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**THE FLIPSIDE: YOUNG WOMEN'S UNDERSTANDING OF
THE RISKS IN SKATEBOARDING**

by
ALANA YOUNG

Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Abstract

Through the examination of 12 young women skateboarders' narratives, I explore skateboarding as a gendered performance which challenges existing cultural norms about gender through the corporeal display of risk-taking and the ability to withstand pain and injury. Most of the participants construct themselves as 'alternative' women who engage in 'masculine' practices, rejecting dominant notions of femininities. Although skateboarding provides young women with a space to complicate and challenge dominate discourses of gender, skateboarding nevertheless also reinforces dominant constructions of gender. Indeed, young women struggled to establish 'alternative' identities as they are not immune to the ideological power of the dominant codes embedded in the social structures. Using a feminist poststructuralist framework (Lupton, 1999; Weedon, 1997), I explore how discursive power contributes to the construction of women's subjectivities as skateboarders and risk-takers by examining how female skateboarders come to conform to, resist and/or reconstruct dominant notions of 'femininities' and risk.

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**PART ONE: EMPIRICAL, THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL
CONSIDERATIONS**

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to document young women's experiences in traditionally 'masculine' subcultures, I conducted a fourth year honours research project exploring the experiences of young women involved in skateboarding (Young, 2005). Interestingly, a majority of the female research participants alluded to the risks implicated in their skateboard participation. Although the concept of risk was not the focus of the study, their understanding of risks was integral to their explanations of women's minimal participation in skateboarding. Specifically, young women referred to the physical and social risks associated with skateboarding and identifying with 'masculine' street-based subcultures.

With regards to the physical risks, young women reported a fear of physical injuries to the face, which they associated with risking their 'beauty' and substantially altering their 'feminine' attributes. The cement or hard surface required for skateboarding was perceived as dangerous, as flesh is oftentimes exposed and becomes susceptible to abrasions. In reference to the social risks, female skateboarders explained that identifying with marginalised and 'masculine' youth subcultures led to harassment and exclusion. It was ascertained that young women are not socialised or encouraged to participate in skateboarding because it is thought to be too dangerous and against the dominant form of 'femininity/ties.' Women were more frequently ostracised and had fewer peers with whom to skateboard, whereas young men cited group formations and ample networking opportunities as benefits of skateboarding. The sexual orientation and abilities of female participants were questioned because of their participation in a sport thought to be highly aggressive and 'masculine.' The most prominent social risk reported among female interviewees

was the risk of being labelled 'masculine', categorised as queer and perceived as different from other women.

Aim of Research

This research explores how young women challenge and/or reproduce discourses of risk and gender through participating in 'masculine' skateboarding subcultures. Although women have now entered traditionally male domains, historical notions of what is deemed 'proper' for women still circulate and effectively limit or constrain leisure practices and spaces for women. In a society that defines young women and skateboarders in normative terms, a young female skateboarder is forced to negotiate her status and participation in relation to the dominant ideologies of 'femininity/ties.' The street-based youth skateboard culture has 'masculinized' its riding style and image, further legitimizing women as the 'other.' Skateboarding's roots lie within the surf culture (Weyland, 2002). During the first wave of skateboarding, participants leaped to stand up on the board, balancing on their bare feet to mimic the feeling and action of riding a wave. Surfers skateboarded when the waves were flat, altering their dependency on natural forces to the man-made landscape of concrete. Skateboarding was based on aesthetic variations of surfing gymnastics on boards, which required grace, balance and poise, attributes aligned with dominant constructions of 'femininity/ties.' Most importantly, young girls along the coasts were skateboarding in the early 1950's and 1960's. However, women's skateboarding participation was not always readily embraced. Peggy Oki, a professional skateboarder, recalls the other girls in an early skateboarding competition protesting that she skateboarded like a 'guy' (Paralta, 2002). Indeed, women skateboarding were accepted as long as they performed 'femininity/ties' via the corporeal display of grace, beauty and poise. Those who performed

‘masculinity/ties’ were met with resistance because they violated existing norms about gender and aggression, risk-taking and strength.

A rise in injuries among skateboarding youths precipitated a municipal clampdown and city by-laws were enacted banning the leisure activity within urban spaces (Brooke, 1999). As skateboarding was forced underground, young skaters began to appropriate private spaces (Weyland, 2002). As young adults [often males] sought new places to skateboard, they soon started to use emptied swimming pools. The appropriation of private swimming pools allowed for skateboarding to take on a new freestyle forum. What has been coined as ‘pool skating’ among skateboarders was pivotal in the development of vertical maneuvering (Weyland, 2002). Skateboarders developed the aerial and freestyle skating transpired from this break with gravity.

In the late 1970’s, skateboarders re-emerged in urban spaces as they sought new objects and landscapes (Weyland, 2002). They moved to the streets and adopted city space and architecture to ride and learn new tricks. Architecture and public property such as walkways, ledges, stairs, railings, curbs, monuments, garbage cans, and benches became obstacles adapted by skateboarders to learn new tricks and freestyle skate. Skateboarders use of public infrastructure as concrete playgrounds has sanctioned the leisure activity as highly ‘masculine’ and seemingly furthered the gender gap. Consequently, young women are oftentimes discouraged from skateboarding from a young age due to the aggressive nature of the activity and the potential for injuries, which are aligned with mainstream ‘masculinity/ties.’ Vertical jumps have become the standard of skateboarding today. This aggressive new style requires the risk-taking, aggression and strength, attributes culturally coded as ‘masculine.’

Historically, sport has been an important site for the construction of 'masculinity/ties' through teaching young men to be aggressive, to endure physical pain and to control their emotions (Whitson, 1990). Researchers in sport sociology have recently begun to examine the 'culture of risk' (Hughes & Coakley, 1991; Pike & Maguire, 2003; Safai, 2003; Young, White & McTeer, 1994) and explain that injury and pain tolerance become physical and symbolic representations of an athlete's sporting status. Athletes are socialised to internalise pain and thus injuries become routine, and exemplify strong character. 'Masculinity/ties' can therefore be confirmed through the normalisation of pain and injury through sport (Connell, 1990; Dunning, 1986; Messner, 1990). Thus, the risk of injury in the context of sport and recreation allows participants to confirm their 'masculinity/ties' or to defy the dominant ideology of 'femininity/ties.'

Rationale for the Study

Public debates identifying youth as a 'problem' generate displaced anxiety and distrust, legitimizing the need to place adolescence within the realm of medicine and psychology (Austin & Willard, 1999). Consequently, a majority of the research exploring the interplay of youth, risk and recreation has emerged from the field of medicine and psychology (Gonzalez, Field & Yando, 1994; Kerr & Vlaminkx, 1997; Widmer, Ellis & Trunnell, 1996). These studies were based on the underlying assumption that youth are 'at risk', a danger to themselves and others, further legitimizing the need for intervention. Austin and Willard (1999) argued that the majority of scholarly research on 'youth' and youth cultures has concentrated on the areas of social organization, psychosocial development or the reflection of adult concerns within the cultural practices of young people. It is important to be aware of these studies in order to situate new

research findings within the discursive constructions of 'youth.' However, these past studies of youth culture predominately document a lengthy history from an adult perspective and subsequently silence youth voices.

Although theorists of youth subcultures have attempted to explain risk-taking behaviours and subcultural involvement as a strategy for young people to adapt to increased social pressures, they have failed to discuss risk from the standpoint of young adults. Contemporary research focuses on youths' involvement in what researchers deem 'risky behaviour.' Again, adult and academic concerns have defined the boundaries and context of discussions on risk. How young people experience risk, understand risk and come to accept risk has received minimal attention. The intent of this study was to provide young female skateboarders an opportunity to discuss their understanding of risk. How young women construct themselves as subjects within discourses of risk is symbolic of their knowledge of social structures, social organization, power and individual consciousness. Young women's understanding of risk was critical in understanding how they construct themselves as gendered subjects.

The interplay between gender, age and risk was particularly salient for this study. Children are socialised to avoid risks, yet boys and girls develop different attitudes towards risk-taking. In a study of Australians' childhood memories, Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault & Benton (1992) discovered that women's memories of risk behaviours were associated with feelings of shame and guilt for having behaved irresponsibly and having disappointed adults. Conversely, it was found that men were proud of their recreational risk behaviours that courted danger and allowed for them to confirm their 'masculinity/ties.' These findings suggest that girls are expected from an early age to be responsible and to conform to rules imposed by adults. In contrast, boys are

almost expected to engage in risky activities as part of the construction and performance of their 'masculinity/ties' (Lupton, 1999). Thus, young women's decisions to become involved in skateboarding constitute a rejection of dominant notions of 'femininity/ties.'

According to Lupton (1999), counter discourses exist between these dominant discourses on the concept of being 'at risk', wherein risk-taking is not entirely negative. She discusses counter discourses of risk as beneficial and as providing a positive experience. Central to these counter discourses is a temporary escape from control, regulation and certainty, allowing for a sense of achievement, personal growth and self-realisation. According to counter discourses of risk, risky activities such as skateboarding can be conceived as a means of adapting to changing environments, providing young adults with pleasures in response to mounting social pressures.

Despite the evidence of counter risk discourses and the benefits derived from risk-taking, a majority of research has situated youth subcultural involvement and risk-taking behaviours within the dominant discourse of 'masculinity/ties' and risk (Cohen, 1955; Cohen, 1972; Cohen, 1980; Green, Mitchell & Bunton, 2000; Roberts, 1997). In fact, risk-taking has historically been associated with 'masculinity/ties' (Lupton, 1999). Men have often engaged in risk-taking behaviours to conform to the dominant forms of 'masculinity/ties.' These dominant notions of 'masculinity/ties' revolve around placing oneself in environments and situations courting injury or even death, whereas women's risk-taking behaviours have almost entirely been discussed and related to the expression of their sexuality and the risks associated with promiscuity and engaging in unprotected sex (Green, Mitchell & Bunton, 2000; Lupton, 1999). This study explores how young women skateboarders challenge and or/reproduce counter and/or dominant discourses of risk and 'femininity/ties.'

As risk has predominately been discursively produced as a 'problem,' little is known about the positive aspects of risk-taking, namely in the context of sport and recreation. To date, only the controlled risks embedded in recreational experiences have been examined. These controlled recreational risks have been portrayed as a means to 'save youths' from themselves, while empowering young adults through providing an environment that assists them in overcoming feelings of displacement, hostility, and powerlessness (Widmer, Ellis & Trunnell, 1996). This research, in contrast, draws from Lupton's (1999) discussion of 'edgework.' Edgework is a concept developed by Lyng (1990) which explains the actions of those who voluntarily engage in risky leisure activities. Lupton (1999) shows that youths situate risk within the discourse of pleasure, in which dangerous leisure activities become a means for personal growth and self-actualisation. Within this context, young adults can often develop a 'risk reputation' and enhance their social status.

Objectives

The intent of this study was to understand how ideas of 'risk' converge with ideas of 'femininity/ties' in shaping skateboard culture and practices as 'inappropriate' for young women. My interest in studying the interplay of gender, risk and skateboarding stemmed from my personal experiences as a young female skateboarder. I approached this research having identified with a local skateboarding subculture for over seven years and I have been skateboarding for approximately six years. As a young woman involved in a 'masculine' subculture, I have been rendered invisible and oftentimes marginalised. Not only am I considered inferior, weak and prone to risk and injury as a young woman, I have 'risked' a great deal in exchange for meaningful skateboarding endeavours. The goal of this research was to better

understand how discourses of gender and risk influence how young female skateboarders perform and identify as 'women.' Specifically, the study aimed to explore how young women: (a) understand constructions of risk and gender; (b) identify the physical and social risks of skateboarding; (c) deal with the physical and social risks inherent in skateboarding and (d) reproduce/challenge the cultural discourses on risk and 'femininity/ties.' This project allows for a better understanding of how women skateboarders construct themselves and give meaning to their skateboarding practices within cultural discourses of risk and gender.

Female narratives about gender and risk were elicited in order to better understand how women construct themselves as subjects. Female narratives about gender and risk ensured that the young women's experiences and understandings of risk and gender were brought to the forefront. Indeed, young women's participation in youth cultures, such as punk rock and skateboarding, has all too often been left absent from the literature. This study adopted a perspective that recognises young women's agency and thus considered them not as passive, but rather as active subjects aware of, and acting on, the dominant constructions of gender and risk.

In order to explore the gendered constructions of risk, this study moved away from the analysis of cultural artifacts, to explore women's understandings and experiences as embedded in power/knowledge relations. Many youth cultural theorists (Brake, 1985; Cohen, 1980; Hebdige, 1979) have relied on artifacts for analysis, rather than exploring how subcultural behaviours and practices are grounded in various power structures and knowledge relations.

This topic of inquiry was highly relevant because it gives voice to young women in order to further understand women's participation in extreme sports in light of the physical and social risks. The study of risk in the context of sport and recreation was necessary in response to the

recent surge of adventurers (Gutman & Frederick, 2002). Today, many young people are forging an alternative lifestyle in extreme sports and challenging nature, which is often analogous with risk and danger. While studies have repeatedly shown that risk is associated with the performance of 'masculinity/ties' and the avoidance of risk is equated with 'femininity/ties,' there is evidence that the dominant notions of risk-taking have been challenged by some women who seek to perform alternative gender identities through engaging in risky activities (Lupton, 1999).

To date, there has been little research conducted into the understanding and acceptance of risk among women and even less on the sporting context. Although scholars have shown that risk, danger and uncertainty captivate extreme sport enthusiasts (Kay & Laberge, 2002; Priest, 1992; Wheaton, 1998), there has been little attention paid to the interplay between risk and gender. The literature supports that risk is experienced, understood and perceived differently according to gender, yet women's understanding of risk has continued to receive minimal attention (Beck, 1992; Green, Mitchell & Bunton, 2000; Lupton & Tulloch, 2002; Priest & Carpenter, 1993). This study was necessary to further understand how power contributes to the construction of women's subjectivities as skateboarders and how female skateboarders come to conform to, resist and/or reconstruct the dominant notions of gender and risk.

CHAPTER II - LITERATURE REVIEW

To derive a further understanding of young women's experiences of the risks associated with skateboarding, this chapter presents a critical review of the literature on youth subcultures, skateboarding, gender and risk. The first section of this chapter examines the literature pertaining to youth counterculture movements in Britain, the United States and Canada to highlight the dominant risk discourses that operate alongside young people's involvement in alternative leisure. This section also presents an overview of the theories on youth subcultures and focuses on the inaugural and significant studies produced by researchers at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). The second section examines the research on skateboarding. Despite a recent surge in skateboard participation, there have been few studies on this activity, most of which focus on how skateboarders use modern architecture and urban space or on their social resistance. The third section critically examines studies pertaining to women's involvement and experiences in skateboarding and other youth subcultures. The central tenet occupying earlier research is that young women have not participated in youth subcultures. Through exploring the literature, I highlight researchers' polarisation of youth subcultural involvement and 'femininity/ties.' There exists a lack of knowledge pertaining to young women's involvement in youth countercultures. The final section of this chapter reviews the literature on risk to examine the interplay between risk, gender, age and sport.

Literature on Youth Subcultures

In contemporary Western society, age is used to define us, confining us to a 'place' within society, leading to the appropriation of desirable meanings, identities and actions. Age becomes hierarchical, with adulthood associated with responsibility, intelligence and stability. In

comparison, childhood is associated with freedom from responsibilities. This dualistic thinking perpetuates the idea that adolescents are 'caught' in the middle, not belonging anywhere, unstable and in a constant state of flux (Valentine, Skelton & Chambers, 1998).

With 'youth' being a constant source of bewilderment and fear for adult society, many academics have attempted to understand and explain the 'youth phenomenon' (Baron, 1989a; Brake, 1985; Cohen, 1955; Hebdige, 1979; Yinger, 1960). The first accounts of youth culture and counterculture movements were established in the 1920s. The concept 'youth' was socially constructed as threatening, irrational, representing a social decay in a capitalist and developed Western world, and thus legitimising the need to control youths that pose a 'risk.' In the 1920s, American researchers mistakenly associated youth subcultural movement with delinquency (Carrington & Wilson, 2002). Later, Merton (1958) again argued that 'deviance' was a method of adaptation to structural strains in society. He believed young adults' inferior socio-economic status and inability to acquire economic goods fused feelings of deprivation and frustration, which in turn, led to increased crime.

The academic study of 'youth' gained momentum during the 1950s and 1960s in Britain and the United States (Valentine et al., 1998). The work of academics such as Parsons (1942, 1950) and Coleman (1961) emphasised the significance and impact of growing class differences in a society structured in accordance to socio-economic status. Later, the work produced by researchers of the Contemporary Centre for Cultural Studies (CCCS) was aimed at understanding research on delinquency and the emerging class conflicts. Studies conducted throughout the 1950s and 1960s examined the significance and impact of youths growing up in a society structured by class. The major contribution of the CCCS was the idea that working class youths

are much more likely to be labelled and excluded and that this sense of alienation leads more working class individuals to youth subculture movements (Epstein, 1998). Therefore, the cultural theorists working for the CCCS argued that youth subcultural movements could be best understood through employing Marxist cultural theory.

Similar to older theories which prevailed until the late 1960's, the New Subcultural Theory extended the early accounts to demonstrate how youths, proactively and reactively, expressed their dissatisfaction with the status quo. Theorists moved away from earlier economic theories and turned to semiotics and linguistics. Teenage fashion, music, films and magazines provided youth culture theorists with new methods to further understand youth subculture movements. Appropriation was a particularly attractive concept to resistance scholars because it connotes agency, choice and the relative autonomy of the actor who consumes objects (Leong, 1992). The use of objects implied an active involvement in decision-making and a degree of initiation rather than a response to a stimulus (Leong, 1992). Youths' appropriation of alternative styles produced subcultural meanings while simultaneously consuming material objects. Appropriating objects allowed for youth groups to inscribe their bodies to communicate difference (Hebdige, 1979). However, the creation of alternative identities is not extrapolated or completely autonomous from the dominant culture. It is within the dominant culture that youths struggle to establish alternative identities and spaces. They are thus not immune to the ideological power of the dominant codes embedded in the social structures. Hence, appropriation is an act of negotiation (Hebdige, 1979).

The appropriation of alternative styles among youth subcultures was argued to be "guerrilla warfares" undertaken by subordinates against the ruling class (Hebdige, 1979). Youth

subcultures thus adopted and adapted material objects and signs of the dominant culture, producing a distinctive style in order to meet their individual needs and serve alternative purposes. Hebdige's (1971) study of mod subcultures revealed that members adopted mainstream consumer commodities as artefacts in an attempt to transform their meanings and the dominant values of the dominant consumer culture. Studies on the Teddies attributed the teds' risky and violent behaviour to their childhood experiences, during a period of war and contemporary social ills (Jefferson, 1973). Teds captured the media's attention with their public disturbances, sudden violence and increasing delinquency after the Second World War. Clarke's (1973) insightful account of the skinhead movement showed that this was a culture of resistance, conceptualised as 'masculine', where 'masculinity/ties' were affirmed through physical toughness and the 'risky' activities of 'queer bashing' and football hooliganism. These youth movements are highly influential as they give form to an image from which today's youth movements draw on.

Punk subcultures gained momentum in 1976 (Leblanc, 1999), capturing the attention of the mass media due to members' unique style of dress and ability to create an alternative persona. Unlike previous youth countercultures, punks purposely assumed the role of "society's alienated outcasts" (Lamy & Levin, 1985, p.157). The punk counterculture provides young people with an alternative and collective environment, allowing for the development of political consciousness and the formulation of counter ideology. In a Canadian study of a West Coast punk subculture, Baron (1989a) argued that punk countercultures are sub-divided on the basis of gender. He suggested that the punk movement was a social activity for women and an avenue of resistance for men. Therefore, he contends that resistance is gendered. Despite his

acknowledgement of women's involvement in youth subcultures and gender differences in associating with these movements, Baron (1989a) failed to contextualise young women's involvement in countercultures. In a more recent account of punk subcultures, Leblanc (1999) brought underground subcultures to the forefront to critically examine the subtexts of the hidden and forgotten history of women's role in the development of punk subcultures. Leblanc (1999) argued that despite women's integral role in the development of punk rock, women remain marginalised and located outside rhetorical 'egalitarian' subcultures. The punk movement allowed for women to experiment with other gender transgressions, yet remains not as liberating and accepting of women despite the subcultures' alternative values, beliefs and ideologies. Leblanc (1999) confirmed that punk subcultures are still a site where women remain marginalised and silenced.

The history of the teds, mods, skinheads and punks provides insightful contextualization to understand skateboard youth subcultures, which have also formed around risk-taking behaviours and anti-authority temperaments. The history of youth cultures reveals that young women's involvement in 'masculine' youth cultures contradicts the dominant constructions of 'femininity/ties' in a gendered society. This is problematic as today's youth countercultures model the behaviours and styles of earlier subcultures reproducing dominant ideologies of 'masculinity/ties' consequently restricting women's participation.

Critique of Youth Culture Theories

Without undermining the importance and influence of the works produced by the scholars from the CCCS, the emphasis has been on young people's resistance to the dominant culture.

Carrington and Leaman (1983) argued that youth subcultures do not defy governance, rather they entail forms of self-governance. Accounts of youth subcultures should not begin from the premise of a shared, resistant consciousness, but rather with detailed investigations of self-shaping and policing routines. Tait (1999) argued that subcultural style is not an expression of social class and economic position, but the construction of a particular habitus and form of governance. Inequalities and oppressions are inherent to governance and policing practices. Hence, many scholars have glorified the strategy of resistance, ignoring the hierarchy and oppressive systems operating within many subcultures that serve to oppress and marginalise minority participants.

The effects of post-industrialisation and the growing amounts of free time available to young people has significantly altered features of post-war subcultures. The socio-cultural changes have given rise to new contemporary youth cultures based on a state of mind, expressed through lifestyles and without rigid forms of organizations (Maffesoli, 1996). The problems identified with the works produced by scholars at the CCCS, combined with the socio-cultural changes have given rise to an emerging study of youth culture termed 'post-subcultural' theory. Post-subcultural theory is important in examining the collective activities, practices and identities of those involved in skateboarding subcultures. Miles (2000), one of the post-subcultural writers, rejected the term 'subculture' in favour of 'lifestyle', as it more accurately reflects shifting identity politics among contemporary youth. To Miles (2000), lifestyle connotes reflexivity and young people's agency in the making and remaking of their identities. Post-subcultural theory considers the role played by youth in the construction of 'subcultural' identity. Therefore, youth

are not passive victims of culture but are active agents capable of resistance and constructing 'alternative' identities.

Post-subcultural theory stresses the importance of 'depoliticizing' youth culture (Carrington & Wilson, 2002). Researchers for the CCCS never considered the issue of young people participating in subcultures for 'fun.' Baron (1989b) suggested that members of more contemporary countercultures do not necessarily make a commitment to all aspects of the counter ideologies. Indeed, it may be that some youths take on the 'punk' style (e.g., dress, vocabulary, music) as a consumption practice rather than as a strategic political statement. One can then conclude that subcultures are not homogeneous entities and that there are varying levels of political consciousness raising among members.

Many cultural theorists have mistakenly perceived youth subcultures to be homogeneous groups (Clarke, 1973; Cohen, 1955; Cohen, 1980; Hebdige, 1979; Jefferson, 1973). Not only have many theorists suggested that all young people organise around a shared political opinion, but also a common style of dress (Brake, 1985; Hebdige, 1979). The premise of this study was that youth subcultural style is not homogeneous as it is a creative expression and, at times, an individualised form of resistance. For example, many male skateboarders wear baggy clothing to represent an alternative 'masculinity/ties', while others have adapted a retro and tight fitting style. The variance in style of dress sometimes represents differing values, beliefs and/or years of adherence to the subculture. Similarly, Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) contend that there is a distinction between gothic, new gothic and minigothic variations of 'goth' subcultures. This differentiation pertains to age, style of dress, length of time an individual has been a gothic and perceived degree of affiliation to the subcultures.

Literature on Skateboarding

In his study of skateboarder's use of urban space, Willard (1999) explored the trivialisation of skateboarders, left absent from the 'public' record produced by more powerful adults. He argued that the trivialisation of skateboarders was problematic because youths are dismissed on the basis of moral disapproval and their complex and insightful understanding of history and power is denied. Willard (1999) contends that skateboarders are agents capable of resisting authorities' attempts to reform and control them so that they conform to more mainstream values. Borden (2000) added that skateboarders endeavour to establish alternative identities, attempting to live outside 'the box', while being simultaneously located within the core of society, the city. Skateboarders' alternative use of space becomes a means to establish differences and separate themselves from adults and mainstream society. Such studies of the spaces of skateboarding are important in that they explore power and resistance and situate young skateboarders as agents who actively exercise power to critique modern life.

Karsten and Pel (2000) also studied skateboarders' alternative practices and use of urban space in Amsterdam. They contend that the colonisation of urban space by skateboarders further legitimise skateboarding as a 'masculine' practice, attracting participants from a higher status group. In his study on skateboarders' alternative use of space and the city, Borden (2002) claims that urban space and skateparks function as enclosed, self-contained skate communities, creating a sense of belonging while concurrently precipitating intra-regional rivalries. It is within these communities that skateboarders establish allegiances to other skaters, allegiances founded on specific ideas about gender and sexuality. Borden (2002) linked women's lack of skateboard

involvement to the pressure to avoid displaying their bodies in a non-sexualised manner, the pressure to avoid injuries and the demand to focus on inter-gender social relationships rather than self-development. Indeed, in a different study, a young female skateboarder stated “it’s kinda crazy to see a girl out there skating... Girls aren’t supposed to be tough and if they are they’re considered to be butch or tomboy or lesbian maybe” (Pearson, 2002, p.16). Therefore, not only are dominant ideas about appropriate ‘femininity/ties’ reproduced within the street-based skateboarding movement, heterosexuality is also emphasised as the norm (Young, 2005). Borden (2002) argued that homophobia is evident within skateboard subcultures because the activity takes place collectively, with young men watching each other and emulating other men. To confirm their heterosexuality, young male skateboarders bond with other male skateboarders through aggressive ‘masculinity/ties’ by performing moves that may cause injury and pain.

