

LOCALS ONLY! THE IMPACT OF MODERNITY ON A LOCAL SURFING CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT: *This article is a qualitative examination of the effects of modernity on the lives and identities of a group of surfers in Southern California. The men studied feel that newcomers are changing the nature of the surfing in their area. The surfers attribute the negative changes in surfing to the gentrification of their community and the importation of new values by newcomers. Using the theoretical approach of modernity as discussed by Giddens, the act of surfing is conceptualized as being "disembedded" from the traditional local context established and maintained by the surfers for more than two decades. It is being figuratively transplanted into a more generic context reflecting the competitive, materialistic, and individual-orientated order typifying postindustrial American society. Keywords: surfing; modernity; disembedded; California; globalization.*

The sport of surfing has fundamentally changed in many ways over the past thirty years. Boards have become lighter, stronger, and more durable and are available in a variety of shapes and sizes. The advent of the wetsuit has made surfing possible year round in a variety of climates. Images and knowledge about surfing are globally disseminated in a variety of media formats, such as song, cinema, television, and the Internet. Correspondingly, surfing has become popular, with more people taking up the sport than ever before. Whereas surfing in the United States was once the reserve of adventure-seeking rogues, now it has become a thriving mainstream industry. It is a commodity available to most able-bodied Americans with the money to purchase surfing gear and ready access to the ocean.

The changes in surfing reflect larger changes in American society as it experiences modernity. Modernity refers to "the institutions and modes of behavior established first of all in post-feudal Europe, but which in the twentieth century increasingly have become world-historical in their impact" (Giddens 1991:14). As societies become more modern, local contexts become less salient as foundations

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for order and identity. The changes accompanying modernity are experienced both globally and individually. This appears to be true in the Southern California city that is the locus of this work. A group of surfers collaborated with me to document and discuss some of the changes implicit with modernity that have occurred at their beach during the past twenty years. From their perspective, surfing is being stripped out of the local social context in which the respondents practiced it for more than two decades. It is being transplanted into the new social context evident on the breaks, a public context that is both hostile and repugnant to the "old school" surfers.

The following work is a qualitative study of the changes experienced by a group of old school surfers at two adjoining locations in a Southern California coastal community. Ostensibly it is a description of a traditional local social order they helped establish and maintain for more than twenty years. It is also a discussion of the changes the surfers have witnessed in that traditional social order. Furthermore, it is an exploration of what is replacing that traditional social order and some of the nuances inherent in those changes. Conceptually this study documents the manner in which the fundamental changes inherent with modernity have been experienced by those studied and explores some of the consequences of those changes for them within their lived experiences. The importance of this study to the discipline of sociology is to be found within these documentations and explorations, as modernity continues to transform the world.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

There has not been a great deal of sociological work done concerning surfing. Surfing and surfers tend to be viewed from the perspective of a deviant subculture, similar to that described by Wolfe (1968) in the mainstream press. This perspective is interesting and sometimes useful when describing various surfing scenes around the nation, as they do differ immensely. The notion of surfers as "deviants," however, is often overplayed in the culture and stems from an earlier, socially insensitive definition of the sport, as discussed later. This author does not view surfing and surfers from the perspective of deviance but rather as an instance of an organized social activity situated within a particular social-historical context that can be characterized by modernity. The impact of modernity on the sport itself and the implications of these social forces for that sport's enthusiasts remain to be examined.

Modernity and globalization are interrelated and dynamic social forces that have had a tremendous impact on social life during the past 200 years (Giddens 1991; Ritzer 2004). In the instance of the sport of surfing, the material changes and social interconnectedness resulting from modernity have allowed for the images of and knowledge about surfing to spread to every corner of the globe. This includes the technologies involved in the design and production of surfboards and related gear as well as the less tangible aspects of the sport. Access to surfing equipment is no longer limited to coastal areas, as worldwide purchase and delivery is readily available (to those who can afford it) in great part because of the ubiquity of the Internet. Access to surfing sites has also been enhanced through

the continued development of the transportation infrastructure in the United States and throughout the world. Surfers from the United States are traveling to ride waves in such diverse places as the Philippines, Panama, and Indonesia. Access to surfing sites has also been expanded through technological developments (primarily wetsuits and jet skis), which allow surfing in locations previously considered unsuitable because of cold temperatures or surf conditions (dangerous currents and/or wave size). The changes attendant in modernity have transformed the physical and social worlds in a spectrum of manners, making public (and thus available) things, practices, people, and locations previously out of reach to all but a determined and fortunate few.

It has not always been so. The activity of surfing was developed in Polynesian cultures well before it was encountered by Whites during their explorations of the Pacific Ocean. The society about which we know the most, Hawaii, developed surfing within a local social context that regulated the activity and endowed meaning to it (Finney and Houston 1996). Although an analysis of the original social order within which surfing was developed is beyond the scope of this article, it is safe to say that it was quite different from the context(s) in which surfing is practiced today. Whites appropriated the sport (and decimated the Hawaiian culture), transplanting it in a physical sense to California (and elsewhere) while interpretatively recasting it as an exotic, dangerous, roguish amusement (London 1986; Twain 1962). What had once been a cherished activity, vital to the colorful and complex culture in which it sprang, was now a White adventurer's curious pastime. The act and attendant meanings of surfing were disembedded from the original local cultural context through this early instance of globalization (Giddens 1991). The appropriation of surfing was not necessarily just the physical transportation of the act. More important for this work, surfing became discontinuous with the traditional culture from which it sprang and fundamentally different than its previous iteration, although the physical location of its practice had not necessarily changed. Surfing did not stop in Hawaii once the Whites came and spread knowledge of it elsewhere. It continued on the Hawaiian breaks (surfing locations), although the meanings surrounding it and the skin color of surfers had drastically changed (Finney and Houston 1996). It was disembedded, *in situ*, geographically speaking. Within 100 years of the discovery of Hawaii by Whites, an observer would have been hard pressed to find a native Hawaiian surfing the superb breaks of those islands (Finney and Houston 1996).

