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**“Who Needs Money When You Can Go Windsurfing?”:
The Paradox of Resisting Consumerism Through Consumption in a Lifestyle
Sport Subculture.**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in
Visual and Material Culture at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand.

Peter Francis Wilkinson, 2010.

Abstract

Lifestyle sport has become a significant sociological phenomenon, with millions participating worldwide. Using windsurfing as a case study, this thesis focuses on core members of this subculture to discover their motivations for involvement and the degree to which they are willing to sacrifice other areas of their lives in order to participate. The thesis explores the contention that this level of sacrifice amounts to resistance to the dominant consumerist culture of our society. The study examines the way subculture members manifest an embodied critique of urban experience that takes place outside of that environment in natural spaces, using time that consumerist imperatives would have them in the earn-spend spiral dictated by that ideology. It does this through a twelve month ethnographic study, with the author as a complete participant, then as a participant observer, completing formal interviews with a number of selected core members of the subculture.

Through interviewing and observation it became clear that it is only possible for subculture members to participate through the consumption of considerable quantities of the material objects associated with the activity. This means that participants are resisting consumerist culture through the consumption of consumer goods. This contradiction goes to the heart of the ways that consumerist ideology co-opts resistant behaviour.

The study shows that windsurfers are resistant to consumerism in a number of ways. The rejection of traditional sporting values, the use of time in opposition to dominant practices, the rejection of wealth as the primary measure of success, and resisting cultural expectations are all manifestations of this resistance. The niche visual media of the subculture creates a dreamworld of natural perfection and freedom. The way that the visual culture mediates the paradox central to my thesis is by valourising a lifestyle, and those who adopt it, rather than selling consumer goods.

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I dedicate this work to the memory of Jude Green, who died windsurfing on the southern lakes while I was conducting this research.

“This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University’s Human Ethics Committees. The Researcher named above is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Research Ethics), phone 06-350-5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz”.

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Preface: “That’s Not Rough”

Fear colours the excitement that had been building since I first caught sight of the water as I pull to a stop next to the point. The meters on the yacht club website had put the gusts at 52 knots,¹ but that had just been numbers and little graphs. As the car shudders with the impact of the wind, the reality that those figures represent begins to sink in. David, who has skived off work and whose text message had started this adventure, is already there, braced against his car as he surveys the water. I shoulder the door open between gusts and join him on the point gazing at the sea state. Words are impossible, or at least pointless, the wind subdues their sound and whips them away, so we nod and gaze in mute awe at the conditions and become lost in our contemplation.

The water is being worked into a frenzy. There is so much spray being whipped from the peaks that you can see the other side of the bay only with difficulty. We remain for some time in this trance-like state, assessing the conditions, subconsciously noting the changes in wind strength and direction, getting a feel for the way the water is moving, mentally building up the kit to deal with these crazy conditions.² Mind you, there are not many decisions to make, the conditions are just so over the top that we both very quickly decide on our smallest gear. “4.0?”³ I say once we have reached the sheltered rigging spot. “Mmm,” he mumbles, not entirely managing to mask his nervousness. I’m a bit concerned about his ability to cope in these conditions, so I say, “We don’t have to do this, it’s pretty out of control out there”. He covers his concern with bluster. “Pah, that’s not rough” he laughs. With a last glance at the water, we begin the calming ritual of rigging our kit. I am still quite nervous and mess up the downhaul,⁴ having to re-adjust it several times before I finally calm down enough to let my body, which has done this work hundreds of times, do what it needs to do.

¹ 52 knots is equal to 96.3 km/h.

² ‘Kit’ is a commonly used word in windsurfing circles to describe the equipment used to sail.

³ Sail sizes are measured in square metres, so 4.0 refers to a 4 metre square sail, a small size for high winds. This is usually verbally expressed as four oh, or five seven etc.

⁴ Downhaul is the tensioning of a sail, done manually by the sailor. It requires some considerable experience to get right.

With our kit ready to go, we have now to prepare our bodies. It is early spring, and the water is still very cold, the next part of the ritual is to arm our bodies against the conditions. Wetsuit, boots, hood and helmet; by the time I clip my harness shut I am ready; the fear is still there, but I know I can do this.

Nonetheless, we stand for some time on the beach, slightly out of the wind, holding our gear, contemplating the water. David is a guest at this beach, and so I let him launch ahead of me. He makes it about 10m from the beach before being completely engulfed and disappearing from sight. “Outstanding!” I yell, even though I know he won’t hear me. There is nothing I can do to help him, in these conditions it’s pointless to even try. I jump up on my board, trying to counter-act the massive wind force with all my weight. It works, and I shoot forwards in a surge of adrenaline. There is no fear now, just total focus on keeping it all together. I suddenly remember David, and glance back to see his sail emerging from a wave. But I’ve turned too long, and get smacked sideways by a wave that I had not seen because of my backwards glance. I scissor the board downwind to dissipate the impact, getting a surge of power from the wind in the process, and blasting forward. I cannot help but laugh out loud at this point, nothing can match this feeling. It’s all getting a bit out of control though, so I carve back into the wind to lose some power, and enter the rollercoaster of the waves. In a slightly less mental environment, I would be jumping off these crests, but the wind is so strong that I do my best to absorb the waves with my legs, pushing down into the troughs, trying to keep the fin in contact with the water so I don’t get smashed over like David...I lose track of time, but my forearms eventually begin to complain bitterly about the effort, and my thighs ache from the strain of fighting the lift from the fin. I catch a glimpse of David again as we pass on opposite tacks.⁵ He looks well out of control, but at least he’s still sailing.

I decide that I’m not going to be able to cope physically with the situation for much longer, so I start to calculate how to get back to the beach. It means a

⁵ Windsurfing has adopted some sailing terminology, including referring to the direction that one is going as the ‘tack’ that one is on. Port tack is sailing left hand forward, and starboard tack is sailing right hand forward.

pretty sustained broad reach,⁶ which is normally a lot of fun, but in these conditions, it's going to be pretty terrifying...excellent. I angle the nose downwind and take off. It's completely insane, the world goes away, except for the next crest, the next little squall which shows a big gust coming, the feeling of the fin skittering about as it starts to lose its grip. Abruptly everything comes apart, just a little adjustment in direction to absorb a big gust, catch a wave, the board gets a little airborne, gets the wind under it and flicks me off like an insect. I somersault backwards into the next wave and the world turns blue and calm. Perhaps I am slightly dazed by the impact of the freezing water. I emerge just in time to breathe in a mouthful of spray and cough my way through the next wave. Everything is suddenly very difficult. The waves are breaking over the top of me, and I have lost sight of my board, which flew off as soon as it was unburdened of my weight. I luckily spot it when we both crest waves at the same time. It's only 20m away, but I am already weary and going through the washing machine isn't going to be easy. I decide on the 'sprint as fast as I can' option, because the board is being blown downwind, catch a lucky wave and kind of surf the last distance and then grab one of the foot-straps gratefully.

My water-starting technique is sloppy because I'm so tired, but there is so much power in the wind that I find myself sailing again and only about 100m from the beach. The wind gods have definitely been smiling on me today. I come into the bay under maximum power, using the last of the strength of my shaking arms. I am so happy and so tired I lie with my arms outstretched on the surface of my board basking in the adrenalin sting.

The pain in my fingertips brings me back to myself, and I suddenly remember that I have not seen David's sail for quite some time. I quickly survey the water, squinting through the spray, maybe there was a good reason that the old sails were flouro'. I can't see him anywhere and I'm starting to think about the Coast Guard, and climb on to the point, only to see him washed up on the rocks about 500m downwind. Hahahahahahaahha...I laugh out loud again.

Field Notes August 2009

⁶ A broad reach is sailing terminology for going downwind.

Introduction : “It’ll Be Going Off in the Ditch”

Ben met with me on a fine and still morning for our interview, having taken time out from his undergraduate studies to meet me. He began chatting confidently and answered my questions fully. After 15 minutes or so, his eyes strayed to the sky, where the wispy clouds had started to move, betraying a windshift. He continued with the interview, but became increasingly distracted, glancing at his watch and shifting in his seat. After a short while he said, “It’ll be going off in the Ditch, let’s go.” The interview was over.

In many ways this incident epitomises the attitude to life of the members of the subculture that is the subject of my research. If a meeting is arranged at a time and place, the sub-text is always “as long as it’s not going off somewhere else”. Windsurfing involves a great deal of commitment. Core members arrange their work, their domestic lives, and even where they live in order to be on the water when the conditions are right. This means that core members are not able to pursue economic advancement to the degree dictated by the dominant consumerist culture. My research is designed to answer a number of questions raised by this relationship between subcultural participation and consumerist society. In subscribing to a style of life that requires people to compromise their economic potential, are participants expressing resistance to the dominant cultural values of consumerism, which prizes economic success, particularly expressed as consumption, above all else? How is this resistance consistent with the consumption required to take part? Finally, how does the visual culture of the subcultural advertising mediate this apparent paradox? These questions are explored in this thesis.

The Windsurfing Subculture¹

Everything is pretty much geared around windsurfing, to the point that our house is garden free, so that we are free to chase the wind. Holidays are geared around windsurfing, how many stops we can get to, to go sailing... I don't have a real job, you have to sail when the conditions are good, it would be impossible to be in an office when the wind starts to blow (Harry).

Windsurfers create their lifestyle around the ‘stoke’ they get from riding a perfect wave or the blur of speed blasting² through chop. In this section I first outline how windsurfing fits into a group of subcultures of broader cultural significance. Next I discuss the various names given by academics to these activities, and why the term lifestyle sport is most applicable for my study. I then move on to a description of the nature of these activities, and finally discuss why they are of significance.