Becky Beal (1992, 1995, 1996) is one of the few sport sociologists that examined skateboarding. In her (1995) examination of social resistance among skateboarders, she found that they challenge dominant Western ideologies through experimenting with non-traditional forms of ‘masculinity/ties’ in addition to reinforcing values of anti-competition and acceptance. Yet, as skateboarders resist dominant ideologies of ‘masculinity/ties’, competition and conformity, subcultures are not fully transformative and free of contradictions. This youth movement cannot fully and completely challenge all dominant ideologies, as it is influenced by popular culture’s attempts to co-opt the movement. Unfortunately, Beal’s (1995) study into the subversiveness of a local skateboard subculture failed to explore the relationship between resistance and gender. Women’s accounts of their personal methods of resistance and their experiences in a male subculture were minimally addressed.

However, in a different article, Beal (1996) did examine gender relations in subcultures of skateboarding, and explained that skateboarding exemplifies how sport and 'masculinity/ties' are not naturally predetermined or universal but are instead socially constructed by participants. Beal (1995) maintained that skateboarders emphasise participant control, self-expression and open participation, which are in opposition to conformity, authority and elite competition. Despite these alternative proclamations, there remains minimal female participation in skateboarding. This lack of skateboarding women compared to the higher number of skateboarding men is explained and justified among men and women skateboarders as an effect of 'natural' female inability or as women's personal choice not to skate (Beal, 1996). Skateboarding subcultures, similar to other youth cultures, perform resistance by redefining 'masculine' behaviour while paradoxically reproducing patriarchal relations (Beal, 1996). This is yet another illustration of contradictions within the youth movement where some dominant values are challenged and rejected whereas others are repeated.

Literature on Women and Subcultures

The near absence of young women's experiences in the research on youth subcultures characterises women's historical relationship to economic production, a sphere where women are assumed to be peripheral (Brake, 1985; McRobbie & Garber, 1976). McRobbie's and Garber's (1991) study of young women and subcultures suggested that their historical minimal participation in youth subcultures is a result of their being conceived as situated outside of the work domain and their being discouraged from 'loitering on street corners'. It is argued that women engage in leisure activities within the private realm, including the home and the social

organisation of family life. This dangerous assumption is evident in the words of Brake (1985) when he referred to a cult of 'femininity/ties' as the non-work dominated identity. Over 20 years ago, Lees (1986) coined young women's leisure as 'the bedroom culture.' The sentiment that a young women's culture is based within a separate but analogous sphere to the street has been a dominant theme echoed through Canadian youth research, as suggested by Leblanc (1999). McRobbie and Garber (1991) concur by arguing that young women do have their own cultural forms of expression and to learn more about them researchers need to move away from traditional male subcultures. However, it has been suggested that perhaps there are not two polarised cultures but rather a continuum of cultural forms of expression where young women's and men's experiences overlap (Van Roosmalen & Kahn, 1996). Van Roosmalen and Kahn (1996) argued that young women are highly visible and active in youth cultural pursuits. Indeed, their ethnographic study of young people's culture showed that young women were involved in sports and in hanging out at the mall, activities that occur outside of the private sphere. In sum, women's involvement, or lack of participation, in youth subcultures has been understood from a 'malestream' and 'masculine' perspective. Women's participation in youth subcultures occurs in alternative places and takes different forms.

'Malestream' research has resulted in the lack of knowledge about women's experiences in male-dominated subcultures (Leblanc, 1999). This can be attributed to the finding that young men join subcultures such as skinheads, gangs and skaters to validate their 'masculinity/ties' (Arnett, 1993; Cohen, 1955; Ferrell, 1993). McRobbie (1991) suggested that minimal female participation in youth subcultures stems from the prevalence of 'masculine' norms and young women's positions as ancillary and subordinate to men's. Furthermore, accounts of women's

involvement in 'masculine' subcultures have been described in sexualised terms (Leblanc, 1999). While conducting my undergraduate research into women's participation in skateboarding, I observed that male participants differentiated between men and women on the grounds of motivation. Many young men made a connection between female participation in skateboarding and attempts to be cool or to meet young men for romantic relationships (Young, 2005). Yet, the integrity of males who desire to meet female participants to satisfy their own romantic objectives was not put into question. Young men are not frowned upon or stereotyped for their desire to meet women, as it reaffirms their 'masculinity/ties' and heterosexuality. Thus, female skateboarders are often differentiated from their male counterparts on the basis of their perceived ulterior romantic motives.

Many studies are argued to be 'malestream' because male ethnographers only identify with young men in youth subcultures and thus only focus on male experiences. Consequently, subcultural accounts are argued to be skewed and incomplete (Leblanc, 1999). They furthermore reinforce patriarchy. In his account of West Coast Canadian punks, Baron's (1989a) argued that resistance is gendered. While never defining resistance, Baron suggested that male punks' resistance is exerted in ['masculine'] institutions such as school and work. Furthermore, he concluded that male punks are more resistant as they are more likely to engage in the [masculine] street-based activities of squatting and panhandling (Baron, 1989a). The punk movement was explored and defined in 'masculine' terms and thus divided into two contrasting subcultures. Although taking on the punk identity can be a means of resisting the dominant discourses of 'femininity/ties' for young women, Baron (1989a) suggested that women do not engage in resistance and therefore cannot attain the same type of subcultural status. Thus, researchers have

ignored the hierarchical and oppressive systems operating within youth subcultures, further marginalising members of a minority status.

Literature on Risk

Risk is a loose term that has been employed broadly and has not been rigidly defined. The term 'risk' has become synonymous with danger and unwanted events, ignoring possible positive effects and outcomes. In everyday lay people's language, risk connotes a threat, hazard, danger or harm, referring to a somewhat negative outcome (Lupton, 1999). Generally speaking, in a negative context, risk can refer to the possibility of physical, social or financial harm or loss due to a hazard.

One's understanding of 'risk' or 'risk perception' refers to individual judgments and evaluations of hazards that one is or may become exposed to (Renn & Rohrman, 2000). The understanding of risk is a salient and challenging issue, which has become a major focus of study among scholars in the area of both applied and basic research (Rohrman, 1994). A majority of the studies on risk and the understanding of risk have been generated in the field of psychology to examine the meaning of the concept of 'risk,' particularly its subjective understandings and evaluation (Jasanoff, 1993; Kerr & Vlaminkx, 1997; Priest & Carpenter, 1993). Although there is a substantial amount of research into how individuals respond to risks, there is a lack of literature investigating the social experience of risk (Renn & Rohrman, 2000). In fact, there is currently a lack of research on the understanding of risk as it relates to leisure activities (Renn & Rohrman, 2000).

The greatest application of risk perception research has been in risk information and communication (Brehmer, 1987; Renn, 1990; Slovic, 1992). This cognitive science approach has

emerged from the fields of psychology, statistics and economics, exploring risk in relation to the probability of a magnitude of adverse effects (Lupton, 1999). The majority of risk issues have been located in the discourse about the environment and technology, resulting in a narrow and limited approach in addressing risk (Rohrmann, 1994). Cognitive scientists have approached risks as identifiable and calculable and have thus developed predictive models that sought to understand why risks occur and why people respond to them in various ways (Lupton, 1999). Such a perspective reduces risk to a rational action, in which all behaviour becomes categorizable and anything that is not categorizable is deemed as irrational. Furthermore, meanings and behaviours associated with risk are reduced to an individual level, neglecting how risk is constructed through the social world. Individuals cannot be situated outside of cultural, social and political contexts where their beliefs are constructed and their actions occur. Lupton (1999) argued that a cognitive science approach to risk portrays people as free actors who withhold self-interests and thus behave in response to their calculations of risk as it affects them.

Lupton (1999) claimed that the broad usage of the term risk is linked to the changes inherent in the transformation of societies from premodern to modern and then to postmodern. The changing political, cultural and social conditions alter how people experience and have come to understand risk. Thus, risks occur and are embedded in specific historical and socio-cultural contexts. For instance, recent sociological literature has portrayed risk as a salient feature of industrial societies and modernity. The works of Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) has been influential in historicising risk and documenting the conceptualization of risk in late modernity. With science and scientific knowledge no longer seen as having the answers or solutions to new risks, individual uncertainty and security have been heightened (France, 2000). Beck (1992)

viewed late modernity as increasingly individualized and standardized, as individuals have become further removed from the traditional social forms, secondary agencies, social policies and economic cycles and markets. Both Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) perceived risk as an organizing principle that is prevalent in industrial societies, superseding that of class conflict (Green et al., 2000). According to Lupton (1999), sociologists adopting a macro approach to risk such as Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992) have focused on the ethical self-formation in the context of surveillance, discipline and regulation to construct particular norms of behaviour that serve to encourage individuals to engage in voluntary self-regulation. It can thus be argued that the discourses of risk act as 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1988) allowing for the regulation of self-construction. In contrast, Lupton (1992) adopted a micro socio-cultural approach to risk to suggest that risks have a more controlling and political function, which are used to 'blame the victim' and further the interests of the dominant groups.

According to Douglas and Wildavsky (1982), risk is hierarchical in that individuals who withhold the locus of authority and power experience risk differently than marginalised individuals. In an analysis of risk perceptions in France, Brenot, Bonnefous and Marris (1998) found that middle aged, white males (in a position of privilege) perceived risks to be low, which was associated to their particular trust in institutions and decision-making authorities. Slovic (2000b) added that Caucasian men perceive risks as less severe because they create, manage, control and benefit from many activities and systems within society. Thus, women and non-white men see the world as more dangerous because they are more vulnerable, benefit less from risks and have less power and control over what happens within their communities and their lives. Race, age and gender differences in the understanding of risk highlight the role and impact

of power, status, alienation, trust and other sociopolitical factors in determining the acceptance of risk (Slovic, 2000a). Thus, the distribution of power is germane to the study of risk. Taking into consideration the concept of power and knowledge, theorists have helped uncover gender and age differences in the understanding of risk (Hunt, 1995; Lupton & Tulloch, 2002).

Risk and Minority Populations

An analysis of risk must incorporate an awareness of power and knowledge, as experts withhold most sway because of their assumed 'scientific' and 'neutral' knowledge. Expert concepts of risk serve to normalise, locating minority populations within a framework of comparison to majority groups. Any deviation from the norm is considered 'abnormal' and 'evidence' of high risk serves to legitimise intervention. For example, expert discourses tend to represent young adults as caught in the middle, belonging nowhere, deviating from the norm and as vulnerable and susceptible to becoming involved in a wide range of risky behaviours, such as crime or drug use.

The variable of age has been linked to the understanding and conceptualisation of risk. In a study of risk among a group of Australians, Lupton and Tulloch (2002) noted that as people grow older they become more conservative in their risk-taking. Although risks cannot be completely eliminated, it was found that as people age they actively increase voluntary risks and purposely seek to decrease involuntary risks, as they perceive them as harmful. Thus, adults accept different types of risks than younger people. For example, participating in dangerous leisure activities was found to increase with age as participants viewed these risks to be a positive contributor to their lifestyle and sense of self (France, 2000). It was concluded that there is a life course trajectory of risk-taking and risk-avoidance. This is supported by Lupton and

Tulloch (2002) who discovered that people engaged in voluntary risk-taking behaviours as youths but reported higher levels of risk avoidance when family and other responsibilities became important. Interestingly, a few older participants noted a change in their approach to risk-taking in their later years, when their responsibilities to others decreased and they felt less need to be cautious.

Lupton (1999) maintained that of all social groups, young men take the most risks as part of their everyday lives. Drug use, excessive drinking, petty theft and speeding in automobiles are believed to challenge one's boundaries of fear and endurance and prove 'masculinity/ties' and adulthood. Young people's risk experiences differ from adults, as it becomes a means of developing an alternative identity and reputation (Green et al., 2000). Young people actively shape their social world through the development of risk identities and 'risk reputations.' A risk reputation can be voluntarily or involuntary (Green et al, 2000). For example, young women can involuntarily acquire a negative risk reputation as a 'slut' whereas young men's voluntary participation in risky activities, such as skateboarding, can enhance their reputation and assist in developing a risk identity. Among young people, voluntary and involuntary risk is not always perceived as negative. For many young people, risk is associated with danger and pleasure and thus is viewed as positive.

Lupton (1999) argued that risk discourses target specific social groups other than young people, such as women, racial minorities and queer individuals and operate as strategies of normalization and exclusion. Risk is cultivated and presented as universal, however, risk is subjective and tends to elide differences. Lupton (1999) suggested that risk is projected onto social groups that are marginalised and stigmatized as the 'risky' other. With the use of

dichotomies as a separation practice that is central in ordering, risk discourses create and perpetuate 'the other' as dangerous. The white, able-bodied, heterosexual male is idealized and valued, while women, the working class, non-whites, queers and the disabled are set apart as 'the other' (Lupton, 1999). Otherness is not solely bound by those directly in opposition to the established norm, but also that which is uncertain, confusing and blurring the ordering of binary oppositions (Douglas, 1992).

Binary oppositions and dichotomies rely on spatial metaphors. The concept of space is a cultural construction allowing for the other to be conceived by the dominant group as polluting public space. Therefore, the policing of public space allows for the dominant group to remove or limit members of threatening marginalised groups. Specific to this research, the use of public space is implicated in the binary opposition of woman and man. Space has historically been socially constructed according to patriarchal assumptions and values. Private space is argued to be gendered as it is constructed around the binaries and essentialised categories women/men and nature/culture (Damost & Seager, 2001). The ideology confining women to the household is believed to have spatially removed women from the public spaces of the city.

Risk and Gender

Many studies have documented that men consider risks as smaller and less problematic than do women (Gutteling & Wiegman, 1993; Gwartney-Gibbs & Lach, 1991; Slovic, 2000a). Steger & Witte (1989) suggested that the gender differences in the understanding of risk can be attributed to the process of socialization. They argued that women are socialized to be nurturing and are therefore highly concerned with the issue of health and safety. Indeed, Lupton and Tulloch (2002) found that women described their anxieties about physical risks posed to their

children, while in sharp contrast, men in their early or mid-adulthood stressed the financial risks associated with unemployment and the pressures of supporting a family. Indeed, the understanding of risk is inherently linked to one's gender.

Macgill (1989) argued that people's understanding of risk is established over a lifetime of personal experiences, as well as their location within social groups. Lupton (1999) claimed that one's understanding of risk is also influenced on the basis of one's position within such social groups. The understanding of risk thus becomes important to people's sense of self-identity within subcultures (Macgill, 1989). The voluntary risks that skateboarders take can often become what Lupton (1999) referred to as a shared challenge and unifying force. Within subcultures, those who blur culturally important boundaries are continually subjected to negative reactions because of the challenge they pose to group unity and the subcultural image portrayed. Female skateboarders who enter into 'masculine', street-based youth cultures can be treated as threats to the social order within these subcultures. Marginalised populations, such as female skateboarders, who take on the 'masculine' practices that are espoused in subcultures can be treated and positioned as the 'other,' subjected to anxiety, fear, disgust and abuse (Thomson, 1997). Hence, risk discourses can serve to exclude the 'undesirables.'

Gender differences were also reported with regards to voluntary risk-taking. Lupton and Tulloch (2002) found that men concentrated on the risks involved in sporting activities and leisure. Another analysis identified young male subcultural members as the most likely to engage in leisure activities that are deemed 'risky' as a means of performing dominant masculinities (Collison, 1996). Engaging in risky leisure activities allows men to test and define their boundaries of selfhood while demonstrating their control over the emotions of fear and anxiety.

While men engage in risky leisure activities in an attempt to conform to dominant notions of 'masculinity/ties,' women's conceptions of risk-taking are also highly related to assumptions about 'femininity/ties.' Dominant notions of 'femininity/ties' sanction women to avoid dangerous situations as they are socialised to believe that they are particularly vulnerable to risks such as sexual assault and mugging. Historically, while risky leisure involvement allows for men to perform dominant notions of 'masculinity/ties', assumptions about 'femininity/ties' sanction women to avoid participation in risky activities.

Risk in the Context of Sport and Recreation

According to Messner (1990), organized sport emerged as a response to social changes that undermined and presented a threat to patriarchal power. Sport is a cultural code that provides white, middle and upper class men with a form to confirm their inherent superiority and validate their 'masculinity/ties.' Women's exclusion from organized sport allowed for men to continue controlling women's bodies (Lenskyj, 1986). Thus, sport has been a method of increasing social control and decreasing the 'risks' posed by outsiders and 'otherness.'

With risky behaviour and deviance associated with adolescence, sport and recreation has played a vital role in authorities' attempt to morally reform youth. The success of recreation intervention for youth who are deemed 'at risk' for violence and delinquency has been well documented (Martinek, 1997; Offord & Knox, 1994; Reid & Tremblay, 1994). Research has suggested that recreational opportunities provide positive outlets for youth to engage in activities that promote self-confidence, self-esteem and self-awareness, building a sense of community and assisting in the process of empowerment (White & Wilson, 2001). With a growing public concern perceiving youth crime and deviance as a major problem in Canada, focus has been

shifted to restitution and rehabilitation to counteract against youths' engagement in risk behaviours (White & Wilson, 2001).

While sport has been used to control youth "at-risk" from social risks, sport brings along physical risks that need controlling. The physical risks inherent in sport is a way for individuals to "experience" risk. In fact, the safer western life has become, individuals' need for engaging in stimulating and risky activities has also increased (Florenthal & Shoham, 2000). It has been suggested that individuals cultivate risks to defy ontological security (Lupton, 1999). It would be for this reason that there has been a surge in the participation in risk recreation and sport. While more traditional recreational activities continue to expand, new sports, such as wakeboarding, a hybrid of waterskiing and snowboarding, continue to develop (Shoham, Rose & Kahle, 1998). Extreme sport enthusiasts are captivated by the inherent risk and exposure to the real or perceived danger that is involved in extreme sports and alternative recreational involvement.

As the concept of risk and risk acceptance has only recently been applied in sport research, few studies have examined risk-taking among sport participants. Frey (1991) stated that these studies have overemphasised the physical risks and ignored the influence of self-concept, value-configuration and social standing. Sport and recreational settings call for participants to risk the social, physical and emotional self by demonstrating skill, motivation and a lack of fear. Frey (1991) found that sport is a vehicle by which individuals are socialized to risk themselves for the desirable outcome of achieving success. Sport emphasizes the importance of competition, courage and a willingness to incur the inherent short-term costs, such as pain, for a long-term benefit.

Without denying women's increased participation in many different sporting avenues, sport remains a male domain. Sport is an important institution where young men are taught to value competition and aggression, to endure physical pain and to control their emotions (Sabo, 1992). Young and White (1995) maintained that the context of organized sport leads to a "no pain, no gain" mentality among men that becomes acquainted with a tolerance of risk and injury. In reference to the physical risks associated with participation in highly aggressive and 'masculine' defined sports, Young, White and McTeer (1994) have claimed that athletes who conform to the pain principle and demonstrate pain are at risk of having their 'masculinity/ties' questioned and oftentimes stigmatized by peers. Therefore, the physical risks inherent in aggressive sports are a crucial ground for young men to assert their physical 'maleness' and distance themselves from the dominant ideology of 'femininity/ties.' Although it was found that men do not enjoy physical violence and pain, the rewards of hegemonic 'masculinity/ties' were reported to be meaningful enough for them to expose their bodies to significant physical risks.

Related to the positive aspect of risk-taking, Hughes and Coakley (1991) established that according to the sport ethic, being an athlete involves accepting risks and playing through pain. The voluntary acceptance of sport's physical risks is a sign of courage and dedication among athletes. Wherein, the dominant discourse that athletes never back down from challenges in the form of physical risk or pressure was found to be prevalent among athletes.

The athletes' understanding of risk is pivotal in their decision to become involved in a sporting or recreational activity. In his study of the social risks and the meaning of sport, Frey (1991) ascertained that athletes or recreationalists tend to minimize or negotiate the physical and social risks within activities. People oftentimes underestimate risks and thus create a false sense

of security and control. Such an attitude is indicative that risk is part of contemporary everyday life in a risk society (Beck, 1992).

In their study on injury among female rowers, Pike and Maguire (2003) have suggested that normalising practices of risk produce docile bodies. They found that participants reported a stigma associated with engaging in injury-avoidance measures and an embarrassment at being injured. Therefore, female athletes perform according to accepted norms of pain and risk. Risks are deemed normal if they coincide with the dominant cultural views of acceptable risk.

In her study of divers' accounts of normal risk, Hunt (1995) found that male and female deep sea divers are socialised into subcultures and learn to distinguish between formal, normal and excessive risk, where 'normal' risk is described as practices that people employ on specific occasions and formulate as necessary, appropriate and reasonable. Divers who do not take sufficient risks or who demonstrate incompetencies reported receiving negative sanctions. Therefore, the normalisation of pain and risk is embodied for both male and female participants in diving sport subcultures.

Extreme sports and practices such as skateboarding become an outlet to reinforce injury, aggression and hegemonic 'masculinity/ties.' While extreme sports such as skateboarding provide young men with the opportunity to perform dominant notions of 'masculinity/ties', research has suggested that women's involvement in 'masculine' risk-taking activities challenges the constraints imposed by cultural notions of 'femininity/ties' (Hargreaves, 1997; Young & White, 1995). In a study of women's involvement in competitive boxing, Hargreaves (1997) showed how their participation challenges archetypes of 'feminine' passivity. Female boxers proclaimed that they have felt empowered through the physical challenges and danger of boxing.

Their involvement in a male dominated sport was said to challenge the vulnerability, passive and weak notions associated with 'femininity/ties.' Thus, there is evidence of some shifts in the dominant forms of 'masculinity/ties' and 'femininity/ties' as women have begun to perform alternative femininity/ties through engaging in extreme sports and risky recreation.

Young (1997) claimed that women's participation in non-traditional sports stems from their dislike of the hegemonic and 'masculine' model of sport. He found that women's participation in non-traditional and alternative sports stems from their quest to generate their own meanings of involvement and to reconstruct dominant forms of 'femininity/ties.' Young and White (1995) have suggested that women are engaging in alternative sports to specifically reject hegemonic masculinity/ties in sport. According to Krane (2001), alternative sporting activities, such as skateboarding, become a means for women to oppose hegemonic masculinity/ties in sport.

Conclusion

Many researchers have acknowledged the historical relationship between economic production and socio-economic status in an attempt to explain young people's resistant and 'risky' behaviours. The perception that youth subcultures are homogeneous entities has reinforced and perpetuated dualistic thinking. The literature reviewed has demonstrated that theorists of youth subcultures have established normative categories, marginalising the individuals that do not fit within these categories. These early studies of youth cultures are argued to have established the powerful and problematic categories of mainstream, resistance, dominance and 'masculinity/ties', which delineate the 'other' as submissive, subordinate and

'feminine' (Thorton, 1995). Young women's involvement in subcultures has been left absent from the record and oftentimes ignored or analysed in comparison to young men's involvement and experiences.

Although there is literature on skateboarding, most of these studies have focused on the social construction of space (Borden, 2000, 2002; Karsten & Pel, 2000; Willard, 1999). While few studies have examined the practices of skateboarders, even fewer have focused on power relations and gender in skateboarding. While Pomerantz, Currie and Kelly (2004) have noted the gender disparity in skateboard subculture, Beal (1995, 1996) found that members of skateboard subcultures experiment with non-traditional forms of 'masculinity/ties.' While skateboarding affords men with a space to challenge hegemonic masculinity, this study explores whether women also challenge dominant constructions of 'femininity/ties' through their skateboarding practices. There is a lack of account of young women's experiences in skateboarding and of research documenting young female skateboarders' understanding and negotiation of the risks of this sporting practice. The review of literature revealed that research on risks in sport is emerging (Hughes & Coakley, 1991; Hunt, 1995; Pike & Maguire, 2003; Young, White & McTeer, 1994), but there is a lack of studies that focus on young women's experiences of risk-taking in sport. While researchers have suggested that extreme sports (Young, McTeer & White, 1994; Beal, 1996), such as skateboarding, provide young men with the opportunity to perform dominant notions of 'masculinity/ties', there is evidence that women's involvement in 'masculine' risk-taking activities challenges the constraints imposed by cultural notions of 'femininity/ties' (Hargreaves, 1997; Young & White, 1995). This study is unique in that it focuses on how young

women discursively construct themselves as subjects by drawing on dominant constructions of risk and gender.

CHAPTER III - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I used poststructuralist theory, in particular Foucauldian discourse analysis and its feminist adaptations (Butler 1990, 1993; Weedon, 1997) to understand the production of gender and to uncover the discursive construction of risk (Lupton, 1990) to further understand the intersection between discourses on risk and gender and their influence on young skateboarding women's experiences. According to poststructuralist theory, meaning is constituted within language and thus cannot be guaranteed by a speaking subject (Weedon, 1997). A poststructuralist theoretical framework was fundamental in determining the extent to which a speaking subject is the product or effect of discourse. Poststructuralism placed an emphasis on the role of language in the construction of reality and rejects the notion that meaning is 'out there' and 'pre-existent.' For poststructuralists, there is no reality that is independent of ideology and language and thus, language is central to one's construction of reality.

