysis"

Most of the benefit of these texts in relation to the social meaning of surfing is in their diametrical focus upon typical sporting patterns and by contrast, how surfing can be seen as atypical of mainstream sports and structure. In the virtual omission of material addressing alternatives forms of sport or play it is clear that there are clearly a multiplicity of avenues and needs for sociological research into alternative modes of sport.

Sports sociology makes a distinction between play, game, and sport. A multitude of social scientists, too numerous to mention, agree there is a delineation between the formally structured entity called sport, the less rigid but still highly structured concept of games, and the virtually uninhibited aspect of play. However there are several gradations within these concepts that overlap such as play-sport, and game-play. Calhoun (1988) says, "Play is defined as a cooperative [or individual] interaction that has no stated goal, no end point, and no winners; formal games, in contrast, are competitive interactions, aimed at achieving a recognized goal."(Calhoun 47). Completing the other end of the spectrum, sport is seen as an extrinsically goal-oriented, activity that actually suppresses the freedom of play by advent of severe and structured regulation. Surfing then, can be described more accurately as play, while mainstream sports like basketball are better characterized as sport reflecting their goal-centered orientation.

To elaborate on play then, Leonard's *A Sociological Perspective of Sport* (1998) explains the autotelic, or self-efficacious nature of play. It describes play as an exuberant expression and interaction with the environment that is a means and ends in itself. He lists five distinct elements of play.

Play is "free" or voluntary

Play is not temporally or spatially confined to arenas or timed periods unlike sport

Play is uncertain in the respect that the end result is unpredictable

Play serves no utilitarian purpose other than its own involvement

Play is contrived and the role of the player dissipates as soon as the activity is abandoned.

Charles Page writes "Play is a voluntary and distinct activity carried out within arbitrary boundaries in space and time, separate from daily roles, concerns, and influences, and having no seriousness, purpose, meaning or goals for the actor beyond those emerging within the boundaries and context of the play act itself"(Leonard 9). This is relevant to the study of surfing as an anomalous sport precisely because it stresses the intrinsic value of the phenomena itself.

Although surfing appears to be "play", I would argue that the fifth criteria on the "Play qualifier" fails to acknowledge the identity that those, who are devoted to eco-sports that prize activity in a tumultuous and 'unpaved' environment, feel for their interaction with the medium and context of their activity outside of its boundaries. Sports sociologist, John Huizinga addresses this in saying, "A play community generally tends to become permanent. The feeling of being apart together in an exceptional situation of mutually withdrawing from the rest of the world and rejecting the usual norms, retains its magic beyond the duration of the individual game"(Calhoun 43).

This seems to suggest support for the premise that surfers, as eco-athletes, are themselves, distinct and can be distinguished by the substance of their experience.

Jay Coakley's Sports in Society provides a plethora of discussions and issues within sports that relate to the larger society. His text suggests many alternative theories, other than that sports are always good ways to have fun, keep in shape, and make lifelong friends. He specifically focuses on a number of sports issues relating to social values including interscholastic sports. In one chapter he states, " Research suggests that the most important social consequences of interscholastic sports may be their effects on ideas

about social life and social relations, rather than their effects on [GPA], attitudes towards school, or student popularity"(Coakley 425, brackets added).

Reading about the various theories on sports sociology, I was struck by two competing theories: Functionalist theory and Interactionist theory. According to Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies, "Functionalist theory focuses attention on how sports help keeps societies, communities, organizations, and groups operating smoothly, as well as how they influence individuals to contribute to the social systems in which they participate"(Coakley 34). The text explains that this theory usually guides research and discussion into how sports are key in providing stability and social progress of the larger community and society at large.

> According to functionalist theory, social systems operate smoothly when they have efficient mechanisms for doing four things: (1) socializing people to learn and accept important cultural values, (2) promoting social connections between people, (3) motivating people to achieve cultural goals through accepted methods, and (4) protecting the system from disruptive outside influences. (Coakley 32).

Interactionist theory seems to provide opposition to functionalist theory in that, according to the text, it prioritizes the values and viewpoint of the participant rather than the context and values of the larger society in which the participant resides. "It focuses on the meaning and interaction associated with sports and sports participation. It emphasizes the complexity of human behavior and the need to understand behavior in terms of how people associated with sports define situations through their relationships with others."(Coakley 39).   This theory concentrates on issues of identity, subcultures, and social relationships in sports and how these roles spill over into non-sporting life. " . . . as we interact with others, we create the norms, roles, relationships, and structures that

make up society itself."(Coakley 38). This overall theory is a useful paradigm in examining the difference in sports ideology between mainstream and laissez-faire sports because it focuses its inquiry and understanding from the bottom up. "A common goal of interactionist research is to reconstruct and describe the reality that exists in the minds of athletes, coaches, spectators, and others involved with sports in society"(Coakley 38).

These two competing theories present an ideal contrast that mirrors the questions that this research is seeking answers to: Do mainstream sports lend themselves more to the reification of the values of the larger society based on their competitive, rule driven, performance model ethic than do other more loosely defined activities like surfing that seem to possess a more malleable format and flexible interpretation of the rules and codes of conduct?

While there seems to be an apparent black hole concerning analysis of those players who choose alternative sports in general and surfing in particular, there is a small smattering of sociological research devoted to deviance in sport and other sports that share a commonality of unstructured format with surfing.

In A Sociological Perspective of Sport, Leonard applies Robert Merton's theory of anomie to sports in general. He believes that there are roles for participants in sports. Since inevitably there will be losers as well as winners, Leonard suggests that players will engage in deviance in order to achieve goals when under social pressure. Deviance manifests itself in varying forms of cheating according to Leonard. One of the five forms of adaptation that he mentions is *ritualism*. Those who engage in ritualism embrace the means but reject the ends, hence the old adage, "its not whether you win or lose but how you play the game." Under the heading of ritualism, he alludes to those who engage in

ecosport as a prime example. "Ecosport (usually played outdoors and stressing the relationship between sport and the environment) consists of play that is natural, unstructured and free blown . . .Its goal . . .play hard, play fair, nobody hurt"(Leonard). This analysis ripely describes the credo of surfing throughout its history. A credo that emphasizes pleasure and discourages division or animosity.