The Hawaiian instance of the *in situ* disembedding of surfing is very similar to that transpiring today in Southern California. As the sport developed in Southern California during the twentieth century, it became the province of small groups of people (overwhelmingly men) who plied the best local breaks around small, somewhat disconnected beach communities. There were only a few well-known breaks with widespread popularity (e.g., Old Man's break at San Onofre). As transportation, communications, and board construction techniques developed, communities grew and more surfers began entering the water. In the late 1950s, the surfboard as we know it today was developed; made of foam, fiberglass, and wood, it was durable, was relatively light (compared to the wood boards of earlier times), and could be more easily produced in greater numbers. Continued

technological progresses and the 1960s ushered in a new popularity of surfing. The best breaks became crowded, and lesser quality breaks, previously ignored, were being sought out and used.

The surfers who helped with this study took up surfing during the 1970s and early 1980s. They learned to surf at the tail end of the 1960s era of surfing, characterized by longer, heavier boards without leashes (tethers linking human to board) and a gliding, graceful style. They were present for the dawning of the 1970s era of surfing, characterized by shorter, lighter boards with leashes and a more slashing style. Furthermore, technological advances had made surfing a year-round possibility with the mass availability of the wetsuit. Well equipped and versed in both long- and short-board surfing, these men began surfing the less popular breaks adjacent to Coastal City to escape the crowds at the better quality breaks. Over time a social order developed that patterned the surfing activity at these lesser breaks. The local social order gave precedence to seniority and surfing skill and endowed a sense of belonging and esteem to group members. As the number of surfers at these lesser breaks was initially small, the men knew each other (or of one another), and surfing became more than a pastime. Most lived, surfed, worked, and recreated within Coastal City. For the men who contributed to this work, surfing became a way of life centered about the local social order of the Coastal City breaks.

The local context that was established and within which they surfed (henceforth termed the *traditional social order*) has been and is now undergoing change. This change in part mirrors the larger changes taking place in Coastal City as it moves inevitably from being an isolated beach community to becoming a suburban community within a major metropolitan area in Southern California. As with the Hawaiians in an earlier century, the surfers on whom this study is built are seeing the activity of surfing being disembedded *in situ* from the traditional social context they established and maintained. It is being figuratively transplanted into a new social context reflecting the values of the new residents of Coastal City. The traditional order, valuing seniority and skill, is being eclipsed by the new order, which values competitiveness and individual gratification. As with the Hawaiians, surfing (the act) still exists at the breaks in question in Coastal City. It is, however, surfing removed from its local context and is thus different in character. The morality, values, identities, and lives of the men under study are being irrevocably altered through this process typical of life within the postindustrial United States.

This work uses Giddens's (1991) theoretical conceptions regarding modernity and its impact on society to explain observed changes in the nature of surfing for a small group of surfers in Southern California (see also Cassell 1993). This work is similar to works noting the impact of modernity on consumption patterns of food (Ritzer 2000), opiate use (Yi-Mak and Harrison 2001), and credit use and the assumption of debt (Manning 2000). Giddens postulates that modernity involves the process of disembedding, the lifting out of social institutions from local contexts and the reestablishment of those institutions into modern contexts discontinuous from their origins (Giddens 1991). This theoretical perspective holds that modernity produces fundamental social change not only in structural characteristics of a society but also in the moral and interpersonal fabric. These changes have important

and sometimes dire consequences for members thereof. Among these consequences are the disintegration of identity as founded within the traditional social context and the installation of individual-orientated, materialistic value sets. Members of such disrupted societies are often set adrift from any substantial and meaningful social order and thus founder in a type of anomie (Yi-Mak and Harrison 2001). This work has sociological value in that it addresses the experiential impact of modernity, as lived by the respondents, and traces the connections between their experiences and the larger social milieu in which they exist. This work also incorporates Ritzer's (2004) sociological theme of a social trajectory toward the "globalization of nothing," as it documents the move from local derivations of meaning to meanings found within a global framework, devoid of relevance.

RESEARCH METHOD

Entree in the Field

This qualitative work is the result of five years of work in participant observation and unstructured interviewing made in and about a surfing "scene" in the San Diego, California, area. The work is centered around two adjoining breaks (separated by about 100 feet) of lesser quality adjacent to a San Diego County coastal community, Coastal City, which was undergoing population growth and gentrification at the time of the work (2000 to 2005). My initial interest in surfing was purely as a healthy, novel form of exercise given my Midwestern upbringing and penchant for new experiences. I, initially a novice surfer, went to the breaks after acquiring basic surfing skills at another location. After several attempts at joining the line-up of surfers waiting to catch waves (with mixed success), I came to realize that I had blundered into some sort of social hierarchy. I kept quiet, said little, and waited his turn. In a few weeks, the most vocal of the morning group eventually spoke to me and informed me of "the way it worked." In retrospect this was an important moment that I fortunately did not spoil by surfing out of turn or doing something foolish. From this introduction, I was granted tentative entree into their group as long as I did not get in their way. After a while most of the men got to know me and my professional aspirations. The majority of the men were eager to talk; a few were not.