A poststructuralist theoretical position situates reality as much more fragmented and diverse and thus, there is greater attention paid to the arena of discourse in culture. For Foucault (1972), discourses are part of the operation of power wherein they construct, define and produce objects of knowledge. They are 'regimes of truth' which regulate speaking and serve to sustain power relations (Barker & Galasinski, 2001). Therefore, Foucault (1980) was not so much interested in statements or utterances, but rather in the way in which they amalgamate into discourses and govern subjects.

According to Lupton (1999), an abundance of expert knowledge has developed, accompanied by the establishment of many state apparatuses and institutions, constructing, disseminating and reproducing discourses of risk. Lupton (1999) has maintained that all

knowledge and perceptions of risks are formed in relation to experts' and lay people's knowledge. Information about various risks is collected and analysed by medical researchers, statisticians and other authorities and rendered problematic, calculable and governable. Risk, from a Foucauldian viewpoint, is a moral technology (Lupton, 1999). Risk society theorists, such as Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) have highlighted how power structures and authorities create and establish boundaries to determine what is dangerous (Clarke & Short, 1993; Lupton, 1999). For example, Stallings (1995) has illustrated how engineers, scientists and federal agencies that shape the policy initiatives to deal with earthquakes, socially construct the concept of 'earthquake.' He did not contend that earthquakes do not materially exist, but rather he demonstrated how government authorities engage in the discursive creation of an earthquake as a social and economic threat.

Foucault's work (1972, 1979) has been influential as it has allowed for theorists to move away from economic and capitalist analyses of power and point instead to the combined forces of institutional and cultural pressures, coupled with the power of discourse. Unlike previous theories, Foucault (1972) argued strongly against the top-down model of power and away from a fixation on the state. He enabled us to conceive of power within modern societies as implicated in discourse and language, which is argued to be the heart of social practices and processes.

Power is a relation which is exercised within discourses to produce the self and govern individuals (Barker & Galasinski, 2001). Foucault (1991) referred to this social process as 'governmentality.' To Foucault (1991), governmentality is a strategy of social control that emerged in Europe during the sixteenth century as a result of the breakdown of the feudal system. It was at this time that citizens began to be discursively constructed as individualised

bodies that required intervention and management in order to maximise the welfare and productivity of the state (Lupton, 1999). According to Lupton (1999), Foucault (1991) claimed that governmentality is a key strategy of politics and neoliberalism, which advocated for individual rights and freedoms without the excessive intervention of the state. Foucault (1979) has demonstrated the individualising effect of discourse, highlighting how power disciplines subjects in modern societies. According to Foucault (1979), the modern technology of discipline produces 'docile' bodies that adapt to the modern pressures. Power is thus a relation and not a simple imposition. Power does not work by negatively coercing those who are subjected to it, but rather it shapes them to fit within its needs (Foucault, 1991).

Lupton (1999) explains that voluntary self-discipline [governmentality] is established through the process of normalisation. Through normalisation, an individual is subjected to the techniques of power, which monitors and observes their behaviours. The normalisation of risk is a method by which norms of behaviour are identified by individuals and then compared to determine how they best fit the norm. Lupton (1999) maintained that the process of normalisation is central to identifying those who deviate from the norm and legitimising their being 'at risk.' To resist these strategies is difficult as the failure to engage in risk avoidance behaviour is considered a failure to take care of the self. Subsequently, risk avoidance behaviour has been associated with self-control, self-knowledge and self-improvement. Therefore, the process of normalisation is a form of self-governance, requiring eternal vigilance.

The governmentality approach asserts that risk is a state strategy of disciplinary power in which individuals are monitored and managed to best meet the goals of the dominant group. Green et al. (2000) have stipulated that if risk and individualization characterize modern society

then the result is diversification and difference. Social inequalities and the impacts of these differences are filtered through discourses of individualized risk. For example, Tait (1995) argued that today's youths are experiencing a heightened sense of risk while having access to a diverse range of leisure activities (Green et al., 2000). The availability of leisure choices insinuates young people's individuality, overriding issues such as gender and socio-economic status (Roberts & Parsell, 1994; Rojek, 1985).

In an attempt to align subjects with the needs of the state, expert knowledge has fabricated a heightened consciousness of the modern day 'risks.' Castel (1991) argued that the process of identifying and monitoring risks in populations or among subcultures constitutes a new mode of surveillance that pre-detects populations posing a risk to the dominant order and system. An individual is monitored because he or she is identified as a member of a 'risky population.' Castel (1991) stated that the shift from 'dangerousness' to 'risk' results in the behaviours of marginal individuals being continuously subjected to external intervention and regulation. Thus, the 'at risk' label serves to reinforce the powerless status of minority populations and subjects them to differential treatment.

Skateboarders have been subjected to constant monitoring as a result of the activity being labelled as a 'disruption' to society. Members of the youth culture have subsequently been labelled as reckless and deviant because of their particular use of public space and infrastructure. Consequently, young subcultural members are believed to be 'at risk' of becoming involved in illegal activities and not becoming productive citizens in capitalist societies leading to the perceived need for constant monitoring and surveillance. Discourses of skateboarding have situated skateboarders as the risky 'other' on the basis of behaviours that are often deemed to be

'too different.' Today's approach to the use of public space has constructed skateboarders as 'perpetrators' and 'a problem' in a lucrative society. The underlying assumption built into this spatial construction is that if youths are left unsupervised, particularly in their appropriation of urban landscapes, they will become delinquent (Borden, 2000). These normalising procedures establish the grounds to make judgements and comparisons. Foucault maintained that it is through the power of discourse that we continually devise categories and norms that specify position and define people in different ways such as the insane, the nuclear family, the extended family, children and adolescents. As a result of categorisation, there has been a focus on the abnormal, allowing for the differentiation between 'normal' and 'deviant' (Lupton, 1999).

Issues concerning what is considered 'normal' also emerge with in discursive constructions of appropriate gender behaviours for men and women. According to Butler (1993), 'sex' is normative and functions as a regulatory practice that produces the bodies that it governs. Sex is not a description of what one is, but rather it designates a body inscribed by cultural norms. To this effect, the sexed body is governed and sanctioned to perform its gender, a social and cultural construction structured by discourse. Butler (1990) has presented gender as a performative act, wherein women and men engage in performing dominant notions of 'femininity/ties' and 'masculinity/ties.' To Butler (1993), 'femininity/ties' is not a product of choice, but the result of a norm that disciplines and regulates bodies and punishes those who transgress it. Indeed, subject formation is dependent upon pre-existent gender norms. According to this perspective, one comes to accept the 'truth' about one's gender identity through engaging in regulatory and gendered practices structured by discourse. Through the power of discourse,

bodies that transcend the limits imposed by cultural norms are subjected to abjection and exclusion.

Discourses that produce and constitute 'feminine' bodies prohibit women's involvement in 'masculine' defined spaces and processes. As a result of the heightened sense of modern day risks and the risks related to skateboarding, women are surrounded by and constructed through expert and lay advice. Shogan (1999) reminds us that women were advised by medical doctors to avoid physical exercise, vigorous activity and 'risky' competition on the grounds that it would tax female bodies, damage their reproductive system and contribute to 'mannishness.' Such advice has reaffirmed dominant notions of 'femininity/ties' and is directed at how women should regulate their bodies, which are portrayed as being highly fragile and susceptible to risk. Even before a young woman considers learning to skateboard, she has been subjected to and subject of dominant discourses about gender and is thus expected to stay away from certain types of physical risks. To protect her 'feminine' character she must avoid injuries to the face or other wounds that would alter her 'femininity/ties.' Indeed, in my study on women's minimal participation in skateboarding, I discovered that young women reported a fear of physical injuries to the face, which they associated with risking their 'beauty' and substantially altering their 'feminine' attributes (Young, 2005). Because young women are discursively positioned within a context in which the consensus assumes women are fragile and vulnerable, most women voluntarily engage in risk-avoidance strategies (Lupton, 1999).

Dominant discourses on sport have reinforced that sport is a 'masculine' practice which has afforded men with an opportunity to confirm their 'masculinity/ties' through aggression and enduring physical pain (Sabo, 1992). Risk sport leads to the "no pain, no gain" mentality that has

become acquainted with a celebration of risk. Therefore, risk sports reinforce injury, aggression to reproduce hegemonic 'masculinity/ties.' Dominant discourses of 'femininity/ties' acculturate women to avoid risks and situations of danger. Furthermore, women have been socialised to be passive, emotional and to avoid unnecessary risks that could potentially alter their 'feminine' attributes and/or appearance. In sport, this has lead to the idea of the 'beauty queen,' which has been heavily portrayed in the media as an aesthetically pleasing female athlete that displays flexibility, grace and coordination and highlights her heterosexuality. In skateboarding subcultures, these women are referred to as 'skate betties.' Skate betties are discursively constructed as young women who become involved in skateboarding for reasons instrumental to meeting males and associating with an alternative crowd.

Female skateboarders have called into question gender norms and ideals by undermining the power that it sustains. Using Butler's (1993) framework that links gender and sexual identities, the aggressive and 'risky' nature of skateboarding, which is associated with dominant notions of 'masculinity/ties', transfers gender ideals and thus undermines their power. As gender norms have operated through the embodiment of 'feminine' and 'masculine' ideals, resisting or opposing these norms destabilizes heterosexuality (Butler, 1993) as it signals that there is no one 'femininity/ties' or 'masculinity/ties' with which to identify. As heterosexuality is based on the production and regulation of the essentialized categories of 'man' and 'woman,' the possibility that there may be an array of 'feminine' and 'masculine' identification sites undermines heterosexual normatives and standards (Butler, 1993).

It is important to emphasize that although heterosexuality operates in part through the stabilization of gender norms, gender designates a dense site of signification that contain and exceed the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1993, p.238).

As the heterosexual logic requires one to desire a different gender, the transgression of gender norms exposes multiple identification sites and undermines compulsory heterosexuality (Butler, 1993).

As a result of undermining the 'naturalness' of heterosexuality and violating heterosexual normatives, attempts to police and shame gender exist in efforts to regulate bodies through cultural and social norms. Butler (1993) argued that the term 'queer' operates to accuse and insult those who resist or oppose social and cultural norms. Sexuality is regulated through homophobia, and abjecting gender to homosexuals such as describing a gay man as 'feminine' or characterising lesbians as 'masculine.' The discourse of the 'strong athletic woman' describes muscular, powerful, large and athletic women who transgress the codes and cultural constructions of 'femininity/ties.' Consequently, the strong athletic woman is target of anti-lesbian harassment. Indeed, two participants in my previous research indicated that a predominant stereotype of all female riders is that they are "all dykes," "tomboys," or "lesbians" (Young, 2005). These terms, meant to be derogatory, become the grounds to prohibit and restrict women's access and involvement within skateboarding and maintain hegemonic 'masculinity/ties.'

According to Butler (1993), the formation of the subject is dependent on identification with norms. In this sense, the subject is constituted through the process and power of exclusion or inclusion. Discourses serve to exclude the undesirables (Lupton, 1999). Within subcultures, those who blur culturally important boundaries are continually subjected to negative reactions because of the challenge they pose to group unity and the subcultural image portrayed. Female

skateboarders who enter into 'masculine,' street-based youth cultures can be treated as threats to the social order within subcultures.

It must be noted that in order for power to produce the self, power must be both productive and repressive. To become a subject of a particular discourse, we become its subjects by subjecting ourselves to its meaning, power and regulation. For Foucault (1980), no power relation is one of total domination, because within every social relation there exists the possibility of challenging or overthrowing the force. Therefore, discourse is open to a range of interpretations and it is no longer assumed that the dominant meaning of discourse is the only meaning available within a text. While there is a dominant discourse, multiple other subject positions exist as well. Furthermore, there is also the possibility of reverse discourse. According to Weedon (1997), "Reverse discourse allows the subjected subject of discourse to speak in her own right" (p. 106). Reverse discourse thus has important implications for the power of the discourse that it seeks to challenge and subvert. It is vital in challenging meaning and power and offers a subject discursive space from which she can resist dominant subject positions (Weedon, 1997). The notion of resistance has been meaningful for feminist theorists in their quest for moving away from the oppressor-victim model of dominance that has been central in much feminist thinking. Mills (1997) stated that Foucault's work on discourse has been vital in feminists' attempts to move away from the simple perception that women are victims of men's oppression towards analysing how power is manifested and resisted in the everyday.

In short, poststructuralist theory focuses on the power of discourse to understand gender. It allowed an analysis of how female skateboarders reproduce and/or challenge historical notions of 'femininity/ties' and risk. Adopting feminist poststructuralist theory was insightful in

analysing young women's skateboarding performances as discursive acts in the establishment of 'alternative' gender identities. Through discourse analysis, women's narratives highlight how they recognize and are aware of the dominant gender discourses and take up positions in reverse discourses. I was able to explore how young skateboarding women recognize themselves as subjects and seek to constitute themselves as 'alternative' women. Poststructuralist theory assisted in examining how discourses shape the identities and practices of female skateboarding subjects.

CHAPTER IV - METHODOLOGY

This research was informed by feminist methodologies. The increase in qualitative research on the sensitive issues associated with belonging to a marginalised and 'silenced' population has become a predominant concern due to the political, ethical, and methodological implications involved. The rising awareness of these implications has sparked a debate among feminists on honoring the voices and visibility of marginalised and oppressed populations and methods to do so (hooks, 1989; Jansen & Davis, 1998; Reay, 1996; Valdivia, 2002). Despite the current debate among feminist scholars with regards to the importance and role of feminist methods and methodologies in social science research, a feminist methodology was useful in understanding and generating data pertaining to young female skateboarders' understandings of risk and gender. Feminist methodologies have proposed that dominant groups socially construct knowledge and that value-free science is non-existent. Star (1979) stated that feminist methods are a means for understanding one's own participation in socially constructed realities, both politically and personally. Thus, a feminist framework encouraged me to consider my own social positioning and aimed to interrogate power structures, dynamics and relationships, while being self-reflexive.

This chapter discusses the research design and the data collection instruments chosen to inquire about young women's understanding of the physical and social risks involved in skateboarding and in identifying with street-based 'masculine' subcultures. More specifically, this chapter will address the research approach, data collection techniques and my position as a researcher as it relates to knowledge and power. In addition, this section addresses how participants were recruited, the sample and the specific sampling technique employed. It also

includes a discussion on how the data was analysed and the ethical concerns of this research project.

Research Design

To date, there have been few qualitative studies on young women's understanding of risk in a sporting context or their lived experiences within 'masculine' subcultures. Qualitative research is committed to capturing rich descriptions of experiences, thoughts and beliefs in order to develop a deeper understanding of the details and intricacies, that otherwise may prove to be difficult to elicit (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Such a research approach was valuable for this project because it delved beyond behaviour into the more personal self who engaged in and shaped feelings, reflections and perceptions (Jansen & Davis, 1998). This study focused on the everyday world as problematic, while recognising that young women participate in constructing risk discourses and their gender identities within a much larger and complex milieu. There has been a growing interest in qualitative research designs in the field of sociology and the sociology of sport. The shift away from quantitative research methodologies can be attributed to researchers' needs to increasingly understand the subjective experiences of individuals in today's fragmented and complex Western World. Indeed a qualitative research design provides researchers with the tools and opportunity to examine the subjective experiences of research participants, uncovering meaning rather than measuring (Sherman & Reid, 1994).

Data Collection Strategies

For the purpose of this study, I used two qualitative data collection techniques. Individual interviews were the primary method of data collection. I interviewed 12 young female

skateboarders to explore how they discursively constructed the risks of skateboarding. The second method of data collection was fieldnotes written immediately after each interview which served as a written record of my experience of the interviews.

Interviews

The primary method of data collection was twelve face-to-face audiotaped interviews. Through these conversations, I was able to encourage the young skateboarding women to explain and discuss how they made sense of their skateboard experiences, how they viewed the risks of this practice and how they dealt with these risks. The use of interviews was valuable in eliciting young women's first-hand knowledge through narratives. Participants were interviewed once between the months of October and November 2004 for approximately one and a half hour. I conducted one follow-up interview in order to gain clarification and elaboration after the preliminary analysis of interview data. Participants were given the opportunity to add or change their statements in reviewing the interview transcripts. It was my hope that these conversations facilitated consciousness raising and allowed for the participants to further reflect on the risks they attribute to their skateboard participation.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-standardised interview guide (See Appendix A) with open-ended questions to allow for flexibility, while providing a base structure that ensured consistent and comparable data. Open-ended questioning provided the participant the greatest amount of flexibility in answering questions and provided the possibility of tangential conversations that may enrich the data. Such questions helped establish a more reciprocal relationship with the participants. A feminist framework encouraged open dialogue rather than an 'interrogation' in an attempt to establish more egalitarian research and to diminish unequal

power dynamics. While studying marginalised populations, researchers have noticed that being an 'in/sider' has assisted them in building rapport with the research participants (Jansen & Davis, 1998; Zavella, 1993). Establishing rapport with participants was essential to ensure that the research participants were comfortable in disclosing aspects of their intimate social world. Islam (2000) discovered that although her 'in/sider' status in an Asian community allowed her to build rapport with her research participants, merely being an 'in/sider' did not guarantee her status nor forge a trusting relationship with participants on its own. Indeed, participants continually questioned her 'in/sider' status and oftentimes interviewed her, in an attempt to confirm her status as a researcher and as a 'true' 'in/sider'. In light of this, I invited interviewees to ask me questions. This conversational format allowed for participants to gain information about my position as a researcher and to evaluate my own status as a legitimate female skateboarder in a local street-based subculture.

The interview guide consisted of questions on: how participants defined and understood risk; how they conceived of, and dealt with, the physical and social risks of skateboarding; the impact of these risks on their skateboard participation; and, the relationship between gender and risk. In total there were five distinct sets of questions. The first section elicited demographic information and details about young women's skateboarding experience. More specifically, I was interested in the number of years that they have been skateboarding, their motivation(s) for skateboarding, the benefits and implication(s) of skateboarding. The second section of the interview guide required participants to define the concept of risk. The third section asked the participants to discuss the risks of skateboarding. The answers were open-ended; however, I had established sub-categories and asked each participant to define and discuss the physical and

social risks of skateboarding. The next section was structured to derive information pertaining to how they dealt with the risks they earlier identified. I employed probing techniques to ensure that participants reflected upon the impact those risks have had on their participation. The fifth and final section consisted of questions that related to the impact of gender and risk in skateboarding. More specifically, the questions asked the participants to discuss whether they perceive a difference between male skaters and themselves.

The semi-standardised interview guide was pre-tested to ensure its accuracy and reliability. An acquaintance that is an active skateboarder was recruited to conduct a pilot interview. This pilot interview helped in ensuring all questions were effectively worded, clear and concise, single barrelled and sequentially ordered. Following Berg's (2001) suggestions, the interview consisted of essential, extra, throwaway and probing questions. Essential and extra questions were included in the interview guide. Extra questions are similar to essential questions, but during the conversation they were worded differently and served to check the reliability of the responses (Berg, 2001). For example, I asked participants what risks in skateboarding they consider to be acceptable and then later rephrased this question and asked them what risks they were willing to take. I asked 'throw away' questions at the beginning of each interview to establish rapport and allowed the participant time to reflect upon her past experiences and perceptions of risks. For example, at the beginning of each interview I asked participants to explain how skateboarding has evolved in the past couple of years to encourage them to discuss the skateboarding subculture. I also incorporated a question pertaining to their first skateboarding experience in order for participants to potentially make an unprompted link between age, gender and risk-taking behaviours as they described their introduction to the sport and their early

involvement. Such questions at the beginning of the interview allowed me to see whether issues of gender, age and risk emerge instinctively in young women's narratives as factors that they conceive as significant influences on their skateboarding experiences. Furthermore, I utilized a probing technique throughout the interviews to elicit more in-depth responses and for clarification.

Fieldnotes

This study also relied on field notes that were written immediately and systematically after each interview. Fieldnotes included a variety of information such as, descriptive accounts of people, dialogue, scenes and even personal experiences and individual reactions (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2001). The fieldnotes served as a written record of my experience of the interviews. Producing fieldnotes was a reflective process which served as a written record of thoughts and ideas related to the facets of research that may otherwise have been forgotten. Creating a descriptive account of participants helped enrich the research articles by providing a description of their aesthetic styles, and linking it to how the young women construct themselves as gendered subjects.

Methodological Implications

This section examines the methodological issues of conducting research as a member of a subculture. The benefits and ramifications of being a member or nonmember will be discussed, highlighting the many methodological considerations and techniques that were employed to ensure the authenticity of this study. My complex position will be further examined to discuss the obstacles I encountered as a researcher and as a member of a local skateboarding subculture.

The 'in/sider' and 'out/sider' debate concerns the divergent epistemological assumptions, methodological strategies, and political claims provided by members and non-members of researched groups or populations (Naples, 1996). The 'in/sider' and 'out/sider' debate has been derived from Merton's (1972) position paper on the sociology of knowledge. The essay was written in response to black scholars who were challenging the dominance of white academics, by claiming epistemic privilege for black scholars researching minority populations (Zinn, 1979). Merton (1972) characterised the 'in/sider' and 'out/sider' debate as "the problem of patterned differentials among social groups and strata in access to certain types of knowledge" (p. 11).

A methodological and empirical advantage of conducting 'in/sider' research is the ability to provide 'rich' accounts of social life, based on prior knowledge and an extensive understanding of the marginalised population (Malbon, 1999; Zinn, 1979). In his highly insightful account of dance club culture, Malbon (1999) suggested "my own background as a clubber was, I believe, crucial in establishing myself as someone who could readily emphasise with [clubbers'] experiences rather than merely as someone who happened to be doing a project on nightclubs as his job" (p. 32). Proponents of 'in/sider' research contend that the culture and worldview of disadvantaged and oppressed populations can only be accurately understood by members of such groups (Mirandé & Tanno, 1993; Zinn, 1979). Many feminists have asserted that women are the best informants of women's lives due to women's knowledge and ability to empathise with human subjects (Acker, 2001). The methodological significance of research conducted by women and for women can be attributed to the "feelings of empathy and emotions which 'in/sider's share from knowing their subjects on a deep, subtle level" (Hayano, 1979, p. 101). Stacey (1988) has suggested that empathy and human concern are essential and characterise feminist research. She argued that women are united through an authentic female selfhood, which entails a degree of co-operation, empathy, and attention to women's daily lives.

Thus, women can bond across time and space, transcending the inequalities between the researcher and the research subject.

Zavella (1993) rejected the claims of women's methodological advantages in feminist research on the grounds that female researcher's have often assumed a type of pan-female solidarity. While there are obvious advantages of conducting 'in/sider' research, studies contributed by non-members relative to certain groups are argued to be no more or less valid than 'in/sider' research (Mirandé & Tanno, 1993). Therefore, my status as a woman and member of a local skateboarding subculture does not necessarily substantiate or validate my research on women's understandings of gender and the risks involved in skateboarding. Rather than assuming a methodological advantage as a member of the skateboarding community, I strived to establish a respectful rapport with participants and avoid making assumptions of shared knowledge. This was achieved by asking participants to explain everything, even if I thought I knew what they meant. The assumption of withholding a methodological advantage was decreased by continuously re-evaluating the degree to which I was an 'in/sider' in Toronto and Ottawa skateboard communities, the degree to which I was an 'in/sider' in 'masculine' subcultures and to what extent I shared experiences and understanding with the young women interviewed.

Researcher-Subculture Relationships

During the course of the interviews with female skateboard participants, I continuously reminded myself and evaluated the differences among the research subjects and myself. As feminists and fieldworkers, we need to attend to the differences between our subjects and ourselves, recognizing the diversity of women's experiences based on race, class, and sexual preference (Zavella, 1993). My status as a woman and skateboarder did not guarantee 'rich' accounts of women's skateboarder's understandings of risk and gender. As a researcher and

member of local skateboard subculture, I found myself in a complex position. Rather than assuming a methodological advantage as a subcultural member, it was imperative that I distance myself from my research participants in order to identify and heed differences. In studying a culture that is similar to one's own, researchers are exhorted to make the familiar strange (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Defamiliarisation refers to researchers cultivating an attitude of distance that enables one to see cultural arrangements as worthy of analysis rather than as taken for granted features of social life (Wolf, 1992). Defamiliarisation assisted me in making the familiar strange in order to identify, report, and acknowledge differences and unusual behaviour that is worthy of inquiry and analysis.

hooks (1989) has suggested that researchers 'walk the margins' to separate themselves from research subjects, identifying and clarifying the differences. In order to deal with the contradictions of being a researcher and subcultural member, I questioned the extent to which I was actually an 'in/sider.' In his account of the youth rave culture, Bennett (2002) realized that he was not as much of a member as he had originally anticipated. In his ethnographic study, he realized that there were different types of ravers based on one's involvement in, and commitment, to the subcultures. This finding suggests that Bennett's involvement was not as extensive and therefore, he was not fully considered an 'in/sider' among members of youth rave subcultures. Therefore, despite the proximity among research participants and myself and in an attempt to make the familiar strange, I reminded myself of the differences. For example, as a lesbian, I am not an 'in/sider' within 'masculine' heteronormative subcultures. In addition, I am an 'out/sider' within the skateboarding communities in the Ottawa region.