There has been some research and analysis of activities that are similar in personalized and interpretive format and have originated parallel to/from surfing: Snowboarding and skateboarding. In her essay "Skateboarding: An alternative to mainstream sports" Becky Beal describes the community and actions of skateboarders that she observed over a two year period. She discovered four thematic components to the group of skaters that she researched, three of which that seemed to be unique to skateboarding and other forms of play emphasizing personal achievement as motive, and one that shared commonality with popular sports.

- Participant control of skateboarding
- Participant desire to individualize skateboarding and the emphasis of self-definition
- The devaluing of competition by participants
- Male privilege and dominance in skateboard culture

Her description of methods and findings is applicable to research on surfing and the themes she discovered are similarly found in surf culture based on my preliminary and autobiographical information.

Finally, there is much literature on surfing, but mostly as a celebration of its impact, a description of its history, or hints and tips on the "how-to" of surfing. Most of the current literature and periodicals are written for those who surf, not *about* those who surf. To gain a slight background into the culture and creed of surfing I consulted various periodicals and some historical texts. A similar emphasis for surfing purity as a way of life echoed throughout all the texts.

An article from a late 1980's issue of Surfer Magazine entitled "Go To Work And Cry" describes the plight of the hapless surfer and his difficulty in mediating his devotion for surfing and his responsibility to gainful employment and to authority. To quote, "When the surf's up, surfing always wins"(Surfer Dec 1988).

Surfing: The Ultimate Pleasure, by Leonard Lueras provides an excellent history of surfers, surf culture, and surf creed all the way up through the early 1980's. It retells accounts of the explorer James Cook and others who as far back as the sixteenth century saw examples of how entire island populations would surf for days on end when there were waves—leaving behind family, work, everything. It also tells of modern but static devotion and prioritization of surfing among surfers. "They listen to apostles who preach, "When the surf is good, you've got to go and get it. Work is secondary"(Lueras 144).

There is a large amount of literature that is closely related to the social meaning of surfing or that may lend itself to such. However, one must be able to synthesize multiple ideas and texts in order to support or dismantle any rational theories about surfing, as there is a lack of sociological material about surfing. One finds this exceptionally interesting in the respect that it is a thousands of year old sport, much older than several others that have received much more literary attention. In conclusion, I believe there is

enough material to suggest that the social meaning of surfing, as viewed through several possible inductive theoretical frameworks is a viable and necessary topic for further inquiry and research.

Research Question

Being that there is not an extensive archive of research in this field, an exploration of surfing and of surfers is called upon in this case. An ethnographic approach utilizing observational data will help to answer important questions such as:

- Looking at surfers from an interactionist standpoint, how do surfers interpret and create their reality in the water and out of the water? Does a surfer's perspective of surfing spill over into their perspective of life? Of priorities? Of social status? To what degree?

- Understanding the rift between the various perspectives of commercial and competition surfing, which do surfers consider most pertinent to competitive surfing? Does competitive surfing provide maintenance for the level of performance and enthusiasm in surfing? Does competitive surfing create artificial divisions and hostility/commercialism and commodification? Does the competitive format enhance performance through reward, or does it limit expression and options due to the structured format that judges must employ? Why? How?

- Where do surfers, of all kinds, see competition surfing with the realm of surfing?

Being that surfing is a very exclusive sport in that it's extended network of promoters, coordinators, and media are in-group members (claims, commercial rights, networks, and identification belonging strictly to those who surf) it is surfers, whom, by way of dialogue and consensus have attempted, in recent years to deregulate the bonds of competition surfing[1].

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[1] In my experience in and around surfing, and with other surfers, I have observed, firsthand, a disdain and criticism of the competitive format that appears to be singular to surfing itself, in the level of widespread

New formats and new criteria for judging wave scores have been emerging steadily throughout the modern competitive history of professional surfing of the last 35 years, and especially, dynamically so, within the last 5 years. Industry surfers are changing the profession to find ways to include and reward professionals who do not compete, and to more importantly, suit their own lifestyle, preferences, and beliefs. This observational evidence of agency leads me to believe that surfing creates a breed of independent thinkers who have a unique schedule of prioritization that affects not only the sport that they love, but also the terrestrial lives that they lead.

Based on this, I think it is important to study how surfers may interact with their cooperative, competitive, athletic, and social environments in distinctive and often opposite ways than other athletes do. For this, I thought it would be useful to include the following concepts and the following questions and to see how they relate or apply to surfers and surfing to help in understanding why surfing seems to be such a unique and atypical experience.

According to Webster's Universal College Dictionary of 1997

Apathy= Lack of interest in or concern for things that others find moving or exciting.

Anomie= A condition of an individual or of society characterized by a break down or absence of norms and values or a sense of dislocation and alienation.

Anomalous=1. Deviating from the common order, form, or rule; irregular; abnormal.

2. Not fitting into a common, familiar, or expected type of pattern; unusual.

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support for those who oppose the limitations of a rigorous competitive circuit, or who support an overhaul and rethink of the practices of judging competitive surfing. In this way, the surfing community as a result of the commitment and urgency of its members, exhibits agency in its orientation toward competitive formats and their formulation.

3. Incongruous or inconsistent.

Do surfers exhibit higher levels of apathy and anomie toward the six major institutions (family, religion, career, academia, law, and government) or more anomalous qualities in their allegiance to social norms than participants in other activities? Why? To what degree?

In my observational experience in and around surfing, I have noticed patterns of behavior that at some points show extreme devotion and dedication and that at other times exhibit qualities of apathy and disaffection. The two prior qualities are primarily shown in relation to the sport itself, while the latter two are illustrative of the bounds and practices of the terrestrial society.

Interestingly, and as a result of several interviews, I found out that in a surfer's life, one may have discovered that oftentimes the level of dedication to the aquatic world is inversely related to the dedication of the terrestrial world. That is to say, often one feels an elation in their surfing that allows one some comfort to soothe the trappings of reality, or the reality that one may be neglecting one's duties as a student, gainfully employed citizen, active political participant, religious observer, and otherwise contributing member of society. At other times, one's effort or success in the academic and work sphere may be some (small) consolation for the fact that one misses many days of surfing and countless waves for weeks on end. Surfing, according to surfers, after all is artistry. Each surfer[2] draws their own line upon the face of the wave- the board their brush, and wave their canvas.

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[2] This includes all who ride waves, the crests, or the updrafts of them, including humans, pelicans, dolphins, etc.

