Understanding Lifestyle Sports

Consumption, identity and difference

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1 Introduction

Mapping the lifestyle sport-scape

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Prologue: alternative sport comes of age

> Pro skateboarder Tony Hawk is standing aboard a corporate jet on his way to a charity event in Houston. In his hand is a Heineken and on the table in front of him is a platter overflowing with lobster, stone crab, and jumbo shrimp. Doing his best imitation of former Talking Heads singer David Byrne, he stiffens his frame, taps his arm, and says, "And you may ask yourself, Well, how did I get here"?
>
> (Borden 2002: 1)

In May 2002 in a poll conducted by a 'teen' marketing firm in the USA, skateboarding star Tony Hawk was voted the 'coolest big time athlete' ahead of 'mainstream' mega-sport celebrities such as Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods (Layden 2002). If Jordan's status comes even close to Nike's claims (in 1999) that he is 'the most recognized person in the world' (cited in Mcdonald and Andrews 2001: 21), then alternative sport it seems, has come of age. Further evidence of the tremendous growth in alternative and extreme sports comes from participation figures; as Beal and Wilson (this volume) outline, in the USA the growth of skating, based on sales of skateboards, has outpaced the growth of a number of 'big league' traditional sports including baseball. Moreover, it is not just the US market that is seeing such a growth, nor is it just among young teenage men. For example, the snowboarding industry (in 1996) predicted that by 2005, half of all ski-hill patrons will be snowboarders (Humphreys 2003: 407); and in the UK, surfing became one of the fastest growth sports at the turn of the twenty-first century, particularly among women, and men in their thirties and forties (Tyler 2003; Walters 2002; Asthana 2003).

How do we make sense of this popularity in what I have termed lifestyle sport, particularly when one of the central characteristics of these so-called *alternative* sports is that they are *different* to the western traditional activities that constitute 'mainstream' sport?[1] As Rinehart (2000: 506) suggests, alternative sports are activities that 'either ideologically or practically provide alternatives to mainstream sports and to mainstream sport values'. This popularity trend, or process of mainstreaming particularly as manifest in the increased media and market appropriation

of alternative sport, has now received a great deal of attention from both academic and non-academic commentators on these activities. As Gliddon (2002: 1) notes:

> Surfing has appeal far beyond the surfers who provide the marketing cool. There's a surf shop in Singapore but the roughest water is the condensation on its windows. A boutique surf store competes with Chanel and Prada for the consumer waves of downtown New York.
>
> (Gliddon cited in Arthur 2003: 162)

This commercial co-option, particularly visible in the burgeoning 'sports style,' is a central debate in the wider literature on lifestyle sports, and a theme running through many of the chapters that make up this collection. However I will start my discussion by explaining what lifestyle sports are, and then outlining a theoretical framework for how we can make sense of their emergence and significance in contemporary Western culture. Lastly I outline the distinctive contribution made by this collection of essays to the emerging literature on these sports and their cultures.

What are lifestyle sports?

There is now a body of academic literature examining the phenomena of what has been variously termed 'extreme', 'alternative', 'lifestyle', 'whiz', 'action-sports'[2], 'panic sport', 'postmodern', 'post-industrial' and 'new' sports. Such labels encompass a wide range of mostly individualised sporting activities, from established practices like surfing and skateboarding, to new emergent activities like B.A.S.E. jumping and kite-surfing. While these labels are used synonymously by some commentators, there are differences which signal distinct emphases or expressions of the activities, characteristics that will become evident in the ensuing discussion.

The academic literature and thus 'labelling' of these sporting activities emerged in the early to mid 1980s with Nancy Midol's analysis of 'new sports', based on what she terms the 'whiz' sports movement in France (Midol 1993). Midol and Broyer (1995) developing Midol's (1993) earlier work, argue that a sporting movement developed around the 'whiz sports' which constitute new sport forms, and new communities based on them:

> This culture is extremely different from the official one promoted by sporting institutions. The whiz sport culture is championed by avant-garde groups that challenge the unconscious defences of the existing order through which French society has defined itself for the last two centuries. These groups have dared to practice transgressive behaviours and create new values.
>
> (Midol and Broyer 1995: 210)

In North America the idea of 'alternative sport' was adopted (Rinehart 1996, 1998a; Humphreys 1997; Beal 1995), although the 'extreme' moniker quickly became prevalent, as an all-embracing label, particularly in popular media discourse, and

most significantly in the emergence of ESPN's eXtreme Games, later renamed the X Games (see Kusz this volume).

The meaning of alternative sport has been most systematically considered by Rinehart (Rinehart and Sydor 2003; Rinehart 2000, 1998a, b). It includes an extremely wide range of activities – in fact pretty much anything that doesn't fit under the Western 'achievement sport' (Eichberg 1998) rubric. Rinehart (2000: 505) lists activities ranging from indigenous folk games and ultimate fighting to jet skiing, Scuba diving, beach volleyball, and ultra marathoning, also embracing various media spectacles such as the X Games. A number of commentators have also debated whether these activities are more appropriately (or usefully) conceptualised as forms of play rather than sports (see Stranger 1999; Howe 2003), and have highlighted the importance of their artistic sensibility (Rinehart 1998b; Wheaton 2003; Howe 2003; Humphreys 2003; Booth 2003). However, to understand their *meaning* we need to move beyond simplistic and constraining dichotomies such as traditional versus new,[3] mainstream versus emergent, or other related binaries such as sport versus art. Alternative sport, and so called 'mainstream' sport, can have elements of – to use Raymond Williams's (1977) categorisation – residual, emergent and 'dominant' sport culture[4] (Rinehart 2000: 506). As Rinehart suggests, the difference between, and within, these sport forms is best highlighted by a range of debates, concerning their meanings, values, statuses, identities and forms.

Despite differences in nomenclature, many commentators are agreed in seeing such activities as having presented an 'alternative', and *potential* challenge to traditional ways of 'seeing', 'doing' and understanding sport (Rinehart 1998b; Wheaton 2000a; Midol and Broyer 1995). Historically as Bourdieu (1984) has observed, many 'new sports' originated in North America, particularly in the late 1960s, and were then imported to Europe by American entrepreneurs (what he calls the 'new' and 'petite bourgeoisie'). With their roots in the counter-cultural social movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Midol and Broyer 1995) many have characteristics that are different from the traditional rule-bound, competitive and masculinised dominant sport cultures. Maguire (1999) for example, suggests that the emergence of these sports (he cites snowboarding, hang-gliding and windsurfing) and their challenge to the achievement sport ideology is evidence of the increase in the range and diversity of sport cultures, a 'creolization of sport cultures' (87, 211). Bale (1994), likewise submits that such activities present a challenge to the 'western sport model'.

Lifestyle sport is less all-embracing than the terms alternative or new sport; and although many lifestyle sports are often called extreme sport, the latter tends to be the way the mainstream media and marketers, rather than the participants themselves see them (Sky 2001).[5] As Rinehart (2000: 508) notes:

> Some practitioners – and writers – have disputed the very term 'extreme' as merely a blatant and cynical attempt to capitalize on a wave of oppositional sports forms, and, by doing so, for corporations such as ESPN to appropriate trendy oppositional forms.