Born in the Countercultural Movements of the 1960s

Nancy Midol (1993) observed that windsurfing is part of a group of activities such as snowboarding, skateboarding and surfing (in its resurgence) that arose from the counterculture movements of the 1960s. These activities were dubbed “Californian” sports by Pierre Bourdieu (1984), who writes that they arose in the USA and then spread to Europe and the rest of the western world through the efforts of entrepreneurs. Belinda Wheaton describes how these activities

¹ There is some doubt as to whether, strictly speaking, lifestyle sports can be described as subcultures. Ricky Farmer argues convincingly that “though different from the dominant culture and often in conflict with it, it does not appear to be a sub nor a counterculture” (1992, p. 246). The argument is that lifestyle sports are best described as scenes “the scene is the mechanism that catalyse relationship formation around certain common activities (1992, p. 246). He goes on to draw distinctions based on hierarchy and governing rules and private meeting places that subcultures have and scenes lacks (1992). Finally he argues... “these scenes provide alternative lifestyles that are not as encompassing as countercultures or subcultures. The problem with classifying surfing as a subculture or counterculture is that it implies surfers are well organised and have common goals and a common ideology. For these reasons, surfing appears to be a semi deviant scene rather than a subculture or counterculture” (1992, p. 246). This reasoning appears to be sound. However, all of the sociology journals and texts that I have used to inform my research referred to lifestyle sport subcultures as though it is taken for granted that the scene described above is a subculture. In order to avoid confusion between my own writing and the quotes that I use, I have used the word subculture, accepting that it is, in fact, probably a loose use of the term, but one that is in wide use by scholars in the area. Belinda Wheaton (2007) has discussed the term with reference to post-subcultural theory. This is discussed in chapter 2.

² ‘Blasting’ is a word in common usage amongst windsurfers to describe high speed sailing through choppy waters, and is an attempt to capture in words a highly affective feeling of excitement and exhilaration. The term is used extensively in the magazines that formed part of my research, and they are probably the source of its use.

arose in opposition to mainstream sporting activities in which adherence to rules and competitive ethos are the norm (2004). As Bourdieu put it, they contained “the dream of social weightlessness” (1984, p.220). At their root then, these activities had an oppositional stance to the way that sport in the western world was practiced, preferring fun to competition and freedom instead of rules. In itself such resistance was based on a broader social movement that questioned the capitalist economic imperatives. This basis in the counterculture is significant to my study into resistance to consumerism, as will be explored in chapter three.

There is some debate as to whether these activities should be characterised as sport at all. Tim Dant describes windsurfing in terms of play (1998) and Wheaton discusses these activities as a form of art (2004). In their original and purest form these activities *are* closer to art. Nancy Midol argues that “the new values were the ultimate result of the demands of the aesthetic utopia of the 60s, the beginning of the turnabout when artistic values referred less to the work itself, but centred on the experience” (1993, p.24). However, Robert Rinehart (2008) suggests that consumerist society has co-opted these activities. As a result, they have been transformed into more socially acceptable (for business) sports, which more closely resemble traditional sporting practices with codes of conduct, rules and competitions. This is certainly true for ‘pro’ participants, and those who are held up by the media as the ‘stars’ of the sports. For many grass roots participants who make up the core of all lifestyle sport subcultures, however, these activities remain a form of art or play. This was the case for the great majority of the informants of my research, both identified through formal interviews, as well as during ethnographic observations.

From ‘Whiz’ to ‘Lifestyle’

These subcultures have been the subject of considerable academic attention, and a wide variety of labels have been applied. Wheaton notes that “‘extreme’, ‘alternative’, ‘lifestyle’, ‘whiz’, ‘action-sports’, ‘panic sport’, ‘post-modern’, ‘post-industrial’ and ‘new’” (2004, p.2) have all been used to describe these activities. These are just some of the names that have been used by academics. I will now

review some of the more significant terms, to determine which is most applicable to the subculture that I have studied.

The term 'whiz' sport was used by Midol in France which she wrote were created and practised by the 'funs'. "The funs thus invented a number of sports diverging to the point of dissidence and showed themselves to be totally opposed to be major sporting techniques and values prevailing today" (1993, p.24). This approach is quite useful in describing the windsurfers in my study, as it does reflect the countercultural roots of the activity. However my research has shown that participants of the activity do so for the affective nature of the experience rather than for political reasons. Therefore it may not be the most accurate term.

Robert Rinehart has extensively considered the concept of alternative sport. He canvasses a very wide range of activities including jet-skiing, scuba diving and indigenous folk games (2000). The meaning is very wide, and according to Belinda Wheaton includes "pretty much everything that doesn't fit under the western 'achievement sport' (Eichenberg 1998) rubric" (2004, p.3). For my purposes it is a little too wide, in fact, given my focus on those who have chosen an activity to base a lifestyle around, rather than any activity which differs from 'mainstream' sport.

Many of these activities are characterised as extreme, as Patrick Laviolette observes, not because they are particularly dangerous, but because of their counter-cultural subversion of ordinary lifestyles (2006). Dant and Wheaton argue that despite the absence of the risk of fatal injury, windsurfing can be considered an extreme sport because of the "extreme complexity of the dynamic relationship between the sailors body, the kit of sail and board, the water and wind that make it so exhilarating to participate in" (2007, p.8). However, the term extreme was a marketing invention of ESPN (The Entertainment and Sports Programming Network), and Rinehart comments that some participants "have disputed the very term 'extreme' as merely a blatant and cynical attempt to capitalise on a wave of oppositional sports forms, and, by

doing so, for corporations such as ESPN to appropriate trendy oppositional forms" (2000, p.508). Certainly it is not a term that I heard used by windsurfers themselves during my ethnographic work with them.

Wheaton argues that the narrower term lifestyle sport is appropriate for our purposes. "Lifestyle sport is less all embracing than the terms alternative or new sport" (2004, p.3). My research focuses on people who have made windsurfing their style of life, as I am interested primarily in the effects of that choice of life on people's consumption of life and any resistance to consumerism. As Wheaton writes

I use the term lifestyle sport as it is an expression adopted by members of cultures themselves, and one that encapsulates these cultures and their identities, signaling the importance of the socio-historical context in which these activities emerged, took shape and exist (2004, p.4).

The windsurfers I have been studying have very clearly adopted the scene as a lifestyle, and so I will adopt the term lifestyle sport to describe their activities, bearing in mind the limitations of the word sport as it applies to what is in many ways a form of play or art.

The Nature of Lifestyle Sport Subcultures

Just what is it that makes up a lifestyle sport subculture? Windsurfing, as earlier described, arose from the counter-cultural movements of the 1960s. This genesis has had a significant impact on the nature of the subculture. Wheaton observes that: "windsurfing portrays a public image that emphasises individuality, freedom, hedonism and an anti-competition ethos, cultural values and ideologies it shares with many other new sport cultures, and specifically the surfing culture from which windsurfing evolved" (2003, p.77). This reflects Bourdieu's analysis of what he called 'California' sports as running counter to the ethos of bourgeois sports with their focus on rules and competition (1984). Robert Rinehart and Synthia Sydnor argue that "many participants are in for the long haul. They see these activities as lifestyle choices" (2003, p.3). The cultural characteristics of hedonism and freedom should not be confused with a slacker attitude. As Wheaton (2003) shows, the determinant of subcultural status in

windsurfing is commitment. As I will explore more fully later, this commitment is reflected not only in the amount of time participants spend in the activity, but where they live, the jobs they take and the relationships they have.

In addition to the levels of commitment required, Becky Beal and Lisa Wiedmann emphasised the significance of ‘authenticity’ to lifestyle sport subcultures (2003). Their work was focused on skateboarders, and illustrates a key difference between windsurfing and some of the more popular forms of lifestyle sports. Wheaton and Beal (2003) write that windsurfing remains a relatively obscure activity when compared with enormously popular activities such as skateboarding. As such it has remained largely free of the kind of commodification that has occurred in sports popularised by ESPN and other mainstream media. This has made skateboarders wary of ‘wannabes’ who can buy the commodities that give them the image of the subculture, without any commitment to the lifestyle. Wheaton (2003) elsewhere comments that authenticity *does* remain a core value in the windsurfing subculture, reflected in an individual getting out there and doing it, displaying physical prowess that can only be gained through countless hours of practice.

The primary characteristics of the windsurfing subculture are commitment and authenticity, but the commitment is to pleasure and affect. I will explore what it is that participants get out of the activity in the next chapter. For now, I will consider why it is that these activities are of cultural significance and worthy of study.

The Cultural Significance of Lifestyle Sports

So why is it worth studying these subcultures? Midol commented that:

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

Since she wrote this, lifestyle sports have vastly increased in popularity, thanks in part to the advent of the X-games by ESPN. Rinehart and Sydnor observe that “over 89 million US participants are registered in national associations such as the National Off-Road Bicycle Association, American Sport Climbers

Federation, and Aggressive Skaters Association” (2003, p.3). These kinds of numbers may be particularly significant, considering that Wheaton writes that lifestyle sport participants tend to be resistant to institutionalisation and regulation (2003). It is possible that Americans are less resistant to organised groups than the British windsurfers that were the subject of Wheaton’s study or the New Zealanders in mine.

Interestingly, Beal and Wilson used the numbers of skateboards sold as an indicator of numbers of participants (in the US), rather than registered participants (2004). This shows perhaps that some subcultures are more resistant than others to registering themselves with organised groups, and that some activities are further along the path identified by Rinehart (2008) as becoming ‘socially acceptable’, and accepting of registration and regulation. The windsurfers that were the subject of my own ethnographic research were certainly resistant to any kind of formal organisation. Only a tiny number belong to associations and those that do have only joined because it was a requirement to enter competitions. The great majority networked either simply at the beach, or via websites such as www.deepfried.tv (particularly in Wellington and Auckland), or via text messages (particularly in Christchurch and Dunedin). This means it is difficult to establish exactly how many people participate.