In general, there exists a predominate negative relationship between time spent surfing and success in the earthly world. In better summation, it is more difficult to surf if one has multiple obligations and responsibility out of the water. Hence those that prioritize their sporting activity to a very high degree may find or seek less success in other career, academic, social, and political pursuits.[3]

I see surfing as one of a few sports that, in its unwritten creed, encourages apathy towards different aspects of our citizenry. Like all subcultures, it fulfills the needs of its members and supplements, by way of impassioned experience; the social connection built into civilian life. [4] Hence I expected to see surfers exhibit higher levels of anomie toward our structured society than participants in other hobbies do.

Methodology

The methodology for this study was constructed of multiple methods and sources for analysis and/or interpretation to match the multi-faceted nature of the experience and perception of surfing as a form of sport, or active engagement, in order to gather as much information as possible. Observations and personal interviews with surfers on their philosophical views of surfing as an activity helped to capture the ideological essence of a code of sport that is fast, powerful, and elusive by nature.

Initially, I imagined that an ethnographic approach would yield results that would provide information about the community of surfers and the aquatic society in which they

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[3] In some periods of highly functioning bliss, I have experienced a balance and a boost in the level of effort exerted in both spheres, with an equal increase in the success of both pursuits, however, for myself and for some others who surf, usually time spent surfing is inversely related to terrestrial success.

[4] One aspect of the social meaning of surfing that I will attempt to prove, through qualitative investigation, is that surfers derive much of the meaning and significance of life, from their engagement, experiences, and lessons they learn in the water during surfing. After a period, with accumulation of experience and ocean savvy (which is infinitely faceted), It is the experience of this humble surfer, that the lessons and influence of terrestrial life become more dilute and the viewpoint from the ocean, becomes the reference point for surfers.

participate. In thinking that participant observation would provide insight into the,

perhaps, novel way that surfers are socialized, I proceeded to make as many observation

about conduct, code, and behavior as I could. After a time, however, I realized that my

previous and extended involvement in the sport might shade my essential impressions of

it and so I decided to use the areas of observations and the things I observed to guide the

questions I would ask in the surveys and in the open ended interviews of other surfers. In

this way, I was able to ask the surfers in this study to explain the various phenomena that

I had initially observed. I feel that this has provided a clear and unbiased description of

the elements of a sociological investigation of the sport of surfing.

Primarily, I desired to explore and investigate levels of anomie and apathy towards the

institutions of society, empirically, within surfers and their community. However, I could

only ask that surfers volunteer this information through some form of replicable survey.

Six strong indicators of one's connection to western society are the institutions of family,

class, creed, education, profession, and status. In order to explore perceptions of and

towards surfers in all of these spheres, I conducted and distributed self-administered

survey interviews with surfers and other athletes.

Additionally, I wanted to speak with surfers. I wanted to interview them.   I

approached various surfers either before entering, while in or upon exiting the water at

several southern California beaches and through other social networks. I accessed my

own and others' networks of friends, family, and colleagues in order to gather an

adequate sample of surfers through snowball sampling. I made sure not to interview direct

associates or acquaintances of my own. Instead I asked these persons to refer me to other

individuals in order to obtain clear, unbiased interviews.

Surfers were approached regardless of their sex, race, ethnicity, age, or other socioeconomic status. It was simply a matter of convenience and opportunity (convenience sampling). Open ended, qualitative interviewing methods were employed in order to encourage depth and elaboration within the subject matter. I prepared some battery of questions initially but allowed the subjects to delve into subject matter they considered pertinent.

For better comparison within the survey groups, I interviewed various clubs sports teams at local University of California, California State University, and California Community College schools that are coastally located in order to guarantee that the surf community was well represented. I was encouraged by the initial response and ongoing support I had from various administrators at these institutions, and their enthusiasm for my area of research.

The final tallies concerning the units of analysis for my study were as follows. I conducted qualitative interviews on eight individuals who surfed, one of which was female. I took notes as we spoke at times and in some cases made summary notes after the interviews had been conducted. Often times these interviews were conducted informally, (over a game of pool, on the pier, at the beach, in my home or the subjects home) without the obtrusive taking of notes. Furthermore, I chose to stagger the last six of the interviews after conducting the initial two, until after I had been able to tabulate and analyze some of the results of the survey questionnaires. This provided me the opportunity to lead the interviews in areas and directions that help to shed light on some of the results of the quantitative surveys.

The survey results will provide the information for the main body of discussion and analysis. Of the initial 129 completed surveys, 28 of them had to be discarded because of possible contamination with respect to the information sought therein. That left a total of 101 student-athlete completed surveys of which 33 of them were completed by surfer-athletes; a ratio of almost one third. The remaining 68 surveys were aggregated into one group categorized as "mainstreamers" for the sports they participated in (soccer, volleyball, basketball, water polo, swimming, and cross-country). The decision to aggregate the surveys into two distinctive groups makes analysis more feasible and it poses no real net loss of information due to the fact that a demographic portion was not included within the survey.

Data

The results from the quantitative surveys administered to the student-athlete respondents can be organized into four basic sections: Attitudes about institutions, towards competition, about priorities, and about social norms.

A Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, also known as SPSS, was used to analyze the data. Three basic functions to complete the data analysis were performed. The three functions were as follows: Chi-square tests of significance between mean scores for levels of importance between surfers and non-surfers, t-tests for Equality of Means, and cross tabulations. Additionally, to explain possible differences in responses that were not detected by variation in the mean aggregate scores for groups of surfers and non-surfers, I computed the frequency of all the values corresponding to each variable and compared them between the two groups as sometimes significant results can be lost by combining all the values for each variable into a mean score.

Taking a look at the results from the section measuring respondents' attitudes towards competition. I asked a myriad of questions tapping athletes' attitude towards the value of competition. Using SPSS, I implemented a chi-square for and I found there to be a significant difference in the mean scores of how surfing respondents and non-surfing respondents rated the importance of competitive achievement in their sport. In fact, the mean score for how important surfers thought competitive achievement to be was 2.7273 (just in between "A little important," and "Somewhat important" within the ordinal scale), while athletes that were non-surfers mean score was 4.0735 indicating that they believed, as a collective, that competitive achievement in their sport was "important". The difference in mean scores for this test was significant at the .001 level.