This is not to suggest that the media are not central to understanding the experience or cultural significance of lifestyle sports. Rinehart makes a convincing case for the increasing influence of the electronic media in determining the shape of what he calls the 'alternative sportscape' (Rinehart 2000). Lifestyle sports take many shapes, including at the elite level being part of the landscape of 'traditional' sports (witness snowboarding in the Olympic Games), the X-Games (activities include a range of board sports including skating, snowboarding, and sport climbing – see Rinehart, 2000), and increasingly as a marketing tool for advertisers attracting youth audiences. Nevertheless underpinning these forms are lived cultures that are fundamentally about 'doing it', about taking part. Participation takes place in local subcultural spaces, spaces that are often quite 'liminal' (Shields 1992) lacking regulation and control, and the sports are performed in ways that often denounce – or even resist – institutionalisation, regulation and commercialisation.

Moreover, more important than classification is their *meaning* (Rinehart 2000). I use the term *lifestyle sport* as it is an expression adopted by members of the cultures themselves, and one that encapsulates these cultures and their identities, signalling the importance of the socio-historical context in which these activities emerged, took shape and exist. As I will exemplify, 'lifestyle sport' reflects both the characteristics of these activities, and their wider socio-cultural significance.

'It's a lifestyle thang'

In a radio interview in the USA (2002) Jake Burton, a key individual in snowboarding's history,[6] is asked about whether there was any 'agreed-upon definition of 'extreme sport,' or whether, it was 'somewhat in the eye of the beholder'?

> It doesn't have to be an extreme sport at all. There's a lot of people that, you know, snowboard in a fairly conservative manner. But I think what's a better moniker is maybe that it's a *lifestyle sport*, and a lot of the kids and people that are doing it are just completely living it all the time, and that's what distinguishes snowboarding from a lot of other sports. And skateboarding and surfing are the same way. And I'm not sure why that is unique to board sports, but I think the only thing that you can come back to is that they're so much fun.
>
> (Jake Burton 2002, *emphasis added*)

Similarly in my research on windsurfing, and in a range of other activities (Sky 2001), participants described the activity 'as a lifestyle' rather than a sport. It became evident that a particular *style of life* was central to the meaning and experience of windsurfing. Participants sought out a lifestyle that was distinctive, often alternative, and that gave them a particular and exclusive social *identity*. While this is particularly evident in board sports such as skating, surfing, and snowboarding, authors in this collection, and elsewhere, have charted the

importance of lifestyle in other new sport activities such as climbing (Lewis this volume; Robinson this volume; Kiewa 2002) adventure racing (Kay and Laberge this volume) and Ultimate Frisbee (Thornton this volume). Like other 'alternative lifestyle' groupings that have emerged from the counter culture these sporting cultures involve locally situated identity politics and lifestyle practices (Hetherington 1988: 3).

In the emergence of these sports and their associated lifestyles, we can see some of the central issues and paradoxes of advanced capitalist or late-modern societies, such as in the changing expression of self-identity, and the individualisation and privatisation of the act of consumption, even in seemingly public spheres (Philips and Tomlinson 1992). Theories about the de-stabilisation of social categories, and the increased fluidity of social relationships have triggered interest in the conception of more 'fragmented identities' (Bradley 1996; Hall and Du Gay 1996). As Kellner (1992) outlines, whereas in traditional society identity was relatively fixed and stable (based on a range of identifiers such as work, gender, ethnicity, religion, age), in late modernity, 'identity becomes more mobile, multiple, personal, self-reflexive, and subject to exchange and innovation' (141). It is argued that with the acceleration of change and increasing cultural complexity, the possibilities of different sources of identification have expanded, in particular the increased significance of consumption practices such as sport and leisure lifestyles in the communication and maintenance of self-identity for growing segments of the population (Chaney 1996; Lury 1996; Bocock 1993). Many of these commentators suggest that the relationship between class and identity has shifted;[7] for some like Bauman (1992) lifestyle has overshadowed 'class' as the social relations of production. Maffesoli (1996) describes the emergence of neo-tribes, collectivities based around new types of identification and interests such as alternative lifestyles, youth 'subcultures' and sporting interests, but that are more fluid in composition than subcultures, and that are not determined by one's class background.[8]

The close relationship between identity and consumption has become a key indicator for examining the changing social terrain in late-modern/postmodern society (Hetherington 1988).[9] Consumer culture presents us with an array of lifestyles to aspire to, manifest in a range of symbols including the leisure and sporting activities we pursue, and signifying self-expression and individuality (Tomlinson 1990). 'Leisure is particularly germane to consumption because it displays so many of the characteristics of consumer culture' (Chaney 1994: 78). These:

> new heroes of consumer culture make lifestyle a life project and display their individuality and sense of style in the particularity of the assemblage of goods, clothes, practices, experiences, appearance and bodily dispositions they design together into a lifestyle.
>
> (Featherstone 1991: 86)

The emphasis is increasingly 'on choice, differentiation, self expression, creativity, fitness, health and the body' (Jacques 1997: 18), characteristics reflected in lifestyle sport's cultures, identities and styles of life. Thus although the lifestyles of the urban middle classes have been the main empirical emphasis and point of illustration of these trends, other types of groupings, such as subcultures based around sporting identification, are also useful exemplars. In the emergence and evolution of lifestyle sport activities what is being sold to the consumer is not merely a sport or leisure activity but a complete style of life, one which is saturated with signs and images that emphasise many of these aspirations of postmodern consumer culture.

Yet, consumption is a socially and culturally constructed act which cannot be understood simply in terms of market dynamics, nor in terms of a 'position which seeks to preserve the field of lifestyles and consumption, or at least as a particular aspect of it (such as sport), as an autonomous playful space beyond determination' (Featherstone 1991: 84). To understand the sociological significance of these activities we need to understand the *context* in which 'free choices' are made; acknowledging that choice is often structured by and contingent on factors such as age, class, gender and ethnicity; and the relation of such activities to other dimensions of lifestyle and the media/consumer industries. As Lash outlines, the audience for postmodernist culture tends to be made up of the members of 'post-industrial middle-classes' (Lash 1990: 252). Likewise, as explored later in this chapter, the consumers of these lifestyle sports tend to be dominated by the privileged white male middle classes.

Postmodern lifestyles, postmodern sports

Some theorists have represented the emergence of these sporting activities, and the subcultures and lifestyles that develop around them, as a new phase in the development of sports, characterised by some as 'postmodern' (Rinehart 1998b; Allison 2001; Wheaton 1997; Rinehart 2000; Stedman 1997).

My own early theorising of the significance of these activities focused on this idea.[10] At that time few commentators were interested in these new sporting activities. Moreover, despite postmodern 'claims' about the dissolution of boundaries, for instance between 'Culture' and 'popular culture' (Rojek 1995; Connor 1989), most commentators on postmodern culture seemed to be (and to an extent still are) oblivious to sport as a central expression of leisure. Postmodern thought – if one can use such an umbrella term to describe the contested, complex and multifaceted intellectual trends that have come together under the banner of postmodernism (Featherstone 1988; Hebdige 1993) – has since had a significant impact on the ways sport is theorised, researched and understood. My conception of lifestyle sport as 'postmodern sport' I came to realise was in many ways a theoretically naïve idea. What I was really interested in was the changes that these (lifestyle) sport and leisure *cultures* and *identities* were undergoing in the theorised shift from modernity to postmodernity, and how the emergence and growth of lifestyle sporting activities were implicated in this alleged socio-cultural shift. Put

another way, what were the elements of lifestyle sports that seemed to reflect this shift towards postmodern culture?