The Participants

The surfers discussed in this project were the men who surfed the same adjoining breaks (usually just one of them) early in the morning, every day, weather and seas permitting. This study focused on eight such men. They were older men, ranging from forty-nine to almost seventy years of age, who had surfed in the area for more than twenty years and who had built a life that allowed them to pursue their passion as they did. It must be stressed that these men were by no means social "dropouts," a status so often accorded surfing enthusiasts in popular culture. One was a deputy sheriff at the time of the study, another was a factory worker, and several of the men had retired from socially respectable, lower middle-class professions. In this work I have dubbed them the "old school" surfers for two reasons. First this was a term they

frequently used to describe themselves. Second they were quite a bit older than the common conception of a surfer. They were White, and all were working- or middle-class. It became quickly apparent that the network of hardcore, "old school" enthusiasts in my area was somewhat small. I became privy to the shared biographies, legends, and tales of yore that characterize similar more established, masculine-orientated groups, such as the military and law enforcement. Furthermore, in this manner I struck up a friendship with one of the surfers who was also a surfboard "shaper" (craftsman) by trade. Despite lack of formal education, he was especially well read and extensively knowledgeable about surfing and its history. He was a key informant who introduced me to local surfing notables and invited me to various, sometimes obscure, surfing-related events. His knowledge and insight were invaluable and inform this project throughout.

The issue of "role engulfment" as used by Adler and Adler (1991) concerning college basketball players has some usefulness here in describing the participants of this study. This work focused on men who had been "engulfed" by the role of surfer and had assumed that role as a dominant status. The question of balancing competing roles, such a husband, deputy, and/or father, had already been worked out prior to the time of my observations. For other persons at the breaks, surfing was perhaps a pastime for occasions when other duties did not call. For the men in this study, surfing came first and they had constructed lives off the water to fulfill this basic requirement. Although not the topic of this article, their choice of the surfing lifestyle had implications for other roles purportedly typical of American men.

Data Collection

When I began to think and act on my surfing endeavors from a sociological perspective, I initially set about the work in the style of the "long interview" (McCracken 1988). From two such interviews, the generic themes of negative change and growing conflict were developed in conjunction with existing knowledge of the field and of the sociological literature. During the two interviews, however, I noted the participants had been somewhat uncomfortable and flummoxed with the process. I decided that the time-honored, tape-recorded interviewing method was not going to be the most productive for my research. The most useful knowledge was gained through observation and talking with "old school" surfers on the water, in the parking lots above the breaks, or at local pubs and restaurants. On one occasion, the previously mentioned key informant coordinated a meeting between all of the participants at a local pizzeria and brewery. Usually notes were taken concerning my observations and informal talks and actions after I had left the social scene, as suggested by Polsky (1969). The constant presence of yellow legal pads and pencils in my pick-up truck was a source of amusement for some of my respondents as well as friends and family. The two long interviews, my notes, my observations, and my experiences compose the data on which this work is founded.

Data Analysis

The qualitative method employed is one that encourages the importation of conceptual themes to interpret the data collected. This places it between the purely inductive methods such as grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1994) and more deductive strategies of qualitative research (McCracken 1988; Miles and Huberman 1994). It is also informed by the conception of the individual as a historically situated, language-dependent social being, as elaborated by Heidegger (1996). As previously noted, the generic themes of negative change and growing conflict were repeatedly evidenced by the participants in their discussions and interactions with me. The specific themes inherent to Giddens's (1991) concept of modernity were developed by me and supported by the data during the formal analysis portion of the study in 2005. Particularly relevant was the concept of the disembedding of practices from their social and locally derived contexts. It was through this framework that the data were interpreted to create this sociological work.

DISCUSSION

The Traditional Social Context of Surfing

When I first started surfing here, things were a lot different than they are now days. Some of the older guys like Benny, they'll tell you the same thing. You had to earn the right to catch waves. You had to spend the time watching while the other guys surfed. Sometimes, if you were lucky, you'd get to surf the scraps that no one else wanted. It probably wasn't fair, but that's the way it was.

Yeah it used to be real tough out there. If you fucked up and got in some guy's way, there'd be hell to pay. There used to be a guy Tim and another guy Len, if you dropped in on them (got in their way on a wave), they'd knock you off your board, rip your leash off, and shove your board into shore. If you said anything about that, they'd drag you underwater and hold you down for awhile. Mean mother fuckers! That happened to me a couple times, but I kept coming back . . . eventually I learned my lessons and they let me surf there.

The old school surfers I talked with were unanimous in their claim that surfing had changed for the worst during the past twenty years. They were saddened and angered by this turn of events, which they saw as detrimental to their way of life. They had "come up" in surfing within a social context that minimized conflict, valued skill and seniority, and granted them a network through which they could create identities. For these men, surfing was the central theme in their lives, and that theme was now being threatened.