As a subcultural member, at times in the interviews, I found myself having difficulty focusing on the interview process, and more importantly, on the responses because of my own experiences and self-reflections on similar events distracted me. It would have been valuable to further develop my listening skills prior to conducting the interviews to ensure that when a

participant is responding, my full attention is directed towards listening, receiving, and decoding narratives. Another difficulty that I encountered was the failure to pursue vague statements, generalities, or even participant-initiated leads with follow-up probes. I also often overlooked the taken for granted assumptions about social behaviour, because I did not feel the need to probe about information that was already familiar to me. I thought, mistakenly or not, that I could sense what respondents meant by innuendoes regarding culturally specific behaviour, events, analyses, or coded language. And during the interviews there was indeed an assumed understanding. It is only when working with the transcripts in which problems of interpretation and meaning of sentence fragments or incomplete ideas or arguments became clear. I found myself in a position where I was “adding” the unspoken words, thus using my own understanding of what they meant. The failure to probe into what is already ‘familiar’ was problematic because I ignored the opportunity to gather richer details and accounts of social life. By failing to probe, I found that I was forced to discard fragments of data that would have been insightful if complete, but that as it stood lacked details and clarity. I opted to discard these narratives as it would have decreased the credibility and authenticity of the study.

As a subcultural member, I failed to probe into what is already too ‘familiar’ to generate further details and provide a more detailed account. For future research, I will listen carefully to the respondents and probe into statements such as ‘you know.’ These incidental features of speech provide new ways to think about and analyse the data (DeVault, 1990). DeVault (1990) suggests that statements such as ‘you know’, should not be perceived as stumbling inarticulateness, but as a signal that requests more understanding. I also found that when reviewing the transcripts, there were numerous occasions of shared laughter, unfinished phrases, and specific terminology that represented ‘knowing’ and the interactions between those who share cultural ways that are profoundly ingrained. In hindsight, I recognize that this is a poor practice for researchers to interrupt interviewees in mid-sentence and it results in incomplete

understanding. Hence, my contradictory position as a subcultural member and researcher led to many trials and tribulations.

Selection and Description of the Site and Participants

This study draws upon the insights, knowledge and perceptions of 12 young women. Jackson (1999) stated that it is better to have a smaller sample, then a poorly selected sample. The participants were 16 to 29 year old female skateboarders who self-identified as members of a skateboard subculture and who had been skateboarding anywhere from one year to many years. The varying years of participation allowed for reflection upon the relationship between young women's understanding of gender and risk and the duration of their involvement in skateboarding.

The sample consisted of young female skateboarders from the Greater Toronto Region and Ottawa, Ontario. Participants were recruited through street skateboarding networks. On the one hand, I invited my personal contacts, which are young women I have met or meet through my own skateboarding practice to participate in the study (See Appendix B for the recruitment script). And, on the other hand, I recruited participants through referrals from peers. This recruitment technique offered an established method for identifying and contacting hidden populations. This method of recruitment was necessary in studying the experiences of young female skateboarders, a group located outside mainstream society and hidden from a lay person's view of social life. I distributed recruitment letters outlining the topic and purpose of the study to my skateboarding peers for them to pass on to their personal contacts (See Appendix C for the recruitment letter). This letter specified my contact numbers if the skateboarding women they knew were interested in participating. This method of recruitment ensured that the personal

referrals did not feel obligated to participate. In accordance with the conditions laid out by the University of Ottawa's ethical guidelines (University of Ottawa, 2003), written consent was obtained from the participants prior to the interviews. Interviews were conducted in a location of the participant's choice such as a restaurant or coffee place, their residence, or even a park bench.

Ethical Considerations

Conducting qualitative research with human participants required that I was constantly aware of the ethical considerations during each step of the research process. Critiquing her work within a women's prison school, Tilley (1998) acknowledged that the ethics review process and the letters of consent do more to protect the institution conducting the research and the individual researcher than they do to protect the participants themselves. As a researcher working with young women and members of a marginalised youth culture, I was always sensitive to their concerns. My participants had agreed to share their experiences and thoughts with me and I was respectful of this and grateful for the trust they placed in me.

As a professional obligation, I honored assurances of confidentiality made to subjects (Berg, 2001). For this study, all interviews were held in discrete locations. All data obtained from the study was stored in a locked cabinet in the Human Kinetics' Research Centre for Sport in Canadian Society to ensure that only my advisor and myself had access to the information. In addition, the coded data and transcripts were stored within a desktop computer and with a protective password assigned. The anonymity of participants was also respected with the use of

pseudonyms and the omission from the final report of conspicuous characteristics that may identify the participants.

There were no known or anticipated risks involved in this study. Participation in this project was voluntary and I did not impose any influence on participants. The interviewees were made aware that they withheld the right to disclose only the information that they felt comfortable sharing with me. To prevent any form of emotional discomfort, interview questions were pre-tested to ensure that they do not induce embarrassment, humiliation, lowered self-esteem, guilt, conflict, anger, stress, or discouragement. This pilot interview ensured that the questions promote emotional and psychological safety by being non-invasive, concise, respectful, non-derogatory, and non-discriminating. Participants were not asked to disclose any intimate or otherwise sensitive information. The exclusion of adolescents 15 years and younger from the research ensured that only participants with full understanding of the study and its implications were recruited. Hence, the participants were capable of understanding the purpose and the implications of the study and to make the active decision to become involved.

As the purpose of this study was to incorporate young women's 'real life' narratives of their understandings of gender and the risks in skateboarding it was necessary that consenting participants were tape-recorded to capture exactly what the women said and how they said it. The interview was structured to allow for time to develop rapport with the female skateboard interviewees. The more personal questions about how they dealt with physical and social risks were asked only after rapport had been established. The interview format incorporated demographic questions at the beginning, leaving the more personal and insightful questions to the end. To increase the rapport between the female interviewees and myself, I dressed for the

interviews as a skater and discussed my own experiences as a woman skateboarder. My own experiences as a skateboarder were only discussed to relieve any tension and to generate thought-provoking conversations.

Transcription

The face-to-face tape-recorded interviews were the primary source of data analysed. Soon after the interviews were completed, I transcribed the audiotapes to ensure maximum recall. Transcription was part of the analysis process because it is an interpretative act wherein one decides what data will be included or omitted in the final report, impacting the analysis of the data. "Paralinguistic features" (O'Connell & Kowal, 1999, p. 109) such as laughter were represented in the text of the transcript. Repetition and pauses in conversation were also textually represented. "Repetition is never irrelevant" (O'Connell & Kowal, 1999, p. 109); the significance of repetition in the conversation cannot be determined a priori. The repetition or pauses indicated points during the interview in which the participant was particularly engaged by the question.

Recognising that there is always a degree of interpretation in the process of transcribing, each tape was transcribed as closely to verbatim as possible. To ensure that the interview was accurately transcribed and was trustworthy, each participant was provided with an opportunity to review the transcript. The transcripts were sent and received via Electronic mail to ensure that they were not lost or misplaced. At this stage, any information that the participant was uncomfortable with was omitted from the final document and data analysis. While four participants requested to review their transcripts, only one participant made changes. In fact, the participant thought that I recorded her name incorrectly, so her revised transcript replaced the

alias I had attributed with her real name. I consequently contacted her to explain that the name on the transcript was a pseudonym to protect her identity and ensure confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Poststructuralist philosophers have argued that reality is socially constructed and this 'reality' becomes embedded and reinforced in language. According to Pecheux (1982), a discourse is not a disembodied collection of statements, but groupings of utterances and statements that are enacted within a social context. Foucault (1973) specified that a discourse is something that produces an utterance or statement, rather than something that exists in itself. Thus, discourses are not only the meaning of language but also the effects of language.

In terms of thinking about discourse as having effects, it is imperative to consider truth, power and knowledge. To Foucault (1973), truth is something that societies have to work to produce. Thus, discourses do not simply exist in a vacuum but they are in conflict with other discourses and social practices which inform them over truth and authority (Foucault, 1973). Pecheux (1982) added that discourses do not exist in isolation, but are the object and site of struggle. Discourses are thus, never fixed, and are the site of constant contestation of meaning (Mills, 1997). With discourses being 'regimes of truth', they sustain power relations at particular times and places (Foucault, 1973). Using discourse analysis, underlying power relations can be revealed. Lupton (1992) stated that discourse analysis is "a critical analysis of the use of language and the reproduction of dominant ideologies in discourse" (p. 145).

Discourse Analysis

The written text was analysed via discourse analysis. The aim of this type of analysis was to understand the complex workings of power in discourse and in sustaining gendered social arrangements in skateboarding subcultures. More specifically, discourse analysis enabled the exploration of the linguistic construction of subjectivity (Lee & Ponnyton, 1995) This approach assisted in indicating the ways in which women skateboarders are positioned and take up positions within discourses of gender, risk and sport. The premise of this study was that language constructs ways of being which may be in conflict. I focused on the way in which women skateboarders actively and consciously take up within different and sometimes competing discourses of risk and gender. As they are both products of specific discourses on risk, gender and sport and producers of talk, they are both subjects of discourse and agents in social and cultural reproduction and change. Therefore, discourse analysis helped in understanding how women skateboarders take up subject positions and are subjected to the regulatory power of that discourse. The participants' discursive statements were analysed for their way of producing new understandings of identities and social relations and/or of reproducing old ones.

Discourse analysis was useful in that it allowed me to analyse women's statements as products of a particular set of power/knowledge relations (Mills, 1997). Discourse analysis was used to explore the ways in which intersections between discourses on sport, risk and gender, inform young women's experiences and how they construct themselves as subjects. Lastly, the analysis of women's discursive fragments was selected to identify how young female skateboarders reproduce gender and risk discourses and how power is exercised in the construction of women's subjectivities.

The analysis first focused on identifying young women's statements about sport, risk or gender. The 'truths' produced by each of the young women were linked to larger discourses of gender (dominant femininity, alternative femininity, masculinities) and discourses of risk (positive features of risk, negative features of risk). For instance, as expected from the risk literature, participants reproduced discourses of risk as negative and associated risk-taking behaviours with an uncertain and unwanted outcome. Discourse analysis also revealed that the subjects enunciated counter discourses of risk. Indeed, some of their statements situated risk-taking as enabling because it allowed them to achieve a sense of heightened sensation and to construct themselves as skilled performers.

Young women's discursive fragments were also linked to discourses of gender since they drew on discourses of risk to consciously construct themselves as 'alternative' women. Their individual narratives indicated that they performed resistance by redefining gender appropriate behaviour via taking risks and accepting pain and injury in the context of sport. However, their ongoing identity negotiation was found to simultaneously subvert and reproduce dominant constructions of gender. While they drew on discourses of risk to produce 'alternative' subjectivities, they also reproduced dominant constructions of 'femininity/ties.'

While the analysis focused on identity statements linked to these risk and gender discourses, I was also open to emerging discourses at the intersection of how participants identified as female risk-takers or female skateboarders. For instance, the responsibility clearly emerged in how young women constructed themselves as responsible risk-takers, who are accountable for their own health via controlling and limiting the risks and hazards. They consciously constitute themselves as 'alternative' women, but not as reckless skateboarders. The

salience of the concept of surveillance emerged in the interviews with regards to how participants explain the production of gender and skateboarding identities. They were namely acutely aware of the appraising 'masculine' gaze. Not only were the young women subject to the gaze, but they also employed the gaze by policing other women's participation in order to exert control over the threat that they posed to their 'alternative' gender identities and status in the subculture.

Trustworthiness/Authenticity

As researchers, we inevitably must make decisions regarding what is important, what is useful, what we think is essential to understanding, and what to record in a research study. These choices are ultimately and inextricably tied to our values and our subjectivity's (Bochner, 2000). These decisions are not issues to be settled, but are differences to be lived with (Rorty, 1982). Researchers must recognize that these differences are a reflection of incommensurable ways of seeing. Kuhn (1962) observed more than forty years ago that there is no paradigm-free way of looking. Therefore, researchers can look at the same phenomenon, in the same location, and derive different findings and interpretations.

Guba and Lincoln (1981) argued that the most useful method in securing the trustworthiness of a study is the use of member checks. Member checks were conducted after transcribing the verbatim. Returning to the research participants helped to ensure that the transcription was truthfully conveying young women's experiences. Member checks allowed for research participants to eliminate any information that they no longer wished to share.

Consistency and dependability was secured through the completion of an outlier analysis. An outlier analysis involved examining any extreme or different responses or cases that arose

during the data collection process and including them in the presentation of results. All extreme or different experiences our respondents shared were analyzed and incorporated within the articles to ensure consistency and dependability. There were some commonalities within their narratives, yet interviewees were not homogenously reproducing a certain discourse nor all adopting the same subject positions. Lastly, trustworthiness was achieved via conformability. Conformability refers to how neutral the findings are and whether they are reflective of the participants and not a product of the researcher's biases and prejudices (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Conformability was obtained through seeking and striving for multiple understandings of risk and gender in the women's narratives as opposed to only identifying those statements that confirm my own views on risk and gender in skateboarding. My supervisor also read all interview transcripts to corroborate that the analysis accurately represented the data.

Conclusion

The process of outlining and mapping out my methodology pushed me to think not only about the research process, but also the ethical concerns of conducting respectful research. Participants placed their trust in me, and I was aware and respectful of their concerns and needs. This project was created to capture their unique understandings and constructions of gender and risk and I made every effort to give them a voice. I tried to situate their voices in the discursive context that produces them as female skateboarders and in which they reproduce themselves. Their individual narratives provided information to discern and understand what subject positions they took up.

PART TWO: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

CHAPTER V

**BEWARE*#! SK8 AT YOUR OWN RISK:
YOUNG WOMEN'S SKATEBOARDING DISCOURSES**

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And

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The wind blowing in your hair. You feel so unstoppable, so free. It is an amazing feeling. When you are going really fast and getting green lights with no pedestrians. [...] It is amazing. It goes so fast. It almost feels like you are snowboarding on pavement. It seems that sometimes it makes everything fall into place. All the lights are green, you are carving, the bumps are right, there are no cars, these people over there... Everything else aligns itself and life is great. [...] It is like nothing can really stop you. When something does, I get so pissed off. [...] I am like, "What are you doing!?" and I go crazy. [...] I almost got killed two days ago, twice. Buses, cars, taxis. Fucking taxis have to understand that. There is no middle. Sometimes I get really frustrated. Sometimes I switch on and off. So now I just skate against traffic. But even then, I almost got killed so it's not that great. (Jamie, 16 years old, Longboarder)

In his exploration of voluntary risk-taking Lyng (1990, 2005) introduces the concept "edgework" to characterize the illusionary sense of control experienced during the skilled performance of a dangerous leisure activity demanding "mental toughness" and the ability to overcome fear in the quest for highly valued powerful sensations. While skateboarding practices do not always lead to the exploration of the boundary between life and death such as skydiving and other activities identified as the archetypical edgework experience (Lyng, 1990), skateboarders do conceive of their sporting practice as presenting a threat to their physical well-being. Sometimes this threat is associated to fatality such as described by Jamie in the quote above, but it most often relates to debilitating injury from falls. Moreover, seeking a magnified

sense of self, or “amazing feeling” in Jamie’s description, and improving as a skateboarder inevitably implies taking physical risks, whether it is in the increase of speed, learning new tricks or gaining more “air” (height of jumps).

While the general concept of risk has been for the most part discursively produced as a “problem” associated to negative outcomes (Lupton, 1999; Tulloch & Lupton, 2003), risk-taking behaviour in sport has generally been viewed as positive and oftentimes celebrated and rewarded (Hughes & Coakley, 1991; Young, White & McTeer, 1994; Pike & Maguire, 2003; Safai, 2003). Sport is a vehicle through which athletes put their body on the line for success or achievement. Unlike other social institutions, sport provides a setting to voluntarily engage in and accept physical risks, injury and pain as participants minimize negative outcomes and/or neutralize the potential for danger, creating an artificial sense of control and risk management.

This chapter explores how young women construct themselves as risk-takers in giving meaning to their skateboarding practices. In order to do so, we adopt a feminist poststructuralist framework which emphasizes the importance of language and discourse in constituting meaning and shaping subjectivity. These skateboarders’ narratives reveal that risk-taking is understood as enabling but also constraining. On the one hand, they articulate notions similar to the concept of “edgework”, focusing on the pleasure and subversive features of risk-taking, alluding to the strong sensations gained through skill and success when risking injury. The acceptance of physical risks in sport then enables these young women to consciously challenge hegemonic femininity. But on the other hand, young women also, to a certain extent, problematize risk-taking in sport and the threats to their physical well-being. Drawing on dominant risk and health

discourses associating risk with danger and unwelcome outcomes, they constitute themselves as “responsible” risk-takers, controlling their skateboarding practice to avoid injuries.

Foucault and the construction of self as risk-taker

We draw on Foucault’s ideas of the self-constituting subject (1982, 1984, 1988) to understand how young women construct themselves as skateboarders through risk-taking. Foucault’s concept of subjectivity is constituted in discourse, that is a set of statements or “truths” that construct, define and produce objects of knowledge (Foucault, 1972). These “regimes of truth” regulate speaking and serve to sustain power relations (Barker & Galasinski, 2001). Sanctioned by institutional forces, they have a profound effect on the way individuals think and behave (Mills, 1997). Indeed, the “truths” produced in discourse become the resources through which individuals come to make sense of whom and what they are and therefore come to accept how they should act. In his earlier work, Foucault (1975) examines the rise of the modern system of surveillance in prisons, schools and hospitals to analyse how power operates on the body through external control. He notes that modern power relies on individualization and on the constant supervision and control of these newly constituted individuals in such a way that it ‘normalizes’ them.

In his later writings, Foucault turns his attention from technologies of domination and power to technologies of the self (1988) to explore how a subject consciously “acts upon himself” (p. 19). Thus from examining how individuals become subjected to a discourse as an object of knowledge, he moves on to explore how individuals consciously take up a subject position, then define and maintain their identity through self-control. In short, he focuses on how one relates to oneself. Foucault views technologies of the self as “practices of freedom” wherein

work completed by the self upon oneself aims at self-transformation. In her review of the use of Foucault's "technologies of the self" in sport studies, Markula (2003) emphasizes the notion that technologies of the self are practices that involve both a conscious critical reaction (self-reflection) and self-care. As Shogan argues (1999) athletes are not merely disciplinary dupes. Hence, the "female" sporting body is located within a network of normalizing discursive practices which produces both "docile bodies" as well as the ability to resist practices of domination (Cole, 1993; Duncan, 1994; Chapman, 1997; Shogan, 1999; Johns and Johns, 2000; Markula, 2001, 2003). We suggest that risk-taking in sport generates real capabilities and fosters a new attitude towards the self and discursive regimes. Because sport operates to establish gender differences, and in particular male superiority, it remains a site in which such discourses are made material and can therefore be challenged. More recent research (Young & White, 1995; Hargreaves, 1997; Young, 1997; Krane, 2001; Wachs, 2005) suggests that just as sport has operated to produce and normalize gender differences, sport has the potential to expose, resist, and challenge gender boundaries by disrupting the "naturalness" of gender norms. On one hand, participating in sport and an activity coded as "masculine" involves the self-constitution and regulation of the self. On the other hand, becoming aware of one's abilities, transgressing gender boundaries and managing the outcomes are enabling acts of self-transformation.

Risk-taking discourses and sport

While this paper focuses on young women's skateboarding practices, our analysis shows that they draw on dominant discourses of risk, sport and gender that establish an opposition between masculinity and femininity. Risk-taking in sport and recreation in fact becomes a means of performing dominant masculinities (Collison, 1996) through the corporeal display of

aggression, the ability to endure physical pain and to control one's emotions (Whitson, 1990). Masculinity is confirmed through the normalization of pain and injury in sport (Connell, 1990; Dunning, 1986; Messner, 1990). Hughes and Coakley (1991) describe how the sport ethic focuses on the acceptance of physical risks and the importance of playing through pain. Researchers in sport sociology have examined the culture of risk (Hughes & Coakley, 1991; Nixon, 1993, 2004; Young, White & McTeer, 1994; Pike & Maguire, 2003; Safai, 2003; Charlesworth & Young, 2004; Pike, 2004) to explain that injury and pain tolerance become physical and symbolic representations of an athlete's sporting status. Athletes internalise pain, accept injuries as routine, and therefore exemplify strong character.

Bodies that do not conform to the pain principle and fail to control or mask intense pain are oftentimes stigmatized because of the challenge they pose to the binary opposition between male and female (Sabo, 2004; Young et al., 1994). Young and colleagues (1994) found that male athletes may not enjoy pain and injury, yet they remain uncritical about their participation because injury is more constituting than threatening. Pringle and Markula (2005) also question the rugby culture and its discursive links to masculinity and cavalier attitudes about sport, risk and injury. In their study, adult men problematized masculinity and questioned the links between pain and injury performances, revealing a reverse discourse of health and well-being that rejects pain and situates irrational risk-taking as reckless and juvenile. Although athletes might not escape the dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity, there are discursive gaps in the articulation of sport and the risk culture that allow participants to draw on other discourses and experiences, such as health and ageing, to raise critical awareness of the complex relationships between sport, risk and gender.

While men engage in risky leisure activities in an attempt to conform to dominant notions of masculinity, women's conceptions of risk-taking in sport are also highly related to assumptions about appropriate gender performance, whether they reproduce themselves as "feminine" or not through their sport participation. Certainly, female athletes embody the sport ethic and recognize its relationship to masculinity (Young & White, 1995; Theberge, 1997; Charlesworth & Young, 2004; Pike, 2004; Sabo, 2004). Our analysis seeks to uncover which discursive threads emerge in young skateboarding women's narratives about their risk-taking experiences. What do the physical risks of skateboarding mean to them and how do they contribute to their sense of self?

Young women's risk discourses were captured through in-depth, face-to-face interviews with 12 self-identified skateboarders or longboarders between the ages of 16 and 29. The skateboard is commonly used for street, skate park and trick riding. Falls causing injury can occur from performing skills such as jumps, landings and riding down a vertical incline or from collisions with other skaters. The longboard, significantly longer than the skateboard, features larger wheels and is designed to move at faster speeds over greater distances. It is intended for transportation as opposed to freestyle skating. However, while longboarders do not perform tricks, they face different hazards such as road or sidewalk conditions and hills that can cause falls in addition to possible collisions with motor vehicles, bicycles or pedestrians. All our respondents skateboard on the street for transportation purposes and have been identified based on whether or not they ride a skateboard or a longboard and whether or not they perform tricks in a skate park. As lead researcher for this study, one of us (Alana Young) conducted all interviews. She approached each conversation as a skateboarder, connecting with the lived experience of our

respondents, yet also as a graduate student, seeking to learn from other skateboarding women. These semi-structured tape-recorded interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. Participants were recruited in Ottawa and in the Greater Toronto Region in Canada through a snowball process, starting from personal contacts and proceeding by word of mouth. Interviewees were selected on the basis of their age, sex, skateboarding self-identification and experience (minimum of one year).

Benefits of risks: The attraction to skateboarding

You can set one thing for yourself. Whether it be rolling down a hill that you are scared of or Ollying off of something that you are scared of. You can set those goals and actually actively work towards it. It is an amazing feeling when you finally get it. (Alex, 25 years old, Park Skateboarder)

Both Le Breton (2002) and Lyng (2005) discuss pleasure and emotional engagement as a crucial dimension of voluntary risk-taking leisure activities. The experience itself and the feelings it generates motivates participants and keeps them involved. Le Breton (2002) also maintains that youths engage in risk-taking behaviours to “save face” among peers, to prove their abilities to themselves or others in such a way that their desire of self-affirmation supplants their awareness of danger. Such a notion of voluntary risk-taking as a skilled performance leading to self-actualization emerges as well in Lyng’s (1990) concept of edgework. The young women we interviewed certainly reproduced such ideas in explaining the positive dimensions they attribute to risk-taking in the context of their attraction and involvement in skateboarding, but they also discussed the relevance of gender in giving meaning to their experiences.

Discourse of Emotional Engagement: "Amazing feeling"

The young women we interviewed first and foremost explained their appreciation of skateboarding as a result of the pleasure and emotional intensity it provides. Many of the participants alluded to a feeling of freedom when skateboarding that relates to the idea of emotional escape. Qwin, a 27 year old park skateboarder, like other edgework participants (Lyng, 1990), finds it difficult to put such feelings into words.

Just having a board underneath your feet. That is an empowering feeling. It makes you feel really good to hop on your board and go. You just feel free. It is just you and the road and you are doing whatever you want. It is so hard to explain. It is just you and the board and it is your thing.

Cheryl, a 25 year old park skateboarder, is attracted not by the freedom, but by the joys of taking risks:

I actually like the risk when I am skating on the street. I enjoy it. I get a high from doing stuff that is a little risky. I always catch myself checking myself. It is like, "Wow, I really could have got hit by that truck back there." It is a weird balance between allowing yourself to take a little bit of risk because you enjoy it and having to be smart about it.

She goes on to explain that the speed and "dropping in" when doing tricks is her favourite aspects of skateboarding. "Like I said, the rush and the feeling. I like the speed. You can bend down on it. (...) It is neat the way you can use your body and move it around." Her account draws attention to the feelings she derives from skateboarding. Participation in "risky" activities can thus produce an adrenaline rush that brings the body and mind a heightened sense of emotion

and sensation (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002). Cheryl's words suggest that she is engaging in edgework, wherein the physical risks of skateboarding lie outside of the "comfort zone" and familiarity, balancing between cultural boundaries of life and death and ordinary and extraordinary (Lyng, 2005). Jamie also discussed the intense feelings she derives from the dangers posed by street skating:

If I get run over, it is almost more exhilarating than anything. It is like if I survived that I can do anything. My knee? I was like, "wow, so bloody!" Those, to me, are a part of it and almost a cool part of it. You can't be a pussy in life. You have to just fucking take it. Girls can't take it (16 years old, Longboarder).