To engage with these debates, and illustrate the ways in which lifestyle sport might be reflective of the core themes in the literature on postmodern culture, requires more than the cursory glance I could give in this chapter. However I have related the emergence of lifestyle sports to wider debates about contemporary postmodern culture, and will make some further observations about characteristics of postmodern leisure and sport. Yet irrespective of the theoretical legitimacy of such claims, their emergence and popularity needs to be considered in relation to these wider issues around changing contemporary Western cultures and identities. Whether one considers that we have entered a 'new' postmodern phase of capitalism – as espoused in Jameson's description of Late Capitalism (1991) – or that these 'changes' represent no more than a shift in perception, new consumer activities and leisure industries play an increasingly prominent and wide-ranging role, with the variety of consumer activities and leisure spending by a large part of the population in Western industrialised nations continually increasing, even in periods of recession (Henley Centre 1993).

Mapping identities in the lifestyle sport-scape

In the twenty-first century lifestyle sports are attracting an ever-increasing number of participants, who encompass a wide range of different experiences and levels of involvement, from increasingly varied global settings. Consider the diverse practices embodied in the description of lifestyle sport consumption offered by these two authors:

> [sports] for the cool by the cool, where fashion and music come head-to-head to produce the sort of off-the-wall action that allows the grazing generation to snack at leisure.
>
> (Roberts 1999: 7)

> When a sociologically circumscribed group has no other aim in life but to live in a world of waves or snow, when an entire life is devoted to one moment of ecstasy, it is time to consider the most intimate ways by which human beings build their own cultural landmarks and make them meaningful.
>
> (Midol 1993: 27)

The first quote evokes a common perception of lifestyle sports as superficial nihilistic, materialistic cultural forms practised by youthful practitioners, such as the Gen-X slackers (Kusz this volume), and experienced in seemingly superficial ways. Represented in this way, these activities appear to display many features of the postmodern landscape, such as a depthless image-based culture, seemingly without substance or meaning, experienced as fragmented and discontinuous (Jameson 1991), replicated in postmodern selves 'allegedly devoid of the expressive energies and individualities characteristic of modernism and the modern

self' (Kellner 1995: 236). These media-led perceptions are typified in film representation such as the rebel surfers in *Point Break*, the misogynist skaters in *Kids*, or the dangerous and often irreverent antics typified by *Jackass* (see Kusz 2002).

Nevertheless, such images are part of the lifestyle sport scene, and represent an important set of experiences and identities. As Rinehart (2000) has persuasively argued, the 'alternative sportscape' is increasingly controlled and defined by transnational media corporations like ESPN's X-Games and NBC's Gravity Games, as well an ever-expanding range of international and transnational commercial images and interests. Rinehart cites the increasing popularity of X-Games which in 1998 was beamed via ESPN's different sport channels to 198 countries in 21 languages (Rinehart 2000). Its appeal to the teen or youth market, and their 'counter-culture cachet' (Ostrowski 2000) is what has made a mediated event like the X-Games so commercially successful, despite being initially derided by fans and pundits as 'made-for-TV pseudo-sports created solely to peddle products to the much coveted teen male demographic' (Kusz this volume). This expansion of lifestyle sport programming has also been expansive outside North America. Europe's first extreme sport channel was launched by a British company in May 1999. Underpinning this initiative was the commercial need to tap into the 'soccer centric' British youth. Yet football's televisual costs were escalating and other traditional sport didn't seem to tap into the desires of these teens (Roberts 1999). Described as a 'cross between MTV and sport' the Extreme Sport channel broadcast events that 'were not so much made for TV as made by TV,' a 'territory that lies somewhat between mainstream sport and video games (Roberts 1999: 7). Thus many of these (predominantly young) consumers do not participate in these sports at all, so are labelled by some as 'poseurs.' As a Cornish surfer laments, 'loads of guys come at the weekends with blonde hair and surfboards on camper vans, and don't even go in the water' (O' Connor 2002: 8). Nevertheless, they consume the sports avidly and in increasingly diverse ways ranging from buying the commodities, to watching television, videos, and live performances to playing the video games.[11] These 'participants' seem to display the kind of postmodern grazing that Rojek (1995: 8) proposes is characteristic of the postmodern leisure experiences, in which he suggests individuals are faced with such a 'multitude of differing leisure options and experiences', experiencing a variety of different leisure activities, without ever demonstrating allegiance to any one of them.

However, taking the vision of lifestyle sport represented in the second quote above from Midol's anthropological emphasis, she signals a different emphasis, and one that is reflected in my own research on windsurfing in which I wanted to understand the significance and meanings given to these activities by the sport participants, the subculture members, however marginal their involvement. Those who *do* the sports range from very occasional participants who perhaps sample different lifestyle sports on a summer holiday, through the 'weekend warriors,' to the 'hard core' committed practitioners who are fully familiarised in the lifestyle, argot, fashion and centrally technical skill of their activity. Many of these latter types of participants are extremely *committed* to

one (or more complementary) activities, dedicating large amounts of time, money and effort investing in a lifestyle and social identity. For example windsurfers that also surf or snowboard in the winter; snowboarders that skate.

This emphasis on investigating the meaning of, and dynamics within, these leisure subcultures, understanding how these social identities and forms of collective expression are constructed, performed and contested, recognises popular culture's significance as the basis of people's identities. Like the identities constructed in many other forms of popular culture, lifestyle sport identities can represent an engagement with, or site of identity politics, a politics that is expressed around competing and passionate claims about the right to belong, and to be recognised (Street 1997). This approach is shared by many (but not all) of this book's contributors, particularly those who have adopted ethnographic methodologies. Of course, in our postmodern image-saturated culture, the media in all its forms provides many of the resources for identity; how we come to understand ourselves (Kellner 1995). However the 'constant stream of representation in popular culture' (Street 1997: 11) paints only one part of the picture. To understand contemporary sporting practices requires an exploration of what people *do* with this 'barrage of images and identities' (Street 1997: 11), and of 'the complex association between the lived experience and "ways of seeing" – as "embedded in inter-textuality and discourse"' (Wheaton and Beal 2003a: 156).

'Keeping it real': identity and status

> [identity]: it ain't where you'r from, it's where you're at.
>
> (Paul Gilroy quoting Rakim a rap artist)[12]

Previous research on lifestyle sport cultures has suggested that membership, identity and status are influenced by factors including commitment, attitude, style, gender, class, and 'race'.[13] However the 'real' or the 'authentic' tends to be defined around the performance of the activity, around 'doing it' (Wheaton and Beal 2003a). The *meaning* of participation is articulated around personal expression and gratification; the 'thrill of vertigo,' individuals own adrenaline 'rush' (Henio 2000). As Rinehart (2000: 510–511) citing Cook (1995) suggests, the 'pretenders' in lifestyle sports are soon revealed:

> A skater wrote to the editor of *Daily Bread*: 'who fucking cares what people wear when they skate?' Get a life! Any real skater should know that it's not the look it's the attitude. [sic]

Despite the visibility of symbolic markers of the lifestyle sport participant's identity, there are less 'visible' aspects of identity that are often more significant to the insider notions of 'authenticity' (see Kiewa 2002; Wheaton 2000a). These 'symbolic boundaries and behaviours' (Cohen 1985: 71 in Kiewa 2002: 151) include argot, technical skills (sporting prowess and style), 'attitude' and the use of subcultural media and space. For example commentators discuss the significance

given to commitment in the participant's lifestyles and identities (Beal and Weidman 2003; Wheaton 2003):