Whether measured by registered participants, sales of boards, or survey, the increase in numbers is clear. In some cases, they are set to overtake ‘mainstream’ sport in popularity. Wheaton quotes Humphries (2003, p. 407) as stating that by 2005 “half of all ski-hill patrons will be snowboarders” (2004, p.1). Beal and Wilson point out that skateboard sales have outpaced sales in more traditional sports such as baseball. Lifestyle sport has become both big business and a culturally significant factor, in part because of the numbers of people participating, as well as the effect it has on the way people lead their lives. Windsurfing itself is notable because it has been spared the co-option of its more popular cousins, so in effect it is a case study of what lifestyle sport is like without the intervention of mass media. Windsurfing has remained largely in the hands of the participants. This makes it an interesting and worthwhile

research subject, as it retains its original ethos, and also makes a useful comparison with the activities that have been co-opted.

Thesis Questions

Participants of the windsurfing subculture express through their lifestyle resistance to consumerism, a dominant ideology of our society. In order to pursue this lifestyle, however, individuals must consume quite considerable quantities of material goods. The visual culture of the lifestyle mediates this apparent paradoxical relationship with consumerism. My research is aimed at establishing answers to the following questions. What are the participants in lifestyle sport subcultures actually consuming? What motivates them to make the sacrifices necessary to participate? To what degree are they willing to sacrifice or compromise other areas of their lives to the activity? Do these sacrifices amount to resistance to the dominant ideology? Does simply choosing not to engage fully in consumerist society amount to resistance to it? What is the nature of the dreamworld³ that the visual media create in an attempt to mediate the paradox between resisting consumerism and the consumption necessary to participate? How do participants respond to this dreamworld, and how do they manage this paradox?

Methodology

In order to answer the questions raised in my thesis, I have adopted a methodology primarily centred upon an ethnographic approach. In the beginning of my ethnographic work over the course of a year, I was what Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson have described as a "complete

³ The dreamworld concept is one developed by Walter Benjamin. He uses the concept in a political analysis of mass consciousness, and refers to a collective mental state, as outlined by Susan Buck-Morss: "The term acknowledges the inherent transience of modern life, the constantly changing conditions of which imperil traditional culture in a positive sense, because constant change allows hope that the future can be better. Whereas myth in premodern culture enforced tradition by justifying the necessity of social constraints, the dreamworlds of modernity—political, cultural, and economic—are expressions of a utopian desire for social arrangements that transcend existing forms" (2000, p.xi). I use the concept here to reflect the idea that advertisers are attempting to create a kind of collective mental state regarding the dreamworld of their lifestyle, and aware that the full political ramifications of the original idea are not met in this instance.

participant" (2007, p.82). That is, I was an ordinary participant in the activities. During this time I informally interviewed people on the beach, about the nature of the lifestyle and their commitment to it, observed their interaction with each other and the environment, attended social gatherings of the Wellington Windsurfers Association, and informal gatherings at windsurfers' houses. Almost all of this activity took place in Wellington, the place of the highest concentration of windsurfers in New Zealand.

In order to gain greater depth of insight from my informants, I decided to undertake formal interviews. At this point I became what Hammersley and Atkinson refer to as a "participant observer" (2007, p.4). That is, I continued as a participant in the activities, but my subjects were almost all aware of my role as an observer for my research. I did not notice any change in behaviour in interactions with participants, although some people in informal situations did expound at some length their theories about other people's involvement in the activity. For example, one person observed that she felt that most windsurfers were 'alpha males', out to prove their dominance over the situation. This was quite different to the kinds of interaction that I had had with her before my status as a researcher had been revealed. This was relatively unusual, however.

The interviews were conducted to gain a more in depth understanding of the motivations and influences of individuals involved in the subculture. The interviews were a development of the themes that were raised during the complete participant phase. I conducted interviews in all of the subcultural sites around New Zealand: in Wellington, where I am based, and travelling to Auckland, Napier, Christchurch, and Dunedin, and conducted a phone interview with a participant in Taranaki. The reason for this national coverage was to gain an understanding of similarities and differences across the country, and to identify patterns of behaviour spatially, contextually and temporally (Wheaton, 2000). For this research I was interested in those who were committed to the lifestyle. I therefore selected interviewees who were all core members of the subculture, excluding casual participants. I interviewed a range of people who reflected the composition of the group overall. There was an age

range from 19 to 57, with the majority being in their late 20s to early 40s. The group included four women, approximately reflecting their representation in the activity, which is very much dominated by male participants. I also interviewed some of the spouses of committed windsurfers in order to gain some insight into the level to which committed participants compromise other areas of their lives in order to go sailing. All but one of the interviewees were of European origin (the exception was a woman of Chinese descent). This is a reflection of the privileged, white middle-class nature of lifestyles sports generally, discussed more fully later in this introduction.

The group that I selected for interviews was broadly representative of the subculture as a whole. There were, however a couple of exceptions to this. The speed sailors (a distinct group within the subculture) refused to participate. Speed sailing is a secretive activity. Sailors wait sometimes for months for conditions to be suitable, and quietly go about getting an edge on everyone else. This secrecy may be reflected in their unwillingness to be interviewed, although a detailed analysis of this refusal is beyond the scope of this thesis. Another group that I did not approach are board sailors (Olympic sailors), as these sailors were not considered to be authentic windsurfers by the subcultural participants with whom I interacted during the complete participant phase of my research. There are many windsurfers, particularly in Wellington, who were born overseas and who have come here for lifestyle reasons. I chose, however, to limit my interview subjects to New Zealanders, in order to make the study focused on the behaviours of a New Zealand subculture.

The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis in a variety of settings chosen by the informant to make them as comfortable as possible, ranging from their own homes to pubs and cafes. Belinda Wheaton related that her: "interviewees were encouraged to be spontaneous and interactive, focusing on their individual experiences" (2000, p.257), and this is the approach I adopted.

I was fortunate that people reacted in a positive way to requests for interviews. With the exception of speed sailors, as outlined above, all those who I

approached for interviews responded affirmatively. During the formal phase of my research, I interviewed 20 people to develop the themes that had emerged from the complete participant phase of the research. In addition to exploring the significance of subcultural participants' lifestyle choices, my interviews also focused on the influence of the media on the dreamworlds of the subculture. The observations regarding the significance of the media, made during the participant observer phase, are also of relevance here. I am primarily interested in the effects of the media in the subculture not in its content per se, and so the audience response will form the backbone of my treatment of the subcultural media.

During the complete participant phase of my ethnographic research, I became well-known in the local subculture as well as coming to know other participants quite well. This meant that I was able to choose my interview subjects with a reasonably good understanding of their place in the subculture, and their level of commitment (a key subcultural signifier, see Wheaton (2003) for example). When I came to select interviewees in other areas, however, I had to rely on my knowledge of subcultural participants from my interactions with them on the internet, particularly www.deepfried.tv and www.sessionlogs.com. This worked quite well in places that use these sites to network and log their sailing sessions, as I was able to assess their levels of commitment using www.sessionlogs.com in particular. My presence on these sites also made me a familiar figure, at least in the virtual world, to those I wanted to interview, so they had a sense of my own level of commitment to the activity. People in Christchurch, however, steadfastly refuse, for reasons known only to themselves, to network on www.deepfried.tv or to log their adventures on www.sessionlogs.com. I therefore had no way of knowing the level of commitment of the sailors I was to interview, and they had no knowledge of my own involvement. Subcultural groups are typically suspicious of outsiders, and so I had some work to do with people to establish sufficient trust so that they were willing to be interviewed. Once I had established one such relationship with a participant, others in her group of friends were willing to participate. The Christchurch results are therefore likely to be skewed to a particular group of friends. However, in the larger study this is

unlikely to be of significance, simply their levels of commitment tended to be somewhat lower than the interviewees that I had chosen because they were core members of the subculture.

In chapter four I analyse the content of magazine advertising and DVDs, in order to understand the ways that these media create a dreamworld of escape from the iron cage of consumerism using consumer goods. I am primarily concerned with the ways in which the lifestyle of the subculture is portrayed. This will involve a reading of the imagery used in the ads, and types of activities and settings portrayed in scenes from the DVDs. Having described the content of these media, following Mckee (2003) I interpret the likely understandings about that subcultural lifestyle that are communicated to viewers, both explicitly and inferred by the images. I use hermeneutic analysis of the texts of the ads and scenes from DVDs that I have used as part of my interview process. I will use the model of hermeneutics proposed by Judith Williamson. She describes this process as: "interpreting in the sense of deciphering a code, or translating from one language to another" (1978, p.71). In this way I will be able to gain understanding of what the advertisers and producers of DVDs are attempting to create, as well as the ways that the people who I interviewed responded to those texts. Together the analysis and responses will provide insight into the influence that the subcultural media has on the lifestyle.

Geographic Location

New Zealand lies between 37 and 47 degrees south of the Tropic of Capricorn. Both the North and South Islands of New Zealand enjoy moderate, maritime climate, weather and temperatures. New Zealand has an extremely long coastline for its size, more than 15,000km. This long coastline is possible because the coast is very irregular, with many bays, coves and harbours, and in the South Island, even fjords. This means there are many spots suitable for sailing. Most New Zealand cities are very close to, or on the coastline, giving most people good access to the sea. New Zealand's west coast is subject to a great deal of wind, making the country excellent for windsurfing.