The physical risks, real or perceived, posed by skateboarding provide an emotional experience, one that embraces uncertainty. It is through testing her abilities in a brush with the possibility of injury or even death that her sense of self and the meaning of her existence are strengthened (Le Breton, 2002). Through accepting pain and injury, she also deliberately challenges the restrictions imposed on her by techniques of femininity, transgressing gender boundaries. In this context, cultivated risk-taking allows Jamie to experience intensified bodily awareness and live a life of personal agency, expressing the ability to maintain control over the self. Longboarding on busy streets allows her to be spontaneous and demonstrate her willingness to face danger and gamble with uncertainty in which she derives pleasure. Each spring, she looks forward to re-living that emotional intensity:

Longboarding seriously holds a really big place in my heart. I don't want to make it seem that I am taking myself super seriously. To me, it is so freeing. (...) I can go and longboard and I am good at longboarding because I was skating for two

years, and go swerve around the cars and go everywhere. I know that people are like, “Woo, look at that girl go!” I can do whatever I want. At night, I can longboard for miles. It is so freeing. [...] On any aspect that you can image, it is freeing. (...) It is almost like I am leaving that behind and leaving, going really fast and “swooshing”. And, my abilities. I do go really fast. A girl that goes through the city that is me! I am confident about my longboarding. After coming back from the winter I wonder if I still remember everything. After I go down this one hill, it is huge and there are always cars and busses, that is the one hill I do first and then I realize that I still got it. Every single time that I go down that hill, it is amazing. (Jamie, 16 years old, Longboarder)

Not only does this excerpt illustrate the emotional significance Jamie attributes to longboarding and particularly to her risk-taking, it is also a useful quote to highlight the fact that while we have divided our analysis in such a way to identify various discursive trends in young women’s accounts about skateboarding, these discursive fragments are intertwined and interconnected. Jamie makes clear links between risk-taking, her talent at controlling the risks and her gender performance that challenges discursive constructions of women’s fear and lack of motor skills. It is in drawing on different discourses about the benefits of risk-taking that she constitutes herself as a skateboarder.

Discourse of Self-Actualisation: “To Get Better”

Risk-taking in sport is an avenue for adolescents and young adults to improve physical skills and achieve excellence (Calfas & Taylor, 1994). While the quest for improved performance may be an inherent feature of most competitive sports to ensure victory, in

edgework, mastery of skill holds a different significance. Rather than being related to triumph over opponents, improving one's skateboarding abilities allows enhanced control of physical risks. Edgework refers then not only to a skilled performance, but also to the ability to maintain control through one's physical and mental aptitudes (Lyng, 1999). As Jamie expressed earlier "It is like if I survived that, I can do anything."

Most of our interviewees did articulate similar notions as they explained their personal quest to enhance their sport performance. Alex, a 25 year old skateboarder, illustrates this desire to ameliorate her skills and she goes on to explain that getting better at skateboarding is such an important pursuit in her construction of self, that once she sets her mind on learning a new skill, she is willing to risk injury from falls to achieve it. "I don't know what goes through my mind apart from that I really want it. There are certain things that I have been trying lately that I just wanted so bad that it does not matter if I fall off a million times." Lupton and Tulloch (2002) have also observed the emergence of the discourse of self-improvement in their study of Australians' risk knowledge and experiences. Such a discourse invites the skateboarder to push the boundaries of self-realisation and to work on her self to improve and transform herself. Her skateboarding practices and particularly her efforts at skill and mental development can be construed as technologies of the self where she creates her new and improved self. Like Alex, 23 year old Tristan explains her street skateboarding as a quest to master new skills. She accepts the physical risks in skateboarding because she views herself as a "legitimate" skateboarder, a true devotee of the sport, which entails certain performance standards:

I kind of have this urge that I am not going to give up. There is some weird determination. I am thinking that it is probably because of my brothers and my

mom being like, “You can’t skate.” I want to be able to hold my own. I want to be able to do the things that my friends do. Now that all my friends skateboard, I want to be able to go out and ride with them. I want to be able to hit a park with them and not sit on the sidelines drinking my tea. There is just some crazy determination like, “I am going to do this and I am going to do it right.”

Other skateboarding women also explain that risk, injuries and pain are an inherent component of learning and improving. As 27 year old Qwin puts it: “You know if you don’t fall then you are not trying. That is the thing.” Indeed, to become a better skateboarder, girls understand that they inevitably have to face physical risks (Kelly, Pomerantz and Currie, 2005). In this sense, like other sportswomen, our respondents are reproducing the “no pain, no gain” dominant physical risk discourse in sport (Young & White, 1995; Theberge, 1997; Charlesworth & Young, 2004; Pike, 2004; Sabo, 2004). However, as we will discuss later, they do problematize this acceptance of pain and injury and actually adopt strategies to prevent severe harmful outcomes.

In their study on young people’s perceptions of risk, Green, Mitchell and Bunton (2000) contend that young people respond to mounting social pressures by investing heavily in peer-group relationships, which are most often developed and consolidated through leisure activities. Sport and recreation become a space where young adults work on the self and acquire valued “risk reputations”. Le Breton (2002) has also noted the influence of peers on youth risk-taking. As such, young people engaging in risky behaviours are often admired for their courage, strength and willingness to face danger and uncertainty (Lupton, 1999). Cheryl also tells a similar experience as she worked on gaining acceptance at the skate park:

Because I was a girl, I got a lot of claps. It was because I was a girl. If I was to drop in or something or do something, they were like, "Wow!" If I fell, they were like, "Ohhh." I let them know that I was good, bleeding and all. Over all, it has been very positive. I haven't had any problems.

Cheryl's story however adds a gender dimension to the significance of her risk-taking behaviour. She consciously shows other skateboarders that despite being a woman, she is not only skilled but she is also prepared to take risks: she'll fall. She purposefully transgresses boundaries and constitutes an image of herself as an alternative "girl". Cheryl gains respect and admiration by never backing down from challenges that might lead to injury. Cultivated risk-taking affords young women with an opportunity to display courage, master fear and prove their abilities and capacities to themselves and to others. Lupton and Tulloch (2002) frame risk-taking as a form of work upon the self. Risk-taking is tied to notions of self-actualisation and self-determination and can be a form of protest against conventions, such as gender norms, that restrict behaviour.

Risk/istance: "I'm Not the Average Girl"

Both Krane (2001) and Theberge (1997) have found that women gain a feeling of empowerment or accomplishment linked to the physicality and motor skills required in sport. Success in sport performance results in the creation of an alternative gender subject position that transgresses dominant discourses of femininity. Some of these young skateboarding women exemplify what Krane (2001) refers to as female bodies that challenge hegemonic femininity. They reject dominant gender norms and consciously dress and act, in their skateboarding practices, in ways that are "unfeminine". They thus become free to "develop their own definitions of acceptable body shape and appropriate sporting activities" (Krane, 2001, p. 123).

As has already been shown in previous quotes by Cheryl, Jamie and Tristan, our respondents clearly show that they understand the contradiction between gender norms and their skateboarding practices. Some of the young women we interviewed were attracted to skateboarding precisely because it allowed them to construct and express different gender norms. Jamie, a former skateboarder who converted to longboarding, explains that when she first started skateboarding as a 12 year old, she became quite involved in the sport and its culture as it allowed her to be a “different” kind of girl and to show her courage.

At the source, it was because I was different. I wasn't trying to be different. I felt that I had different interests from everyone. I was attracted towards that. It was a mix of “I want to try that.” I was a really gutsy girl. I didn't have inhibitions going into it. I was like, “I want to try it, let's do it.” [...] Back then, my whole grade 7 and 8, I got labeled a totally tomboy. It was everything, skating and because I dressed like a skater. I was a tomboy, I guess. To me, I didn't need to show that I was a girl because I was so confident. I was like, “I am a girl, I don't give a fuck! Whatever, I like skating. I don't need to wear tight pants for you to think that I am anything.”

Lupton (1999) and Weedon (1997) draw attention to the effect of reverse discourses in allowing the subject to surpass expectations or to engage in subversive gender performances. Just as Jamie was resisting hegemonic femininity as a teenager, Cheryl consciously took up skateboarding in her early 20s to demonstrate that she was not a “typical” girl. Notwithstanding the fact that Cheryl insists that performing an alternative gender is not her principal motivation for skateboarding, preferring instead to define herself as a “true” skateboarder based on her love of

speed, risk and the sheer pleasure of the activity, she does recognize that the transgression of feminine performativity is part of her attraction to the sport. It is also worth mentioning that Cheryl came to the sport in her early 20s after years of competitive figure skating, one of the sports closely associated to the reproduction of hegemonic femininity. Skateboarding evidently presents a new and distinctive opportunity for her construction of self-identity. Similarly, Heika, a 27 year-old street skateboarder, confirms that being a skateboarder means:

That I am not the average girl. I am willing to try things where I possibly can get hurt.

Where I do not think many girls would do that because they would be afraid to break a nail. I think that it is very difficult. It is not like hopping on a bike. Most people can learn how to bike. Not everybody can learn how to skateboard.

For Heika, contesting traditional ideas of femininity and the feminine body and the acceptance of physical risks are central to her skateboard participation as she adds “Mind you, if a girl is skateboarding, it is because she is different to begin with. She won’t be as afraid of getting hurt and getting her hair messed up.” Indeed, there is evidence that women do create alternative gender performances through alternative sporting practices. Pomerantz, Currie & Kelly (2004) show how skater girls produce themselves in relation to alternative images of femininity, aligning themselves with discourses of risk. Research suggests that women’s involvement in masculine risk-taking activities challenges the constraints imposed by cultural notions of femininity (Hargreaves, 1997; Young & White, 1995). Amongst athletes, playing through pain is valorised while injuries in a sense inscribe men’s bodies and attest to their masculinity. Alex reveals that like other sportswomen, she accepts pain and continues skateboarding while injured to protect her status as true skateboarder. She asserts:

Even when I rolled my ankle, I will skate a bit and then all of a sudden hours later...I think it is the whole surge of adrenaline that is in your system that lets you skate some more. As soon as it goes away you're like, "Why did I keep skating?" Yep, just to be tough in front of the guys. (25 years old, Park Skateboarder)

By subjecting herself to the pain principle, she embodies the sport ethic and rejects feminine attributes of vulnerability and weakness. Yet, she also starts to question the imperative of skating despite being injured and she is quite aware that such behaviour is governed by the desire to prove her determination and legitimacy to her male peers.

Qwin also accepts that physical risks are not only inevitable, but also a part of being an "authentic" skateboarder. She states, "Willing to break a bone? If it happens, it happens. You just got to get back up on that horse. Skating is the only thing I really have, physical wise. Skating is just so much fun. I am 27 and it is part of me" (27 years old, Park Skateboarder). By accepting pain and injury, Qwin "does" masculinity, reproducing dominant discourses of masculinity and risk-taking. While this allows her to resist gender norms, it does however mean that she is reproducing risk-taking masculine norms in sport to achieve success and credibility as a skateboarder in the same way that other sportswomen accept pain and injury as part of sport (Young & White, 1995; Theberge, 1997; Krane, 2001; Pike & Maguire, 2003). But as Pike and Maguire (1995) have proposed in their analysis of female rowers, our interviewees might be seeking to achieve success by taking on the dominant values and beliefs of sport with regards to pain, injury and risk, as a form of compensation for their perceived failure as "feminine" women. They have in fact explained that they are "different" from other women and that they appreciate skateboarding because it allows space for their alternative gender performance.

In contrast, Erin a 28 year old skateboarder occupies a more complex position. She aligns herself with dominant notions of masculinity via the ability to withstand pain and injury. She claims that she is willing to accept scrapes, bruises and scars. However, she is unwilling to accept any injuries to her face: "I don't want to smack face. I don't want to get a broken nose. Not that I am beauty conscious, but." She spontaneously rejects the notion that she wants to protect her face for motivations associated to dominant femininity and the need to protect and care for one's loveliness. But when she repeats later in the interview that "I wouldn't want to do any damage to my face", when asked to explain why she answers:

I wouldn't want any missing teeth. I think that would hurt a whole lot. Then you would have to have a fake tooth and that is shit to contend with. When you are missing a front tooth, you look like a completely different person.

Thus her appearance is important to her. Perhaps she is not willing to admit that she does abide by some femininity standards as it would contradict her dedication to her sport and her definition of herself as a skateboarder. Or her position might also be similar to that of women in Charlesworth and Young's (2003) analysis of the experience of pain and injury among female athletes from a variety of sports, who felt that facial injuries, especially, destabilized their sense of femininity. The authors explain that such visible signs become a marker of unfeminine behaviour since these women placed themselves at physical risk.

Controlling danger or injury

I have this one picture of myself. I came home from longboarding one night, it was the third time in two weeks that I hit a huge pothole and my knee was totally done. It started once, I was walking and I tripped. I kept longboarding so my pants soaked up a lot of

blood. I was sitting on the stairs and my knee was just blood. You can see it and it was blood, blood, blood! When I think of risk, I think of that picture. (Jamie, 16 years old, Longboarder)

While our respondents discussed the pleasure and the self-actualization benefits they derive from risk-taking in skateboarding, they also alluded to their fear of the actual potential physical outcomes of these risks. All but 1 of our 12 participants talked about the danger and bodily harm associated with their skateboard participation predictably identified as scrapes, bruises, fractures and sprains, mostly resulting from falls, and even death from collisions with motor vehicles. They enjoy the feeling of skateboarding, as long as they are successful. But they worry about the harmful consequences when they fail or can not control all hazards. Ashley, a 21 year old park skateboarder, explains the relationship between skill and concerns for negative outcomes:

I am always thinking about [the physical risks], in the back of my mind. It is something that is at the back of your head. If you are doing something that you have done over and over, then it is not really there. But, if you are trying something new, then [hesitation and a little fear] are going to be there.

Tristan on the other hand explains that she fears situations where risks are created by shared public space where she is vulnerable to other people's decisions and actions:

Cars intimidate me. If a car hits me there is a lot more damage then if I hit the car. Having other people around in vehicles, I am not really down with. I will ride on roads but I will ride on roads where there is like one car every once in awhile and not a constant stream of cars.

Le Breton (2002) and Lyng (1990) stress that voluntary risk-taking through leisure activities is not only about seeking the emotional intensity, but also about mastering skills to control the danger. Edgeworkers are uncomfortable in situations where they do not control all circumstances and where they feel that success or failure is a question of fate. It is not surprising then that skateboarding women discuss the issue of controlling risks in a way that produces them as “responsible” skilled risk-takers.

Discourse of Responsibility

I usually think about it. After that time when I busted myself, I think that this is not something that I need to do. Whether for myself or anybody else. I don't need to go down this big hill; I don't need to break my kneecap. I usually walk it.

Granted if a hill looks really fun and it plateaus and is flat at the end, that's cool. I think about how much momentum I am going to build. I think about if there is enough room for me to slow down. If I can't gage that, I won't go for it. (Taylor, 20 years old, Longboarder)

Participants constructed themselves as responsible risk-takers by engaging in strategies that limit their exposure to severe injuries with long-term consequences. For instance, some will learn new skills on soft or smooth surfaces. They limit their exposure to injury by skateboarding in parking lots, a location deemed safer because of the minimal motor traffic and safe surface. Some participants also reported skating in isolated locations to avoid pedestrians or on sidewalks to avoid motor vehicle traffic. Others wear a helmet and protective gear when they skateboard in parks or attempt new tricks. And two park skateboarders who limit the duration of their skateboard participation to avoid injuries due to fatigue. They adopted such safety practices not

to avoid all risks, but rather to control the probability of injury when learning new skills or to reduce the chances of severe consequences such as fractures or disability.

The physical harms resulting from skating stairs, vertical ramps, busy streets and gaps were deemed unacceptable by participants who felt they lacked the required skills and ability to avoid grave consequences such as death or permanent impairment. A 16 year-old park skater comments:

I am not going to ollie off of something once it surpasses a certain height. I won't gap rooftops. I will not drop into a 12-foot half pipe. That is pretty nuts! I am afraid of that because I might kill myself" (Adrianna, 16 years old, Park Skateboarder).

Therefore, risks deemed unacceptable depend on factors such as skill and previous experience which allow the skateboarder to control her performance. Hence, there is a clear connection between the acceptance of risks and skill level. Alex concurs when she explains that the physical risks she refuses to take are "Things that are kind of beyond my means. I am not a great skater. If I know it is beyond me, I am not going to try it. I am not going to ollie off a bloody 20 stairs" (25 years old, Park Skateboarder).

The severity of the potential injury was also a factor that influenced whether or not they felt that the risk was acceptable. While some young women were not willing to risk fractures, others set the limit at permanent injury, paralysis or death. Therefore, the point was not to eliminate all injuries as they accept them as part of skateboarding, but rather to control for the consequences they did not tolerate. It is clear however that all participants are critical of what

they consider careless risks such as “jumping off a 50 foot drop trying to get to the other side” or “jumping while cars are moving” which they deem “stupid”, “foolish” or “ridiculous”.

Taking care of oneself is not only important to protect one’s health, but also because of one’s relationships and responsibilities towards others. Taylor, a 20 year old longboarder, recognizes in the quote above, that hurting her knee not only affects her, but it has an impact on others as well. Similarly, Cheryl, a 25 year old park skateboarder, acknowledges that what she considers careless risk-taking practices would have a negative impact on family members, her students and others:

Well, yeah. I think that my parents would be pretty pissed off if I got hit by a car if I was skating while drunk. It is not really fair for me to do that. I have responsibilities in this world. I teach kids and do all kinds of different things. I am going to affect a lot of people if I put myself in that position. I need to be mobile. My job, I teach figure skating, I need to be on my feet. If I break something or do something, you want to know what? My income is gone. In that sense those sorts of responsibilities come in. That also helps me draw the line with that type of risk.

Cheryl is concerned about what happens to her and would blame herself for engaging in a reckless practice such as skateboarding while under the influence of alcohol. Her sense of responsibility to herself and others is similar to that of the young girls interviewed in Green’s (1997) study of children’s risk narratives. Therefore, as a responsible risk-taker, she states that she must control the hazards and only engage in those practices she can confidently accomplish:

I won't do anything that I don't feel ready. If I feel prepared, that I have the capability and I can get my mind around it, I will try it. I am not willing to do stuff that I don't think that I can do.

Young women's accounts of their risk-taking behaviours in skateboarding were framed in notions of moral responsibility tied to contemporary health discourses that construct individuals as responsible for their own health (Lupton, 1999). Such assumptions about responsibility were reproduced in our respondents' narratives where individuals who do not engage in risk-avoidance activities may be judged as irresponsible and even blamed for a failure to take care of the self.

Skateboarding women: Self-constituting subjects?

The young women we interviewed conceive of risk-taking in skateboarding as both enabling and constraining. It is enabling because it allows them to achieve a sense of heightened sensation, to construct themselves as skilled performers and to consciously challenge hegemonic femininity. They self-reflectively position themselves as risk-takers and use this subject position to problematize dominant gender norms. Hence, for them voluntary risk cultivates self-knowledge and self-transformation. In challenging themselves through a form of edgework, these young women submit themselves to a self-evaluation, not only to know who they are, but also to become who they want to be. Work and play are involved in these skateboarders' experiences in order to transform themselves as "alternative" women. By aligning themselves with discourses of risk in attempts to resist and transgress the boundaries associated with traditional femininity, participants performed masculinity. As they engage in "masculine" practices, they contest dominant notions of "femininity" and "masculinity" and demonstrate that

to choose an alternative gender identity is to interpret gender norms in a way that reproduces and organizes them anew (Butler, 1991). However, they also conceive of risk-taking as constraining in that they fear some of the possible harmful consequences of skateboarding. They consequently draw on a discourse of responsibility to question the sport ethic and justify the limits they impose on themselves to protect their physical well-being. Here again, they consciously control their skateboarding practices to constitute themselves as a different type of women, granted, but not as reckless skateboarders. Skateboarding is empowering and becomes a practice of freedom in so far as young women limit the types of risk they are willing to take, restraining their risk-taking behaviours to protect their health and constituting themselves as responsible risk-takers. The search for intense feeling is a controlled quest, based on their perceived competence. Moreover, this desire to take care of the self is not only related to how these young women relate to the self, but also how they relate to others and how they conceive of their responsibility towards others.

Now the question is whether or not they are simply adopting moral values associated with the dominant health discourse that calls on individuals to take responsibility for their own health or are they actually engaging in ethical self-care? To what extent are they exercising power to question the truths of risk, sport and gender discourses and make their own choices about how they want to act and transform themselves or not? It is important to remember that these young women's self-reflective construction of identity is constrained by available regimes of truth (Weedon, 1997). In other words, they can not re-invent themselves in a discursive vacuum. A young skateboarder may actively reject a subject position in the dominant femininity discourse, but she can only choose among available discursive possibilities to patrol the boundaries of gender and to resist. Yet, the subject can be a self-determined subject, as opposed to merely a

dominated subject produced by the relationship between power and knowledge (Deacon, 2003). In exercising choice and engaging in critical self-awareness, the young women we interviewed navigate between existing discursive fragments about the benefits of risk, pain and injury in sport, gender norms, and responsibility for one's health. They each reiterate various combinations of these discursive truths to produce distinct identities. Some like Cheryl and Jamie deliberately use skateboarding as a strategy to question hegemonic femininity, others like Alex and Tristan seek improvement and mastery of skill to know and create themselves as talented while Brooke pursues risk-taking to prove to herself and to her friends what she can do. Clearly, they are not all engaged in the same degree of self-reflection and self-transformation. But they are positioning themselves at the intersection between risk, sport and gender discourses that certainly allow them the possibility to recognize themselves as subjects and to act upon their thoughts and practices, to accept or reject "truths" about who they are, so that they can constitute themselves as who they want to be.

CHAPTER VI

SELF/EXPRESSION SESSIONS:
YOUNG WOMEN SKATEBOARDERS CONFORMING, RESISTING AND
NEGOTIATING GENDER IDENTITIES

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And

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Abstract

In this article, young women's skateboarding performances are analysed as discursive acts in the establishment of alternative gender identities. We explore how young skateboarding women recognize themselves as subjects and seek to constitute themselves as alternative women. The deliberately aggressive, risk-taking and strong skateboarding woman challenges cultural notions of women's bodies as passive and docile and thus becomes subject to the objectifying gaze. Through the examination of 12 skateboarding women's narratives, we highlight their awareness of dominant gender discourses and of the appraising panoptical gaze. Interviewees discussed at great length others' attempts to shame and police their participation because they are seen to transgress social and cultural norms. The emphasis is given to how they are both the subject of technologies of power and of technologies of self as they consciously see themselves as different types of subjects and complete work upon the self to strategically take up positions in reverse discourses.

Self/expression sessions: Young women skateboarders conforming, resisting and negotiating gender identities

Many critical sport scholars have adopted Foucault's (1988) framework of relations of power and domination to examine the production of gender in and through sport (Hargreaves, 1987; Theberge, 1991; Cole, 1993; Duncan, 1994; Chapman, 1997; Johns & Johns, 2000). Within this framework, sport has been represented as a disciplinary practice that employs techniques of power and domination – such as hierarchal positioning, observation, normalizing judgment and the establishment of routines, rules, ethics and guidelines – in order to produce compliant athletic bodies (Shogan, 1999). The discourse of sport thus targets and disciplines individual bodies which learn to unquestionably follow a discursive regime (Heikkala, 1993). Sport is argued to be a technique for working on and fashioning the gendered self within existing regimes and social practices that permeate individual modes of behaviour contingent on norms that regulate the boundaries of desirable and acceptable forms of femininity/ties and masculinity/ties.

The focus of this article is young women's participation in skateboarding subcultures and how they "carve" out space to construct themselves as subjects in gender discourses. Lack of research on young women's experiences in youth sport subcultures such as skateboarding is disappointing considering that such a milieu can foster resistance to gender norms and are sites where youths construct their identities. Cultural theorists working for the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) have demonstrated how youths, through subcultures, proactively and reactively, expressed their dissatisfaction with the dominant ideologies (Clarke, 1973; Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Hebdige, 1979). Much of the research has situated youth subcultural involvement within the dominant discourse of masculinity (Clarke, 1973; Cohen,

1955; Cohen, 1972; Hebdige, 1979; Roberts, 1997; Green, Mitchell & Bunton, 2000).

Consequently, men's involvement has been represented as the norm and women's as peripheral to subcultures. Research efforts have thus been directed towards the myriad ways that young men affirm their masculinity/ties within subcultures. In particular, the focus has been on young men's resistance to the dominant culture, yet without considering the role that young people play in the making and remaking of their own identities. Youths are not passive victims of culture but are instead active agents constructing alternative identities (Nilan & Feixa, 2006; Wulff, 1995).

However, the creation of such identities is not completely autonomous from the dominant culture. In their struggle to establish alternative identities, youths are not immune to the ideological power of the dominant codes embedded in social structures and practices.

Women's participation in traditionally masculine spaces, namely through sporting practices, can be viewed as a means to challenge the constraints imposed by cultural notions of femininity/ties (Hargreaves, 1997; Kelly, Pomerantz & Currie, 2005; Mennesson, 2005; Young & White, 1995). The premise of this article is that women's involvement in skateboarding, an activity coded as masculine, enables young females to simultaneously resist and conform to gender norms. In this way, their behaviours and aesthetic styles can be seen as a form of gender negotiation, as they involve the refusal to act in accord to normative expectations. However, women skateboarders cannot outright reject prevailing constructions of gender. We examine the ways in which women skateboarders both refuse and reproduce dominant femininity/ties through their enactments of alternative gender identities.