Surfing is a social activity. It is typically done around some sort of underwater structure that causes an on-coming wave to "break" (fall over) prematurely, thus creating a usable surface for a short length of time. One is rarely on a break alone, so turns must be taken to avoid collisions with others. Most of the time spent surfing is spent sitting on the surfboard in close proximity to fellow surfers, which lends itself to nonverbal and verbal communication. Furthermore, the presence of more people present on a break at a given time requires some sort of regulation of turn taking to avoid collision and conflict. The old school surfers (and their predecessors) had

developed and maintained just such a social order to regulate surfing conduct at the break. This social order predominately valued skill and seniority (but from the my own observations, also valued masculinity and Whiteness). The attendant hierarchies within the order minimized conflict and also served to reward those with the most skills and experience with a larger number of waves. The senior and more skilled surfers were bestowed with positively evaluated terms, having had "paid their dues" and having demonstrated their abilities. New members were expected to show deference to the established hierarchies and to demonstrate adequate skill in wave riding when given the opportunity. Observing the established order was rewarded with inclusion in the group, and breaking the rules was punished with ridicule, ostracism, and regulated violence. The established social context at the break functioned to minimize collisions and conflict between surfers, making potentially chaotic situations more or less predictable. In this sense, the context was similar to that described by Jimerson (1996) concerning pickup basketball. In a competitive situation, the norms served to structure the social interaction allowing for "the game" (basketball/surfing) to transpire while rewarding those who had the requisite skills and seniority with play/wave time. It was more than that, however, for the men interviewed. The established social context gave the old school surfers a world in which to surf with meaning and identity. It is around this social context that the old school surfers had built their lives.

This social context lent structure to the lives of the old school surfers. Within it they could arrive at "their" surfing location at the usual time and paddle out beyond the break (where the waves begin to fall over) and find themselves among competent surfers with whom they may have had several decades' worth of experience. The time spent idle could be filled with talk, if desired, and when waves arrived, the old school surfers knew they had a good opportunity to catch at least some of them. Furthermore, by observing the rituals and heeding the rules day after day, year after year, they garnered the esteem of those around them and continued to make themselves eligible for the privileges that esteem entailed within the group. The shared historicity (Heidegger 1996) inherent within the established social context was an important structuring factor as well. Not only were the day's activities meaningfully patterned, but the tapestry of their lives as surfers was made meaningful as well.

Perceived Changes in the Traditional Social Context

I want you to tell those friggin' kooks [novice surfers] that I don't care who they are on land. When you come out to surf my waves, you better show me respect. You better show respect to all the guys that have been surfing here for years, ten years, fifteen years for Christ's sake. I don't give a shit if you're CEO of WidgetCom! It don't matter!

It happens once in awhile, you know, we'll be out there [surfing] and some yuppie who just dropped a grand on a new Joel Tudor board [a brand of surfboard] will drive up in his shiny SUV and see us out there. He'll paddle out and think he's going to catch our waves. Fuck him, who's he to surf our waves? He doesn't have the right to even be there. He may think he does, but he doesn't. He doesn't even

know how to ride that board. How long has he been surfing? A year, two years? And he's out there with guys who been there 10, 20, 30 years? Fuck him, go down to Wind n' Sea [a nearby beach area] and fight the crowds for awhile and then come back when you're good enough. Or better yet, go down to Dog Beach [a beach with low-quality waves] and learn to ride your board without getting in the way.

The old school surfers unanimously felt that their way of life was in jeopardy. They pointed to the large number of newcomers who they felt had spoiled life on "their breaks." The old school surfers added that there was no longer "any respect" out on the waves. They claimed that newcomers were ignorant of the social context into which they were intruding and were "trying to bring in status from land" to the break. For the old school surfers, surfing had become problematic, as it often entailed anger and confrontation.

According to the respondents, the traditional social context has been fractured. The changes of which they complained originated with the large numbers of surfers entering the waters and frequenting the breaks at Coastal City. These new surfers (myself included) overloaded an inflexible traditional system that had been based on locality, interpersonal communication, and status recognition. Large numbers of new unknown surfers, of varying skills, were now at the breaks, trying to catch the limited amount of surfable waves. The respondents felt that the newcomers were oblivious to the fact that they were treading on a valued way of life. Additionally, the newcomers were not being deferential to the more established surfers present at the break.

It was, however, not just that there were lots of new faces in the water or that they were merely ignorant of what they were blundering into. The respondents all complained that the newcomers did not show "respect"; in other words, they did not recognize the validity of the traditional social context that was so important to the respondents. Moreover, the respondents felt that their local context was being supplanted with another more generic one. This new social context was the competitive and individualistic social order of contemporary American life in the metropolis. This was frustrating and frightening to the old school surfers who had "come up" in the ranks through patience, practice, and deference.

The increase in the saliency of the new social context was accompanied by a decrease in the quality of life for the respondents. The increase in bodies and boards in the water at a given time, the general lack of "respect" being shown to the old school surfers by the newcomers, and the importation of landed values to the water often made a day's surfing a frustrating and angering endeavor. Confrontation seemed to be an ever-present issue. There was a genuine bitterness among the old school surfers concerning the regularity of confrontations and considerable apprehension as to what may come. The specter of unregulated violence was a theme frequently touched on by the old school surfers. In the traditional social context, violence was acceptable to punish those who had clearly broken the rules of the social order. Each respondent had his story of comeuppance (as victim and/or perpetrator) but only in terms of a "fair fight" involving fisticuffs and wrestling. What they complained of and feared was the unregulated use of violence for any perceived conflict of interests and the unilateral use of weapons at the break or removed from the surfing location entirely.