All of the subcultural spaces that I visited enjoyed good access to multiple sites for windsurfing in terms of coastal areas available to sail. In wind strength and regularity, Wellington is by far the most blessed, being situated in a river of wind between the North and South Islands of New Zealand. Several of my informants and interviewees said that they lived in Wellington solely for that reason. Taranaki enjoys good wind and easily the best wave sailing in the country (the Taranaki Wave Classic is the premier wave event in New Zealand). Cities such as Napier, Christchurch, and Dunedin are on the east coast of the country and so do not enjoy such windy conditions. Napier in particular suffers from long periods with no wind, particularly in summer. Christchurch does get strong winds in spring and summer time from the north-west, and Dunedin harbour channels that same wind into quite strong winds making it an excellent slalom site. Both Christchurch and Dunedin sailors told me that it was too cold in winter time to sail there. Because of its large population base, Auckland does have a high number of sailors. Yet, despite being blessed with several very large harbours, and being relatively warm, it is not generally seen as a good place to sail. This is because the wind there is very light. Generally though, New Zealand is geographically an ideal place to pursue windsurfing as a lifestyle sport, and retains a dedicated core of committed participants.

Thesis Outline

Chapter one is a review of the literature. I begin with a brief overview of the substantial body of work focussed on consumption and consumerism, and some of the main theorists of consumption. Following this I approach the work that has been done specifically on consumption and lifestyle sports subcultures. The motivations for people to be involved in lifestyle sport are important in understanding whether what they are doing amounts to resistance, and I review the literature on this point next. The nature and forms of resistance to dominant ideologies have exercised many scholars in recent times, and I review their work also. Finally I deal with the literature on the ways in which the visual culture of a lifestyle sport subculture helps in their development, and also mediate the paradox identified as the central theme of this thesis. Throughout this review I identify gaps in the literature that I aim to help fill with this thesis.

In chapter two I explore just what it is that participants are consuming, is it a lifestyle as opposed to goods or things? What do they get out of their involvement? How much are they willing to compromise their situation to get the benefits that the lifestyle offers? These questions are of significance because they help to reveal the motivations for an individual's involvement, which is of course important in understanding why and how much they are willing to compromise their economic potential.

In chapter three I consider whether any of this amounts to resistance as such. Does simply choosing not to participate fully in consumerist society amount to resistance to it? This is important because if there is no resistance inherent in the actions of core subcultural members, there is no paradox in the consumption of the vast amounts of kit which are necessary for participation.

Then, in chapter four, I move on to the question of the influence of the subcultural media on the activities themselves. Does the visual media create a dreamworld for the lifestyle? What is it that the subcultural media actually portrays? This will include an analysis of a sample of magazine advertising and scenes from DVDs. Underlying the creation of the dreamworld of an escape from the iron cage of consumerist society is a very clear business-driven desire to sell more product. How do individuals manage this apparent paradox?

Finally, I relate the conclusions which emerge from my research as shown in the earlier chapters, and consider the significance of these answers. Then I outline the limitations of this work, and the possibilities for further research.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Participants of the windsurfing subculture express through their lifestyle resistance to consumerism, a dominant ideology of our society. In order to pursue this lifestyle, however, individuals must consume quite considerable quantities of material goods. The visual culture of the lifestyle mediates this apparently paradoxical relationship with consumerism, and my research is aimed at understanding how this works.

Consumption and Consumerism

There is a substantial body of literature focused on consumption and consumerism. Before I turn to the literature on this point, it is necessary to provide a set of definitions of the key terms used here, particularly the relationship between consumption and consumerism. Colin Campbell defines consumption in the following way: "The selection, purchase, use, maintenance, repair and disposal of any product or service" (1995, p.102). Thus, consumption is essentially an economic conception. Consumerism on the other hand, is described by Zygmunt Bauman (2001) as the culture of consumer society, or as Stephen Miles would have it "Consumerism is the cultural expression and manifestation of the apparently ubiquitous act of consumption" (1998, p.4). These definitions form the basis of my discussions of consumerism throughout this thesis.

Consumerism has come about as a result of a complex inter-relation of a number of economic and social factors. Population growth, and the concentration of that increased population into urban centres, coupled with the industrial revolution, that called people into the cities, and which needed those people both as workers and as consumers of the goods that it produced, provided the economic basis. The rise of Romanticism and the changes in social attitudes that justified consumerist behaviour on an intellectual, and perhaps more importantly emotional level, allowed the social change which enabled people to seek enjoyment and fulfilment through consumption.. All of these factors rely on each other for the creation of a consumerist culture. These developments are described by a number of scholars. Neil McKendrick, John

Brewer and J. H. Plumb, in their book *The Birth of a Consumer Society* (1982) provide an excellent economic history of the consumer boom created by the Industrial Revolution. For those who are interested in a more complete history of consumption, Grant McCracken charts the political roots of consumption back to the court of Elizabeth 1 of England in his book *Culture and Consumption* (1990). Steven Miles makes a clear account of these developments in his book *Consumerism as a Way of Life* (1998).

Miles argues that the experience of consumption has changed in recent history, particularly in the late 20th-century. It is during this period that consumerism emerged on a day to day level as what might be described as a 'way of life'. (1998, p.8) The Fordist economy flourished in the post-war boom period until the oil shocks of the 1970s. After these economic shocks, there emerged a more diverse and flexible production model in which there was a shift from a mass produced uniform product to a situation where the producers no longer determined consumption, the consumer instead gained greater significance. This situation is referred to as the post-Fordist economy. The changes wrought upon society during this time were profound. "What was emerging was not merely a consumer society but a consumer *culture*" (author's emphasis)(Miles; 1998, p.9). By the 1980s it has been suggested by Lunt and Livingstone that mass consumption had become ubiquitous to the point that it: "infiltrates everyday life not only at the levels of economic processes, social activities and household structures, but also at the level of meaningful psychological experience" (1992, p.24). It is this consumer culture in which we now find ourselves and which provides the cultural and economic background to the lifestyles of the windsurfers who are the subject of my research.

The Social Theorists of Consumption

Consumerism is the dominant culture of western societies. The significance of this to our culture has been discussed with increasing sophistication by the social theorists of consumption. There is a strong tradition of scholarship which considers consumption to be a means for people and social groups to provide distinction between groups and individuals. Thorstein Veblen was the first

theorist to suggest that an act of consumption carries distinct meanings in the form of messages about identity. The message that such an act carried was, in Veblen's view, quite specific. It was a direct message about the pecuniary strength of the consumer. According to Peter Corrigan: "in Veblen's rather cynical view of the world, the basis of one's good repute in society lies in one's pecuniary strength. In other words one is esteemed in direct proportion to one's wealth" (1997, p.17). Veblen was analysing the American nouveaux riches, who, he proposed, imitated the upper classes of Europe. According to Stephen Miles, "Veblen therefore identifies an elaborate system of rank and grades, the markers of consumption expressing a person's place in the social hierarchies of the leisure classes" (1998, p.19). Veblen's analysis has its critics, although Corrigan argues that conspicuous consumption *is* an effective means of showing off your pecuniary status to others who know nothing about you save what they see (1997). Colin Campbell attacks this thesis on the grounds that it depends on the viewer having a good sense of how much things cost, which is far from a certainty (1995). Mostly, though, Veblen's work is categorised as too simplistic, without dismissing its central thesis that goods communicate. Grant McCracken writes that "the cultural meaning carried by consumer goods is enormously more various and complex than the Veblenian attention to status was capable of recognizing" (1990, p.89).

Georg Simmel, whilst a contemporary of Veblen, approached consumption with greater depth of analysis. Simmel goes deeper than Veblen in analysing consumption; for him, consumption is not simply about status or class, but also about the psychological needs of consumers. Simmel attributed to consumption (particularly fashion) the attempt of individuals to recover a sense of themselves in the face of an ever-increasing complexity of stimuli. As Don Slater writes "the individual is confronted with a bewildering sensorium of ever-changing stimuli, which produces a nervousness, restlessness and unease" (1997, p.105). Thus fashion offers the individual an opportunity to reclaim some sense of self through adhering to a style. Slater argues that for Simmel fashion is a dialectic of differentiation and conformity which "are seen as innate human characteristics that take social form in the use of goods simultaneously to conform to the class

structures of taste and yet to mark out of both oneself and one’s group as unique and individual” (1997, p.157). Or as Woodward puts it “all excursions into fashion (including an anti-fashion stance) are techniques or resources for individuals to orient themselves to social forces” (2007, p.126).

There are some significant deficiencies to be identified in Simmel’s analysis, particularly when applying it to our postmodern situation. Daniel Miller argues that Simmel’s analysis of the metropolis is too bleak. To counter the pessimism inherent in Simmel’s work, Miller’s argues that developments since he performed his analysis have extended analyses of the ways that people deal with the alienatory effects of mass consumer culture. Simmel’s analysis of fashion also comes into criticism for his assertion that the lower classes have no genuine taste of their own, and that it was all about reflection and mindless copying of the upper classes.

Simmel’s insights may well be useful to me here, because lifestyle sports subcultures may well be, in part, a means (other than fashion) for individuals to mark out their individuality in the face of the alienation caused by mass consumer culture. Simmel also wrote about the nature of adventure in the following way: “more precisely, the most general form of adventure is its dropping out of the continuity of life” (1911, paragraph 2). This is indeed the effect of participation in lifestyle sport subcultures. His analysis therefore retains significance for my work.

More recently, the work of Pierre Bourdieu has had a significant role in highlighting the importance of consumption. Like Veblen, Bourdieu emphasises taste as a key factor in determining the significance of ordinary goods. Bourdieu’s analysis is very much more sophisticated than Veblen’s, and he was able to apply his critique to the whole of French society, rather than a particular segment of the population. Whilst Bourdieu’s thesis is predominantly focused on class, and the expression of class through taste in objects, his writing, regarding what he refers to as ‘Californian sports’, including windsurfing, is what is of interest to my work here. Bourdieu states that the participants in

‘Californian sports’ engage in “symbolic subversion of the rituals of bourgeois order (...) and the taste for natural wild nature” (1984, p.220). Bourdieu argues that consumption actively involves signs, symbols, ideas and values which are used to establish distinction between groups. This is of significance for my thesis as the consumption of the windsurfing lifestyle may be signifying resistance to consumerism.