Even more revealing results occurred when the frequencies for each value of the variable were compared. For reference, in this section, I asked athletes to score their personal measure of importance for a myriad of concepts on a 1-5 scale. A score of 1 represented a view of "Not important", 2 reflected a view of "A little important", 3 reflected " Somewhat important", 4 reflected "Important, and finally a score of 5 indicated the person thought that particular concept was "Very important".

Very Important   Important   Somewhat Important   A Little Important   Not Important

Only 2.9 % of non-surfer athletes thought competitive achievement was not important compared to 24.2% of surfers who thought it was not important. Only 1.5 % of non-surfers ranked it as a little important compared with 21.2% of surfers who thought it was a little important. Overall, only 4.4 % of the other athletes thought competitive achievement in their primary activity was either unimportant or just of little importance while over 10 times that

percentage was true for the surfing athletes. Only 18.2% percent of surfers thought competitive achievement was important and only 12.1% of them thought it was very important bringing the group of surfers who thought, as a concept, that competitive achievement was certainly important to just over 40%. 38.2% of the other athletes thought competitive achievement was at least important, and an additional 38.2% of them thought it was very important reflecting a large overall difference in how these two groups value competition. In seeing how there were marked differences in response to these variables, I was surprised to find that there was no significant difference in how the two groups rated the importance of personal achievement in their respective sports.

In attempting to understand how these two groups of athletes compared in the degree of value they derive from their primary sport, I asked them " How important in participation in your primary sport to you?" While I did not find a statistically significant difference in mean scores, I did find, using a cross tabulation function and a chi-square test, that only 42.6% of the non-surfing athletes thought of their participation in their sport as "very important" while the 69.7% of surfers felt this way: a difference of 26.1%! The p-value associated with the chi-square statistic was .024, making the difference in response significant at the .05 level.

Next, athletes were asked, "How important is winning or losing?" Again, using the ordinal scale, the mean scores for these responses were analyzed in a two-tailed test. The mean score for surfing athletes was 2.6061 reflecting an aggregate attitude that thought winning or losing was just a little important. Non-surfing athletes scored a mean score of 3.7941, indicating that they believed, as a collective, that winning or losing was closer to "important" as a concept, than even, "somewhat important". These results were significant

at the .001 level with an actual p-value of .000. Additionally, in looking at the individual percentages for the values of the responses, it was interesting to see that none of the 68 athletes in mainstream sports thought that winning or losing was not important while over a quarter of surfers thought that winning or losing was unimportant.

I wanted to know whether surfers and other athletes had similar or different values for rules in their sports and so I asked plainly, "Do rules matter?" Nearly all (95.6%) of the athletes in popular sports responded in the affirmative and only 75.8% of surfers responded that rules did matter. Surfers were approximately six times as likely as other athletes to indicate that rules did not matter.

Athletes were asked whether competition was good or bad. Interestingly, 100% of the athletes in mainstream sports like soccer, basketball, volleyball, etc. responded that competition was good. Only about 80% of surfing athletes thought competition was good, while about 15% stated that it was bad, and 3% did not respond to the question.

An experimental question was asked of all the athletes. It consisted of a figure with a large square with a smaller circle completely enclosed within the square. Respondents were then asked to imagine that this figure represented their primary activity and were asked to place a small 'x' within the figure to indicate where they saw competition in their sport in relation to the essential nature of their sport. No other instructions were given and respondents were encouraged to make their own interpretation of what the figure meant and how they should respond. The responses were coded into five separate categories as follows: Central(c), Off Center(oc), Way Off Center(woc), Outside Of Circle(ooc), and Outside Of Box(oob).

According to the coding scheme in which the responses were quantified based on their proximity to the apex of the figure, exactly 50% of the mainstream athletes and 9.1% of the surfing athletes thought that competition was central to their sport. 19.1% of mainstreamers (as I shall refer to them) thought hat competition was off center in relation to the essential nature of their sport, while again, only 9.1% of surfers responded such. 17.6% of mainstreamers indicated that competition was way off center and a full third of surfers responded in kind. Only 8.8% of mainstream athletes ventured outside of the circle at the same time fully one third of the surfers felt placed a similar mark. Finally only 2.9% of the mainstream athletes placed a mark indicating that they thought competition in their sport lay somewhere outside the essential nature of their sport, (a cross country athlete, and a swimmer). The percentage of surfers who ventured "outside of the box" was over five times that amount.

The difference in the values associated with these two groups of athletes for the circle and square variable was significant at the .001 level according to a chi-square test. More interesting was that 81.8% of surfers in the study felt that competition was at least way off center, and perhaps more, in relation to the essential nature of their sport. Only 29.3% of mainstream athletes felt similarly.

Finally, I just wanted to know, "Does competition matter?" That is what I asked these two groups and they responded as follows. 45.5% of surfers stated that competition did matter. Almost twice that amount (89.7%) of mainstream athletes also stated that competition did matter. More shocking was the converse: only 7.4% of mainstreamers thought that competition did not matter while 54.5% of surfers thought that competition did

not matter. Additionally, 3% of mainstream athletes thought that competition mattered "sometimes."

To understand the value derived from the experience of the athletes' participation in their sport, whether it is goal attainment, competition, socialization, or other extrinsic or intrinsic rewards, one last question was included in the section measuring attitudes towards competition. It asked whether or not athletes had experienced some type of euphoria while engaged in their sport. The statistics are almost a mirror image of the statistics for the question referring to whether or not competition matters. 93.5% of surfers said that they had experienced moments of ecstasy or euphoria while surfing, while just over half (54.5%) of mainstreamers reported they had.   Only 6.5% of surfers reported no experiences of euphoria in their activity and 45.5% of non-surfers also reported no experiences of euphoria while engaged in their sport.

Another section of the survey questionnaire attempted to measure the athletes' personal connection to society, social norms, and levels of adherence or deviance. There were no significant differences in mean scores or individual value frequencies for the surfers and non-surfers in how they valued society or their involvement in it.   However, percentage wise, within the study, surfers were more than twice as likely to report that they thought society, for themselves, was 'not important' than other athletes were, and the other athletes were twice as likely to report that society was 'very important' to them than the surfers were.