The old school surfers could read the writing on the wall and had a sense that there was little chance of things returning to what they had once been. Various adaptation strategies employed to deal with the situation are discussed later. Surfing, as they had known it in Coastal City, had been taken from them. It had been usurped by the new host of surfers entering the water and had been imbued with a new set of social sensibilities. The old school surfers could still surf in the physical sense, and perhaps on the odd day when only they were in the water, they could reconstitute the old local context. Such days, however, were becoming few and far between, and they had to play, for the most part, by the new set of rules if they wanted ride the waves.

The New Social Context of Surfing

Man, I tell you it's getting dangerous out there these days. I'm surprised that there aren't more injuries because it's just ridiculous. So many people out there and no one looking out to see if it's safe, if there isn't someone in the way. They just go [on a wave] and hope for the best I guess. No wave is worth hurting someone for.

Just last year I was surfing at Coastal City and this guy I never seen before takes off in front of me [takes a wave out of turn] and then eats it [falls off his board]. I manage to miss him but just barely. So I ride the wave and then paddle back out next to him and I say to him nicely, "Hey don't be taking off in front of me like that, see this board [a long board] I can't stop it just like that." So he looks at me and says something like "Fuck you, that was my wave, you stay out of my way." So I see where this [is] going right? So I remain calm and say, "Look pal, I don't know where you think you are, but I've never seen you out here before, we don't surf like that around here." So the guy says something like "I come here all the time, I've never seen you before." I just laugh and say, "I can tell you the names of at least six guys out here, can you?" He gets real quiet so I say to Mickey and Jimmy (other old school surfers), "Have you ever seen this guy before?" They both say "no" . . . needless to say the guy didn't stick around for long and I never saw him again.

The social context does indeed seem to have changed. There are many more people at the breaks trying to catch waves. The populations of both San Diego County and Coastal City have grown substantially over the previous twenty years (U.S. Census Bureau 2001a, 2001b). Surfing has become a multibillion-dollar-a-year industry (McMahon 2005). Although there is no reliable way to determine the number of surfers in the water longitudinally, the infrastructure enabling access to the breaks does point toward a significant increase in the surfing population in Coastal City. The available on-street and lot parking at the breaks in Coastal City are consistently full. Parking overflow into neighborhoods and shopping centers on the weekends, holidays, and when the surf is really good has become a problem for enthusiasts, residents, and police alike.

With the new surfers frequenting the limited number of quality surfing breaks, the traditional social context at those spots has been broken down. Replacing it is a competitive, individualistic mentality, similar to that found on the freeways in

the area. When the breaks are crowded, there is no semblance of the traditional social order and the predictability it imparts. As waves roll in and peak (get ready to break), people scramble to attain the best spot for catching it. This requires surfers to maneuver long, heavy, fiberglass boards within inches of one another. Those who have the good fortune to be where the wave breaks first and who have the daring to ride it with others nearby get the wave. Bearing in mind that the pathway on the wave will be crowded with other surfers, care must be taken to avoid hitting others. Near misses, collisions, injuries, and conflict are quite common on such days.

The old school surfers abhorred such days, although they would surf in such conditions if they felt the need to catch waves (which they often did). In conversations about such days, some would mention the phrase "Fuck it, I'm going!" to describe the mentality of the newcomers as surfers. It was used as an article of black humor to describe the competitive, individualistic mindset of the crowd and the complete disregard for the enjoyment and, more important, the safety of others. Once the surfer is riding down the face of the wave, particularly if the waves are large, there are limitations on the amount of control the surfer has over his or her progress should another person suddenly appear in the way. Momentum and the mass of the board make sudden stops or dramatic swerves very difficult for the average surfer. All surfers should know this, yet many choose to ignore the possibility that they might injure another should they catch a wave on a crowded day. In such a scenario, the drive for immediate gratification overcomes the concern for the well-being of others. Wave "snaking" is also described within the "Fuck it, I'm going" phrase. Snaking refers to the practice of positioning your board so as to block the path of a competitor for a wave or the repositioning of your board in the final seconds before a wave breaks so as to cut in front of another who had been waiting in the particular spot where the wave happened to break. Negligently hitting another and wave snaking would not be tolerated (and most likely punished) in the traditional social context, yet they are commonplace in the new context.

The milieu developing on the breaks in Coastal City seems to be characteristic of the consumer-orientated society in which the new surfers operate. As Coastal City becomes increasingly populated by those wealthy enough to live there, the materialistic mindset will undoubtedly continue to import itself on the water. The older social order, with all its faults (discussed later), did lend a patterning to a potentially chaotic scene. People did get to surf in relative safety under the old doctrine. Those rules, however, are breaking down, and there seems to be little else on the horizon to replace them except the first-come, first-served attitude that composes the zeitgeist of so much else in modern life (Gleick 1999). Although comparison is made between the new social order on the breaks and that found on the freeways, there is an important difference between the two. Unlike the freeways, there are no structural constraints or enforcement agencies that govern behavior on the breaks. Surfers in Coastal City have been left to their own devices in this regard. The old school surfers established a governing social order on the break, in part, to maximize safety and wave use, similar to that discussed by Jimerson (1996). The newcomers, heeding no rule but what they bring with them, are destroying that governance.

Ways of Dealing with the Changes

All this [changes at the breaks] used to really bother me. A lot more than it does now. I used to get so mad, so mad . . . but I guess I just learned to deal with it. In a way it's helped me grow as a person because I finally got to the point where I had to deal with it. I had to change or I'd go crazy. The people weren't going to go away, I had to accept that as a fact and get past it.