While Pomerantz, Currie and Kelly (2004) and Kelly, Pomerantz and Currie (2005) have noted the gender disparity in skateboard subcultures, Beal (1995, 1996) found that male

members of this youth culture claim they challenge dominant Western ideologies through experimenting with non-traditional forms of masculinity/ties. While male skateboarders and their personal quests to critique hegemonic masculinity/ties are not the focus of this study, it is important to note that skateboarding has been found to offer young men an opportunity to disrupt masculine gender norms. According to Beal (1995, 1996), skateboarding subcultures also provide participants space to establish alternative values of cooperation, individuality and anti-competition. Yet, as skateboarders resist dominant ideologies of “masculinity/ties”, competition and conformity, skateboarding is not necessarily fully transformative and free of contradictions. This sporting youth movement cannot fully and completely challenge all dominant ideologies, as it remains influenced by gender relations in society and particularly in sport. Skateboarding subcultures perform resistance by redefining ‘masculine’ behaviour while paradoxically reproducing patriarchal relations (Beal, 1996). This is yet another illustration of contradictions within the youth movement where some dominant values are challenged and rejected whereas others are reinforced. It remains a male coded activity where young men’s performances are the standard all skateboarders are compared to and judged against.

It is because of its “maleness” that skateboarding becomes a space where young women can question hegemonic femininity. Other researchers have in fact similarly observed that skateboarding becomes a site where young girls reproduce “alternative” gender identities. Kelly et al. (2005) have demonstrated skateboarding women’s desires to produce themselves as alternative via problematising and distancing themselves from traditional images of femininity/ties. Pomerantz et al. (2004) have recognized skater girls’ agency through their quest to expand the possibilities for feminine subjectivities. The adolescent skateboarders they

interviewed occupied the position of “skater” girls to contest conventional thinking about femininity/ties.

In this article, young women’s skateboarding performances are analysed as discursive acts in the establishment of alternative gender identities. We explore how young skateboarding women recognize themselves as subjects and seek to constitute themselves as alternative women. The impetus to refuse femininity/ties and consequently construct alternative subjectivities often results in many women enacting masculinity/ties (Carr, 1998; Mennesson, 2005; Young & Dallaire, forthcoming). The deliberately aggressive, risk-taking and strong skateboarding woman challenges cultural notions of women’s bodies as passive and docile and thus becomes subject to the objectifying gaze. Indeed, participants discussed others’ attempts to shame and police their participation because they are seen to transgress social and cultural norms. Through the examination of 12 skateboarding women’s narratives, we highlight their awareness of dominant gender discourses and appraising panoptical gaze. The analysis focuses on how they are both the subject of technologies of power and how they see themselves as different types of subjects strategically taking up positions in reverse discourses.

Theoretical framework

Using a feminist poststructuralist framework, women’s participation in skateboarding is explored as a resource for identity play. To this end, the analysis draws on Butler’s (1993) framework where gender is produced through the stylization of the body and a repetition of acts in which gestures, movements and styles constitute a gendered identity. Where a subject “does” gender, others decode, interpret and categorize her based upon current gender norms. These

normative gender expectations assign meanings, roles, rights and responsibilities and delineate how a subject should look, communicate and ultimately, behave.

Like Pomerantz et al. (2005), we situate young women skateboarders as active agents in the construction of alternative gender identities. Unlike Pomerantz et al. (2005), however, our analysis suggests that young women skateboarders are caught in a moral dilemma in that they seek to challenge dominant femininity/ties, while at the same time reinforcing such constructions in order to avoid ostracism and stigma. The works of Foucault (1979, 1980, 1988) thus become useful to examine how women skateboarders who wish to produce alternative subjectivities both resist and reiterate what Krane (2001) has called “hegemonic femininity”. Foucault’s conceptualization of “technologies of power” (1979, 1980) and of “technologies of self” (1988, 1991) is particularly insightful to understand how young women skateboarders enact and resist conventional ideas of femininity/ties.

Technologies of power

Foucault’s earlier works (1979, 1980) explored what he refers to as “technologies of power”, which focus on how power operates upon individuals and groups. He traced the modern form of power by detailing how procedures and practices are contingent on techniques of discipline and control. Foucault (1979) focused on how “the body is the object and target of power” (p. 136). As a result of the breakdown of the feudal system in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, citizens began to be discursively constructed as individualised bodies that required intervention and management (Lupton, 1999). Foucault claimed that the eighteenth century heralded new and subtle techniques of disciplinary power to create “docile” bodies that “may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (1979, p.136).

Keeping with Foucault's techniques of power and his docile bodies thesis, it is not surprising that research on women's participation in sport has often been limited to activities which control, sexualize and shape the body in one's attempt to conform to the cultural construction of the ideal female body. For example, aerobics has been considered a site which promotes the sexualization of women's bodies (Duncan, 1994; Markula, 1995; Theberge, 1991), while gymnastics reproduces stereotypical ideas of the ideal feminine body as petite, graceful in motion and extremely flexible (Kane, 1995). Therefore, particular sport and exercise practices have been understood as technologies of femininity that women engage in to inscribe, produce and shape the feminine body (Chapman, 1997; Hargreaves, 1987).

Technologies of Self

In his later works, Foucault (1984, 1988) shifted his theorizing about the self from how power operates upon individuals to the ways in which we actively construct ourselves through knowledge and disciplining of the body. He introduced notions of governmentality, freedom and ethics as well as notions of corporeality and power. Foucault admitted (1988) that he placed too much emphasis on technologies of domination and power in his earlier work, wherein he focused almost exclusively on how power operates upon individuals and groups while overlooking how power includes self-regulation. He thus turned his attention to technologies of the self "which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves" (p.18). Technologies of the self become "practices of freedom" that subjects employ to make conscious choices about how to understand and relate to themselves, a process resulting in self-transformation and new ways of being. While Foucault (1984, 1988) only started in the

latter part of his career to focus on technologies of the self, we follow recent poststructural feminist work in the sociology of sport (Chapman, 1997; Johns & Johns, 2000; Markula, 2003, 2004; Wesely, 2001) in the hope to further develop his project of examining the self-reflexive subject.

Sport theorists have more recently begun to embrace Foucault's genealogy. The more notable theoretical developments of Foucauldian analyses of sport have come within the growing poststructural feminist sport research. This scholarship embraces an awareness of resistance that "takes the body as a control locus of the constitution of femininity and gender" (Theberge, 1991, p.125). Poststructuralist feminist scholars have adopted Foucault's approach to highlight how the female sporting body is located within a normalizing web of discursive practices which withholds the ability to resist practices of domination (Andrews, 1993; Cole, 1993; Duncan, 1994; Chapman, 1997; Shogan, 1999; Markula, 2001, 2003). Without question, research on sport and the production of feminine bodies has greatly advanced our theoretical understandings of how gendered bodies are socially constructed and monitored. Feminist poststructuralist research has underscored how sport and fitness are body projects that involve the ongoing maintenance of established ideas of femininity/ties and/or the site to subvert established ideologies (Theberge, 1991; Chapman, 1997; Markula, 2003). Our goal is to draw on the wealth of theoretical insight about bodies by feminist poststructuralists to examine the ways in which skateboarding performances are used by women in the process of negotiating and resisting dominant constructions of femininity/ties.

The study¹

Young women skateboarders were identified through a snowball technique, proceeding by word of mouth through personal contacts and referrals from peers. Twelve young women were selected on the basis of their age (16 to 29 years old), skateboarding experience (one year minimum) and self-identification as a skateboarder or longboarder. The skateboard is commonly used for street or skate park trick riding. In contrast, the longboard is significantly longer, features larger wheels and is designed to move at faster speeds over greater distances, thus it is used for transportation. In-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted over two months in Ottawa and the Greater Toronto Region. While young women's understanding of the risks in skateboarding was the topic of the research project, the analysis revealed that notions of risk are conflated with dominant understandings of gender (Young & Dallaire, forthcoming). Their accounts of their skateboarding risk experiences inevitably brought gender to the forefront of the study. Although participants were not specifically asked to discuss their gender identities, we did invite them to address whether or not they felt their skateboarding experiences were different because they were women.

We draw heavily on feminist adaptations of Foucault (Butler, 1993; Weedon, 1997; Maclaren, 2002) in order to conceive of women not simply as powerless, but with the ability to self-monitor, self-regulate and as capable of resistance through the production of counter discourses. We use this framework to explore skateboarding as a practice that objectifies young women and subjects them to discursive control yet simultaneously allows for a certain degree of strategic self-transformation. A variety of discourses compel skateboarding women to contradictory subject positions. It is out of these contradictions that the subject may choose to

¹ One of us (Alana Young), a skateboarder, carried out the data collection phase of the research.

exert agency over her circumstances, contributing to her sense of self and self-construction. In the sociological literature on sport, cultural conformity and resistance to dominant constructions of gender are indeed recurrent themes. And Foucault (1978) reminds us that they go hand in hand when he states “where there is power, there is resistance” (p. 95). Indeed, within every power relationship remains the opportunity for the subject to contest established “truths”. However, freedom of the modern individual is contingent upon knowing, monitoring and improving oneself, giving rise to a self-managing subject. Therefore, practices of freedom are bound by self-regulation and self-surveillance. Although we have chosen to present young women’s acts of conformity and resistance into two separate sections, we acknowledge that women’s skateboarding acts of compliance and defiance to dominant constructions of femininity/ties are inexorably intertwined. Young women’s involvement and experiences in skateboarding illustrate the ways in which they simultaneously reproduce hegemonic femininity/ties in response to the appraising gaze yet challenge such dominant notions in order to constitute themselves as alternative subjects.

Sk8r “grrrls” and established conformity

In *Discipline and Punish* (1979), Foucault traced the modern form of power by detailing how procedures and practices are contingent on techniques of discipline and control. In a Foucauldian sense, sport is a practice whose central feature is one of bodily discipline and surveillance. Moreover, in Cole’s (1993) analysis, it is a practice that conditions, reshapes and inscribes the body through the terms of a patriarchal society. Since sport has long been considered a masculine body project that inscribes young men’s bodies with power and strength to validate their masculinity and authority over

women (Crawley, 1998), preferred understandings of femininity consider such displays among women as improper. In short, women are considered more passive and naturally weaker than men, a view that is incidentally reinforced through the subculture's niche magazines that display much sexist and misogynist imagery where women are seldom portrayed skateboarding (Rinehart, 2005; Wheaton and Beal, 2003). And skateboarding women are aware of such gender norms. For instance, Brooke, a 21-year-old street skateboarder, explains how such hegemonic femininity/ties lead to the disapproval of young women's skateboarding.

A lot of guys grow up and do it [skateboard]. With girls, it is not really seen as something that is normal. You don't see very many girls skateboarding. It is almost like it is not acceptable or something. [...] I think it is that girls are supposed to be more quiet, they are not supposed to take risk. They are supposed to stand on the sidelines and be calmer. But it is starting to progress. Even with hockey there are tons [of] more girls starting to play. Girls were never supposed to be seen as aggressive and stuff.

Indeed, women's skateboarding performances are disturbing since they signal that women can in fact "do" masculinity/ties, despite being conditioned not to pursue the kind of autonomous development that is perceived to be a constitutive feature of masculinity/ties. Moreover Qwin, a 27 year-old park skateboarder, discussed how her own actions were read and interpreted as masculine.

A friend of mine saw me skating when it was really dark out. He skates too. He was like, "I thought that was a really husk guy skating." A husk guy meaning a guy that wears tight pants. [...] Even some of my

girlfriends that skate are like, "I saw you pushing and I thought you were a guy. It's you!" But that's complimenting me because I push like a guy.

Skateboarding requires that women's bodies go beyond conventional gender norms. Qwin's skateboarding skills defy the historical notion of women's bodies as weak and disrupt notions of what is natural for women's bodies because others recognize that she "moves" like a man.

Skateboarding women remain suspicious because of their apparent masculinization and ability to perform masculinity making them subject to increased surveillance. Qwin's narrative exemplifies the pervasiveness of the external gaze which surveys women's skateboarding bodies as a result of transgressing and disrupting the "naturalness" and fixivity of social and cultural boundaries. Women who transgress these boundaries are the source of much confusion, fear and even aversion (Lupton, 1999), and athletic women, such as bodybuilders, "face incredible pressure and tremendous attacks if they do not stay within the realm of acceptable femininity" (Wesely, 2001, p. 173). Brooke comments that skateboarding young women "get labeled, definitely. Like, a tomboy. Some people are homophobic and they will be like, lesbian because you skate." In performing masculine practices through skateboarding, not only is young women's gender questioned, but they are also perceived to digress from heteronormativity (Young, 2005). Thus, like other female athletes, they are considered neither feminine nor heterosexual women (Caudwell, 2003; Cooky & McDonald, 2005; Krane, 2001; Shogan, 1999; Veri, 1999; Wedgwood, 2004).

Women Sk8boarding Bodies and Disciplinary Power

Such judgments of women's skateboarding performances as "abnormal" stem from powerful gender discourses. Although, as Brooke remarks above, such expectations

of women's sport practices may be changing, gender policing, through scrutiny and labelling, persists. Foucault (1979) compared such surveillance and modern disciplinary power to Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. The panopticon is a prison structure with a guard tower, in which the guard can observe all prisoners and the latter are aware that they can be watched at all times. This arrangement creates an illusion of surveillance that renders the inmates docile and self-regulating. Power then becomes internalized in accordance with the panoptical schema (Cole, 1993). Foucault argues that modern power takes the form of the panoptical gaze. We are normalized through illusionary and continual surveillance which results in a new form of consciousness marked by self-policing. Although Foucault made no reference to gender arrangements, feminist researchers (Bartky, 1990; Bordo, 1991; Spitzack, 1990) have exposed the ways in which women are surveyed for possible transgressions against dominant constructions of femininity/ties. Bartky (1990) and Bordo (1991), in particular, developed the idea of the body as a site of cultural inscription. They demonstrate how femininity/ties are socially constructed and conveyed through women's bodies as they focus on how women engage in a variety of disciplinary practices including weight control, cosmetic surgery and applying make-up. Moreover, Spitzack (1990) argued that the discourse of the healthy woman as thin, toned and muscular regulates women's bodies and results in a disciplinary gaze where women learn to see themselves as others do.

In the context of sport, Cole (1993) and Duncan (1994) have also applied Foucault's concept of the panoptic gaze to examine the mechanisms that encourage women's self-surveillance. And such modalities of the exercise of power do emerge in

our analysis. The young women we interviewed vividly discussed the pervasiveness of the gaze and its effect on their skateboarding practices. While some of our interviewees did point out that they receive support from male peers and that such encouragement has a positive effect on their skateboarding experiences on the street or at the park, it was obvious that our respondents more commonly experienced disapproval through young male skateboarders' observation. Qwin, a 27 year-old park based skateboarder, recounted being put down by a more talented male skateboarder at the park.

At some parks you will be doing a trick and this guy will be doing the trick. I am like, "Are you trying to show me up here? Because you can easily do that." They can see the tricks I am trying to do. I am not doing a lot of tricks. It is so easy for them that they are like, "I am going to do this and that," It just seems that they are showing you up.

After she had performed and executed a trick, this young man belittled her efforts by executing the same skill with greater height and a different variation, adding a higher degree of difficulty. She felt her efforts and accomplishments had been trivialized by his enhanced performance. Qwin's and other young women's achievements within the skateboard subculture are continually being challenged by their male peers. In fact, Alex, a 25 year-old park skater, explains that young men's taunts are frequent.

It feels like you have to prove yourself. People really do stop and stare at you because you are a girl with a board. I don't know what they are looking for.

Maybe they want to see you fuck up. I really don't know, but they do stop and watch.

Because of the insidious surveillance, Alex went as far as shaving her head. The pervasiveness of the gaze proved so powerful that it resulted in her altering her appearance. She states:

The only negative way that I have been treated with a skateboard is by other skateboarders and it is guys. They tend to stop and watch you if you arrive at a park or you ride an area. They will stop and watch you to see what a chick can do. To that end, I ended up shaving my head for a great deal of my youth so that they would not look at me. They would assume that I was a guy when I arrived.

Alex is able to disguise herself as a male skateboarder since with her shaved head and her athletic skills she looks and performs like a man, thus making herself un-noticeable as a woman. She chose to inscribe masculinity upon her body because her hair marked her skateboard participation as describable and analyzable as a woman's performance for which she was judged, measured, classified and oftentimes excluded. Chantal, a 24-year-old street skateboarder, also repeatedly refers to the idea of being watched, either when she walks holding her board, or when she is riding it. She feels she is being appraised and would prefer if no one knew she was a skateboarder or saw her skateboarding, since she feels that those doing the watching think she is a "poser" attempting to be cool or because she does not want to feel belittled when she is practicing new tricks. It is in this context that she discusses the importance of private sessions or girls' night at the skate park, so that women can "just skate and practice and there are no eyes on them." Skateboarding thus represents a highly politicized terrain wherein some identities and actions are rewarded and others are not. Grounded in ideals of masculinity/ties, the surveillance of women's bodies in skateboarding has and continues to marginalize and devalue women's

participation. Undoubtedly, the gaze is a persistent feature of our interviewees' skateboarding experiences. Their narratives reveal that young women either avoid the challenge posed by surveillance and doubts about their skateboarding skills and in doing so reinforce dominant femininity/femininities or they take on the challenge and prove their talent thus strategically reproducing themselves as alternative women.

Response to surveillance: Avoiding the challenge

As skateboarding has progressed into vertical skating and street riding (Brooke, 1999), skateboarders have begun to colonize urban space and public infrastructure to ride and learn new tricks. Yet, many female street based skateboarders interviewed for this project stressed that their participation is not based on a freestyle form of riding nor trick oriented. These young women who identify as street-based skaters consider their skateboard participation as a form of transportation or social activity amongst themselves and their peers. While they define and reiterate the prevailing male freestyle riding as the "skateboarding standard", they do not wish to perform such tricks, choosing instead other practices which render them invisible within skateboarding subcultures.

Since young men dominate skateboarding, one strategy young women adopt to escape the male gaze and the ensuing challenge is to avoid skateboard parks or busy streets. Women skateboarders who wish to elude surveillance often appropriate hidden and empty parking lots or other deserted locations to skate alone or with other women. Heika, for example, a 27-year-old street skateboarder, feels the sport is considered a masculine preserve and that she is perceived differently because she skateboards.

But by the general public, if they see me on a skateboard, they may think differently of me because they do not have anything else to base it on other than this person riding on a skateboard doing a boy thing. [...]

Based on my gender and the whole thing about skateboarding. [...] It is seen as a guy thing.

Thus, she rides in secluded areas to avoid the appraising gaze: "I usually keep to my own. That is why I like to go to parking lots."

Conversely, other interviewees remained in public spaces, but preferred longboarding rather than skateboarding. In response to the constant pressure from males to perform tricks on the skateboard, 16-year-old Jamie ceased her skateboard participation to take up longboarding instead. She maintains:

They would see that I am a girl; they would see that I am out there and with the way I dress, they would test me. They would feel the need to test me. They would be like, "Do an Ollie!" and I would say "Fuck off!" I think I even recited a line every time. I said, "I actually use skateboarding for transportation use." It was always the same thing.

By quitting skateboarding, Jamie is no longer subject to the masculine gaze appraising and trivializing her performance. With the development of freestyle skating, the skateboard has become predominantly trick-oriented, considered riskier and consequently more masculine. In contrast, the longboard is conceived of as a feminine version of the skateboard because it is deemed safer since it is designed exclusively for transportation. Taylor, a 20 year-old longboarder, explains "It is easier with longboards for sure, for girls. Totally easier! Longboards

are kind of the girl version of the skateboard.” She goes on to explain how longboarding becomes a strategy to avoid being compared and judged against male skateboarders because of the inherent limits of the board:

If you are not on an equal plain as a man is with skateboarding, it is understandable because there is not that much you can do with a longboard. If you are saying “This is what I can do with it”, that is what you can do with it. That is what it limits you to do. With a skateboard and you say, “This is what I can do with it”, it is “What do you mean? You should do this, this, this.”

Since they do not wish to practice freestyle or because they are not sufficiently talented to perform complex tricks, Taylor and Jamie choose the longboard. In response to the panoptic gaze and their perceived inferior status as skateboarders, they construct an identity as longboarders. They both enunciate discourses of emphasized femininity establishing women boarders as subordinate and their performances as second-rate. Women are taught that their body is inferior and so they must continually work upon to improve it (Cole, 1993). Indeed, Alex, a talented park boarder, claims that “If you want to get some time at the park or get a little bit of respect, you really have to work your ass.” Women skateboarders need to work upon their bodies to legitimize their participation and receive recognition. As such, the construction of a feminine skateboarding body requires individual labour in terms of time and desire. In contrast, men’s bodies are socially constructed as athletically superior (Wachs, 2005; Wesely, 2001). Qwin’s statement earlier confirms this view when she takes for granted that her male peers can easily outperform her. Alex reiterates such notions of men being naturally better at skateboarding when

she expresses her wish to improve her skills, "This is something that I really, truly would like to be good at. Boys tend to get better a lot quicker. That becomes really intimidating."

While skateboarding could be constructed as requiring grace, balance and poise, the young women we interviewed evaluate the authenticity of skateboarding performances against masculine norms of risk-taking, pain and aggression (Young & Dallaire, forthcoming). Indeed, there is a specific logic to the discourse of skateboarding and the construction of a masculine identity from which Jamie and Taylor both want to disassociate. They took up longboarding to reproduce feminine subjectivities. Jamie related how her initial skateboard participation situated her within the discourse of masculinity/ties:

The worst part was probably learning about the consequences of skateboarding, social wise. Realizing that I was forever going to be labeled as a guy, great! I really loved it, so I didn't mind. Still, when it came to school dances, "No one is going to dance with you because you are a guy!" I was like, "No I am not." It really labeled me and to this day. People still see me as that girl.

Despite her passion for skateboarding, Jamie quit skateboarding and took up longboarding in order to construct a subjectivity which ultimately aligned her with dominant constructions of femininity/ties. She maintains:

Anything that guys do a lot and it is very stereotypically a guy thing to do, any girl that does it is going to be looked at differently. It is just like anything else. I find that it has mostly been positive with longboarding. With skateboarding, it wasn't so much because back then it was judgmental... With longboarding, I have had a lot of people think that it is fucking cool... It is really positive being a girl longboarder. It is really cool!

Through the practice of longboarding, Jamie is able to produce a feminine identity with appropriate feminine movements.

Evidently, interviewees were influenced by dominant constructions of gender identity. Because the skateboarding body is seen to transgress acceptable boundaries of femininity/ties, this resulted in an ongoing identity negotiation. The choices they made regarding their specific boarding practices, such as restricting themselves to discrete locations, inscribing masculinity/ties onto their bodies and/or ceasing skateboard participation to avoid the gaze, operate through panoptic mechanisms. While some participants constructed a more feminine longboarding identity, the other women who constructed themselves as skateboarding women were forced to negotiate their practices within the acceptable limits of femininity/ties. In summary, female boarders face incredible pressures and receive considerable attention if they do not stay within the boundaries of acceptable femininity/ties.

Constructing “alternative” subjectivities

Like in Jamie’s case discussed earlier, Ashley, a 21-year-old street skateboarder, also renounced skateboarding to conform to hegemonic femininity. In fact, she states that while she first started skateboarding at 13 years old and skated “all the time”, she gave it up “when I was a girl”. When asked to explain what she meant by that, she explained “Well, I did what I was supposed to do... not skate! Other girls do not skate, so I tried. Then I just said screw it!” Ashley tried to conform to demands of dominant femininity, but she eventually decided to position herself outside of such norms, at least with regards to skateboarding. She resumed her skateboard participation because she enjoys it and for the feeling of accomplishment it provides her. For

some women, skateboarding is a form of protest as sport can serve as a site where alternative gender practices occur and where young women perform different gender norms (Hargreaves, 1997). While the women we interviewed did discipline their bodies in ways that reify dominant constructions of femininities, these discourses did not govern or control all their behaviours.

We apply Foucault's "technologies of self" as a set of activities and practices skateboarding women perform that open up possibilities to resist dominant subject positions. Women's skateboarding practices can also be understood as a discipline through which women relate to, understand and transform themselves. We notice this process of subjectification among young women skateboarders and longboarders and their pursuit to transform themselves into alternative women. In fact, while they may have on the one hand aligned themselves with hegemonic femininity through some of their practices, like Jamie's decision to take up longboarding rather than continue skateboarding, our respondents all claimed, on the other hand, to be alternative women and all expressed comments similar to the following statement by Erin, a 28-year-old street skateboarder: "I wasn't your typical girl that wanted to do any girl sports." Indeed, the young women we interviewed all situated themselves on the margin of femininity/ties and, as Menesson (2005) also observed in her study of female boxing and soccer players, they considered themselves "tomboys" as young girls, even before taking up skateboarding. Tristan, a 23-year-old street skateboarder, for instance skated with boys when she first started because "all the girls would not get on skateboards. (...) Because they are wimps. They want to be girly and not mess up their hair" whereas she did not see herself as one of these other young women. Cheryl, a 25-year-old park skateboarder, enjoys skateboarding since it allows her to reposition herself in a counter gender discourse.