> *Thrasher* [magazine] used to disparage these people who didn't skate every day. I never understood these people. Obviously you should skate everyday. And think about it every minute of every day. I never went anywhere without my skateboard.
>
> (Wilsey 2003: 19)

For many of these subculturalists, particularly the very committed, subcultural statuses and identities were seen to be more important than other spheres of their lives, or identities, including in *some* cases paid work and national, gendered or racialised identities. This does not deny the existence of social inequalities in these subcultures, nor the centrality of gender, class, sexuality and 'race' in structuring identity, difference and forms of exclusion (see on page 16); but recognises that participants did not always concede these facets of their identities in these subcultural contexts. 'Often the most important "I/ we"-identity' (Maguire 1999: 186) of the windsurfer was their subcultural affiliation; that they are 'a windsurfer'. Nevertheless, although class, gender and ethnicity did not stop participants creating new identities and statuses in (some of) these subcultures, other factors such as the expense of the equipment, activity costs, geographical locations, and the time and commitment required to participate were effective in excluding many less-privileged participants (see for example in Wheaton 2003). In these lifestyle sports traditional social demarcations remain significant, but operate in more diverse and complex ways.

Subcultural identities however, are not static, but are contested and re-made over time, and (geographic and metaphorical) space. One way of illustrating the contingent and shifting aspects of these subcultural identities and boundaries, it to examine the relationship *between* lifestyle sport subcultures, particularly those closely interrelated in terms of origin, industry (including technology, consumer and medias) and membership. As already noted, many board sports have their roots in California surf culture in the 1960s (see Wheaton forthcoming). The special relationship between snowboarding, surfing and skateboarding has been described as a 'love triangle' (*White Lines* magazine 1996) due to similarities in motion, attitude and dress. Other derivatives from these board sports have since metamorphosed, such as wake boarding – a hybrid of water skiing, skating and snowboarding – and kite-surfing, a hybrid of power-kiting and water sports like windsurfing and wakeboarding. The chapters by Booth, and Beal and Wilson, discuss changes in the sport and identities of surfing and skating respectively. There are also synergies between different lifestyle sports industries and their media. Corporations make equipment for several lifestyle sports, sometimes under different brand names. Clothing companies like Quiksilver, Roxy and O'Neil sell to a range of lifestyle sport markets including skating, surfing, windsurfing, snowboarding and have been quick to exploit the potential of emergent and rapidly growing activities like kite-surfing.

Thus while each lifestyle sport has its own specificity; its own history, (politics of) identities and development patterns, there are commonalities in their ethos, ideologies as well as the consumer industries that produce the commodities that underpin their cultures. The main defining characteristics of lifestyle sport can be summarised in the following list of nine features. It is not exclusive, nor is it an ideal-type (which might suggest these activities are homogenous, fixed and unchanging), but it illustrates defining features that the subsequent chapters, and wider literature,[14] exemplify in specific sports and contexts.

- Such sports are a historically recent phenomenon. The activities have emerged over the past few decades, involving either the creation of new activities – such as windsurfing, ultimate frisbee and snowboarding (see Humphreys 1997; Wheaton 2000a) – or the adaptation of older 'residual' cultural forms, such as the (re)emergence of surfing culture in California in the 1960s (Wheaton forthcoming 2004; Booth 2001; Finney and Houston 1996), or sport climbing in rock climbing (Morgan 1994; Kiewa 2002; Lewis this volume; Donnelly 2003).
- The emphasis is on 'grass roots' participation. Unlike some alternative extreme sports, lifestyle sports are fundamentally about participation, not spectating, either in live or in mediated settings (such as watching the X-Games, or other media festivals). Nevertheless, practitioners are self-consciously aware of 'being seen', and presentation of self to others – whether in lived settings or mediated forms – seems to be a part of the experience (Rinehart 2000). Similarly Allison regards these 'postmodern sports' as representing a revival of Amateurism (2001: 44).
- The sports are based around the consumption of new objects (boards, bikes, discs, etc.), often involving new technologies (see studies by Allison 1986; Booth 1999; Lewis this volume; Midol 1993; Bourdieu 1984; Donnelly 1993; Midol and Broyer 1995), yet embracing change and innovation. Improvements to technologies have resulted in rapid developments in many lifestyle sports, such as the fragmentation and diversification of the culture, and its forms of identity. This fragmentation can produce new scenes, or even the creation of new activities (see Lewis this volume). For example Booth (this volume) describes the revival of long-boards in surfing, and concurrently the invention of tow-in-surfing.
- Commitment in time, and/or money and a style of life and forms of collective expression, attitudes and social identity that develops in and around the activity (Stamm and Lamprecht 1997; Midol and Broyer 1995). See for example, in skating (Beal 1995; Beal and Weidman 2003; Beal and Wilson this volume; Borden 2001); in surfing (Pearson 1979; Lanagan 2003; Stedman 1997; Stranger 1999; Booth 2001); snowboarding (Humphreys 1997; Humphreys 2003; Henio 2000), windsurfing (Wheaton 2000a, 2003) and climbing (Kiewa 2002; Donnelly 2003; Lewis this volume).
- A participatory ideology that promotes fun, hedonism, involvement, self actualisation, 'flow,' (Csikzentminalyi 1990) living for the moment, 'adrenalin

rushes' and other intrinsic rewards. They often denounce – and in some even resist – institutionalisation, regulation and commercialisation, and tend to have an ambiguous relationship with forms of traditional competition.[15] Most lifestyle sports emphasise the creative, aesthetic and performative expressions of their activities (cf. Wheaton 1997; Howe 2003; Humphreys 2003; Booth 2003). Rinehart (1998b) has termed these activities 'expressive sport' (rather than the reward driven 'spectacle' sports), they are rarely conducted for spectators or competitive practice, emphasising the aesthetic realm in which one blends with one's environment. Some practitioners refer to their activities as art.

- A predominantly middle class, white, Western participant composition. However despite being associated with 'youth' many activities have wider-based age ranges, and in some cases are less gender differentiated than 'traditional' sports (see discussion in Part 2 of this book).
- Predominantly, but not exclusively, individualistic in form and/or attitude. Ultimate frisbee and adventure racing are two interesting exceptions that are examined in this book. Rinehart (2000) discusses how ESPN and other media transnationals have attempted to promote 'team based' versions of alternative sport, such as Border-X in which several snowboarders compete alongside each other.
- They are non-aggressive activities (see for example Thornton, this volume on ultimate frisbee)[16] that do not involve bodily contact (Bourdieu 1984), yet they embrace and even fetishise notions of risk and danger (Fiske 1989; Midol and Broyer 1995; Le Breton 2000; Stranger 1999; Lewis this volume; Palmer this volume).
- The spaces of consumption are new or appropriated outdoor 'liminal' zones (Shields 1992: 7), mostly without fixed or created boundaries (see Borden 2001). Many occur in non-urban environments, and are 'cultural spaces in which one 'blends with' or 'becomes one with the' sea / mountain' (Midol and Broyer, 1995). Many non-urban lifestyle sports express a nostalgia for an imaginary past rural life, and a sense of nature as 'something mysterious and spiritual' (Hetherington 1998: 338) to be revered, protected and nurtured (see Lewis this volume; Midol and Broyer 1995; Wheaton and Beal 2003a). Urban-based activities like skating or B.A.S.E. jumping off buildings, adapt and redefine urban city spaces (Borden 2001).