The old school surfers with whom I talked were in the process of dealing with the changes they encountered on the breaks in Coastal City. They were not going to stop surfing, as it was the pillar around which they had constructed their lives. Quitting the sport was not an option for them.

One way of dealing with the changes taking place was to collectively ignore them and develop a "localism." The old school surfers would congregate at one minor break and enforce their hard code on those who surfed there. The reputation of this break would ensure that usually only skillful surfers with a similar mindset would be there for any length of time. The old school surfers would make sure that those judged unworthy would have a frustrating and aggravating surfing experience by taking every wave possible and through ridicule. In worst case scenarios, violence was used to enforce the rules. The uninitiated had only to read the spray-painted warning "Locals Only" on the cliffs in front of the break to get the hint that they were not welcome. This strategy worked well on average surfing days, when enough old school surfers were present to make it work. There were better surfing locations nearby, and the location in question required a walk, whereas the others did not. This drew most surfers away from the particular break used by the old school surfers. Some days, however, the surf would not break correctly at the spot, which meant the old school surfers had to surf inferior waves or venture into the more populated breaks where their social order did not preside. Furthermore, on some holidays and summer weekends, there were just so many people in the water that even their break became overcrowded with old school surfers and newcomers alike.

The phenomenon of the "localism" bears a few more words. The beach and breaks in Coastal City are part of a state park and thus are legally open for use by anyone. The area is amenable to kayaking, snorkeling, swimming, wave boarding, and fishing. When referring to the breaks detailed here, however, the old school surfers used possessive terms such as *our breaks* and *our waves*. They felt a sense of entitlement to the surfing enjoyment of the area as they had "paid their dues" in time and effort. In a sense, they had struck a claim of ownership over public domain through use and residential privilege. Surfers from other areas were not welcome because, in the mind of the old school surfers, the place was for (as the spray-painted sign stated) "locals only." Furthermore, two of the more aggressive old school surfers verbally harassed any kayakers venturing onto the breaks. From this standpoint, the old school surfers were like a street gang asserting dominance over a section of territory (turf). The phenomenon of the "localism" has been well documented in surfing-orientated publications, as it continues to be an ongoing controversy in the surfing world (Barilotti 2006).

Another aspect of the "localism" perhaps not yet considered is its concordance with what has been termed elsewhere as "California nativism" (Miller

1969). Californians have had a long, checkered history with welcoming newcomers to their midst. The exclusion of outsiders from prized resources in California dates back, at least, to the unjust and racist treatment of the Chinese in the gold mining fields circa 1850 (Miller 1969). During the twentieth century, Mexican, Japanese, and Vietnamese newcomers (among others) were and continue to be treated unjustly by some so-called "native Californians," who themselves are of immigrant stock (Chavez 1992; Do 1999; Nagata 1993). Derogatory treatment in the media, political machinations, harassment, exclusion from resources, assaults, riots, and lynchings have all been foisted on various groups of newcomers to the state by so-called native Californians. Californians are rightfully concerned and proud of their natural resources (Semas 2005). They also seem to have a sense of entitlement to those resources, where no such right exists, at the cost of the well-being of others. The current social strife and political debates concerning immigration lend support for the existence of such a "California nativism." Although other people in other areas may treat newcomers as second-class citizens, the significant and long history of exclusionary tendencies in California merits attention here.

The newcomers certainly resented the sense of entitlement they felt and heard about at the breaks from the old school surfers. Many had heard tale of the "localism" through word of mouth in the community. Several times when talking with a newcomer (like myself) about a conflict with "a local," I knew who they were talking about and understood their frustration with that person. Some of the old school surfers could be quite callous at times. The newcomers, for the most part, were good-natured men and women who wanted to participate in a much-publicized and hyped-up sport. From their perspective, it was a public space and they were free to use it just as they would a park or playground. The relevancy of the old school rules was lost on them. In a sense then, the newcomers felt a sense of entitlement as well. They felt they were entitled to use the public facilities as long as they didn't hurt anyone. It probably never crossed their minds at the onset of the surfing endeavor that they were, by their very presence, trespassing on the domain and lifestyle of other people.

Another way the old school surfers dealt with the changes they saw at Coastal City was to leave town. Most would go on "surf trips" several times a year, usually driving far south into Baja or flying to a budget-minded surf camp in a developing nation. This was neither as expensive nor farfetched as it might seem to the average person. These were men who had built their lives around surfing, and they were willing to forego a good deal of pleasantries and purported normalcy to maintain that lifestyle. There are many "surf camps" that cater to such people, offering minimal accommodations and services in remote locations around the world. Most of the old school surfers had set up their economic lives to support their desire to surf, so an extended vacation two or three times a year was manageable and not a hardship. The key informant during the time of the study left Coastal City at least three times a year to surf in (among other places) Panama, El Salvador, and Mexico. Some, sick of the crowds, reportedly left Southern California for good. One such gentleman, a local celebrity in surfing circles around the area, left for Southern Mexico permanently

during the time of the study. He moved to a very remote location (for the time being) where he had leased a small house near a break with good surf almost year round. This adaptation to change was successful inasmuch as it allowed the men to surf in relative peace at least part of the year. It is interesting that some of the "remote" locations were no longer remote enough, it would seem. Write-ups in the surfing press and word of mouth were spoiling these once-deserted breaks by drawing crowds of accomplished and not-so-accomplished American surfers. For example, surfing in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, once a haven for crowd-weary Americans, is reportedly much like surfing in suburban California. The problem from which the old school surfers were fleeing was following them! Additionally, the globalization of culture was bringing native surfers out to the breaks in these remote locations. Many reportedly resented gringo surfers, which put the old school surfers in the peculiar and uncomfortable position of being the newcomer.