It probably does have to do with being a girl. I do get that feeling when I am on the board. When I am coming up to people on the street, I always think in my head that they are thinking "I am a girl, oh my goodness!" You get those double takes when they realize that you are skateboarding. [...] That is part of it. I try not to make that the main reason to me. But it is part of it. It is the difference that makes it fun

It should be noted that Cheryl started skateboarding in her early 20s after years of competitive figure skating, a sport that certainly emphasizes hegemonic femininity. Thus, skateboarding allows Cheryl to reinvent herself as a different kind of woman. Through this sporting activity, rather than confirming her femininity, she can challenge it and push the boundaries not only for herself, but in a very public way.

In fact, not only do our respondents consider themselves as unconventional women, they strategically construct themselves as alternative women taking up masculine practices. Our interviewees reject the "girly" image associated to dominant femininity/ties and transform themselves as capable, risk-taking women through skateboarding. We have in fact shown elsewhere how risk-taking through skateboarding becomes a significant practice through which these young women situate themselves in counter gender discourses (Young and Dallaire, forthcoming). Kelly and colleagues (2005) also highlight how skater girls internalize masculine norms of the culture rather than resisting them for fear of being expelled from their local skateboarding subculture. Participants discussed their personal attempts to confirm their status within the subculture and validate their participation not only through continuing improvement, proving their skateboarding abilities to men, but also by publicly accepting pain and injury.

Through risk-taking, they construct themselves as alternative subjects and differentiate themselves from non skaters and other women who are perceived as lacking the courage or the toughness to skate. These young women also situated themselves in counter gender discourses through displaying their skills and proving their legitimacy as skateboarders, through their own surveillance of other young women and through their aesthetic style.

Response to surveillance: Taking on the challenge

While we showed earlier that some of our respondents avoided the constant critical male gaze, other young women persist with skateboarding in parks and on the street and respond to the challenge by confirming their abilities and establishing themselves as authentic skateboarders. Alex, a 25-year-old park skater, often feels the need to demonstrate her skills in response to being watched. She claims,

I know that if I walk past a group of jocks they will yell, "Do an Ollie" at me. The best response to that is to just to do the biggest fucking Ollie they have ever seen.

I know that they are trying to psyche me out and be derogatory to me.

Ashley, a 21 year-old street skateboarder who has skated for over nine years, states that one downside of skateboarding is the criticism she receives from male skateboarders because she is a woman: "People say things to me. I am always criticized. "Girls can't do it" for whatever reason." And like Alex, her reaction to such comments is to show her skateboarding skills.

Ashley: Yeah. I am like "fuck off"! Then I get better at it and I go up to them and show them and they are like "oh shit."

Alana: So you have to kind of prove yourself?

Ashley: Yeah, I guess you could say that you have to prove yourself. But,

I do not do it intentionally. I just.....

And again later in the interview Ashley comes back to the idea that male skaters suggest that female skaters lack ability and then demonstrate that they can perform at a more advanced level. While she will not initiate the challenge, when she is tested by her male peers, Ashley will prove her skills, and evidently, she is a talented skateboarder.

Yeah. Everyone I have showed, they have been like “holy shit, you are pretty good for a girl.” That is another one, “pretty good, for a girl!”

Bastards!

In accepting the male skateboarders’ dare and in succeeding in performing the male defined standards of the sport, Ashley defies the notion that women are not supposed to be good. Rather than avoiding the challenge, Alex and Ashley confront these assumptions because they are skilled skateboarders. But, not all participants in this study are as accomplished skateboarders as these two which is why they resorted to strategies discussed earlier to avoid the male gaze.

Bodies @ Play: “You Can’t Sk8 in Heels!”

Not only do young women identify with the dominant masculine norms of skateboarding through their risk-taking and their athletic performance, they also subvert popular images of femininity/ties through their appearance. Their clothing and aesthetic styles of dress are embodied signifiers of gender. Alex, a 25 year-old park skateboarder, declares “Even girls that skate dress less feminine. Therefore, it is more of a masculine sport.” She labels other young women wearing jewellery, restrictive clothing and carrying a board as “posers”. Chantal, a 24-

year-old street skateboarder, wilfully constructs an alternative subjectivity and links her aesthetic appearance to a rejection of conventional femininity/ties:

I was a tomboy growing up. I didn't really want to be super girly, dressed in heels and fancy clothes. But, if that is your style as a girl, it is conflicting to go out and skate if you want to be super dressy and fancy and dressed to the nine's all the time. It doesn't really fit the image that a lot of girls are trying to portray. I think I just don't really care that much about things like that, so it doesn't bother me. But, I do know a lot of girls who are very girly and I am not, so.

She is engaging in body play in order to construct a non-feminine subjectivity. Just as some women have learned to inscribe cultural conformity upon their bodies through ritual projects of identity construction (Bartky, 1991; Bordo, 1990), skateboarding women have learned to confront the established gender order through clothing. Heika, a 27-year-old street skateboarder, goes further and argues that tight fitting attire actually restricts movements on a skateboard. She thus highlights the contradictions that arise from skateboarding in clothing coded feminine.

I would say that if you are going to skateboard, you can't wear the clothes that the girls have. (...) It wouldn't be comfortable and you would be showing crack all the time. The shirts are way too tight. [...] Oh yeah! It does not make any sense. The clothes made for the girls are made for them to stand by and watch the boys skate. Yeah, girls that skateboard wear the boys skateboard clothes.

Heika believes that women's clothing produces passive feminine bodies and controls women's movements.

While Kelly et al's (2005) analysis confirms that skater girls wear comfortable and casual clothing that allows them to move freely on their skateboard, we acknowledge that not all skateboarders appropriate similar styles of dress. Such a stereotype inevitably leads to inaccurate categorization of female skateboarders who may or may not fit the subcultural mould. Discourses of masculinity/ties operate as strategies of normalization, exclusion and inclusion in skateboarding. Because a gendered identity of skateboarding is naturalized, authentic skateboarding subjects are produced through practices of masculinity/ties whereas those who display or exude feminine attributes are classified as different. Feminine embodied skateboarders may internalize their constructed difference by referring to their inability to be like other more masculine embodied skateboarders. Cheryl, a 25 year-old park skater, for instance views her embodiment as different from the more androgynous or masculine skateboarding women and as a result, her body has been the object of scrutiny. She discusses her outsider status as a result of not embodying masculine coded clothes:

When I have been in the park, I have been one of two girls. There is a young girl here that skates. She is really good. (...) She fits in with the guys. She was totally skater'ish. She had a baseball cap on. I remember one time that I was skating there, I had clothes on like I do now and I was skating on my friend's board. I met her and went over to her in the park. I really got looks because I had dress clothes on and was on this board. I bailed. Anyways, I perceive that I am being watched more because I still think that it is considered odd.

Cheryl's feminine embodiment through her attire disturbs gender boundaries and order within the subculture. While most of the interviewees had adopted loose fitting clothing

coded as masculine, Cheryl was dressed in “women’s” attire. She had long hair, fitted clothing and her body read as feminine. Members who embody femininity/ties are unwelcome in skateboard parks and other skateboarding spaces and as a result, strategies of exclusion are projected onto these others through the gaze.

The Gaze of Women Skateboarders

Indeed, young women skateboarders also construct their alternative gender identities by comparing themselves to other women and in deriding displays of femininity in skateboarding. Qwin, a 27 year-old park skateboarder, draws on hegemonic femininity in order to understand and construct herself as different. In particular, she conjures the image of the “Skate Betty” in order to produce herself as alternative. Skate Betties are discursively constructed as young women who become involved in skateboarding for reasons instrumental to meeting young men and associating with the “cool” crowd. Qwin strategically distances herself from these young women:

That is one thing that is intimidating, the skate hoe’s that are there at the park.

They stare you down like, “You are going to take my 15-year-old man.” No, I am not. This one girl was rollerblading in Orleans [skate] park in a thong. She had her little thong sticking out of her pants, rollerblading around with her weak ankles.

(...) I am like, “You’re not even doing anything. You are walking around thinking the guys are going to like me; look at me!” Yep. It was like, “What are you doing? Why are you even here? If you are not going to skate, then leave.” I am thinking that part of them is intimidated because we are actually skating and we are actually with the guys. Maybe they are getting all jealous and stuff. They will

go to the park and just sit there and not skate. They are just like, "Look, I am trying this. Can you hold my hand?" I am like, "You are making us all look bad." That is how I feel. They are ruining it for every girl. Stop doing it.

Qwin dissociates herself from traditional femininity/ties, which links women's participation in masculine subcultures to their sexuality and desire for male attention. She produces herself as a credible and "real" skateboarder, skating with and like the guys. Her surveillance of other women illustrates Cole's (1993) "postmodern-embodied gendered-panoptic subject" (p. 88), who watches herself and other feminine bodies. Qwin has internalized the gaze and watches herself as an alternative subject and other female bodies who undermine the "authenticity" of women skateboarders. So here Qwin's gaze, rather than reinforcing hegemonic femininity, serves to criticize it in the skateboarding arena.

Indeed, our respondents engaged in the policing of gender in skateboarding spaces. Many of the participants confessed to evaluating and assessing the legitimacy of "other" women skateboarders. They monitored women's participation to exert control over the threat they posed to their status in the subculture. Feminine women were conceptualized as the "other" in their efforts to push them as far as possible, both symbolically and literally, from the self. They were described and analysed as hyper-feminine, weak, passive and overly-sexualized, thus designated as potentially undermining "legitimate" women skaters. In policing and separating skateboarding bodies from other more feminine bodies, Qwin and other respondents reproduce the norm of skateboarding as masculine. Brooke, a 21-year-old street skateboarder also constructs an alternative identity by repeating gender stereotypes and arguing that other female skaters seek the attention of males. She states, "Oh yes! Pink is punk all over their boards. It is totally just for

the image because they want all the cute skater guys. They don't even want to skate; they don't care. They will try." She constructs herself as a genuine skateboarder because of her motives for skating and her actual skills, consciously distancing herself from those "girly girls". As Menesson (2005) observed of female boxers and soccer players, skateboarding women construct themselves as alternative by putting forth derogatory remarks about hyper-feminine and hyper-sexualized women or "Barbie dolls."

A noteworthy paradox here is that while most of the women discussed at great length their internal motivations for skateboarding and desires to "really be good at it", many of the participants admitted that their initial inspiration to skateboard was related to meeting male skateboarders. Alex, a 25 year-old skateboarder admits, "When I first got into it? Very honestly, it was the boys. I really liked the boys. What got me into skating, intimidated me out of it. Now, I don't give a shit what people think!" Jamie, a 16 year-old longboarder concurs

I am kind of boy crazy so I thought that boys are totally going to dig it. [...] I had not thought that I was still a tomboy looking person. (...) I thought that they would see past that and think that "My girlfriend is the chillest, she is a skater."

Guys don't think like that. Guys will hang out with you and skate, but then go back to the hoochy.

Discourses of femininity/ties teach young women that the value of their body is based on their ability to attract, meet and retain male attention. The heterosexual matrix, a concept put forth by Butler (1990), helps "designate that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders and desires are naturalized" and how they appear as "normal" (p. 151). Alex and Jamie first thought that skateboarding would help them meet young men, however they quickly discovered

that their skateboard performances aligned them with masculine practices and thus, skater boys did not want to date them. Despite their own original motive for skateboarding, these women both conceive of themselves as “authentic” skateboarders principally driven today by their passion for skating, whereas, “newbie’s” or “Skate Betties” are viewed as participating for external reasons such as meeting men. While our interviewees all refuse dominant femininity and strategically take up subject positions in alternative gender discourses, some like Jamie are more ambivalent. While they recognize that they are categorized by others as “different” and do indeed construct themselves as atypical women, they wish they could partake in some of the benefits of hegemonic femininity, like for instance gaining young men’s attention.

Conclusion

Young women skateboarders both resist and conform to dominant norms of femininity/ties through their enactments of alternative gender identities. Indeed, they actively participate in the act of self governance and the regulation of their bodies. Their specific practices can be examined as an effect of disciplinary power that acts on women’s bodies by organizing their movements and managing their identities. This modern disciplinary power operates through the pervasiveness of the gaze which leads women to self-monitor their skateboarding bodies. Although this paper is not the first to address the discursive production of gender in and through sport, it provides new insight with the use of Foucault’s “technologies of the self” to empirically demonstrate how young women use skateboarding to situate themselves in counter discourses. Their sporting practices become a self project to confirm their difference and establish a distance from dominant femininity/ties. Foucault’s analysis of power and self-fashioning techniques involved in the production of subjectivity helps investigate the ways in

which young skateboarding women challenge, resist and negotiate conventional constructions of femininity/ties. The premise is to bring insight into the paradoxical relationship between power, domination and resistance. Most notably, we attempt to highlight the relationship between regulation and autonomy in order to emphasize the opportunities for individual resistance through skateboarding practices. Central to this article is Foucault's conceptualization of power as "technologies of domination" and "technologies of self" which discipline the feminine skateboarding body.

Foucault's (1984, 1988) work on technologies of the self guides our examination of how women skateboarders relate to, understand and ultimately transform themselves into alternative subjects, albeit various forms of alternative subjects and to varying degrees. But as Markula (2004) observes in her exploration of the Hybrid fitness class as a technology of the self, sport or physical activity becomes a practice of freedom only if the subject is critically self-aware and self-reflexive and strategically uses sport as such. All the young women we interviewed consciously problematized dominant constructions of femininity/ties, and most of them strategically reproduced themselves as alternative women through their skateboard practices while others transgressed gender boundaries yet struggled to remain as close as possible to normative gender expectations. Women's involvement in skateboarding is embedded in power relations and provides these young women with discursive tools and practices to oppose gender power relations. Whether or not the body must escape cultural inscriptions to engage in resistance (Butler, 1990), resistance happens for these young women in and through the body by avoiding the gaze through avoiding male dominated spaces or disguising as a male skateboarder, by taking on the challenge and by watching other skateboarding women.

Similar to other youth cultures, skateboarding equips young women with the resources to critique traditional femininity/ties and construct an alternative subjectivity via skilled performance, taking risks and appropriating a masculine style of dress (Leblanc, 1999). However, it remains exceedingly difficult for women to counter and negotiate their participation within masculine sporting practices and spaces. Notwithstanding the fact that “men” and “women” and “masculinity” and “femininity” are social constructions with material consequences, the problem with the gender dichotomy is that it continues to construct some characteristics as “male” and others as “female” in spite of the body that performs them. As a result, women’s materialisation of masculinity/ties and men’s materialisation of femininity/ties becomes disturbing and subject to the panoptical gaze. As researchers, we must continue to highlight and discuss both the reproduction and subversions at the same time. We concur with Chapman (1997) that sport sociologists need to continue to focus and expand on the discursive potential offered by sport to recreate and work on the self. In order to focus on the discursive possibilities, Foucault’s work on the technologies of the self is helpful in exploring gendered resistance.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

McDowell (1992) calls on researchers to recognize and take account of their own and the participants' positionality, writing these dispositions into their research. hooks (1989) has led the debate surrounding the obscure power dimensions in research and who should speak for whom. She has focused her attention on the tendency of Caucasian men to research, speak, and write for women and more specifically, women of colour. She argued that anyone can conduct research on populations that they are not a member of, however there is a manifold of ethical implications and guidelines that should be identified and resolved. She has suggested that in the past, white academics have transcended a degree of authority, perpetrating a sense of supremacy. Taking into consideration the recommendations made by bell hooks (1989), I recognize that my membership and social position and status influenced every stage of this research, including my accounts and findings. Due to standards and length restrictions for publishing, I was unable to address my status as a "woman" and member of a local skateboarding subculture in the two research articles. In this section, I have chosen to address and reflect upon my social position and how it impacted the research process.

As a street-based skateboarder who is heavily involved in the "boarding" culture, my personal experiences and interests was the motive for this study. I identify as a wakeboarder, snowboarder and skateboarder and thus, I am more involved in boarding subcultures than some of the other younger participants interviewed for this study. In fact, because I am so involved in the subcultural aspects of "boarding" cultures, my personal interests in youth subcultures was the major motivation and influence behind this project. However, when conducting the interviews I quickly realized that other young women were not as nearly interested nor motivated by the history and politics of youth subcultures. At the onset of this study, my goal was to examine and further understand women's participation in "masculine" spaces and subcultures. Because the women were not as aware of the history of youth subcultures nor did they pay attention to the

political dimension of the subculture, they did not have much to say about those issues I was concerned with.

What did emerge from the interviews is that the women were involved in skateboard subcultures to different degrees. Wheaton and Beal (2003) have highlighted how discourses of “authenticity” operate within skateboarding subcultures in order to delineate some bodies as “authentic” and communicate “otherness.” For three of the participants, consuming skateboard magazines and videos helped them shape their identities as skateboarders. One of the youngest participants constructed herself as a “real” skateboarder by drawing on her knowledge and awareness of skateboard videos to demonstrate her “insider” status. While I did not ask the participants about their consumption patterns, two women overtly discussed particular imagery and issues they had with certain skateboard magazines and advertisements.

Most of the women I interviewed had appropriated a “skate” style to communicate their identities as “authentic” skateboarders and as members of a skateboard subculture. As noted by Wheaton and Beal (2003), there is a degree of brand fetishism that operates in many skateboard subcultures. More mainstream brands signal newcomers and “outsiders” while other more “hardcore” and underground brands are worn to communicate “authenticity.” Although two of the interviews were conducted on the phone therefore I did not physically see their attire and appearance, young women’s narratives showed that all of them, but one, had appropriated a “skateboard” style to signal their identities as “authentic” skateboarders. It is not uncommon for women skateboarders to wear low, baggy pants, a t-shirt or hooded sweatshirt, running shoes and a hat or toque. Cheryl, a park skateboarder, who did not take on the look of the “legitimate” skater, discussed how she is often regarded and treated as an “other” and subject to the panoptic gaze within skateboard settings. In this sense, communicating their identity and proving their legitimacy as a “genuine” skateboarder through fashion style and brand fetishism is necessary to escape the gaze.

Two other participants were recruited at a local skateboard competition. Although these women were obviously involved in skateboard subcultures, they are not part of the core. Whether they read magazines, watch videos or attend skate competitions, women boarders are on the periphery of skateboard cultures. Women like Alex, a park skateboarder who has been skating for over five years, came close to skating at the “core” of her local subculture. Certainly, social relationships and networks are important to one’s status and “authenticity” as skateboarder. Many of the interviewees skated alone and therefore, they were not centrally located or even members of local skateboard subcultures. The young women are positioned at the margins of the subcultures. While some strategically occupied the margins to escape the panoptic gaze, other participants’ skateboard performances were and continue to be marginalized on the basis of “not being good enough” or that they are unable to perform and execute freestyle tricks.

Women’s marginalization in skateboarding might very well be more of a sport issue than a subcultural issue. They are marginalized because of the “athletic” component of skateboarding and only those able to master this style of skating get respect within these “sporting” youth cultures. For example, in the dance culture, women’s dance performances can be “as good” as men’s. However, in sport, women’s sporting performances continue to be compared to men’s practices and marginalized or legitimized on the basis of physical attributes.

I attribute the fact that participants were involved in their local skateboard subcultures to different degrees, some more than others, to issues of recruitment. Because I recruited interviewees between the months of October and November, it was difficult to find women that were part of skateboard subcultures. As skateboard season was almost over, I approached women on skateboards and longboards and who identify to a certain extent as a “skateboarder” or “longboarder” as opposed to limiting recruitment to women who are full members of a subculture and skateboarding as a “way of life.” This substantially altered the direction of this study which is reflected in the findings and discussion. Whereas the first three chapters address

gender and youth subcultures, the final chapters explore what was important for these women and what emerged from their “truths” about gender and sport participation—rather than about gender and youth subcultures.

The young women I interviewed framed their skateboarding performances as a resource for *gender* identity play more than *youth* identity play. While most of them seemed unaware that youths participate in subcultures to symbolically “resist” dominant ideologies via the display of alternative behaviours, their participation similarly allowed them to challenge dominant constructions of “femininity/ties.” In this sense, their participation in skateboard subcultures afforded them with a space to negotiate their identities within the discourses readily available to them. Therefore, today’s youth are oftentimes attracted to youth cultures for “fun” rather than the politics and commitment to counter ideologies. Indeed, some of the respondents initially became involved in skateboarding to meet young men, thus reproducing heteronormativity and dominant femininity/ties, but oftentimes their participation developed into a strategic alternative gender construction. From this study, one can conclude that the skateboarding subculture is not a homogeneous entity and that there are varying levels of involvement as well as political consciousness-raising among skateboarders.

Feminist researchers have long stressed the importance of locating themselves within their research (Gelsthorpe, 1992; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). Stanley and Wise (1993) have argued that “recognition that who a researcher is, in terms of their sex, race, class, and sexuality, affects what they find in research as true” (p. 228). Knowledge and power intersect, based on gender, race, ethnicity, class and sexual orientation. As a 26-year-old member of a skateboarding subculture in south-western Ontario, a Caucasian lesbian woman, from a middle socio-economic status, I cannot escape the confines that I operate within which mean knowing different, not better. My position as a skateboarding young women ultimately informed my

interpretations and conclusions. Rather than disguising my position and suppressing my privileges to ensure objectivity, adopting a feminist framework helped me to acknowledge my social positioning. As a lesbian woman, I have my own understanding of participants' experience and perhaps was more attuned to noticing the reiteration of heteronormativity in their narratives.

While I did not disclose my sexual orientation when I interviewed the participants, I recognize that I "fit" the stereotype of lesbian skateboarders. For example, I wear clothing coded as "masculine" and have an androgynous look. Despite that no question in the interview guide elicited information regarding respondents' sexual identities, many of the young women I interviewed alluded to their heterosexuality at various times throughout the interviews. How they constructed and discussed their sexual identities and desires might have been in response to my own gender and sexual identity/ties. Conversely only one respondent spontaneously identified as a lesbian and two others did mention being attracted to women. Sexual identities were not the focus of the study but they are nevertheless inherently tied to their construction of gender and their reproduction as "alternative", particularly in sports. Clearly their skateboarding performances, an activity constructed as "masculine", affect their subjectivities. Brownsworth (1991) stated that "sports are coded as masculine; therefore, women in sports are masculine; therefore, women in sports are lesbians" (p. 37). In light of skateboarding being coded as "masculine", it is not surprising that discourses of sexuality and stereotypes of masculinity and lesbianism emerged from young women's narratives. Qwin, a 27-year-old park skater best highlights this logic when she discussed the social risks of skateboarding. She stated:

I guess that there are always stupid jocks who are like "It is a guys sport and if you are doing it, you must be butch." So you must be a big lesbian, you know?

There is this article. Have you read the SBC magazine? Vanessa Torres has this article in it about how a guy behind them in this line called her and her friend a lesbian. He said, "You bunch of dykes." It is like if you are not used to something different.

Qwin's narrative is evidence that women's "alternative" subjectivities disturb and dislocate the sexed body binary and the boundaries of woman-feminine-heterosexual. In a previous study on gender relations in skateboarding and snowboarding, I highlighted the tensions faced by women as a result of identifying as a "woman" and a "skateboarder" (Young, 2005). A male skateboarder went as far as saying that women skateboarders are all "dykes, fat and [who] cannot drink a lot of beer!" Certainly, the lesbian stereotype was prevalent in skateboard subcultures and closely linked to perceptions of perceived gender transgressions.

Butler (1990) argued that sex and gender cannot be distinguished. She analyzes various discourses about gender which assume that biological sex, as the starting point of gender, grounds the political identity of "women." Gendered subjects, who are born as female bodies, have been socially constructed with the gender "woman." Butler suggested that it is within the disciplinary regime of compulsory heterosexuality that the gender dualism is upheld. The regulatory regime of normative heterosexuality requires the repression of some desires and the creation of others. Butler's (1990) analysis offers a postmodern account of subjectivity, which acknowledges the multiplicity and complexity of sex, gender and desire identities. Indeed, the concept of gender is not as clear cut and simple as we like to present it. The postmodern world highlights this as subjects cross gender boundaries, play with gender roles, and refuse gender categories.

Much of the research on how athletic women deal with the tensions that arise from being “a woman” and identifying as “an athlete” focuses on their use of the apologetic defence, a coping strategy wherein women athletes construct themselves as hyper-feminine in order to compensate for their perceived “masculine” performance (Blinde & Taub, 1992; Griffin, 1998). The apologetic defence has been used to refer to athletic women’s specific behaviours such as wearing feminine attire, emphasizing cooperation and downplaying aggression in sport and divulging heterosexual desires to counter the perceived “masculinising” effects of sport. The women I interviewed expressed their concerns that their “femininity/ties” were at risk because of the perceived “masculinity/ties” of skateboarding. As a result of their concerns, young women underlined their heterosexuality. Qwin, a 27-year-old park skater revealed her heterosexual desires when asked if her family and friends are supportive of her skateboarding. She stated, “Some of the guys that I dated that skated, like my ex-boyfriend didn’t like skating with his girlfriend. Yeah. It’s a weird thing but he was like, ‘Nope. It is not something that I want to share.’ Most of the guys that I have been with, they don’t teach you stuff really. They do their own thing, you know?” Chantal, a 24-year-old street skater, also underlined her heterosexuality when she disclosed, “My boyfriend at the time was at a different school and his friends all skated. I think they perceived me in a positive way because I was into that stuff.” Hence, because of the perceived “masculinizing” effects of skateboarding, many of the young women emphasized their heterosexual desires.