However, there were large and discernable differences in how the groups valued the importance of social status, group affiliation and how important it was to maintain or achieve it. The mean score for how surfers, as a group, saw the importance of social status was 1.9697 (A little important) and the mean score for this variable among the other athletes was

2.9853 (Somewhat important); a mean difference of 1.0156 significant at the .001 level. Not only was there a large difference in the mean score, but also in analyzing the individual frequencies, one could see that the over 30% of the non-surfers had categorized social status as either important or unimportant, but no surfers (0%) had indicated that social status was anything more than somewhat important. In fact, the surfer responses were fairly equally distributed between the 'not important', 'a little important', and 'somewhat important' values. The surfer percentages for little importance and no importance for this variable were three times as high than the other athletes. This is an indication that surfers value society more for its functional and organizational aspects than for its ability as a measurement instrument to reflect their position, be it positive, negative, or neutral, within society, than other athletes do.

When asked how important maintaining and achieving social status was for them, the two groups responded in similar fashion as the preceding variable. Surfers had a mean score of 1.9091 and non-surfers had a mean score of 2.9706; a difference of mean scores of 1.0615 also significant at the .001 level. Again, surfers had no responses of important or very important for this variable while approximately 28% of the other athletes did. 42.4% of surfers responded that this concept was not important to them, almost six times (7.4%) the percentage of non-surfers who responded in the same fashion.

Continuing with the search to find possible differences in the attitudes and behaviors of surfing athletes and non-surfing athletes in the context of social norms the athletes were asked to respond to the following four questions. Had they ever engaged in recreational drug use? Are they currently engaging in recreational (as opposed to performance enhancing) drug use? Did they consume alcohol at any time while under the legal age? Had

they done anything within the last three months that they could be held criminally responsible for?

Surfers, on the whole, reported slightly higher levels of under age drinking and criminal activity than the non-surfers, but not to an appreciable degree. Apparently about 85-90% of student athletes in this study had engaged in consumption of alcohol while a legal minor and approximately 28-33% of student-athletes had done something criminal within the last three months, but the differences between the groups was not significant.

Surfers, however, did report significantly higher levels of past drug use as a group (72.7%) than non-surfing athletes (35.3%). That is a report of over twice as many surfers, percentage wise, that had done recreational drugs compared to other athletes that is significant at the .001 level. Additionally surfers reported two and a half more times (27.3%) current drug use than non-surfer athletes of whom only 11.8% admitted recent drug use. This was significant at the .051 level.

In the section of the survey designed to investigate how surfers as athletes and other athletes prioritize their lives and their sport, I asked the athletes questions to understand what they give up to participate in their sport. Surfers in the study were more than twice as likely to miss religious obligations for their sport than other athletes in the study were, one eighth more likely to miss social obligations than other athletes, and equally likely, as other athletes, to miss academic obligations, but none of these results were significant at the .10 level.

When asked if they had missed work obligations for their sport, 41.9% of surfers stated they had as compared to only 16.2% of other athletes who stated they had missed work. This was significant at the .006 level. When asked if they had missed family obligations, 36.4% of surfers answered in the affirmative, a percentage almost twice as high as the

statistic for the other athletes (19.1%) who had missed family obligations.   This difference was found to be significant at the .06 level.

Creative and philanthropic output, potential, and tendency was another slightly less pressing, but intriguing conceptual area. Athletes were asked to indicate whether they participated in various creative pursuits. No significant difference between the groups emerged with respect to the questions that asked whether the athletes were involved in volunteer programs, the affairs of their family, or if they painted or drew at least once a month. However, non-surfers in the study were twice as likely to be involved in volunteer programs and in the affairs of their family as surfers. Surfers, on the other hand, (although not significant) were markedly more likely to write for pleasure and to read for pleasure. One significant result emerged. 54.5% of surfers reported being able to play a musical instrument fluently. 35.3% of the other athletes reported such skills and the difference was significant at the .066 level.

The main body of the questionnaire that dealt with student athletes' measure of importance for six general institutions of our society (work, school, law, government, faith, and family) did not bear forth many significant results. Generally, there were few significant differences in the mean scores of these two groups for the six concepts stated above. There were two exceptions. When asked, "How important is work and/or career?" surfers scored a slightly lower mean score (a difference of .2482) than their counterparts and the result was significant at the .055 level. Similarly, surfers scored a slightly lower mean score for their collective conceptual importance of the law than the mainstream athletes did and these results were significant at the .10 level. The other exception was in reference to the question that asked, "How important is government?" in which surfers, as a group, scored a slightly

lower mean score that was .0071 lower than the non-surfers mean score and was significant at the .065 level.

In further review of the institution section, I found marginally interesting results when looking at the extreme values (Not Important/ Very Important) for each variable. For the question concerning the importance of law, non-surfers were twice as likely to see the law as "Very Important" than surfers were. Surfers were over six times as likely to view the law as "Not Important" than the non-surfers. They were also four times as likely to state that obeying the law was not important than other athletes were. Surfers were only, approximately, half as likely to value work as "Very Important" as compared to mainstreamers and slightly less likely (-15%) to value work in their own lives as very important. In fact, surfers were less likely to highly value any of these institutions, when compared to other athletes, with the exception of family and religion in which they ranked these concepts higher than did the non-surfing athletes.

Conclusion

On Attitudes about Competition

The evidence suggests that members of the collegiate surf clubs in the study have a lower value for competition overall than do members of the more mainstream sports clubs like the basketball or volleyball clubs. Not only did the surfers rank competitive achievement on the graduated value scale than mainstreamers but they also had a lower overall rating for the importance of winning or losing. Surfers also were much more likely to respond that rules and competition didn't even matter, while at the same time, they indicated a higher level of importance placed upon their sport than did the athletes in the mainstream sports.

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To support, test, and understand the results of the quantitative surveys, I used the data gathered from the personal interviews to try to better explain the initial results. Of the seven surfers interviewed, only two of them indicated that they placed high priority on the results of their competitive surfing heats although they all possessed a high regard for competition in surfing. However, the nature and tenor of the discussion surrounding competitive surfing reflected that they enjoyed the competition itself, not necessarily the results. Metaphorically, it was the journey they sought, not the destination providing good evidence for the theory that surfing is legitimized in the eyes of its participants by its intrinsic value rather than by extrinsic rewards.