There are limitations to Bourdieu’s approach. Daniel Miller argues that as valuable as Bourdieu’s work is in identifying patterns and relationships in a society of mass consumption, “*Distinction* does not provide a theory of either consumption or material culture as the form of modern culture” (1987, p.157). A further difficulty with Bourdieu’s work may be with regard to the changes in social structure that have taken place since his work was completed in the early 1980s, when windsurfing was still in its infancy, and also social differences between France and New Zealand, where my subjects are based.

Jean Baudrillard (2001) conceived consumption as part of a communication system, but not one that is created or used by individuals. He considered that ‘needs’ are a construct in our consumer society, not fundamental to our existence, and that consumption to meet those ‘needs’ is therefore based on a myth because they are never satisfied. In this context, argues Baudrillard, consumer items take on the value of a sign. “In the logic of signs, as in the logic of symbols, objects are no longer tied to a function or a *defined* need” (2001, p.47, author’s emphasis). So for Baudrillard consumption in our society is not tied to needs in any objective sense. Baudrillard argues that in reality these needs are no more than desires (2001). According to Steven Miles’ analysis of Baudrillard, these signs “signify the potential to fulfil human desire, but can never actually do so. What therefore emerges is constant fluidity of differential desires and meanings” (1998, p. 26). This means a consumer is doomed to forever consume in the vain hope of fulfilment, which is always denied, leading to further consumption. Baudrillard goes on to argue that consumers do not even derive pleasure from the consumption that they are compelled to undertake. “The truth about consumption is that it is a *function of production*

and not a function of pleasure” (2001, p.49, authors emphasis). He even goes so far as to argue that “consumption is defined as *exclusive of pleasure*” (2001, p.49, authors emphasis).

Windsurfers are consumers of a lifestyle which is based around pleasure and fulfilment, or the pursuit of the ‘flow’, as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) put it. But is this lifestyle simply the creation of manufacturers, in order to sell more goods to the people who adopt that lifestyle? According to Peter Corrigan, Baudrillard places the creation of needs in the practices of marketing and advertising. “It is not a question of the market reacting to the expressed desires – the sovereign needs – of the consumer, it is rather that manufacturers deliberately attempt to shape consumer behaviour through advertising” (1997, p.19). Don Slater (1997) goes so far as to say that Baudrillard’s argument is that society has now fragmented into an unending and unanchored production of lifestyles by the codes of marketing. However, Iain Borden raises the possibility of resistance through using spaces in opposition to the consumption of signs. Borden writes about skateboarding as a critique of capitalist space, through using city spaces in opposition to a dominant ideology that sees architecture and city spaces purely for their sign value. Individuals within the windsurfing subculture consume the objects of the activity predominantly for their use value. This is an act of resistance in Borden’s terms, and such a position may go some way to clarify how windsurfers can resist consumerism while still consuming the goods of the activity. The way that windsurfers consume their kit is in its use value, not predominantly for its sign value. This goes against Baudrillard’s rather extreme view of the manufacture of lifestyle, which gives little or no element of choice to consumers of those lifestyles, and may be shown to be too bleak a view of the postmodern society. The less extreme argument advanced by Hall and Jacques (1989) is that postmodern individuals associate consumption with identity and pleasure, and freedom. This may well be shown to be more reflective of the windsurfing subculture.

Mike Featherstone argues that consumerism *does* provide consumers with a sense of control. He proposes that we are able to create any identity that we

want, as long as we are willing to consume in the postmodern world (1991). Featherstone's line of reasoning is that rather than consuming goods themselves, we consume meanings of goods as constructed through advertising (1991). This is of particular relevance to lifestyle sports, where one may be constructing, through consumption (both of goods and time) a lifestyle that one aspires to. I aim to establish whether these lifestyles actually exist or to what extent they are dream worlds created by advertising and the producers of windsurfing equipment to sell more goods. The ability in a postmodern society to create your own lifestyle is at the heart of lifestyle sport subcultures such as windsurfing. Featherstone sees lifestyles as a means for postmodern individuals to establish their individuality through consumption.

There are, however, limitations in Featherstone's approach with regard to my research. He is primarily interested in image, or as he puts it, the aestheticisation of everyday life (1991). When he talks of the construction of identity, he is primarily referring to the display of signs through consumption that communicate who we are (or who we would like to be seen as) to others. As Corrigan writes "Featherstone (1991) pays most attention to the external body, interpreting the internal body as merely having the role of something that needs to be maintained in good health in order the better to promote the external body as desirable appearance" (1997, p.156). Those who are engaged in lifestyle sport subcultures frequently create their lifestyle beyond the gaze of general society, and tend not to care for the way in which the wider public can view their activity, although there is naturally competition for subcultural status, and this is, no doubt, another form of consumption for the purposes of communicating with other subcultural members. The most significant commodity which windsurfers consume, however, is time. Windsurfers above all seek the internal pleasures of an immediate experience, variously described as 'the stoke' 'the buzz' or the 'flow' and do not care for the shallow image-based identity that Featherstone speaks of.

The price to pay for the freedom of a consumerist society in which choice reigns supreme may be existential chaos. It is against this chaos that Mary

Douglas and Barron Isherwood argue that individuals use consumption to create meaning for themselves. They write: “forget that commodities are good for eating, clothing, and shelter, forget their usefulness and try instead the idea that commodities are good for thinking; treat them as a non-verbal medium for human creative faculty” (1996, p. 40). They further expand their thoughts on consumption as follows:

man is a social being. We can never explain demand by looking only at the physical properties of goods. Man needs goods for communicating with others and for making sense of what is going on around him. The two needs are but of one, for communication can only be formed in a structured system of meanings (1996, p. 67).

This approach to consumption is useful for my thesis, as individuals within lifestyle sports subcultures may well be using the consumption of lifestyle and the equipment required to construct meaning for themselves through this consumption. According to Douglas and Isherwood’s work, it is markers in a system of information that people are using when they consume, so no doubt, when people participate in windsurfing, they are sending a message to others, whether they like it or not.

The limitation on the relevance of all of these theorists to my work is that they are all primarily focused on the ways in which our consumption communicates to others, whether that is in order to establish our own place in a social order, or to create an identity, or at least an image to display to others. The lifestyle sport subculture that is the subject of my research undertakes the consumption of their lifestyle for *internal*, immediate rewards, often far from the gaze of others. The theorists also focus primarily on the consumption of goods, and whilst there is a requirement for a large amount of kit in order to participate in the activity, my primary focus is on the consumption of the lifestyle itself.

Consumption in Lifestyle Sports Subcultures

The literature about consumption in lifestyle sports reports the centrality of the consumption of material objects to the activities. Belinda Wheaton observes that: “windsurfing, in common with many other new individualised sports, is based around the consumption of objects, in its case the windsurfing equipment or kit, which is both expensive and fetishized” (2003, p.85). Despite the

centrality of the material objects to the activity, they do not define the lifestyle itself. In fact, it is not possible to buy your way in to the core of the subculture by purchasing advanced or expert gear, as Wheaton explains (2003). For my purposes it is more important to consider the consumption of the lifestyle of a committed windsurfer. In this, I follow the work of Nick Ford and David Brown who write that: "it is more gainful to consider surfing in terms of the consumption of lifestyles, with reference to the choices made regarding work type and general expenditure to enable the, often extensive, time commitments involved in following the wave" (2006, p.61). It is this attitude to the consumption of a lifestyle that may allow an anti-consumerist attitude even whilst participants are consumers of the material goods necessary for participation in the subculture. This is an idea not explored by Ford and Brown, as surfing (their area of research) does not require such extensive kit, but it is an important idea here, and one which I will elaborate in this thesis.

Motivations for Participation in Lifestyle Sports

There is considerable literature addressing the human need for excitement, which becomes expressed in the pursuit of hazardous activities, when life in general society becomes too safety oriented. For example, Gunnar Breivik argues that "if society gets too safety oriented people will find arenas during their free time to get the thrills and challenges that belong to humans" (2007, p.21). For further developments of this theme one can also refer to Michael Apter's *Danger: Our Quest for Excitement* (2007), and Verner Moller in 'Walking the Edge' (2007). What I wish to focus on, however, is the motivation of the individuals who make up the windsurfing subculture, and what it is that they get out of participation, rather than focus on biological imperatives in response to safe societies.

There is a long tradition of scholarship around the motivations for involvement in high risk activities. Well before the activities that Wheaton has dubbed lifestyle sports were conceived of, Simmel wrote about what he called the adventure. He argued that "the most general form of adventure is its dropping out of the continuity of life" (1919 [1911], p.2). In an individual sense, Simmel

means that an adventure for an individual is something extraordinary that a person experiences that is outside their normal life. People who become core members of lifestyle sport subcultures, though, tend to build their lives around that experience and seek to repeat it. In a broader sense, people are seeking to drop out of the continuity of the normal experience of our society, thus creating a life of adventure for themselves compared with normal life. This is the core of chapter three, where I discuss whether the compromises made by subcultural participants amount to resisting consumerist ideologies.

Simmel is also of interest here because he posits that there exists a "profound affinity between the adventurer and the artist" (1919 [1911], p5). As I discussed above, there is some debate as to whether lifestyle 'sport' should be more accurately described as a form of art. Simmel supports this construction of the activities, arguing that "indeed, it is an attribute of this form to make us feel that in both the work of art and the adventure the whole of life is somehow comprehended and consummated" (1919 [1911], p5). This is relevant to my work in the way that he describes the need for an adventure to connect with personal meaning and identity for it to produce a transcendent experience. During the course of my ethnographic work I extended this concept to the lived culture of a lifestyle sport subculture, with results as reported below.