The scope and organisation of the book

It is not the purpose of this book to chart the histories or characteristics of different lifestyle sports. The chapters are more critical essays that address either particular trends within a specific lifestyle sports culture (namely skating, climbing, surfing, adventure racing and ultimate frisbee) or explore discourses around lifestyle sports (such as risk, travel, masculinity and whiteness). The overarching theme is how to understand the social significance of this sporting movement, particularly as related to its consumption, and the expression and politics of

identity and difference. The authors do not necessarily embrace my classification of lifestyle sport, so use terms such as extreme and alternative. Nor do they all acknowledge or adopt the cultural meanings and social significance of these sport that I have outlined in this introductory chapter. Their methodologies are also different, ranging from 'insider' ethnographic accounts in which the authors are also participants (see Thornton; Wheaton; Lewis; Kay) – and in some cases also journalists documenting the activity (Kay; Palmer) – to those embracing historical accounts (Booth), and analysis of the inter-textual and conjectural texts that frame the discourses in and around lifestyle sport (Kusz; Palmer). While methodology is not the focus of these chapters, some do contribute to wider debates about the politics of representation and the nature of the ethnographic enterprise. Nevertheless, these different engagements with the cultural phenomenon of lifestyle sports, drawing on varied theoretical perspectives, collectively demonstrate its complex and contradictory character both in the lived culture and across popular media discourses.

The book is divided into two sections; Part 1 Commercialisation: culture, identity and change and Part 2 Ambivalent masculinities: identity and difference. These are interrelated, with some essays addressing themes central to both sections. In the remainder of this introductory chapter I will give an overview of these two areas, indicating the contributions made by each chapter. I conclude by highlighting key omissions, and direction for further research.

Commercialisation: culture, identity and change

Part 1 Commercialisation: culture, identity and change examines the increasingly evident influence of commercial forces in lifestyle sports development, sporting practices and identities.[17] As Humphries observes, 'Debates over selling-out pervade' – and consume – this 'new leisure movement particularly in its professional wing' (Humphreys 2003: 417). The expansion of consumer capitalism is particularly evident in the ever-expanding array of commodities linked to these activities such as equipment, clothing, videos and magazines. In 1999, surf clothing giant Quiksilver's sales of surf-related products had rocketed to over US$450 million (Abell 2001); by 2002 the global surf industry was reported to be worth around AU$7.4 billion (over 2 billion dollars) (Gliddon 2002 in Arthur 2003: 154). Distributors or importers of the multinationals like Quiksilver and Oakley exist in many countries, helping to produce standardised products and promotional materials. This market's ability to diversify and grow is reflected in the speed in which 'surf style' for women expanded during the 1990s, the catalyst being initially the success of the ladies' board shorts (see Booth this volume). Nevertheless, research in different 'local' subcultural settings has highlighted the complex and contradictory influence of the market on lifestyle sports cultures, particularly in the ways identities are constructed, and commodities are consumed in various lived contexts (Wheaton forthcoming, 2000a; Humphreys 2003). Commercialisation is not solely a co-opting force; lifestyle sports cultures – like many youth cultures – also adapt and change, contesting subcultural meanings, spaces and identities:

> Despite the 'resilient belief' that 'grassroots' or 'authentic' culture resists and struggles with a 'colonizing mass-mediated corporate world,' (Thornton 1995: 116) the media and consumer industries' roles are more complex, contradictory and fluid than simply incorporation and co-option; these subculturalists are not simply 'victims' of commercialism, but shape and 're-shape' the images and meanings circulated in and by global consumer culture.
>
> (Wheaton forthcoming)

Recent sociological research that has moved towards a more sophisticated understanding of the complex dynamics between subculture, the mass media, and global commercial culture (Thornton 1995; Bennett 2000; Muggleton 2000), and ways in which 'resistance' is expressed (see also Atkinson and Wilson 2002), is better able to explore these dynamics.

Furthermore, global consumer capitalism penetrates these lifestyle sports in increasingly multifarious ways. 'Selling-out' debates are not just about commodities, but relate to the (commercial) appropriation of lifestyle sports' ethos and ideologies – such as attitudes to 'risk', 'freedom', anti-competitiveness and anti regulation – repacking and selling their values and lifestyles for mass consumption. The institutionalisation process, especially as expressed through attitudes to competition and regulation, provides an interesting aspect in understanding the commercialisation of these activities (see Booth this volume). In sports like surfing, skateboarding, snowboarding and windsurfing, there have been (ideological and 'real') battles over their inclusion in traditional 'mainstream' forms of sporting competition such as the Olympic Games (Wheaton forthcoming; Humphreys 2003), and media-driven competitions such as the X-Games (see Rinehart 2000, 1998a).

Becky Beal and Charlene Wilson (Chapter 2) explore the contested and contradictory ways in which skaters' identities have been transformed in the context of rapid and widespread commercialisation of the US skating culture in the twenty-first century. Their discussion is wide-ranging, considering the impact of the X-Games, the importance and influence of the subcultural and mainstream medias, skateboarders' relationship with the skating industry, and the effect of these processes on *different* and increasingly fragmented expressions of subcultural identities. They reveal evidence of changing attitudes to commercialisation, demonstrating that skaters are less critical of sponsorship and professionalism, seeing the benefits they bring to the skating community. Nevertheless, they continue to resist changes that will lead to increased regulation or a change in the ethos of skating, such as in creative/artistic sensibility, self-expression and an individualistic attitude. Beal and Wilson also explore how commercialisation processes are constitutive of new, or shifting identities and status hierarchies within skating, exposing how these are intertwined with distinctions based on gender, class, age and 'race'. For example, distinctions between vert, ramp and street skating styles, in which the latter – which is more risky, less regulated and controlled – is considered the most 'hard core', are also reflective of, and give cultural power to, 'hard' working-class masculinities.

The discourse around risk is a theme running through many of the chapters in the book. Climbers, surfers and B.A.S.E. jumpers literally 'play with death' ; they are sports that are often 'free' from the restrictions based on safety (Midol and Broyer 1995; Callinicos 1989). Danger and excitement are often fetishised in the – masculine defined (see Kay and Laberge and Robinson, this volume) – 'go for it attitude' that characterises these activities. Catherine Palmer (Chapter 3) explores the 'selling of risk' in and around lifestyle sport, and its industry. Her chapter illustrates how these attitudes to risk and hedonism have been appropriated to sell mainstream products (see also Beal and Wilson); how 'risk taking has gone mainstream'. Palmer explores two revealing and concerning examples of this process in the adventure tourism industry; the widely publicised Everest expedition of 1996, and the Interlaken tragedy in 1999. These examples illuminate the potentially disastrous consequences of this trend to sell extremity to inexperienced participants.

Neil Lewis (Chapter 4) also explores attitudes to danger in his phenomenological examination of British climbers' embodiment, illustrating that 'doubt, contingency and risk' are central to the leisure experiences of adventure climbers. Drawing on Simmel, Heidegger and other 'critique of modernity' philosophers, he examines how philosophies about the 'sacred' spaces of nature (Heidegger), and the ambivalent character of modern technology, are reflected in different expressions of climbing. Technological development, he suggests, has facilitated both adventurous mountain leisure (risky with low levels of routinisation) and more commoditised touristic leisure with high levels of routinisation.[18] However the *traditional* climbers that are his ethnographic focus, let '*nature* dictate the route or the path' (Lewis, this volume, p81, emphasis added); they see 'authentic' dwelling as the 'proper' use of nature, which translates into the 'natural preservation of this cliff environment. These climbers resist these processes of commercialisation and rationalisation by deliberately seeking to maintain high levels of risk and uncertainty; British adventure climbers, he claims are 'prepared to die for their leisure experiences'(p81). Employing Lefebvre's (1979) suggestions that leisure spaces are not just an 'escape' from everyday life, but a place for critiquing it, Lewis argues that these climbers' embodied adventure practices highlight the 'continuing possibilities to engage critically with everyday life' (p89).

