Module 3 Collectivities and Spaces, focuses on the socio-spatial organization of sport and physical activity.

It examines both the social groupings through which sport and physical activity are organized, and the cultural geographies (spatialities) which inform this experience.

In this module we focus on various spatial dimensions of sport and physical culture collectivities (collective groupings).

These range from subcultures, to city/metropolitan contexts, to understandings of community range from towns to nations, and to the global aspects of contemporary sport and physical culture.

Theme 1:

What is a Subculture?

A subculture is a group of people with their own distinct culture that distinguishes/differentiates them from the dominant/mainstream culture, and from other subcultures.

Subcultural identity is the individual expression of an affinity/membership of a particular grouping which, simultaneously distinguishes the individual from other individuals and groupings.

Subcultures can be based around (a combination of) the following dimensions:

- Generation
- Location
- Risk
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Class
- Religion
- Sport
- Style
- Culture
- Music

Subcultural Groupings

- Hippiest
- Bronies
- Bikers
- Riot Grrrls
- Fascist Groups

Insider/ Outsider Status

The degree to which an individual exemplifies/performsthe various subcultural commonalities, determines their perceived subcultural authenticity, insider status, and group membership.

How are subcultural groupings/boundaries formed? Through a COMMITMENT TO, and EXPRESSION OF common factors such as:

- values and ideals
- personal style/aesthetic
- cultural preferences
- language codes and expressions
- bodily practices and behavior

There are many types of SPORT SUBCULTURE, but they can be divided into two groups:

1. Spectator/Supporter Based Subcultures
2. Participant Based Subcultures

Spectating [Fandom] Sporting Subcultures

- Football/Soccer Hooligans
- WNBA Lesbian Fans
- Dead Tree Crew
- Basketball/soccer Rooters
Subcultures largely define their identity/sense of coherence and belonging through their “relationship of difference” with MAINSTREAM culture.

Depending on their precise nature, and in relation to mainstream culture, subcultural groups can thus be considered one or more of the following:

- COUNTER RESISTANT
- DEVIAN
- INCORPORATED

Roller Derby offers a subcultural sporting space, within which it is possible to express alternative expressions of embodied femininity to that (emphasised femininity) associated with traditionally female sporting practices.

“They do not eschew femininity entirely but rather productively draw on the tensions of femininity in the context of sports to display themselves as threatening, aggressive, and fearless derby girls.”

Gay Sport Subcultures: Progressive Political Resistance?

Theme 2:
Alternative/“Lifestyle” Sporting Subcultures

Many contemporary sporting subcultures are quite literally ALTERNATIVES to the DISCIPLINING CONSTRAINTS of TRADITIONAL SPORTING ACTIVITIES.

According to Foucault, modern societies need to be able to control its population:

"the body becomes a useful force only if it is...a [controlled, docile and] productive body"


Physical Education as Disciplinary Institution

Team sports represent perhaps the best example of how individual bodies are presently DISCIPLINED:

IN and THROUGH SPORT

Training healthy, productive, and obedient citizens.
Team Sport as Disciplinary Institution

Disciplining the body/mind according to the rules and requirements of modern capitalist society.

Team Sports Disciplining Function

- Playing according to social rules and regulations
- Learning cooperation and teamwork
- Acknowledging and accepting role
- Suppression of individual in favour of collective good
- Conforming to leadership and authority
- Exposure to competition and competitive ethos

A culture of expressive individualism came to prominence which proved a stark contrast to the collective conformity of the 1950s

1960s Counterculture Emergent Consumer Culture

From the 1960s onwards, the highly regulated and individually constraining individual sport forms proved to be at odds, for some, with the individualized nature of contemporary society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little League Baseball</th>
<th>Sandlot Baseball</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adult-centered</td>
<td>child-centered</td>
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<tr>
<td>formal and scheduled</td>
<td>informal and impromptu</td>
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<tr>
<td>regulated and repressive</td>
<td>playful and expressive</td>
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<td>IMPOSED social world</td>
<td>NEGOTIATED social world</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRODUCTIVE bodies</td>
<td>CREATIVE bodies</td>
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<td>FUN?</td>
<td>FUN?</td>
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The 1960s and 1970s saw the emergence of—largely, but not exclusively—youth based alternative sport cultures, which sought to provide alternatives to traditional, highly regulated ACHIEVEMENT sport forms...
These are what Bourdieu (1978) described as “Californian sports”:
- Creative
- Athlete-centered
- Non-competitive
- Un-regulated
- Expressions of youthful alternative physicality


"Kids are flocking to actions sports for many reasons, but I think a large part of it is that these are their sports—not ours. We’ll shoot hoops with our kids, but you won’t see many fathers and sons [sic] skateboarding together. And extreme sports usually aren’t organized into leagues and teams administered and coached by adults. Young athletes enjoy the pure fun of these activities..."