More recently, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has conceived of what he describes as the flow. He describes this experience as when "concentration is so intense that there is no attention left over to think about anything irrelevant or to worry about problems. Self-consciousness disappears, and sense of time becomes distorted" (1990, p.71). This state is very rewarding, as Patrick Lavolette explains: "People experience great satisfaction by being completely involved in an activity for its own sake to the extent that all actions, movements and thoughts follow on instinctively from the previous one" (2006, p. 198).

Csikszentmihalyi argues that the derivation of pleasure is the primary function of activities that produce flow. Roger Caillois (1961) described play and games in ways which may produce flow. He classified games into four categories. The

first is competition, whose dominant characteristic is winning. Chance, with a focus on luck rather than skill is second. Imagination driven games are third, in which alternative realities are imagined, such as theatre or the arts. Lastly there are activities which involve vertigo. These games involve a dizzy like high and the loss of self in the activity. Csikszentmihalyi describes Caillois' categories as flow activities (1990). I discuss Caillois' categories in greater detail as they are relevant to the windsurfing subculture in chapter two.

G. S. Kenyon further explored the motivations for involvement in physical activity. He listed the following motivations: aesthetic, ascetic, catharsis, health and fitness, social and vertigo (1968, cited in Farmer, 1992). Aesthetic activities are those such as dance or gymnastics, where the beauty of movement and grace are the primary motivators. Ascetic motivations tend to be related to competitive activities, where self denial and rigorous training are necessary for success. Farmer breaks this competitive motivation down further into three sub-groups, "man against man, man against nature, and man against himself" (1992, p.244). Kenyon defined catharsis as the "release of tension through the pursuit of another activity" (1968, p.96). Health and fitness and social motivators are self-explanatory. Vertigo is defined by Kenyon as an activity that has risk and thrill associated with speed, acceleration, change of direction and/or exposure to dangerous situations whilst the individual generally remains in control (1968). I apply Kenyon's categories to the windsurfing subculture in chapter two.

The scholars cited above show that participants take part because it makes them feel good. But is this all? According to Csikszentmihalyi, a flow state can be achieved through a game of chess, tennis, or even through work (1999). There are any number of ways to achieve flow that are not potentially life-threatening (Abramson and Laviolette, 2007), and do not require participants to compromise other areas of their lives in the same way that is inevitable in the pursuit of a windsurfing lifestyle. So achieving a flow state is not sufficient explanation in itself. In my interviews I encouraged my informants to elaborate on their motivations, and the rewards that they achieved. In this way I aim to clarify and extend this concept.

One potential explanation may be the experience of ‘communitas’. The sense of communal or shared experience which Celsi described as ‘communitas’ may be important. This is described as being more than just a communal experience of the flow: “whereas flow, [...] is experienced at the individual level, another form of transcendence occurs at the communal level in the form of shared experience” (1992, p.638). Turner described this experience as “the common bond that (participants) have with one another and the suspension of everyday social order” (1977; cited in Celsi (1992, p.638). In chapter two I discuss what significance this concept has to my informants in the windsurfing community.

There are other theories about the motivation of lifestyle sport participants. Focussing on aesthetic motivations, Mark Stranger sees aesthetics as going deeper than simply the scenery or seascapes. He argues that “flow theory suggests that a unifying experience cannot be achieved without the actions having significant meaning for the participant” (1999, p.269). Aesthetic responses are the underlying justification for risk-taking experiences as they allow the experience of sensation to be worthwhile in itself, without any need for extrinsic reward or benefit. In short, Stranger (1999) argues that the aesthetisation of activities gives them meaning, which allows a flow experience. Meaning is not an intellectual process, but one based on affect. This sensation grounds itself in a postmodern aestheticisation of life created by the saturation of life with images that creates a response sensation rather than interpretation. In this interpretation he follows Featherstone (1993), arguing:

Aestheticization, through the culture industry, produces a rapid flow of signs and images, which saturate everyday life to such a degree that they ‘defy systemization and narrativity’. In response to this cacophony of sensory stimulation, postmodern culture involves an aesthetic of *sensation*, replacing the increasingly impossible demands of modernity for rational *interpretation*. (1999, p. 270, author’s emphasis)

The postmodern turn to sensual experience gives rise to “an environment conducive to the development of significant meaning in risk-taking behaviour. This meaningfulness involves a *feeling* that participation in this activity is good in itself” (1999, p.270, author’s emphasis). This aestheticisation of life is exploited by advertisers attempting to sell more product. I investigate this as part of my research.

Although Stranger talks of the aesthetics of risk-taking, surfing, which is the subject of his study, is not an especially risky undertaking, in terms of injuries or deaths. Apart from the very few who take on monster waves, the risk of injury is very low. This situation is the same in windsurfing. Both activities are primarily excitement seeking and any associated risk is simply a by-product, not a motivator (Ford and Brown, 2006; see also Dant and Wheaton, 2007).

The work of Nigel Thrift may help provide a deeper insight into these motivations. One of the limitations of writing about an embodied experience such as windsurfing is that such experiences are so difficult to articulate. This means that any attempt to understand their motivations needs to take into account this limitation. Thrift's work on non-representational theory is an attempt to approach this difficulty. Thrift writes that "non-representational theory is an approach to understanding the world in terms of its effectivity rather than representation" (2008, p.113). He draws upon the school of biological philosophy, which he credits to Deleuze and Serres. Thrift uses this philosophy to inform his thoughts on embodiment. Thrift quotes Donald (2001, p. 26) as writing "a huge reservoir of unconscious or automatic cognitive processes that provide a background setting within which we can find meaning and experience" (2008, p.36). He argues that much of embodied thought occurs at a non-cognitive level (2008). This unconscious level of involvement may be the key to understanding the feeling of fulfilment that participants achieve, and explain their level of commitment. I apply Thrift's theory to the windsurfing subculture to see if this is so in chapter two.

Resistance: The Ways That Lifestyle May Be Seen As Oppositional

Deviation From Cultural Norms as a Form of Resistance

Resistance to societal norms takes a variety of forms. As Patrick Lavolette writes: "the sensual edge of extreme practice can exist as an embodied critique of contemporary urban experience that is played out in the realm of feeling rather than via language, symbol or ideology" (2006, p.199). So we may consider a practice itself as a means to critique societal norms. The concept of activities as critique is also used by Neil Lewis in his work on climbers. He

argues, based on the work of Lefebvre (1979), that “leisure might also provide a place for criticising daily life. Through leisure encounters, (Lefebvre) argued, we conjure up opposing images and practices of the lives we might yet live” (2004, p.71). But is this what participants are actually doing?

Belinda Wheaton describes that “for the dedicated, often obsessed participant, windsurfing participation is a *whole way of life* in which windsurfers seek hedonism, freedom, and self-expression” (2000, p.256. my emphasis). This commitment to put windsurfing ahead of the usual priorities amounts to resistance for John Fiske, who argues that escaping from the norm is resistance because it shows that the power of the dominant ideology is not as omnipotent as it may appear. There has been criticism of Fiske’s ideas. Jeff Lewis (1998) for example, argued that Fiske was too reliant on observation from afar, and read the beach as a text, as opposed to actually asking the participants of the beach lifestyle. However, Wheaton (2007) argues that his work is still a useful illustration of the ways that mainstream control may be subverted through behaviour that departs from cultural norms. My own ethnographic work on windsurfers may go some way to address the perceived lack of immediate experience identified by those such as Lewis in providing evidence of resistance inherent in a lifestyle.

Whether this kind of lifestyle amounts to resistance has been questioned by Jon Stratton. He argues that, rather than being oppositional, surfing subculture is actually based on consumerism. “Surfies emphasise a close link between the consumed object and individualism. In this way they assert two of the fundamentals of American capitalism, consumerism and individualism” (1997, p.183). Stratton argues that these lifestyle subcultures are built around commodities and that they give life to a middle-class myth of a life of leisure. This line of reasoning is flawed, however. The consumption of a lifestyle that rejects social and cultural norms is a form of resistance, through the way that lifestyle is consumed. People who can go sailing whenever the wind blows have *actually* escaped the 48-hour week job. Consumerism *does* use the image of escape in the form of the surfer in order to sell products to those who dream of

such an escape. But the fact that the image has been co-opted does not mean that those who actually live this lifestyle are not resisting dominant values. Stratton makes the error of mistaking the co-opted image of the activity for the activity itself. Individuals may resist the dominant culture using the tools made available by the culture itself.

Resistance to Traditional Sporting Values in Lifestyle Sport

Bourdieu (1984) described lifestyle sport as resistant to the bourgeois values of traditional sport. Those values were enshrined through rules, regulation and organisation. By rejecting those value systems, participants are also challenging the values of the dominant ideology, which were reflected in the competitive, win at all costs, rule-based sports that supported that ideology. Nancy Midol (1993) referred to lifestyle sports as whiz sports. She saw these activities as the heirs to beatnik and hippy values. Most windsurfers are closely aligned with what Duncan Humphries referred to as 'soul-boarders'. That is, those who:

refuse to get involved in the politics and administration of snowboarding, and concentrate on maintaining their own personal space through soul-boarding (riding for intrinsic pleasure). Soul-boarders apply the punk do-it-yourself ethic, and prefer to ride in the back-country, or at small, low-key, club fields. DIY soul-boarding meets the high ideals of the artistic sensibility as the back-country is removed from the world of commercialism and popularity (2003, p.423).

Likewise, windsurfers participate for intrinsic rewards, rejecting bourgeois values in favour of freedom.

Robert Rinehart has argued that this form of resistance through lifestyle activities have been successfully co-opted by the media corporations like ESPN, and changed into 'sport' to allow them to fit a consumption model. He writes

the logic's of so-called extreme sports (the activities that, prior to 1995's Xtreme games, were still 'lifestyle' and recreational activities) have thus been perverted. If it had been a gradual evolution conducted by the athletes themselves, - done from the inside out - then most would agree that there was a sense of authentic change within the sport. But since these changes have been cynically promoted and overtly strategized by multinational corporations, the result is that there is a sense of inauthenticity to what remains of the 'sports' as sports (2008, p. 82).