Douglas Booth (Chapter 5) charts the history and changing expression of the surfing identity and lifestyle in Australia. The surfing lifestyle in the 1960s emerged in the counter culture as an irreverent culture situated in opposition to 'mainstream' and institutionalised sport; however codification and professionalisation soon took hold, transforming the surfing culture and its anti-competition identity. Yet despite the widespread professionalisation of surfing, these 'anti-competition' and 'anti-popularity' debates and attitudes prevail. Booth charts how competition for prestige and physical capital among surfers is often centred on big-wave surfing. He explores a controversy in the surf community that was sparked by the emergence of tow-in-surfing, an assisted way of surfing bigger waves considered to be 'phoney' by many surfers. As explored in the next section

of this introduction, this pursuit of prestige through risk taking and physical prowess is often associated with masculinity. Booth thus explores surfing as a 'fratriarchial' culture that excludes women, highlighting contradictions for the identity of female surfers, and particularly their sexist commoditised representations in the surfing media. Booth concludes that despite the recent increase in female participation, the culture in Australia does little to challenge the gender order.

Ambivalent masculinities: identity and difference

Continuing with this theme of gender identity, Part 2 explores whether lifestyle sports challenge the gender roles, identities and power relationship in 'traditional' sports.

It has been widely demonstrated that traditional institutionalised sport has been, and still remains, central in creating, maintaining and reproducing notions of male dominance, and difference from women, and 'other' (for example, homosexual) men in many Western cultures (Whannel 2002; McKay *et al.* 2000; Connell 1995). Many high-level competitive and professional sport cultures promote and celebrate a masculinity that is marked by combative competition, aggression, courage and toughness, that can be sexist, endorse violence, often promoting homophobic and racist tendencies (see Carrington and McDonald 2001). However sport is not a 'monolithic structure; gender is re-created, performed and resisted differently in the 'many activities considered sport':

> The masculinities of the runner, football player, and rock-climber are qualitatively different; each sport combined various symbolic discourses to create a masculinity particular to the sport.
>
> (Anderson 1999: 56)[19]

It is therefore misleading to view 'sporting masculinity' either in its media representations or lived identities (as player or increasingly as fans and spectators) as essentialised and fixed. Like other masculinities it varies over time and cultural spaces, between men of different, backgrounds, particularly based on social class, age, ethnicity and sexual orientation, and is subject to a continual process of contestation, reinterpretation and revision (cf. Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994; Connell 1995).

Therefore, the central question lifestyle sport researchers have sought to answer is whether these newer non-traditional sports offer *different* and potentially more *transformatory* scripts for male and female physicality, than the hegemonic masculinities and femininities characteristic of traditional sports cultures and identities. As Thornton (this volume) asks 'do these new identities express or exhibit changes in existing gender, race, class, and body dominance'? How do these new sporting practices become gendered? (Anderson 1999: 57); how are these gender performances regulated and monitored (Butler 1990, 1993), and how is the marking of 'difference' or otherness related to exclusion

processes and claims to subcultural authenticity and 'in authenticity'? Research has examined how gender (and in some cases how class, age and racial) identities are related to membership status and associated exclusion process across different lifestyle sporting contexts, including: skateboarding in the US (Beal 1996; Beal and Wilson this volume) and UK (Borden 2001); windsurfing in the UK (Woodward 1995; Wheaton this volume, 2000b; Wheaton and Tomlinson 1998); snowboarding in the USA (Anderson 1999) and Norway (Sisjord 1997); climbing in the UK (Robinson 2002); surfing in Australasia (Booth this volume; Lewis 2003; Booth 2001; Stedman 1997; Henderson 2001); adventure racing (Kay and Laberge this volume) and ultimate frisbee (Thornton this volume). Chapters in the book make a significant contribution to this growing body of work, exploring new sporting sites, and adopting diverse theoretical influences and insights.

The chapters by Victoria Robinson (Chapter 6) and Belinda Wheaton (Chapter 7) explore whether the boundaries of sporting masculinities are broadened in the UK context. Wheaton's research in the windsurfing culture (Chapter 7) illustrates that the prevailing (but un-named) lived masculine subjectivity – 'ambivalent masculinity' – was less excluding of women and 'other men' than many institutionalised sport cultures, or middle-class work cultures in which they were embedded. 'Laddishness' particularly as played out through competitiveness over status, and masculine identification based on the subordination and commodification of women as passive, sexual objects, was largely confined to younger, elite men. Participants of both genders emphasised the supportiveness and camaraderie among men and between men and women in the culture. The younger men tended to be the most competitive over their subcultural status; their need to *demonstrate* their masculine identities in this context was greater than for older men who drew on a range of masculine identifies such as work and fatherhood.

Robinson's study of climbing masculinities (Chapter 6) also adopts Connell's (1995) hegemonic masculinity framework, which she uses to explore and map the diverse, fluid and at times contradictory masculine identities of the climbers. She explores their attitudes to competition, risk, intimacy, their bodies and female climbers. Robinson offers the idea of 'mundane extremities' to problematise commentators' focus on the spectacular, arguing for a theorisation of the study of sport into wider conceptions of 'everyday' culture and experiences.

Wheaton's, and (to a lesser extent) Robinson's chapters suggest that these lifestyle sporting cultures represent both a re-inscription of traditional masculinities – most notably in relation to 'compulsory heterosexuality' as well as the *potential* for more progressive sporting identities. Robinson however warns that the more transgressive aspects of climbers' masculine identities may not transfer outside of the climbing cultural sphere. Moreover, other studies, particularly where the participants are teenage males, and dominated by the less middle class, such as in surfing (see Booth this volume; Stedman 1997; Henderson 2001) and skateboarding (Beal and Wilson this volume) – point to the enduring nature of traditional 'hegemonic' masculinities.

It is not just the individualistic, non-competitive lifestyle sports that have the potential to '*do* gender' differently. Thornton (Chapter 9) and Kay and Laberge (Chapter 8) make important contributions to this debate, exploring the team and gender-inclusive sports of adventure racing and ultimate frisbee respectively.

Joanne Kay and Susanne Laberge (Chapter 8) explore gender relations in the ultra-tough and endurance-based adventure racing (AR) activity. Adopting Bourdieu's concepts (of symbolic power, field, and his social theory of practice) they explore how AR discourse vaunts the (traditionally male associated) values of *physical toughness* and *risk taking* for participation in the sport, while simultaneously privileging the alternative values of *teaming* and *risk management* (seen to be feminine attributes) as a measure of AR achievement. AR therefore appears to subvert and transform the gender regime of sport. However, the practices – as expressed by the participants' voices – contradict these wider representations of AR. Their analysis seeks to unpack this 'difference' between discourse and practice. They explore women's heterogeneous experiences and 'gendered form of capital' in this 'field of practice,' investigating women's different experiences, strategies and struggles for valued capital. Despite the potential for transgression, the authors conclude that AR is a symbolic site that 'naturalises women's weakness and thus legitimates male domination'.