When asked to elaborate on what was good or bad about competition, the surfers conclusively said that the expression of their sport in a forum where it was appreciated by insiders and outsiders was the best part of it. The bringing together of many surfers to test their personal skill against the elements was a key theme. One surfer, who I'll refer to as Mikey said,

> (Competition) helps surfing. It pushes the performance level and keeps people involved, and keeps up the enthusiasm. Competition for me is legitimate, but it's not a personal concern. Maybe that's because for me, it's more about me and other people risking lives daily, outside of contests. Its more primal, more about survival and warrior-dom, but it's isolated. True competition is only against yourself.

This was an important distinction in that they mentioned the measure of their skill against nature, not against each other, suggesting that those involved in eco-sport derive a greater pleasure from the trial of the gladiator versus the elements, than from the contest of two gladiators. This subtle difference supports the notion that those involved in eco-sport and

surfing specifically, value self-determination above traditional values of success and attainment of cultural goals.

In responding to what was bad about competition in surfing, the majority (five out of seven) mentioned that the format of competitive surfing was limiting. They said that the way the contests were judged, even though judged by surfers, didn't reward risky maneuvers and creative expression. Apparently, in objectively attempting to create an ordinal ranking of maneuvers and waves, the judges subjectively homogenize the criterion that constitutes good surfing, effectively reducing the value of unorthodox approaches to similar waves.

The other main theme that emerged when asking surfers what is bad about competition was in reference to the development of big egos through competitive reward. Although the group of surfers, with one exception, agreed that the most talented surfers usually excel and win contests (as opposed to the one who was convinced that on any given day competition could be affected by environmental conditions, judges, lack of waves, or luck) they was no consensus among them as to what competitive success meant outside of competition. Some of them believed competition boosted surfing performance and winners were good ambassadors for the sport while others were convinced that competition was binding of creative expression in its format and that winners were merely conformists who could ride "three (turns) to the beach.". One of the surfers who resided in the competition-was-in-danger-of-creating-big-egos camp, said of competition that, "It make the worst elements of surfing, think they're the best."

Finally, in analyzing the cadre of responses to questions of competition, two elements recurred: The nature of competition and the value of competition. Besides some marginal

response that school competition kept student athletes out of trouble, much of the evidence and interviewee rhetoric confirms that surfers place a lower value on the value of competition. However, this stems from the fact that they debate what the nature of competition is. Charlie, a 22 year old industry-sponsored surfer said, "Surfing is competitive. You're always competing with the top surfers, for waves and for best maneuvers. But you're competing with each other, not against each other. It's more like you push each other more, but combat with each other less than you would in basketball or something. Its more about support" When asked to elaborate about the support and who supports it Charlie said, "Well you can hear people out in the water hooting and cheering each other's waves even if they don't know the guy. People will also compliment you if you get a good wave or a barrel or something. Your friends who surf support you, hopefully your family does, even though mine doesn't but that doesn't matter anyway. **Q:Why doesn't that matter?** It just doesn't. They don't surf so they don't understand. It's my own thing and I love it."

These last statements allude to the reality that surfers comprise among themselves. They support those, who like themselves, surf, and they don't worry about the opinions of those that don't surf, even their own family, even though many of these same surfers ranked the importance of their family involvement as Very Important. This is some support that surfers create their own reality in and out of the water, enacting more agency through their identity than in other more mainstream sports.

On the Experience

Referencing the question on the survey that asked whether or not and how frequently an athlete experienced ecstasy in their primary sport, I asked the interviewed surfers to explain the experiences with euphoria or ecstatic exhilaration within their surfing experience. Similar to the quantitative data of 93,5% of surfers experiencing ecstasy or euphoria while surfing, 100% of those interviewed said they had experienced the same feelings while surfing. They commonly painted epic tales of pristine surroundings, isolated encounters with wildlife, mastery of the present elements, harmony and communion with the immediate environment, and above all else getting barreled.[5]

I thought this last part was interesting, and indeed, unique to the experience of surfing, and so I asked them to expand upon that and to explain the experience of tube riding to those who do not surf. One surfer in particular, the only female interviewed, was extremely vivid and expressive in her account:

> Getting tubed, getting barreled, pitted, slotted, throttled, shacked, covered-up, whatever you call it, it's a sensational experience. You're actually inside of a living, breathing, thing and you're moving with it, capturing its' energy as it captivates you. You're moving with the energy and with the ocean at an interval that is changing like every tenth of a second or something. You don't know what is going to happen, but you have to right there (points to her eyes) and ready for anything, and at the same time, blindly confident that you know you are going to make it (out). It could pound you, lip you in the head, swallow you, eat you, or spit you right out. It's this experience that's totally amazing because you're conquering, maybe I shouldn't say conquering, maybe I should say dealing with something that has a hold of you for a couple of seconds, but it might as well be a couple of years, because the rush and the experience is so mesmerizing and its all you focus on. No work, school, job, boss, family, fights, friends, chores, worries, gripes, lovers, nothing but the barrel. It's almost as amazing as time travel. You're like (shakes her arms and hands and does the "deer in the headlights" expression) *Whooooooooooooaaaaaaaaaaaa!(Emphatic use of body language as expression.)*

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[5] A barrel refers to the period in which the surfer rides the wave inside of the falling lip, but on top of the face of the wave. In this fashion, he or she is enveloped within the wave and hidden from view if situated perpendicular to the direction of the face.

Q. What other experiences compare to getting barreled? Nothing, umm, nothing really. No other sport, even other extreme sports like skateboarding or snowboarding give you that opportunity to ride within a temporary room that's been hollowed out from the surface your riding on. I've heard some guys compare it to sex, and say that they've definitely been taken deeper (in the barrel) than any woman ever could (take them). Maybe an acid trip or skydiving or something. Being on an airplane is kind of like it 'cause you never know if you're going to make it when you take off or land and your kind of nervous and gritting your teeth. Besides that it's pretty much its own thing. Being tubed is the best part of surfing, like a grand slam in baseball, but not really even like that. It's more like the feeling of when you connect the bat to the ball and release. But in surfing your not going for the score, you actually don't control your reality to a certain degree, your just riding. You have to be in rhythm with the wave. Its probably like being born, but I can't remember what that felt like.
(Ehrlich 2002)

On Society and Social Status

Some of the clearest results were found in this section. Although surfers and other athletes did not vary mean wise in their level of value for society, it was clear that less surfers placed a "very important" value upon society than non-surfers. Even more clear were the results of social status. None of the surfing population considered social status, as a concept, anything more than somewhat important, while more than 30% of the mainstream sports athletes ranked social status in the upper levels of the importance hierarchy.