This process of the media's increasing influence in determining the shape of

alternative sports is undoubtedly true in a society wide context, with (predominantly) youth audiences who are primarily groomed as consumers and who are not necessarily participants in the activities themselves, but consumers of the lifestyle solely as spectators. These spectators may be able to consume the outward appearance of a lifestyle (Rinehart, 2008). Yet as Belinda Wheaton has observed, it is not possible to buy your way into the core of a lifestyle sport subculture (2003). The lived culture of a lifestyle sport is fundamentally about participation in the activity. My research is focussed on those that are core members, not those who have merely purchased the image.

In addition, windsurfing itself has been spared co-optation by ESPN and Xtreme games because of its relatively small number of participants in the USA and its relative inaccessibility to the youth market so coveted by the multinational corporations that wish to create consumerist activity out of what were once oppositional activities.

The Use of Time as an Act of Resistance

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) Michel de Certeau discusses the use of time as a form of resistance. "The worker who indulges in la peruque (the hairpiece) actually diverts time (not goods, since he uses only scraps) from the factory for work that is proved, creative, and precisely not directed for profit" (1984, p.25). De Certeau is discussing workers resisting the power of the employment relationship through the use of the employers' time for the employee's own projects.

De Certeau's account has been criticised on the grounds that it simplifies what is being resisted into a dualistic construction of power versus resistance (eg Malbon, 1999). Notwithstanding this simplification, I would argue that de Certeau's analysis is applicable to situations where what is being resisted is more subtle, as in the imperatives of the dominant ideology on the individuals within that society. Using time that the dominant ideology would prescribe as work time for the pursuit of wind is an act of resistance against that ideology.

Resistance to the Idea of Economic Capital as the Primary Measure of Success

Patrick Laviolette considers that:

a continual emphasis upon economic capital as a measure of success, granting access to the symbolic structures of contemporary capitalism, has significantly eroded alternate social structures through which people can gain a sense of moral and social worth. Yet the construction of epic narratives via the intensification of lived experience offers such an alternate arena (2006, p.183).

According to Belinda Wheaton: "these approaches point to the symbolic, embodied, and performative ways in which Lifestyle sports can be seen to subvert or resist mainstream norms" (2007, p.300). My research is aimed at determining firstly whether participants do reject economic capital as the primary measure of success, and whether this amounts to resistance to consumerism.

Resisting Cultural Expectations

Becky Beal considers how departing from cultural norms may be considered resistant behaviour through a discussion of Gramsci's work:

Hegemony is not simply the notion that dominant group ideas are transferred to the minds of subordinate groups through superstructural means. It implies the active consent of the subordinate group in creating and maintaining its subordinate status. This active consent is encouraged by the dominant group's ability to create limits on the range of what is perceived to be acceptable or even possible. In this way, subordinate groups actively choose a dominant group's agenda, maintaining a semblance of freedom while reinforcing the dominant group's interests (1995, p.253).

So the ideology of the dominant culture is reinforced through people living according to the norms of that ideology. This is not necessarily a conscious choice. "Active consent occurs not simply by consciously acknowledging certain ideas, but by arranging one's behaviours by those ideas" (1995, p.253).

In the context of broader consumer society, the kinds of resistance I am researching could be seen as a fairly trivial form of resistance, or as Brian Wilson considers it "resistance that makes no difference" (2002, p.401). However, Ross Haenfler argues that "resistance can no longer be conceptualised in neo-Marxist terms of changing the political or economic

structure, as a rejection only of mainstream culture, or as stylist expression. A conceptualisation of resistance must account for individual opposition to domination” (2004, p.409). Beal argues that deviance from social norms does represent resistance, and that “resistance to hegemonic forms of everyday life represents a significant foundation for social change” (1995, p.253). In chapter three I show how this is so in the windsurfing context.

The Visual Culture of Windsurfing

The visual culture of lifestyle sport subcultures is a complex inter-relation of visual signifiers. Participants come to understand the visual language of their particular lifestyle as part of the construction of their subcultural identity. Here I concentrate on one part of the visual culture of the windsurfing scene, the visual media. It is the media that provides the interface between the business of producing goods, and the lifestyle that consumes them. Thus it is key to understanding the paradox that is the basis of my thesis.

Judith Williamson’s *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology And Meaning in Advertising* (1978) is aimed at understanding the underlying messages in advertising. Williamson approaches the interpretation of advertising from a Marxist standpoint. She is therefore interested in the alienation of workers from the goods they produce: “Thus instead of being identified by what they produce, people are made to identify themselves with what they consume” (1978, p.13). She is also concerned with the dehumanising effects of advertising that turns people and emotions into commodities. Her approach to decoding the unspoken messages in ads is directly useful in my own aim of understanding the messages within the visual culture of the windsurfing lifestyle. Her theories, predating as they do much of the work on the ways that postmodern consumers create their own meanings, need to be read alongside an understanding of the ways that the viewers of the ads interpret them, which I undertake in chapter four.

The co-option of resistant behaviour by advertising in order to drive consumption is well documented, in particular, the adoption of the language

which reflected the ideals of the counterculture. Thomas Frank writes: "not only does hip consumerism recognize the alienation, boredom, and disgust engendered by the demands of modern consumer society, but it makes of these sentiments powerful imperatives of brand loyalty and accelerated consumption" (1997, p.231). Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter adopt this view and take it further to the point that they argue that the counter culture itself was actually partially driven by consumerist society in order to sell more consumer goods (2005). Stuart Ewen also considers that the meaning of oppositional attitude was lost when advertisers adopted the vernacular of the counterculture:

The idiom of subculture had entered the marketplace of style. In the process, meaning was lost. It had been reduced to the status of a commodity. Whatever significance or value the expression may have had in the context of its earlier development, that value was now outweighed by its exchange value, its ability to make something marketably 'hip' (1988, p.251).

This could be applied to the lifestyle sport situation where advertisers are attempting to exploit an anti-consumerist sentiment to sell consumer goods. The difference however, is that the authors above are referring to the use by advertisers of the image and language of the counterculture in order to promote their products as signifiers of resistance. In the context of lifestyle sport, participants express resistance through their lifestyle and they use consumer goods to facilitate that lifestyle, not to signify it.

The media do have a significant role in determining the nature of subcultural groups. The mass media tend to co-opt oppositional lifestyle activity scenes into more acceptable (to mainstream society and business) sporting activities which support bourgeois values, and the elevation of 'stars'. A clear example of this is ESPN's extreme sport channel. Robert Rinehart (2008) has explored this co-option process extensively, with regard to the commercialisation of lifestyles to the point that all that is left is the image of the lifestyle rather than the oppositional core of the activity. However, as Sarah Thornton (1995) identifies, it is important when attempting an understanding of participants themselves to distinguish between the mass media and niche media which is aimed specifically at the scene itself, with scant interest in the general public. Thus, I will look at the magazines and DVDs focussed specifically on windsurfing. Nick Ford and

David Brown have also explored this tendency for advertisers to exploit the image of an activity to market goods to those who want the image, without the commitment to the lifestyle. This is not a factor affecting windsurfing however, because as I showed earlier, it is simply not popular enough for the general public to aspire to the signifiers of the lifestyle.

Belinda Wheaton and Becky Beal argue that: "specialist niche media play a central role in the creation and evolution of these cultures" (2003, p.157). The influence of this niche media on everything from the creation of a subcultural identity to the landmarks of an individual's development is of great importance. The media also have commercial significance: "The niche media are an integral part of the commercialisation process that both produces and circulates subcultural meanings and symbols" (Wheaton and Beal, 2003, p.158). This gives the media a great deal of influence in the shape the lifestyle takes. Whilst Wheaton and Beal are writing about the influence of subcultural media, they are focused on authenticity in the media, whereas I am interested in the way that the media directly and indirectly promotes consumption, and the ways that individuals in the subculture respond.

The bulk of the analysis of lifestyle sport subcultural media is focused on magazines, as they have traditionally been the most influential part of the visual culture of the lifestyle. They are still the main forum for advertising for windsurfing products. As Wheaton and Beal write: "magazines are the sports industry's main forums for advertising" (2003, p.160). They are therefore important to my research here. There are a number of recent articles written by the scholars of lifestyle sports on magazines and the advertising in them.

Douglas Booth (2008) conceptualises *Tracks* magazine as a material artefact of surfing culture, with affective qualities. His argument is that magazines, and magazine advertising, attempt to recreate the affective qualities of surfing. In other words, to create 'stoke' in the viewers of the magazine. In my own research, I have used the UK *Windsurf* magazine (for a detailed analysis, see chapter three). The advertising in *Windsurf* shares much in common with

Tracks, and so Booth's approach will be most helpful in analysing the visual language used, and the advertisers' intent. He is not, however, focused on consumption, as I am. The article is also primarily concerned with the analysis of content and a textual analysis of the intent of the advertisers themselves (although he does relate some 'letters to the editor' feedback). My focus is on the consumers of the magazine, and my ethnographic work is aimed at an understanding of the messages that the viewers themselves took from the images in the magazine.

Robert Rinehart has approached the subject of print advertising in lifestyle sport magazines. He writes:

In print media, advertising photographs tell stories: That is, at a single glance, the reader has learned to expect a compact, creative, sometimes provocative stance that will attempt to coerce her or him sympathetically to the view of the photographer, and by extension, to the product being marketed. No advertising image is naïve. Some are more or less effective, but their intent is singularly clear: Bring in new audience, create more consumers (2005, p. 243).