Gender equality has also been an important issue in ultimate frisbee (Ultimate), seen as a symbol of its anti-establishment 'alternative' character. Andrew Thornton (Chapter 9) explores how gender, class and 'race' differences are part of Ultimate players' identities and sporting embodiment. Drawing on Judith Butler's (1990) ideas about performativity, and post-structuralist conceptions of identity structured in ambivalence, Thornton offers an analysis of the ways Ultimate players 'play around' with their sporting identities, *claiming* to be developing and living different modes of (gender) embodiment and identification. He concludes – similarly to Kay and Laberge – that 'Ultimate frisbee represents an interesting, if unrealised, potential for the subversion of dominant sporting identities'. Ultimate, he suggests 'fails to produce practices and identities that are beyond' those that are dominant in 'existing sports'.

Thornton's analysis also alludes to the ways in which Ultimate identities produce 'a general but unnamed reference group' based on normative heterosexuality and an 'unmarked, apparently autonomous white/Western self' (Frankenberg 1993: 17). As Frankenberg claims, 'the white Western self as a racial being has for the most part remained unexamined and unnamed' (17). Kusz's chapter (Chapter 10), informed by this race theory that has turned its critical gaze towards whiteness (cf. Dyer 1997; Frankenberg 1993; Pfeil 1995; Bonnett 2000), highlights that media representations of extreme sport have become important contemporary sites of whiteness. Kusz's conjunctural analysis of media discourses of extreme sports in North America at the end of the 1990s, shows how mainstream press articles have celebrated extreme sports as the 'symbol of a new American zeitgeist,' understood as the revival of traditional and specifically American values such as 'individualism, self-reliance, risk taking, and progress'. Kusz examines how these discourses give a specifically masculinised

and patriotic representation of extreme sports that re-articulates and naturalises the link between whiteness and America. This, he suggests, 'can be read as a symptom and imagined solution to North America's perceived 'crisis of white masculinity'. He interprets the construction of this particular white sporting masculinity as part of a broader conservative cultural politics that seeks to re-secure the dominant cultural positioning of white masculinity in the American Imagination .[20]

To summarise, these chapters suggest that lifestyle sports present opportunities for more transgressive embodied social identities that differ from masculinities in traditional sports. There are some departures, suggesting in some cases a 'broadening of boundaries'; yet femininities continue to be framed by discourses and practices that perpetuate stereotypes of white heterosexual attractiveness, and masculinities based on normative heterosexuality and whiteness, skill and risk, working within, rather than subverting traditional patterns of gendered and bodily domination in sport (Wheaton and Tomlinson 1998: 270).

Omissions and future directions

This volume cannot claim to give a comprehensive coverage to this complex, expanding phenomena, and the picture these chapters paint is one that is partial and incomplete. There are important omissions; gaps that reflect research on sport more widely. The focus here has been on masculinities, and so (reflecting the lived cultures) the voices of female participants are largely absent or marginalised in this collection. Most chapters have foregrounded gender as the basis on which to explore social identity and difference, which in some cases has resulted in the exclusion or marginalisation of other central aspects of participants' social identities, and particularly normative heterosexuality and whiteness.

Research on lifestyle sport more widely has – largely – failed to explore these multiple axes of difference. We need to consider the ways in which *white* masculinities and *white* femininities are articulated, and maintain and reproduce their privileged position (cf. Frankenberg 1993; Long and Hylton 2002; Scraton 2001). Do lifestyle sport cultures provide less 'racially' differentiated spaces than more traditional sports; and how do participants with different ethnic identities experience and perform their sporting identities?[21] Borden offers an optimistic view of exclusion processes in skateboarding suggesting that it 'has values that can transcend barriers of race, gender, class, and so tends to marginalize their importance and significance' (Borden 2001: 140). His evidence for this claim is that skaters in the 1990s come from different class and ethnic backgrounds and they declare this to be the case in skate magazine articles:

> There aren't the biases that exist in other areas of life. It's like we are our own race.
>
> (Billy Miller interviewed in *Heckler*, cited in (Borden 2001: 141)

Beal (Wheaton and Beal 2003b; Beal and Wilson this volume) however suggests that in the US skaters' attitudes to 'racial issues were often contradictory', and underpinned by racial stereotypes evident in other sporting spheres.

Furthermore, what are the experiences and identities of non-Western participants, such as Polynesian and Brazilian surfers? Surfing is practised in many non-Western countries. Lewis (1998: 66) suggests that 'capitalist colonisation' and 'continuing cultural imperialism'[22] is evident in many of the 'classic' surf films, in which surfers voyage to uncrowded waves in the previously colonised world.

Expressions of authenticity and identity in – and between – these subcultures also need further exploration. What, for example, is the relationship between the commodities and consumers in the context of increasing commercialisation; what is the part played by the different subcultural micro media; and how are these shifting notions of identity and authenticity played out across different 'local' and trans-local subcultural spaces? The temporal changes documented in Beal and Wilson's chapter remind us that lifestyle sport subcultures are not fixed in time or geographical space. Empirical research needs to map the subculture's dynamic relationship with the parent culture that it has emerged from, and the way that values, meanings and ideologies are contested, and change temporally and spatially (Donnelly 1993). People, commodities, information, technology and ideas flow across subcultural systems, a process which has been intensified by globalisation processes (Maguire 1999).The impact and influence of these global flows, particularly the flow of media, tourism and migration and their relationship to 'local' and trans-local lifestyle sport cultures, have as yet eluded sustained academic study (Wheaton forthcoming 2004). However as those who have studied the effects of globalisation on (sub)cultures in other contexts have illustrated, 'local' cultures interpret and respond to these global cultural flows of commodities, medias and images in complex and nuanced ways (Bennett 2000; Appadurai 1996; Lull 1995; Carrington and Wilson 2002).

Issues raised in this book also have important implications for policy makers interested in understanding, for example, *why* young people choose sports that exist outside of the 'mainstream' policy provision, or why any attempt to promote or institutionalise lifestyle sports is likely to be met with resistance. Furthermore, those who are interested in the use and regulation of open space may find research on lifestyle sports informing in understanding the motivations of these hedonistic yet reflective consumers of the countryside.

In summary, the chapters in this collection suggest that although these activities *do* differ in their meaning, consumption and identities from many traditional pre-modern and modern sporting cultures, there is only limited evidence of transgressive sporting cultural practices and identities (cf. Midol and Boyer 1995). There are however clear differences between activities, geographical location, and importantly differences depending on the degree of popularity and co-option of their activity in the cultures in which they are embedded. Nevertheless, as Wheaton and Beal (2003a) have argued, despite evident mainstreaming and co-option, explaining the *meanings* of lifestyle

sports solely in relation to 'market incorporation' and 'resistance' to the market, ignores the centrality of consumer capitalism and the media industries in their very inception and meanings of the sports practices. In these subcultural spaces, participants do not resist materiality, but contest the discourses about commercialisation, regulation and control, and importantly about who has power to define and shape those discourses (Wheaton and Beal 2003a).