Conversely, three times as many surfers than non-surfers, percentage-wise, felt that social status ranked on the lower levels of the spectrum. Almost identical results were found when asked to rank the importance of maintaining or achieving social status.

I asked the interviewees similar questions about social status. They were extremely dismissive of the concept in their responses. They commonly made statements indicating that surfing was a spiritual endeavor and that the experience, and the joy derived from it,

superseded ideas of social status. One surfer, Chris, said, "I don't really care what people think of me. I do my own thing."

It was clear however, that the surfers do recognize status within surfing, based solely on performance and experience. Collectively, they admitted to admiring others surfing prowess and to feelings of pride when others recognized their own. The results from this portion were quite clear. Surfers rank the importance of their position in the social hierarchy markedly lower than other athletes do.

On Social Norms and Deviance

Reinforcing the results of the survey data, all of the interviewed surfers, save for one, admitted to trying drugs in their pasts, while four of the seven were open about current drug (marijuana) use. Similarly all of them had admitted to illegal underage drinking and five of the seven had stated that they had done something within the last three months that they could be held criminally liable for.

I asked a few of them to elaborate on this information. One surfer said, "I don't really do drugs. They'll make you burn out. I've seen a lot of surfers quit surfing and get into hard drugs. I just stick to chronic[6]. I think they should legalize marijuana because it's really not a hard-core drug and it is ready to use in its natural form. It's certainly less dangerous than alcohol, which is legal. I actually think all drugs should be legal, its just stupid to choose to do too many of them. But nobody should be able to say 'You can't do something'"

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[6] Extremely potent marijuana

Another said, "Anything can be bad in excess, but a little bit of weed never hurt anyone." Still others responded by saying that drugs were stupid and really kept people from achieving their dreams.

When asked to elaborate on criminal activity most of them referred to smoking marijuana, but one surfer discussed how he and some friends had fraudulently duplicated several beach parking passes in order to avoid paying the high fees.

Statistically, surfers appear to be more prone to deviance, but it is not clear from the aim of this study whether it is surfing that leads its participants to the mindset that is amenable to deviance or whether it attracts those with an already developed propensity for it. It certainly did show that that they are more likely to think for themselves, rather than in the bounds of the law and the society than other athletes. The responses from the interview portion provided a little more depth to the question of why surfers may be more prone to deviance, not indicating that surfers are so rebellious per se, but that there exists more of an attitude that says, "What's the big deal?" The information from this and the previous section on social status supports the hypothesis that surfers have a more developed internal locus of control, are more apt to form their own interpretations, and are more likely to enact their own self-efficacy based on these interpretations, than athletes from mainstream sports are.

On Institutions

The results from this section were far less conclusive than the other sections. In fact there were few significant results. Aside from some large differences in the *frequencies* of the most extreme values (not important, very important) the institution section did not

provide consistently significant results within the .10 level. However, the frequency

discrepancies and the presence of significant result at the .055 level for work, where

surfers ranked much lower on their measure of importance, and government, where

surfers also ranked its importance   lower than other athletes (significant at the .065 level)

do suggest some things. I asked the interviewees about their personal values for the

institutions of society. They responded in generally supportive fashion for most of the

conceptual and tangible institutions, although they seemed to care little for government

and the law in their verbal responses. Chris said, "I usually surf instead of going to

school. Actually, if I had it my way, I wouldn't work, go to school, vote, or do pretty

much anything except for surfing, eating, sleeping, playing music, and hanging with my

friends."

The survey results that showed a higher level of importance among surfers for the element

of faith were qualified when referenced to the responses of the personal interviews.

Surfers described surfing as a spiritually uplifting experience and said that this aspect of

the sport was very important to them overall, hence it is not surprising that, as a group,

they were more likely to value faith, (not necessarily organized faith), than mainstream

athletes were.

   Overall, this section did not provide support for the hypothesis that surfers are more

likely to reject the institutions of society. This does not necessarily mean that it provides

support for what would be the null hypothesis (that they do highly value the institutions

of society) either, although it may. It is more likely that the scope of the research was

subject to limitations based on concurrent institutional bias. To be clearer, these student

surfers from the University of California, California State, and California Community

College systems, being themselves already invested in institutions for higher learning, may subsequently be already invested in attaining cultural prescribed goals based in the institutions of society.

On Priorities

In the survey, surfers were found to have higher incidences of work absenteeism and of missing family obligations, both at statistically significant levels. In other areas, such as social and school obligations, the results were more muted. I asked the surfers in the personal interviews to expand on how they prioritize surfing in their lives.

One question that was asked was, "Do you schedule your surfing around life, or your life around surfing?"

Five out of the seven said that they scheduled their other obligations around surfing. One surfer summated the general response in saying, "Surfing takes priority over all other things. When there's waves, I'm on it."

Of the two that didn't, one said that she could not surf as much as she would like "because of the bondage of every day life." This was an interesting reference considering that she had previously been a vociferous supporter of the institutions portion of the interview.

Returning to the surfers who placed high priority on surfing, one of them admitted that he had to give up a lot of things for his love of surfing. He mentioned that his girlfriends didn't like that he spent so much time surfing, that he had to take a series of low-skill jobs to work around his surfing schedule (that were easy to find in case he got fired for not showing up to work), and that his grades in school often suffered as a result of too much time spent surfing. He also elaborated on the stereotype of surfers and how

his bosses didn't like that he was a surfer and he had stopped mentioning that under the hobby section of his applications, as he felt all his employers had come to think of surfers as drug users and drop-outs.

Another surfer, whom I will call Greg, said that he frequently missed many things for surfing. He said he missed church all the time, but defended it in saying that, "yeah, I believe in God, but God means so many things. Surfing is very spiritual for me and the ocean is my church. I think God understands that and if he or she didn't then I wouldn't want to worship them." On missing work, he said, "Yeah, I've missed work a couple of times too. You blow some things off to go surf. I have to miss school a lot too. I lie a little bit to cover my tracks. It doesn't mean I don't care about those things, I just need to surf." His candid response to a question asking if he missed family or social obligations illuminated the importance of his identity as an athlete and more importantly as a surfer: "Yes, I miss time with my family all the time. I usually can't even find time to hang out with my friends that don't surf because of al the other things I'm involved in. They understand though, it's who I am. I just tell them I went surfing"

On Creativity and Community

A lot of the questions that were posed in the personal interviews did not correlate to the data gathered from the surveys. Many of these questions focused on the opinions of the surfers about what exactly surfing was and wasn't, what the aquatically situated community of surfers was like, and if there existed conflicts in surfing.