Contemporary “Lifestyle” Sport Subcultures
- Surfing
- Windsurfing
- Skateboarding
- Snowboarding
- The next big thing...

Windsurfing as “Lifestyle” Sport Subculture

Wheaton (2000) highlights the internal workings and dynamics of lifestyle/alternative sport subcultures.


This “individualism” through “lifestyle” sport participation offers and alternative to mainstream sporting activities.

Involvement in such subcultures offers an entire “way of life” centered on the pursuit of “hedonism”, “freedom”, and “self-expression” in an increasingly structured and conformist world.

The Subcultural Irony

As with any subcultural grouping, the insider (core)/outsider (margins) divisions within lifestyle sports are social determined, through factors such as:

1. Sporting Prowess
2. Commitment
3. Equipment
4. Subcultural Style

Windsurfing Core Participants: “Conspicuous Commitment”

The Subcultural Gender Contradiction

Despite their “alternative” status, “lifestyle” sports are often implicated in the reproduction of traditional power relations and identities (class, ethnicity, and gender based).

Theme 3:

Risk Subcultures: Pursuing Excitement and Adventure

One of the most prevalent focal points for sport-based ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLE CULTURES is the pursuit of RISK or ADVENTURE-BASED ACTIVITIES.

Sources of Subcultural Capital and Subcultural Status

Windsurfing Core Participants: “Conspicuous Commitment”

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Risk Subcultures: Pursuing Excitement and Adventure

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Sources of Subcultural Capital and Subcultural Status
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<th>Risk Sports</th>
<th>Adventure Sports</th>
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<td>&quot;Risk sport&quot;...is a concept that cuts across the borders of extreme, alternative and lifestyle sports since some of these sports include big risks whereas others do not. Risk sports are sports where one must reckon with the possibility of serious injury or death as a consequence of the activity.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The term 'adventure' denotes that the activity takes place in a setting that is demanding, challenging, dangerous or exotic. An adventure is something special and valuable that sticks out from ordinary life. It is used about sports or physical activities but also about travels, in body and mind.&quot; (p. 261)</td>
</tr>
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These are subcultures centered around the PERFORMANCE of excitement, danger, and opposition from the sporting NORM.


Ulrich Beck: “Risk Society”

Increased sites of risk identified within society.

- DANGER
- FAST FOOD KILLS
- Food Risk
- Crime Risk
- Childhood Risk
- Environmental Risk
- Terrorism Risk

A “culture of caution” and control

Modernity = Rationality, Bureaucracy, and Control


Increased focus on:
- Identifying RISK
- Avoiding RISK
- Managing/Controlling RISK

The Contradictions of “Risk Society”

Seeking and Experiencing Excitement/Danger/Adventure - RISK!

A Sociological Explanation?

“The quest for excitement in unexciting societies”

According to Elias and Dunning (1986), there is a balance between:

CONTROL---------------------EXCITEMENT

The more controlled/controlling (rationally and bureaucratically organized) a society is, the more there is a need for higher levels of EXCITEMENT/FREEDOM in some aspects of individual existence.

LOW CONTROL (Pre-Modern) Societies
Relatively low levels of CONTROL and REGULATION over virtually all aspects of life.
High levels of FREEDOM, AUTONOMY, and INSECURITY.
LIFE itself more PRECARIous and "EXCITING".

HIGH CONTROL (Modern) Societies
Complex and HIGH levels of CONTROL and REGULATION sought over virtually all aspects of life.
Low levels of FREEDOM, AUTONOMY, and high level of conformity, SAFETY and SECURITY.
LIFE itself less PRECARIous, more PREDICTABLE, and less "EXCITING".

RISK (Post-Modern) Societies
Complex and HIGH levels of CONTROL and REGULATION sought over virtually all aspects of life.
Low levels of FREEDOM, AUTONOMY, and high level of SAFETY and SECURITY within everyday life.
Increased seeking out of managed or cultivated RISK/EXCITEMENT based experiences.