Another adaptation worth mentioning was to address it personally. This entailed surfing the breaks and dealing with the crowds, abstinence from surfing, and resisting local changes that aggravated the situation. The old school surfers could be seen among the crowds on days when it couldn't be avoided. Having decades of experience surfing the same breaks, they had an advantage over the less knowledgeable and could predict where and when the waves were going to break and exactly how to best ride them. This allowed them to catch an inordinate number of waves despite the number of people in the water. For example, on a crowded weekend day, I saw one old school surfer sitting farther out and north of what appeared to be the break line. I watched as this person periodically caught and rode long rights (waves that were breaking to the right) through the pack of surfers congregated further in and to the south. The point is that the old school surfer knew that there were occasional waves coming in from an atypical direction and knew exactly where these waves would break given the rocky structure underneath. The rest of the surfers in the water were essentially riding beach break while he was catching quality waves.

The insider knowledge was also evidenced by board choice and handling. In the previous example, the old school surfer had come to the beach with a relatively long board (11 feet), which was perfect for the conditions. Furthermore, as he rode the long right-hand waves in toward shore, he was able to deftly maneuver the long board through the crowd without having to bail (stop riding abruptly by purposefully falling). The old school surfers could generally outmaneuver most of the newcomers quite easily and only occasionally were beat on a wave (beat catching it) or forced to bail to avoid a collision with someone competing with them or otherwise (bystanders and surfers returning to the break).

Skillful as they may have been, inevitably the old school surfers would come into conflict with someone they considered a newcomer. Outside of their element (the traditional social context), there was little recourse except hostilities or peace-making. The old school surfers I spoke with about the matter all agreed that they found hostilities (verbal and otherwise) counterproductive to the reason (relaxation and enjoyment) they surfed in the first place. When I asked, they admitted

that when surfing in crowds, they only became hostile at the most egregious intrusions on their surfing (injury, serious board damage). They had accepted that they were going to encounter problems and they resigned themselves to deal with those problems peacefully in the usual case. A few even cited examples where they would use the occasion to develop rapport with their antagonists and educate the newcomers on basic surfing etiquette.

Another tactic was to abstain from surfing on the worst of days and to enjoy the ocean view from the parking lot, usually talking with other old school friends. This was sometimes done when the old school surfers could see that it was going to be a long, frustrating day if they entered the water. Usually this was the choice reserved for less-than-ideal surfing conditions and when a good time could be had on shore passing the time with a coterie of friends. On such days, it was not unusual to find some of the old school surfers gathered around a picnic table or bed of a pick-up truck talking and drinking coffee. It must be added that if the surf was good, abstinence from surfing was not a realistic option. The extreme version of this option, giving up surfing entirely, was rarely mentioned by the respondents. This should not be surprising given their investment in years, time, and lifestyle in the sport.

The other option that should be mentioned was resistance to changes in Coastal City that aggravated the situation on the local breaks. The old school men I interviewed were generally quite intelligent and well read concerning the world of surfing and local politics. One had spearheaded a movement to prevent a traffic redirection near the Coastal City breaks that would have made it more amenable to the general public. This movement was successful (from his perspective) and inhibited the automobiles of passers-by from clogging the already crowded parking lots. Additionally, this same man was involved in the citizen oversight of local development codes concerning the general beachfront area. His concern was to slow down what he considered to be the overdevelopment of Coastal City. Another old school surfer volunteered to speak in my sociology classes at a local university concerning the lack of respect and safety issues he saw on the breaks. Still another respondent was a mentor to several underprivileged youths whom he instructed in surfing according to the traditional values he cherished so much. Still another was closely connected to a surf camp that, at least, tried to teach respect and deference as part of its surfing "curriculum" to eager (and paying) newcomers and tourists. Most of the others, although not actively involved as the men above, supported organizations and clubs that sought to preserve the beaches and the heritage of Southern California surfing, such as the Surfrider Foundation.

The Double-Edged Sword of Development

I've got all the business I can handle these days. I even hire out some of the polish work to a guy I know. I've got custom jobs coming in from all over the country, Texas, Georgia, New York. I even make boards for a cat in Japan. Plus I get lots of repair jobs, especially on the weekends.

Johnny Doe's mom died a while back and left him her house in Cardiff. Imagine what that place was worth! I've got to go see him before he takes off to

Mexico, do you want to come? He sold the place and bought some land down in Mexico near K900 [fictitious mile marker number on the Baja peninsula]. He's packing up and leaving town tonight.

During my discussions with the old school surfers, I (as a newcomer) noticed a certain disingenuousness in their fervid complaints about people such as myself. Although I sympathized with their plight and understood their sense of loss to be real, it was also evident that most had benefited in many ways from the influx of people to Coastal City. The surf board shaper was busy making custom boards and repairing damaged boards year round. His lifestyle depended on an expanding market for his wares and skills. Several were local businessmen who also prospered with the boom in local economy created by the influx of new wealth. One worked at a factory where the foam used in surfboards was made, so he too benefited by the growth of the industry. In fact, those that owned or had claim to (through inheritance, for example) real estate anywhere along the coast saw their fortunes rise several times over. There were only a scant few that could legitimately claim they had not prospered in the recent economic growth of Coastal City. Although I understood their complaints to be valid, I also recognized that they were enmeshed in a larger socioeconomic system that had positive as well as negative outcomes for them.