The study has revealed that women skateboarders disrupt gender boundaries and thus, simultaneously destabilize the sex-gender-desire arrangement. The purpose of this research was to examine how female skateboarders construct themselves as subjects within discourses of risk

and “femininity/ties” and as I focused on issues of gender, I did not explicitly address the issue of sexual orientation in the interviews. Yet, participants’ narratives certainly point to the relevance of including issues of sexual orientation to further understand women’s gender identity. As a result, it is difficult to analyse the influence of sexuality on young women’s reproduction of dominant or alternative “femininity/ties” through skateboarding. Future research should certainly address and delve deeper in questions of sexual desires as an important feature of skateboarding women’s construction of self.

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APPENDIX A - INTERVIEW GUIDE

Section 1: Background Information

- A) How many years have you been skateboarding?
- B) Can you describe your first skateboarding experience?
- C) Who introduced you to the activity?
- D) What type of skater would you define yourself as? (ex. Street, freestyle)
- E) What was your primary reason/motivation for skateboarding?
- F) What makes you continue your involvement in skateboarding?
- G) How has your skateboarding involvement evolved since you first started?
- H) How has skateboarding evolved in the past couple of years?
- I) What are the benefits that you derive from skateboarding?
- J) Are there any downsides to skateboarding?

Section 2: The meaning of Risk

- A) What are the first words/images that come to mind when you think of risk?
- B) What are the first words/images that come to your head when you think of skateboarding risks?
- C) How would you define or explain risk?
- D) How would you explain/define the risks of skateboarding?

Section 3: The Risks of Skateboarding

- A) What are the risks of skateboarding?
 - Are the physical risks of skateboarding of concern to you? If yes,
 - i) Can you give me examples of the types of physical risks
 - ii) Define physical risk
 - Social risks? If yes,
 - i) Can you give examples of the types of social risks?
 - ii) Define social risk?
 - Can you think of any other risks? If yes,
 - i) Can you give me examples of other types of risks?
 - ii) How would you define these risks?
- B) Where do you get your information about the physical risks of skateboarding?
- C) Where do you get your information about the social risks of skateboarding?
- D) In skateboarding, what risks do you think are acceptable? Explain.
- E) What risks do you believe to be unacceptable? Please explain why.

Section 4: Dealing with Risk

- A) What physical risks are you willing to take?
- B) What physical risks are you not willing to take?
- C) What choices have you made because of these physical risks?
 - Why have you made these decisions?

- What influences your decisions? (severity, probability, whose affected, level of information, type of effort/sacrifice, influence of others...)
- D) What social risks are you willing to take?
- E) What social risks are you not willing to take?
- F) What choices have you made because of these social risks?
- Why have you made these decisions?
- What influences your decisions? (severity, probability, whose affected, level of information, type of effort/sacrifice, influence of others...)
- G) How do you personally deal with these risks?
- H) What risks are you most concerned about? And why?
- I) What impact do they have on your skateboard participation?
- J) Are there any risks that you feel you have no personal control over and you would want them changed or dealt with concerning your skateboarding participation?

Section 5: Gender and Risk

- A) Have you experienced any form of gender discrimination while skateboarding? If yes, please explain.
- B) Does your family support you in your skateboarding participation? Please explain.
- C) Do you believe there is a difference between male and female skateboarders? Explain.
- D) Do you believe there is a difference between the physical risks male and female skateboarders face? Explain.
- E) Do you believe there is a difference between the way male and female skateboarders deal with these physical risks? Explain.
- F) Do you believe there is a difference between the social risks male and female skateboarders face? Explain.
- G) Do you believe there is a difference between the way male and female skateboarders deal with these social risks? Explain.

Wrapping Up

- There may be a few ideas or issues, which have particularly stood out for you during the course of this interview. What are they?
- Is there anything else you would like to say?

I would like to thank you for your time and your very helpful contributions. Your willingness to meet with me today makes this interview and research study possible. It could not be done without you. I would like to give you my sincere appreciation for helping in this way. Thank you very much!

APPENDIX B - PEER RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Hello, good afternoon/evening. My name is Alana Young and I am a graduate student at the University of Ottawa. I am conducting a Masters study on how young skateboarding women understand the physical and social risks of skateboarding and associating with a street-based 'masculine' subculture.

I have been skateboarding for 6 years and am interested in knowing more about the experiences of other female skateboarders. I am looking for young women between the ages of 16 and 29 who have been skateboarding for at least one year and who identify with a skateboard subculture to partake in an individual interview. The interview is expected to take approximately 1 hour, or 1.5 hours at the most. I am interested in what risk means to you and what risks you deal with as a young skateboarding woman. The interview will be confidential and I will use a fictitious name to report the information gathered. It is possible that I invite you to do a follow-up interview of a maximum of 30 minutes if clarification of issues is deemed necessary following the preliminary analysis of the interview data.

Your assistance and co-operation would be greatly appreciated, but it is up to you to decide whether you want to participate in this study or not. If you decide not to participate in this study, there will be no negative consequences. If you accept to be interviewed, all information obtained will be kept strictly confidential and the audiocassettes will be destroyed once my Masters is completed. You have the right to cease the interview at anytime you wish, and you are not required to answer any questions you find offensive, invasive or inappropriate. Your anonymity is of the utmost importance and a fake name will be used to identify the information you provide in your interview. If you wish, the transcript of your interview and later on a summary of the findings will be sent to you to allow you to review them and ensure that the study accurately describes your experiences.

Do you have any questions that you would like to ask me regarding this research project?

If you are interested in participating, can we set a date and time for the interview?

Could we as well exchange contact information to allow me to call you before our scheduled interview to confirm the location and time?

APPENDIX C – RECRUITMENT LETTERS [REFERRALS]

Hello,

My name is Alana Young. I am a graduate student in sport sociology at the School of Human Kinetics, at the University of Ottawa. I am currently conducting a Masters research on how young skateboarding women deal with the physical and social risks of skateboarding and associating with a street-based subculture.

I have been skateboarding for 6 years and am interested in knowing more about the experiences of other female skateboarders. I am specifically looking to interview 16 to 29 year old women who have been skateboarding for at least a year and who identify with a skateboard subculture. Your co-operation and participation in answering the interview questions would be greatly appreciated. The tape-recorded discussion is estimated to last approximately 1 hour, or at the most 1.5 hours. It is possible that I invite you to do a follow-up interview of a maximum of 30 minutes if clarification of issues is deemed necessary following the preliminary analysis of the interview data.

Your assistance and co-operation would be greatly appreciated, but it is up to you to decide whether you want to participate in this study. There will no negative consequences if you decide not to participate in this study. If you accept to be interviewed, all information obtained will be kept strictly confidential and the audiocassettes will be destroyed once my Masters is completed. You have the right to cease the interview at anytime you wish, and you are not required to answer any questions you find offensive, invasive or inappropriate. Your anonymity is of the utmost importance and a fake name will be used to identify the information you provide in your interview. If you wish, the transcript of your interview and later on a summary of the findings will be sent to you to allow you to review them and ensure that the study accurately describes your experiences.

If you are interested in participating, please feel free to communicate with me by email at: ayoun059@uottawa.ca or at alana.young@sympatico.ca or by phone at 521-9543. You can also communicate with my thesis supervisor, Christine Dallaire, at 562-5800, extension 4279 or at Christine.Dallaire@uottawa.ca

Sincerely,

Alana Young

APPENDIX D- PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Research title: The Flipside: Young Female Skateboarders' Understanding of Risk

Principal Researcher:

Alana Young (Graduate Student)
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As a 16 to 29 year old women who has been skateboarding for at least one year and who identifies with a skateboard subculture, you are invited to participate in a Master's research project on young women's understanding of risk in the alternative activity of skateboarding. This research is led by Alana Young (graduate student) and supervised by Dr. Christine Dallaire from the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa.

Objectives of Study

For this study, Alana Young, a graduate student from the University of Ottawa, is conducting individual interviews in Ottawa and Toronto, Ontario. The general goal of this project is to better understand how young women perceive risks related to skateboarding. The specific objectives of the project are: a) to understand how young women speak about risk and skateboarding; b) to determine what young women perceive to be the most important physical and social risks in skateboarding; c) what risks they are willing to accept; and d) how they make decisions with regards to these risks.

Procedure

If you agree to participate in this study, the interview will be audiotaped and will last approximately 1 hour or at the most 1.5 hours. Questions of the following type will be asked: *“What are the physical risks of skateboarding? What are the social risks of skateboarding? What risks do you believe to be acceptable? What risks do you believe to be unacceptable? How do you deal with these risks? What impact do these risks have on your skateboarding participation?”* There are no right or wrong answers. Your answers do not have to reveal any information that you do not want to disclose. The audiotapes will be transcribed after the interviews and, if you wish, you will receive a copy of the transcription and later on a summary of the findings to verify that they accurately reflect your statements and skateboard experience. It is possible that you will be invited to do a follow-up interview of a maximum of 30 minutes if clarification of issues is deemed necessary following the preliminary analysis of the interview data.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

If you agree to participate, the information you share will be used only for research purposes. Your anonymity will be respected as your name will not appear on any of the written transcription nor in any publication, conference presentations or research reports. If the researcher uses portions of the interview, then a “fake” or fictitious name will be used. Your confidentiality will be respected, as your interview transcript will be available only to the researcher and her supervisor. The audiotapes will be destroyed after completion of the Masters degree and the interview transcripts will be kept for 5 years as required by standard academic practice. You may withdraw this permission at any time and any recordings of your participation will be erased upon your request without negative consequences. All of the data will be managed in accordance with university research confidentiality standards.

Benefits of the study

As risk has predominately been addressed as a negative phenomenon, this study will help establish if risk is experienced as a negative and/or positive phenomenon among young female skateboarders. This study’s framework acknowledges that risk can be experienced as a positive phenomenon in that it can allow for young people to develop risk reputations and enhance their social statuses and also allow young women to reject dominant discourses of ‘femininity/ties.’ This information would be helpful in addressing risk in future studies and in moving away from situating risk behaviours within the dominant discourse of ‘masculinity/ties’. Furthermore, this research will provide a forum to give voice to young women, which have largely been left absent from the literature on youth subcultures. The results will specifically lead to a better understanding about how physical and social risks are understood and experienced among young women with regards to their skateboarding practice and involvement in a street-based subculture. Most importantly, this research will examine if young women articulate dominant and/or counter discourses of risk, filling an important gap in the Canadian literature regarding women and risk in the context of sport and recreation. In addition, participants will be provided with a summary of the findings, which may also lead to further self-reflection and increase their knowledge of the interplay between risk, gender and sport.

There are no expected harms or risk in participating in this study. There is however a small likelihood of possible negative feelings sometime associated with self-reflecting on one's personal experiences. Please remember that you can refuse to answer any question that makes you comfortable, without any adverse effects. In the unlikely event of distress or discomfort you may wish to contact the Confidential Help Line within your locality (Distress Centre Ottawa/Carleton (613) 238-3311, Distress Centre of Toronto (416) 408-4357 or Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868).

For any information about this study you may contact the Researcher, Alana Young at alana.young@sympatico.ca or at ayoun059@uottawa.ca or her Research Supervisor, Dr Christine Dallaire, at the University of Ottawa at 613-562-5800, ext. 4279.

For any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, you can communicate with the University of Ottawa Ethics Protocol Officer at 613-562-5387 or at ethics@uottawa.ca.

Participant Consent

I understand that I sign both copies of the consent form and keep one for my records and the other one is for the researcher.

I freely and voluntarily consent to take part in this research project.

Participant name: _____ Date: _____

Participant signature: _____

Researcher signature: _____ Date: _____

If you wish to review the transcript of your interview and/or wish to receive a summary of the findings of this study, please provide your mailing address or your email address: _____

APPENDIX E – RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Objectives

While studies have repeatedly shown that risk is associated with the performance of 'masculinity/ties' and avoidance with 'femininity/ties', there is evidence that the dominant notions of risk-taking have been challenged by some women, who sought to perform alternative femininities through engaging in risky activities (Lupton, 1999). In a study of Australians' childhood memories Crawford et al. (1992) discovered that women's memories of the risk behaviours were associated with feelings of shame and guilt for having behaved irresponsibly and having disappointed adults. These findings suggest that girls are expected from an early age to be responsible and to conform to rules imposed by adults. In contrast, boys are proud and almost expected to engage in risky activities as part of the construction and performance of their 'masculinity/ties' (Lupton, 1999).

The goal of this study is to incite female narratives of risk about risk and skateboarding. The purpose is to not only understand how risk is understood among young women but to establish if risk is experienced as a positive and/or negative phenomenon among female skateboarders. To give voice to youth and to young women, this topic of inquiry is highly relevant because it seeks to further understand women's participation in extreme sports and the significance and implications of physical risks and social risks. The intent of this study is to provide young female skateboarders with an opportunity to discuss their acceptance and understandings of risk. How young women interpret and perceive the risks of skateboarding is symbolic of their knowledge of social structures, social organization, power and individual consciousness. Thus, young women's accounts of risk and skateboarding is critical in understanding the ways in which the interplay between risk, gender and age inform their decisions to become involved and to continue participating in skateboarding.

The intent of this study is to develop a deeper understanding of other young women's skateboarding experiences and to understand how ideas of 'risk' converge with ideas of "femininity/ties" in shaping skateboard culture and practices as 'inappropriate' for young women. Specifically, this study aims to explore how young women a) understand risk; b) identify the social risks of participating in a 'masculine' street-based subculture; c) accept or not the physical risks inherent in skateboarding; d) reproduce the cultural discourses on risk and 'femininity/ties.' This examination of young women's discursive construction of risk should allow a better understanding of the intersection of risk and gender and how it informs their skateboard practices.

Theoretical Approach

The objective is to employ a methodological approach that can add to and enrich youth cultural studies. In order to achieve this, I will adopt a poststructuralist theoretical framework, which rejects the notion of the stability of language structures. The use of discourse analysis will help to establish understanding by drawing on the skills and tools that demonstrate the place of language in the construction, constitution and regulation of skateboarding subcultures. For this research, I will predominately draw on Foucauldian

discourse theory and in particular, its feminist adaptations. The works of feminist poststructuralists, Weedon (1997) Butler (1990, 1993) will be used to understand the construction of gender through discourse. I will also draw on the work of Lupton (1999), who is heavily influenced by Foucauldian theory in order to understand the discursive production of risk. These bodies of work provide the theoretical tools to better understand how the intersection of gender and risk discourses influence how young female skateboarders perform and identify as 'women' and how this does or does not influence how they negotiate the physical and social risks of skateboarding and participating in 'masculine' street-based subcultures.

Methodology

This research will be informed by feminist methodologies. Feminist methods have been selected because of its increased awareness to the ethical implications of honoring the voices of marginalised and oppressed populations (hooks, 1989; Jansen & Davis, 1998; Reay, 1996; Valdivia, 2002). Despite the current debate among feminist scholars with regards to the importance and role of feminist methods and methodologies in social research, feminist methodologies are essential in understanding and generating data pertaining to young female skateboarders' understanding of risk. Applied to this research, feminist methodologies aim to a) interrogate power structures, dynamics and relationships b) highlight diversity and not perceive skateboarders, youth and young women as homogenous and d) be self-reflexive.

Qualitative research methods will be employed to explore and understand young women's subjective experiences in skateboard subcultures. A qualitative research design is committed to capturing rich descriptions of experiences, thoughts and beliefs in order to develop a deeper understanding of the details and intricacies, that otherwise may prove to be difficult to elicit (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Therefore, a qualitative research design is valuable when researching sensitive topics because it "offer[s] more personal and interactive communication and ha[s] the potential to diminish the typical power relationships present in conventional research" (Jansen & Davis, 1998, p. 291). Qualitative research methods thus delve beyond behaviour into the more personal self who engages in and shapes feelings, reflections and perceptions (Jansen & Davis, 1998). This research focuses on the everyday world as problematic, while recognising that young women participate in constructing risk discourses and their skateboarding and gender identities within a much larger and complex milieu. Hence, a qualitative research design will afford me with the tools and opportunity to understand the subjective experiences of research participants, uncovering meaning rather than measuring (Sherman & Reid, 1994).

Research Instruments

The primary method of data collection will be face-to-face audiotaped interviews. Through interviewing, I will be able to encourage the young skateboarding women to explain and discuss how they make sense of their skateboard experiences, how they view the risks of this practice and how they deal with these risks. The use of interviews is valuable in eliciting young women's first-hand knowledge through narratives.

Participants will be interviewed once between the months of October and November 2004. Each interview is expected to be approximately one hour to a maximum duration

of one and half hours.. Follow-up interviews of approximately 30 minutes may be conducted if clarification and elaboration is deemed helpful after the preliminary analysis of interview. Participants will be given the opportunity to add or change their statements during member checks and reviewing of the interview transcripts. It is my hope that the interviews will facilitate consciousness raising and allow for the participants to further reflect on the risks they associate to their skateboard participation.

The interviews will be conducted using a semi-standardised interview guide (See Appendix A) with open-ended questions as it allows for flexibility, while providing a base structure that ensures consistent and comparable data. Open-ended questioning provides the participant the greatest amount of flexibility in answering questions and provides the possibility of tangential conversations that may enrich the data. Such questions should also help establish a more reciprocal relationship with the participants and lead to a more free-flow conversation.

The interview guide will consist of several sections. The questions will focus on: how participants define and understand; how they conceive of, and deal with, the physical and social risks of skateboarding and with identifying with 'masculine' subcultures; the impact of these risks on their skateboard participation; and, the relationship between gender and risk. In total there will be five distinct sets of questions. The first section will elicit demographic information and details about their skateboarding experience. More specifically, I am interested in the number of years that they have been skateboarding, their motivation(s) for skateboarding, the benefits and implication(s) of skateboarding. The second section of the interview guide requires participants to define the concept of risk. The third section will ask the participants to discuss the risks of skateboarding. The answers will be open-ended; however, I have established sub-categories and will ask each participant to define and discuss the physical and social risks of skateboarding. The next section has been structured to derive information pertaining to how they deal with the risks that they earlier identified. I will employ probing techniques to ensure that participants reflect upon the impact those risks have on their participation. The fifth and final section consists of questions that relate to the impact of gender and risk in skateboarding. More specifically, the questions will ask the participants to discuss if they see a difference between male skaters and themselves.

This study will also rely on field notes that will be written immediately and systematically after each interview. Fieldnotes can include a variety of information such as, "descriptive accounts of people, scenes and dialogue, as well as personal experiences and reactions" (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2001). The fieldnotes will serve as a written record of my experience of the interviews. I will also keep a research journal that will differ from fieldnotes in content. The research journal will include personal reflections on the research process and will be a means of organising my ideas and recording my personal interpretations and theories. Producing fieldnotes and a research journal is a reflective process in which each entry becomes a written record of thoughts and ideas related to the facets of research that may otherwise be forgotten. Creating a textual record of the process of research will enrich the final research paper.

Participants

This study will draw upon the insights, knowledge and perceptions of twelve consenting young women. The participants will be 16 to 29 year-old female

skateboarders who self-identify as members of a skateboard subculture and who have been skateboarding anywhere from one year to many years. The varying years of participation will allow for reflection upon the relationship between young women's understanding and acceptance of risks and the duration of their involvement in skateboarding.

The sample will consist of young female skateboarders from the Greater Toronto Region and Ottawa, Ontario. Participants will be recruited through street skateboarding networks. I will on the one hand invite my personal contacts, that is young women I have met or meet through my own skateboarding practice to participate in the study (See Appendix B for the recruitment script). And, on the other hand, I will recruit participants through referrals from peers. This recruitment technique offers an established method for identifying and contacting hidden populations. This method of recruitment is necessary in studying the experiences of young female skateboarders, a group located outside mainstream society and hidden from a lay person's view of social life. I will distribute recruitment letters outlining the topic and purpose of the study to my skateboarding peers for them to pass on to their personal contacts (See Appendix C for the recruitment letter). This letter will specify my contact numbers if the skateboarding women they know are interested in participating. This method of recruitment ensures that the personal referrals do not feel obligated to participate. In accordance with the conditions laid out by the University of Ottawa's ethical guidelines (University of Ottawa, 2003), written consent will be obtained from the participants prior to the interviews (See Appendix D for the consent form). Interviews will be conducted in a quiet and discrete location of the participant's choice such as a restaurant or coffee place, their residence, or even a park bench.

Data Analysis

The written text will be analyzed via discourse analysis. Discourse analysis has emerged from poststructural frameworks. Poststructuralist philosophers have argued that reality is socially constructed and this 'reality' becomes embedded and reinforced in language. According to Michel Pecheux (1982), a discourse is not a disembodied collection of statements, but groupings of utterances and statements that are enacted within a social context. In terms of thinking about discourse as having effects, it is imperative to consider the factors of truth, power and knowledge.

Discourse analysis is useful in that it can allow me to analyze similarities across a range of texts as the products of a particular set of power/knowledge relations (Mills, 1997). More specifically, this method of data analysis highlights the ways in which differences are constructed and maintained within a binary (either/or) system, and where "the nature of the first term is superior to and depends on the definition of the second" (Rail, 1998, p.xiii). Discourse analysis will allow me to explore the ways in which intersections between discourses on risks, gender, and skateboarding inform young women's experiences and identification with marginalised and 'masculine' street-based subcultures. Lastly, the analysis of women's statements has been selected to identify how young female skateboarders reproduce risk discourses and how power is exercised in the construction of women's risk perceptions.

The written text will be organised using NUD*IST software. Upon reviewing the transcripts and identifying the common ideas and concepts, themes will be established

and coded using “nodes”. Coding is a useful way of organizing the data. It can be used to “expand, transform, and reconceptualise data, opening up more diverse analytical possibilities” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 29). Coding helps in the exploration and development of themes and categories. The coding process will incorporate careful data reduction and analytic categorization. Mountains of raw data will be transformed into manageable piles. In addition to making a large mass of data manageable, the process of coding will allow for the quick retrieval of relevant data.

The coding process will be completed in three stages, as suggested by Strauss (1987). The first pass through the data is known as open coding (Strauss, 1987). Open coding requires locating themes and assigning labels in a first attempt to condense the large mass of data into themes (Strauss, 1987). While reading the interview transcripts and the research journal, the emerging and re-occurring terms, experiences, themes and perceptions will be recorded. The second pass through the data is known as axial coding. During this stage, I will focus more on the coded themes more than the data (Neuman, 2000). Additional or new codes will be created, but the primary task will be to review the initial codes (Neuman, 2000). The third stage of the coding process is selective coding. Selective coding will be conducted by scanning the data and previous codes and singling out cases to compare and contrast participant responses (Neuman, 2000). While reviewing the transcripts, I will look for differences and similarities in opinions, motivations, experiences, and perceptions among participants and within their personal accounts. The purpose of selective coding is to locate the major themes or concepts, and elaborate upon them, as suggest by Neuman (2000).

Ethical Considerations

Trustworthiness will be achieved through the credibility, dependability, and conformability of the research, as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1981). Credibility refers to the truthfulness of the findings. Guba and Lincoln (1981) argue that the most useful method in securing the trustworthiness of a study is the use of member checks (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Member checks will be conducted twice during the course of this research project, after transcribing the verbatim and upon writing up a summary of the findings. Conducting member checks allows for me to go back to the research participants and ensure that the transcription and findings are accurate. This allows the members to discard any information that they do not wish for non-members to review. A project that has been reviewed by the participating members decreases the chances of cultural exploitation on the basis that the members recognize the researcher’s descriptions as accurately and ethically reflecting their intimate social world.

In Mirandé and Tanno’s (1993) essay on the importance of researcher perspective in the studies of ethnic cultures, the authors state that the process of contextual validation helps researchers avoid misunderstanding, making faulty cultural assumptions, and reaching unwarranted conclusions. Therefore, I will share my observations and understandings with participants to ensure that they have an opportunity to refute and respond to my interpretations. Contextual validation suggests that inter-cultural researchers have an inherent moral obligation to insure that conclusions are not only methodologically correct, but also culturally valid.

Consistency and dependability will be secured through the completion of an outlier analysis. An outlier analysis involves looking at any extreme or different responses or

cases that arise during the data collection process. All extreme or different cases will be analyzed and incorporated within the final report to ensure consistency and dependability. Lastly, trustworthiness will be achieved via conformability. Conformability refers to how neutral the findings are and whether they are reflective of the participants and not a product of the researcher's biases and prejudices (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Conformability will be obtained through seeking and striving for multiple risk perceptions and accounts of young women's experiences in skateboarding. Thus, multiple explanations will be sought to ensure that the research is trustworthy.

It is the professional obligation of the researcher to honor assurances of confidentiality made to subjects (Berg, 2001). All interviews will be held in discrete locations. All data obtained from the study will be stored in a locked cabinet in the Human Kinetics' Research Centre for Sport in Canadian Society to ensure that only my supervisor and myself have access to the information. In addition, the coded data and transcripts will be stored within a desktop computer with an assigned protective password.

There are no known or anticipated risks involved in this study. I will not impose any influence on participants and the participants will be made aware that they withhold the right to disclose only the information that they feel comfortable with. The exclusion of adolescents 15 years and younger from the research ensures that only participants with full understanding of the study and its implications are recruited. Hence, the participants will be capable to understand the purpose and the implications of the study and to make the active decision to become involved.

To ensure that no emotional harm, interview questions will be pre-tested to ensure that they do not induce embarrassment, humiliation, lowered self-esteem, guilt, conflict, anger, stress, or discouragement. The questions will be tested to ensure that they promote emotional and psychological safety through being non-invasive, concise, respectful, non-derogatory, and non-discriminating. There will be not be any questions included in the interview where participants are asked to disclose any intimate or otherwise sensitive information.