The Paradox of (Post)Modernity
The Rational Safety-Seeker
The Irrational Thrill/Risk-Seeker

The Quest for Excitement: Climbing

Interestingly, while acknowledging the place of RISK within climbing subcultures, West & Allin (2010) identified that SUBCULTURAL INSIDERS focused on:

MANAGING and CONTROLLING RISK
"those participants who managed risk were good climbers whilst those who exercised poor judgement about risk were poor climbers" (p. 1245)

The degree to which an individual exemplifies/perform the various
dimensions of the climber subculture, determines their perceived firm
authenticity, insider status, and climber subculture membership.

Chasing the Moment

35 year-old climber:

“Yeah, trad climbing is more, is about the fear, trad climbing is
about over-coming fear, and it’s just about being out there, and
hoping you get that thing. I’ve talked to a few people about this,
and a lot of people seem the same thing, you’re chasing. I think,
yeah, it’s probably that you’re chasing one moment all the time.
Who was it I was talking to? An interview with somebody and they
said the same thing, you’re chasing a moment and you get it
maybe two or three times in a year, where you’re absolutely on
form and you’re just not scared at all, and you’re just flowing, and
the whole thing is a joy, and the rest of the time, you’re in that
nether world of half, of like, one minute you’re having a great time,
next minute you’re shit scared and not enjoying it.”

(Robinson, 2004, p. 121).

The POSITIVES of RISK

Actively seeking opportunities for RISK, provides a site for experiences of:

FREEDOM
CONTROL
INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSION
SELF-ACTUALIZATION
PERSONAL FULFILLMENT
TRANSCENDANCE

The Quest for Excitement: BASE Jumping

BASE:
Buildings: Antennas: Spans (bridges): Earth (cliffs)

Remember Bourdieu?

Researchers have show than many RISK sports
are predominantly practiced by the Middle/Upper
Middle/Elite Classes, since they possess the
ECONOMIC CAPITAL that can be converted into
the TIME and PRODUCTS/SERVICES necessary
for involvement in these activities.

RISK sports, and the SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL benefits
thought to derive from them, also related to the Middle/
Upper Middle Class HABITUS, specifically regarding the:

“intrinsic long term rewards from physical and
psychological self-betterment”


Yearning for the Edge?

The Quest for Excitement: Endurance Running

However, the middle/upper classes are not the only ones involved in risk sport...

Those with less economic capital, are similarly involved in a quest for excitement, through the creative usage and adaptation of their local environments.

The Quest for Excitement: Parkour/Free Running

Developed by young residents of a working class Parisian suburb (banlieue) called, Lisses in the 1980s.

"the art of moving fluidly from one part of the environment to another...

...it shares some characteristics with other urban lifestyle sports like skateboarding, such as ambivalence to man-on-man (sic) formal competition, an emphasis on self-expression and attitudes to risk, which tend to be carefully calculated and managed rather than taken unnecessarily" (p. 112)


“My Playground: A Film About Movement in Urban Space”

Risk, Social Disadvantage, and Control/Identity

“The ‘thrill’ derives from the proximity of danger, or even death, and the oppositional status of the act”

(Morrissey, 2008, p. 419)

The POSITIVES of RISK

Actively seeking opportunities for RISK, provides a site for experiences of:

- FREEDOM
- CONTROL
- INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSION
- SELF-ACTUALIZATION
- PERSONAL FULFILLMENT
- TRANSCENDANCE

Theme 4:

Surfing Subculture: Insiders and Outsiders

Surf Subculture Ethos

Freedom  Unity  Commitment
Spiritualism  Exhilaration  Escape

Insider/ Outsider Surf Subculture Status

The degree to which an individual exemplifies/perform the various dimensions of the surf subculture, determines their perceived firm authenticity, insider status, and surf subculture membership.
Aggressive/Protective Surf Culture: Boundary Maintenance and Sport Subculture

Localism and territorialism marks out spatially/geographically defined surf subcultures, who look to protect “their surf” from tourists or outside surfers.

These localized surf subcultures have been likened to gangs, due to their territorialism, violence, and hostility toward outsiders.

Da Hui: North Shore Localism/Territorialism

Da Hui, in Hawaiian Hui means (group or club). Da hui is a well respected group of surfers.

North Shore Localism/Territorialism

Kala Alexander and the “Wolfpak”: The “Protectors of the Break”
Most sporting subcultures are based around activities that take place in the LEISURE (non-work) time of participants.

**Work**--------**Life**

**Work**--------**Non-Work**

**Work**--------**Leisure**

Leisure (non-work) time has increasingly become important in defining individual IDENTITY.