On an additional note, the economy of Coastal City played up the surfing destination angle. Street corners along the Pacific Coast Highway were decorated with murals and mosaics of surfers. There were many stores that sold surfing-related merchandise, where board rentals could be had and surf lessons arranged. The local movie theatre had special "surf movie" nights, harkening back nostalgically to the mythical days of the 1960s. Restaurants and shops had surfing themes, with kitschy names for things such as the "nose rider" sandwich (a club sandwich with avocado) or the "hang ten combo meal" (two grilled beef tacos, fries, and a soft drink). Surf music (the Beach Boys or Dick Dale) reverberated in diverse atmospheres, such as in nightclubs and grocery stores. Surfing-related magazines and tide calendars were sold practically everywhere. In Coastal City it was easier to find a copy of the *Surfer's Journal* than a copy of the *Utne Reader*. Surfing was an important commodity for Coastal City, and that commodity had economic benefits for most of the city's inhabitants, including the respondents. Coastal City, for all the misgivings of some of its residents, was actively promoting itself as a surfing destination to the newcomers.

The concept of surfing as a commodity is one that bears note and future elucidation. As previously mentioned, surfing is big business. One major theme of this work is that as surfing (as activity) becomes a disembedded product (commodity) rather than a lifestyle, the potential for surfing as a nucleus for the construction of meaning and identity is being lost. In its place seems to be "nothing" (Ritzer 2004). Certainly this would seem to be the case for the respondents, at least. In particular, the surfboard shaper (and key informant) had the most to lose. At the time of the study, he was in the fortunate position to be involved in every aspect of the design, construction, and consumption of his surfboards. This was something in which he took great pride and satisfaction. He embossed his name (and sometimes that of the consumer) in the enamel of the works of which he was

especially proud. He knew the history and handling characteristics of the multitude of surfboard shapes and designs available. He rode his own boards, of which he had an impressive collection. He could frequently see his works being used in the "proper" manner by friends and regular customers. He sought out retro surfboard templates, used unique materials (e.g., redwood, century plant), and made boards specifically designed for the physical stature, skill level, and surfing style of a consumer. In a sense, the processes of design, production, and consumption were one with him and made him complete (Braverman 1974). As surfing becomes more popular, the production process of surfboards has become less of a craft, as design, production, and consumption are disjointed. The shaper mentioned above now has to compete with cheaper imports made abroad (e.g., from Croatia) and with more efficient (and thus profitable) manufacturing techniques, such as "indestructible" epoxy boards and mass-produced generics (pop-outs).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This work has sought to explain the personal troubles of a group of surfers in Coastal City in terms of modernity and its attendant social processes. The old school surfers had devoted their lives to the sport of surfing. They had developed a network of social relations and a moral order that patterned surfing activity on the break, making it predictable and safe. Furthermore, this traditional local social order placed value on seniority and skill. Additionally, the local order also granted them a social network within which they could create and sustain their identities as surfers.

The traditional social network worked well for the respondents for more than thirty years in some cases. It was, however, not capable of adapting to the dramatic growth in population in Coastal City in general and specifically at the breaks. The newcomers to the break were overwhelming the traditional social network by sheer numbers and by the importation of a new set of values. Witnessing the progressing irrelevancy of their social order, the old school surfers were left in an anomic funk, as an important part of their lives was becoming increasingly problematic. They were left sad, angry, and pessimistic about the future. Several adaptations to change were adopted by the respondents with varying amounts of success.

The newcomers were either oblivious to the traditional social order into which they were intruding or did not care. With them came a new social order: the competitive, individual-centered order dominant in their lives on land. This new order reflected the larger social context of postindustrial America's wealthier cities, an order earmarked by immediate gratification and a general disregard for the welfare of others. The social forces at work that were drawing newcomers to Coastal City and to the breaks continued unabated at the time of writing. Life, as the old school surfers knew it, would continue to change in the direction they did not particularly like or care for. There were some positive aspects inherent in this change, but the core element of their selves as surfers was being threatened.

As a conceptual theme, the social changes attendant in the process of modernity continue throughout the United States and the world. It seems unlikely that the "good old days" at Coast City will return. The old school surfers interviewed for

this study will probably continue to eke out what surfing they can until they move on, die, or give up the sport. Population increase, urban sprawl, and gentrification appear to be inevitable along the California coast because it is a highly desirable area in which to live. The price of life in such an area, unfortunately, includes what the old school surfers despise. The process of change is not intractable, however, and the worst effects on such local communities can be ameliorated through political action, education, communication, and role modeling. These were employed with varying degrees of success by the respondents in this study. Sociologists have a role here as well. Barring some unspeakable catastrophe or dramatic shift in the direction of American society, modernity is inevitable. Sociologists can assist threatened groups to document what has changed, point out the positive aspects of change for them where they exist, and aid people in avoiding the worst possible outcomes through reflective collective action. In the end, however, we are "doomed," as it were, to the consequences of the spread of our materialistic and individualistic culture via the mass media harnessed to a capitalist social order. Life will never be the same for the participants in this study. Like Mark Twain's quaint Hannibal, Missouri, the process of modernity has destroyed the halcyon world of which the old school surfers are so enamored. Surfing in Coastal City is still being done; its ethos and nature, however, are fundamentally changed.

...and tidal waves couldn't save the world from Californication. (Red Hot Chili Peppers 2004)

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