To each surfer, the three typologies of sport were explained (play, game, and sport) and then they were asked what surfing was. They all conclusively stated that is was play. Expanding upon this, they explained that it had no rules, or scores (beyond the contest

format) and that surfing was "the ultimate experience" whether the surfer is of novice or of professional ability. Three of the surfers compared riding waves and the trajectories of their maneuvers as art rather than strategic game playing or sport. One common theme emerged among all the surfers, and that theme was personal expression. This seems conducive to the statistical findings that surfers are significantly more likely to play a musical instrument fluently and to write and paint for pleasure more so than other athletes.

Surfers were asked if there were hierarchies in the water, and if so to explain them. The surfers, collectively, agreed there was a hierarchy and it was situated to provide 'rights' and access to waves. Aggregating all of the interview notes provided a hierarchy that looked like this. Short board surfers ranked a top the hierarchy with long boarders ranked just beneath them although long boarders commonly garnered more waves on account of the increased volume of their boards and the subsequent advantage in their paddling ability, (an example of real capital). Knee boarders were ranked below the stand up surfers, with body boarders even below them. Finally body-surfers received the lowest rung on the hierarchy.

The hierarchy was said to be based on respect, but the results didn't seem to support this claim. Although body-surfers were considered more respectable by surfers than body-boarders, they ranked lowest within the hierarchy. I wanted to know why and in asking them, one surfer (Chris) had this to say, "I think body-surfers are a lot better because they choose a pure line. Just themselves and the ocean. But the truth is, they can't paddle as fast and they just get in the way." This statement and the shifting status of the long boarders indicates that he hierarchy may actually be based in conflict theory,

pitting ocean participants, their capital (buoyancy and maneuverability of equipment), and access to a limited amount of resources (waves) against each other. Engaging the phenomena of lifeguard blackballing[7], which prohibits hard board use during its implementation, helps to understand how hierarchy and access to resources in the water becomes an important issue that may be worthy of further study.

Limitations and Implications

In review of this study, its methods and units of analysis, it is pivotal to acknowledge certain limitations. Chiefly among was the small sample size, which does not allow for generalization of theory upon the larger population. Secondly, the use of students to complete the units of analysis, although convenient, did not allow the researcher to obtain a sample of individual athletes who were unbiased in their investments into the institutions of society, and that may have thwarted the initial aims of the study. Thirdly, no personal interviews of the other mainstream athletes were conducted which may have discovered similarities and/or differences in ideology when compared with the surfer athletes. Lastly, the study would have been improved had a significant number of non athletes been surveyed to see if athletes, as a whole, are more or less likely to support the norms of society. Future study of eco-sport and of surfing in particular may want to investigate more socially significant queries such as levels of violence, misogyny, homophobia, racism, and abuse that may occur in sport.

For comparison, I would have liked to examine similar indicators of anomie in rock-climbers, bull riders, kayakers, etc. (Eco-sports as well) to other mainstream, goal oriented sports. This aspect of a future study may enable social scientists to examine how

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[7] Denoted by a flag with a black circle on a yellow field, placed on lifeguard towers.

the nature of "play", germane to surfing, may be molded by, or help create, the difference in participants of this activity as compared to participants who engage in more extrinsically motivated games and sports.

The study of alternative modes of sport is becoming increasingly more essential as the proliferation of alternative sports and their popularity continues. Eco-sports provide an additional element of interest for researchers in that eco-sport reflects the more common observational settings in research in the social sciences because they occur in a natural environment as opposed to popular sport that occur within artificial settings. Succinctly, they are more akin to the observational settings of every day life in that they share the qualities of an unstructured and unregulated setting.

Surfing, a sport that dates back, possibly, thousands of years, has been the precursor to a multitude of newer extreme sports activities like skateboarding, snowboarding, dirt boarding, wake boarding, etc. that have gained popularity and national commercial media attention within the last several years. The results of this study show that those who surf are more likely than other athletes to abandon or dilute the values that we are socialized into by society. As a sport, surfing is a valuable medium for research for a number of other reasons too.

Previous studies of other laissez-faire sports have tentatively shown that participants in these activities are more likely to form their own value orientations, decide upon their own desired goals, implement their own regulation, and encourage expression and acceptance rather than strict uniformity and dogmatic allegiance. Understanding that sports reify the values of the larger society, at least to some degree, maybe sports that elude the mainstream will reinforce a set of values that also skirts the boundaries of

mainstream ideology. It is important to embrace these differences, as one administrator

from a local high school reported to me. "20 years ago we had kids ditching class and

dropping out of school to go surf. Now we have a surf team/program and they get PE

credit for it and stay in school. A lot of them go on to become professionally sponsored

surfers and national champions." (Skip Moyer, Vice Principal Huntington Beach High

School 2001).

Coakley buttresses the need for research into alternative sports that stress pleasure

over performance in saying, "Although many people have used the power and

performance model as the standard for determining the meaning, organization, and

purpose of sports, not everyone has accepted it. In fact some have maintained or

developed other sports, grounded in values and experiences related to their connections

with one another and their desire to express those connections through playful and

enjoyable physical activities."(Coakley, 2001, 489).

Robert Merton's theories of anomie bear much significance upon this study and

others that investigate institutions and social norms and or deviance. In his discussion of

individual adaptation when one finds one's self in conflict with the institutions of society,

he states:

The social structure . . .produces a strain toward anomie and deviant behavior. The

pressure of such a social order is upon outdoing one's competitors. So long as the

sentiments supporting this competitive system are distributed throughout the entire range

of activities and are not confined to the final result of "success", the choice of means will

remain largely within the ambit of institutional control."(1996).

However, questionable as the results of this loosely structured, exploratory, and descriptive study are, his specific mode of adaptation, known as ritualism, is a better summation of the results of the data. "It involves the scaling down of the lofty cultural goals of pecuniary success and social mobility to the point where one rejects the cultural obligation to attempt "to get ahead in the world" though one draws in one's horizons, one continues to abide almost compulsively by institutional norms."(Merton, 146)

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