This is partly due to the breakdown in traditional FORMS and TENURES of employment (the demise of the “job for life”).

Many are now defined by what they do in their non-work (leisure) time, as opposed to their OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITY (what they do in their work time).

Remember Woody (“Faking It”)?

However, there are some occupations that explode the LIFE-WORK binary, one of which is CYCLE MESSENGERING.
Cycle messengers are part of a SUBCULTURAL GROUPING which transcends differences between work and non-work, work and leisure.

It is a SUBCULTURAL identity:

“defined through work, rather than standing in contrast to work”

(Fincham, 2008, p. 620)


Cycle messengering possesses a strong OCCUPATIONAL (and SUBCULTURAL) identity centered around the PHYSICAL DEMANDS, DANGER, and EXHILIRATION of being a cycle messenger.

It is this common experience which defines this group, and defines the lives of the members of it.


A Way of Life: An Attitude

“being a courier, one quickly realizes, is much more than earning a living – it’s a way of life, an attitude”

(Cybergeo, 2001, in Fincham, 2008, p. 621)

Replicating Work Outside of Work: Messenger Events

Alleycat Racing

These races replicate messenger skills as participants must race to check points around the city, collecting tags or packages.

Insider/ Outsider Messenger Subculture Status

The degree to which an individual exemplifies/perform the various dimensions of the cycle messenger subculture, determines their perceived authenticity, insider status, and cycle messenger subculture membership.

Style and Subcultural Boundary Maintenance

A Cycle Messenger Outsider:
The Wannabe/ Aesthetic/ Hipster Rider

So Why Be a Bicycle Messenger?

NEGATIVES
- Poor and unpredictable pay
- Dangerous working conditions
- Physically challenging
- Reviled by the general public

POSITIVES
- Freedom and Independence
- Experience of RISK
- Dangerous and marginal occupation
- Group membership and identity

Subcultural Membership and Style: Symbolic Compensation?

“there is a symbolic compensation for messengers, where the maintenance of a particular image makes tolerable the poor conditions and pay of the work” (Fincham, 2008, p. 621)

The Conquest/Colonization of Subcultural “Cool”

Theme 6:

Within “alternative/lifestyle” sporting subcultures, there is often a tension between:

Subcultural Autonomy and Commercial Incorporation

For some, this tension has led to the demise of “alternative” sporting subcultures, leading to their replacement by new subcultural forms…

The skateboarding subculture reasserted its alternative, non-conformist status, through the creative use of urban and suburban spaces not originally designed for skateboarding…

Performing the City


Subcultural Incorporation/Colonization

Many subcultural trends become incorporated into mainstream commercial culture.

Skateboarding Subculture

Youth regulation: 1980s

Youth creativity: 1970s

Skateboarding’s Decline: 1990s

The attempt to confine and control skateboarding within highly regulated spaces effectively thwarted its oppositional and alternative subcultural character.

Therefore, its popularity soon declined among the youth population…

Reclaiming the Street

Streetstyle Skateboarding pioneer, Mark Gonzales

Delightful Prohibition

Whether supported by its core subcultural exponents or not, skateboarding has been incorporated into the highly commercial and competitive cultural sporting mainstream, thereby compromising its alternative status.

Commercial Incorporation/Colonization of Localized Surf Subculture

Commercial Incorporation/Colonization of Youthful RISK

Le Parkour/Free Running

Parkour: “Extreme”

See Video Clip 9

See Video Clip 10
Yoga: From Counterculture to the Mainstream

“Yoga’s greater popularity means we are often taking classes for overlapping reasons, and yoga’s subculture has shifted in character and splintered into segments. Maybe this has always been the case with yoga, but now it is easier to distinguish the three broadest motivations for practicing—to get a good physical workout as a form of fitness, to promote our health or healing, and to follow a deeper transformative path. There are now fitness yogis, health and healing yogis, spiritual yogis and all possible combinations.”

“Advertising revenues [for Yoga Journal] have increased, up 8% in the last five years, and the advertisers no longer appeal only to a counterculture market. Mainstream companies, such as Johnson & Johnson, Ford Motor Co., Kellog’s, Kraft, and Toyota, have begun advertising in the journal, which was founded in 1975 for yoga’s then-hippie subculture.”


Arguably, contemporary sporting subcultures are less about rituals and expressions of (political) resistance, as they are about the aesthetics and performances of consumer (sporting) identity and difference.

See course website for related lectures slides, podcast, thematic review questions, video clips, required readings, key concepts, discussion tasks, and essay question.