Conclusion

Within these highly individualised cultural spaces of late modernity and among their predominantly middle-class male and white participants, a number of tensions and paradoxes in their consumption exists, such as between conspicuous consumerism and resistance to consumption; competitiveness and participation; personalised consumption and group conformity; body discipline and pleasure; freedom and control. As Kay and Laberge contend:

> Performance is paradoxical – imbued with individualism and collectivism, the ludic and the prosaic, aesthetics and kitch. What emerges are tenets that contradict and co-exist; participation and competition, amateurism and professionalism. Urban play and wilderness adventure, the authentic and the constructed, the youthful and the nostalgic, the self-determined and the regulated, the resistant and the compliant.
>
> (2003: 381)

Although lifestyle sports provide the possibility of re-negotiated identities, traditional structures of social and cultural power and inequalities continue to be reproduced within them. The emergently progressive elements in the sport cultures are constrained by, and co-exist with, the dominant and residual elements. That these possibilities of re-negotiation in contemporary society exist is progressive, but the 'ways in which they work within, rather than subvert, traditional patterns of gendered (racial and class) domination in sport, illustrates how cultural change can be contingent, gradual, partial, a matter of negotiation of and within existing social relations' (Wheaton and Tomlinson 1998: 270). Thus against the backdrop of debates about globalisation and fragmentation of culture, the perceived break-down of established cultural identities, the 'pluralisation of styles', and the ephemeral, spectacular aspects of contemporary culture (Hall *et al.* 1992) the studies in this book suggest that even among the white, affluent Western middle-classes, there are clear limits to the extent to which identities are free floating, and self-selected. Yet in contemporary culture, identity *is* 'subject to new determinations and new forces' (Kellner 1992: 174), and lifestyle sport practices and cultures provide one of these manifestations.

Notes

1 This of course raises important and interesting theoretical questions about how – if at all – we characterise the mainstream, a debate that has characterised much of the recent literature on youth subcultures and postmodern culture more widely. See for example Muggleton (2000) and Thornton (1995). Such work raises important theoretical questions, that bears directly on the ways we understand the 'alternative' status of increasingly commoditised lifestyle sport cultures; for example, how we understand, and assess, 'resistance' in a post-authentic, postmodern world characterised by ambiguity and ambivalence. See also Palmer, and Beal and Wilson, this volume.

2 Action-sport is a North American industry-defined term.

3 On this point see also Robinson, this volume.

4 Echoing Kellner in his investigation of contemporary media culture and identity, where he usefully advocates that 'rather than taking postmodernity as a new cultural totality, I would thus argue that it makes more sense to interpret the many forces of the postmodern as an emergent cultural trend in opposition to residual traditional and modern values and practices' (Kellner 1992: 171). Kellner outlines that it is precisely this coexistence of traditional, modern and postmodern cultural forms, which describes the 'postmodern' (1992: 171). The coexistence of emergent cultural practices with traditional and residual practices and forms is – following Kellner – what constitutes a postmodern sport culture.

5 In the recently published (at the time of going to press) collection on extreme sport by Rinehart and Sydor (2003) many chapters could also be considered to fit under the rubric of lifestyle sports.

6 Burton himself was one of the early innovators of the snowboard, and his company remains one of the largest brands of equipment (producing snowboards, boots, bindings, as well as a range of clothing and accessories).

7 Nevertheless as Lash submits, a distinction needs to be made between the decentring of individual and collective identities, particularly in relation to the outcome of different 'social class' identities. For example, he posits that postmodernism can either further the 'hegemonic project of the new middle-classes' or foster different types of collective identities among class groups such as around lifestyles (Lash 1990: 37).

8 Elsewhere I consider – at length – whether lifestyle sport cultures constitute clearly defined, and easily identifiable collectivities such as 'subcultures' or more fluid social groupings that can usefully be thought of as neo tribes.

9 While consumption is the focus here, clearly there are other arenas in which expressions of identity have been examined as important cultural and political issues; notably questions of cultural hybridity 'ethnicity' and racism, gendered identities, nationalism as well as new social movements.

10 My initial interest in lifestyle sports was sparked during the early 1990s, when I was introduced to theorists of postmodernity and postmodern culture during master's study. When I embarked on my PhD research I set out looking at the three sports of windsurfing, surfing and mountain-biking to see if these activities might be a new phase in sport that could be termed postmodern. Central to my initial ideas was the question of periodisation that these activities had emerged in or around the 1960s, the (albeit contested) point at with the alleged historical break between modernity and postmodernity occurred. The 'perspective' I adopted was based on Jameson's discussion of postmodernity as an intensification of capitalism; postmodernism, he claims is a new socio-economic stage, an extreme form of capitalism (1991:4). He argues the concept of 'late capitalism' suggests a continuity with the past, rather than the break or rupture with modernity suggested by the 'post-industrial' society concept (Jameson 1991: 11) Furthermore, Jameson (1984: 4) does not regard all cultural production as postmodern, rather he relates this 'cultural moment' to Raymond Williams' (1977) notion of dominant, emergent and residual culture. Postmodernism for Jameson is the 'cultural dominant' or hegemonic norm of production and consumption of late/multinational

capitalism (Jameson 1991: 4). The transition from one cultural moment, such as modernity, to the next (postmodernity) does not result in the complete collapse of the cultural and economic features of the previous era; many modernist elements will remain, however the postmodern cultural mode becomes the dominant (in Western capitalist societies), but not the only cultural mode. Jameson thus provides an approach for examining the specificities of the development and emergence of 'lifestyle sport in relation to the broader postmodern culture'. From this perspective, it becomes possible to explore the extent to which lifestyle sport are emergent postmodern cultural practices, formed in opposition to the dominant (modernist) sport culture.

11 I am mindful that such claims that 'real' participation is not mediated, evoke problematic binaries in which 'real' or authentic sport is not made-for-TV or commercialised sport (see Rinehart 1998).

12 Cited in Borden (2001)

13 See for example chapters in Rinehart and Sydor (2003); also Wheaton (2003, 2000a); Wheaton and Beal (2003a); Henio (2000); Anderson (1999); Rinehart (2000); Farmer (1992); Lanagan (2003).

14 Most significantly the exciting and long awaited arrival of Rinehart and Sydor (2003) just as this book was in its final stages. I have therefore attempted to make some connection with this text – a luxury not afforded to all this book's contributors.

15 Interested readers can find these characteristics documented in the studies referenced in the previous bullet point.

16 Although the use of aggressive means in turf wars have been well documented in skating and surfing. (See for example; Goodwood 1995; Abell 2001; Booth 2001; Borden 2001.)

17 I explore the issues raised in this section in greater depth in Wheaton (forthcoming).

18 Although his risk assessment in commoditised mountainous leisure contradicts Palmer's chapter.

19 Miller (2001: 10) is critical of the hegemonic masculinity thesis. He suggests that the gender politics of (mainstream) sport has become increasingly complex, particularly in terms of sexuality. He contends that in contemporary capitalism Gay men have become an increasingly lucrative niche market; that the commoditised sporting male body has become an object of male desire (Miller 2001). Yet one aspect of masculine identity that seems to be shared among lifestyle sports is the construction of masculinity through asserting their heterosexuality and subordinating homosexuality.

20 The themes Kusz highlights around the nostalgic representation of the white North American frontier man, are also echoed in Kay and Laberge's (2003) analysis of Warren Miller's extreme skiing films, and Thornton's analysis of masculinity (this volume).

21 An exception is Anderson who attempts to explore how 'race' is related to other aspects of identity and exclusion in snowboarding in the USA (Anderson 1999). See also Gottdiener's (1995) observation on surfing youth.

22 See also Kay and Laberge's (2003) discussion of American cultural imperialism in ski videos.

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