Rinehart has completed a careful analysis of the advertising of skateboarding magazines. As such his work provides helpful guidance in my own analysis of the advertising of *Windsurf* magazine. His focus is on the exploitation and exclusion of females by companies desperate to establish their oppositional status, by setting out to be shocking and counter to mainstream society's attitudes. Gender issues are not the focus of my work, however. Rinehart is also interested in the analysis of the material itself, above the reaction of the target audiences to the advertising material, so my ethnographic work may help to extend the understanding of the ways that audiences themselves make use of or interpret the imagery in advertising.

Belinda Wheaton (2000) has written about consumption in the windsurfing subculture. She undertook an extensive ethnographic study of English windsurfers. Her focus, however, is upon the creation of a subcultural identity through consumption of the goods that make up the material culture of the scene, and the part that magazines play in the development of that identity. My focus is on the creation of a dreamworld lifestyle in advertising which promotes

consumption of material goods with the promise of the attainment of that dreamworld. My ethnographic work is designed to reveal how the core members of the windsurfing lifestyle respond to this kind of advertising. In short, she is focused primarily on the material culture of the lifestyle, whereas I am focused, in this respect, on the visual culture.

Chapter 2: “Did You Ever Meet a Windsurfer on Anti-Depressants?”

Motivations and Benefits for Participants

It’s an adrenaline, endorphin-based culture. A good sesh can last you half a week of that buzz.
(Lucy)

Windsurfing is an activity that involves the individual in a highly interactive way with an assemblage of equipment that allows them to skim over the surface of the water using only the power of the wind and the skill of the rider. Tim Dant describes the interaction in this way: “the whole body is involved in all manipulations of speed and direction and even going in a straight line requires continual fine adjustments, so a particularly kinaesthetic sense [...] is necessary for sailing” (1998, p.92). Windsurfers have travelled at speeds approaching 100 km/h, and tackled some of the biggest waves on the planet. Dant argues that the windsurfing assemblage allows the participant to transcend normal human limitations and allows liberation from the body’s “humdrum uses and experiences” (1998, p.78). In pursuing this activity, just what is it that participants are consuming, is it a lifestyle or objects? What benefits do they derive from windsurfing? These questions form the basis of this chapter.

Consumption: Objects or Lifestyle?

Windsurfers certainly consume a great deal of kit as part of their activities. I found that a fairly typical windsurfer would own three boards, six fins, three masts, and five sails with a total cost of around \$15,000NZ. Most core members would replace their equipment after about two years. This level of financial outlay does exclude some people from participation, although it is certainly possible to participate with considerably less investment. For example, Paul from Napier, who referred to himself as a “bit of a hippy” procured his extensive collection of kit either by people giving it to him, or second hand on www.trademe.co.nz. He estimated that he had spent less than \$1000 on the gear he currently owns, and he does not replace equipment until it is well and truly destroyed. Most of the people I observed, however, are very much into buying new kit, and often. Patrick told me that “windsurfers just see an ad’ and ‘it’s just so much better than last year’s model’ and so they *have* to have it”. Many of my

informants associated buying new kit with levels of commitment to the subculture. As Tom observed “the guys who funk off work replace gear all the time, and sail all the time”. The people I interviewed are quite proud of their gear. When I asked Harry how much kit he had, he just smiled, and took me outside to show me his van. It was loaded from floor to ceiling with seven boards, ten sails, four booms, twelve fins, five masts and associated equipment, all of it less than a year old, and looked to me to be in perfect condition. He then described with obvious excitement what each board was specialised for, and related stories of adventures that he had had on specific boards. Conversely, those who have older equipment are seen as less committed, as Max said “If someone turns up on 25 year old gear [...] I’d probably judge that they don’t get out that often”. Much of this behaviour is related to the economic situation of participants. The details of the economic makeup of the subculture are discussed in a later chapter, but generally speaking the subculture is largely comprised of privileged white middle-class folk, mostly male. This is consistent with Belinda Wheaton’s observations of windsurfing subcultures in the UK (2003).

Once an individual has the economic wherewith-all to participate, the purchase of objects is very much secondary to actually doing it. It is not possible to buy your way into the core of the subculture by purchasing advanced or expert gear, as outlined in the literature review. Despite the importance of kit to participants, and its necessity to the activity, it remains secondary to the activity itself. As Harry describes:

the difference between buying windsurfing kit and most retail therapy is that it is not the act of buying that gives you the pleasure. You could be given a board for free and it would give you just as much pleasure, because the act of consumption is in the use of the kit, it is the experiences of windsurfing that it gives you that are important.

Rather than the relationship between consumers and objects, what is important for my purposes is to consider the consumption of the lifestyle of a committed windsurfer. The monetary cost of the equipment, while substantial, is inconsequential compared with how much participants are willing to compromise their economic situation in order to be able to go sailing when the wind blows. This will be explored more fully in chapter three. It is, therefore,

more useful to approach the situation as the consumption of a lifestyle, which involves the expenditure of that most precious of commodities – time. What makes people so eager to consume such a lifestyle? What does the activity give them? I will approach these questions in the next section.

Motivations for Windsurfing: The Benefits Derived by Participants

What is it that drives people to move towns, give up their jobs and stress or even destroy their relationships? As I have already discussed, there is considerable literature addressing the human need for excitement, which becomes expressed in the pursuit of hazardous activities, when life in general society becomes too safety oriented. However, as Gunnar Breivik writes "such thrills need not be explained [...] by a biological need for sensation seeking, but rather by the inherent pleasure and satisfaction that such pursuits provide" (2007, p.21). It is this 'inherent pleasure and satisfaction' that I predominantly explore here.

As the basis for my discussions about my informant's motivations, I will use the work of several scholars in this area. I begin with Csikszentmihalyi's concept of the flow, which is crucial for understanding the benefits that participants derive from these kinds of activities. I also use the work of Roger Caillois on play and G. S. Kenyon's motivations for physical activity to help gain insight into the flow state that participants achieve. Finally in this section, I will outline Nigel Thrift's non-representational theory, which provides exciting research considerations into human activities, including lifestyle sport.

Motivations for Windsurfing: Play as a Means to Achieve Flow

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has conceived of what he describes as the flow. Windsurfers described their experience of this phenomenon as it affected them through the practice of their activity. Max told me: "It's just all I want to do, just the adrenaline rush, you know, when you do a big jump, it just makes you so happy, good stress release, it's really good, I just feel really good after sailing". For his part, Harry said "You come off the water in a euphoric state...you can't wait for the next time...it's hard to put into words". This euphoric state is

something that makes the activity very attractive. Participants are willing to sacrifice a great deal to achieve this feeling of being fully engaged in an activity in which they can lose themselves so completely. This euphoria is certainly derived from a flow experience in Csikszentmihalyi’s terms.

Roger Caillois (1961) described play and games in ways which may produce flow experiences as theorised by Csikszentmihalyi. Caillois classified games into four categories, which I apply here to the windsurfing subculture. The first of Caillois’ categories is competition. This is certainly an aspect of the activity, although for most participants it is not in a formal way. During the observation phase of my research, I saw that casual races and tests of will are an inherent part of the activity. If a windsurfer is sailing along casually and another comes along to try and pass, it’s all on, suddenly both sailors are straining for maximum power from their rigs, sheeting in and bearing off for speed.



Figure 2.1 Lining Up For a Challenge. Photo: author’s own.

These impromptu competitions are over with as fast as they begin. No trophy is awarded, but there is definitely a winner and a loser. These competitions are a key test of subcultural status, As Dant and Wheaton write: “sailors gather on

suitable beaches and will compete informally amongst themselves and make judgements about each other's competence and skill that are central forms of subcultural capital and status" (2007, p.10).

I did not observe this kind of spontaneous competitive behaviour among wave sailors⁴, who tended to see themselves as pitted against the conditions rather than each other. However, in Wellington (where I completed the participant observer phase of my research), the only formal competition was for wave sailors. This is somewhat anomalous, and would bear further research.

The second category is chance, which certainly plays a part in the activity. Because windsurfing depends on factors beyond participants' control, such as wind, swell and general weather, there is a large element of chance in the pursuit. Several of my informants told me that for them, one of the reasons that windsurfing was so much more rewarding than, for example, mountain biking was that you couldn't just go and do it whenever you felt like it. It was subject to far greater forces than the individual. "Never knowing what the weather is going to throw at you is part of the stoke of doing it. That means that when you do get an epic session, it is that much more special" (Simon). In addition to the chance associated with the conditions, there is an element of chance in the activity itself. A heavy gust in the middle of a tricky manoeuvre or a freak wave can slam the most skilled of windsurfers, and turn an efficient wind-powered machine and its pilot into semi-submerged pieces of jetsam. These aspects of chance certainly add to the excitement associated with the activity.

Caillois' third category, the imaginary aspect of play, does not appear to be relevant to the windsurfing subculture. Participants tend to have a very clear sense of their identity as windsurfers. None reported to me the need for imaginative play as part of their activity, most considering the activity itself to be so satisfying and getting them 'stoked' that imaginative play was not necessary.

In chapter four I investigate the dreamworld of the lifestyle created by the

⁴ Wave sailors are a sub-group of windsurfers who surf waves while sailing. They are the biggest group of core windsurfers in Wellington and Taranaki. It is generally seen as the most skilled form of windsurfing, and carries with it the greatest risk of injury, and occasionally death.

subcultural media, which no doubt involves a degree of imagination, but here I focus on the activity itself.

The most applicable of Caillois’ categories to windsurfing is vertigo, which Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes as a way to directly alter consciousness. Farmer (1992) includes the ability to get ‘high’ and an experience of self transcendence among the benefits of a vertiginous game. As for windsurfers, Tim Dant describes that “the vertiginous pleasure of windsurfing is derived from the sensations of moving off, accelerating, sailing at speed and making turns, especially while moving fast [...] there is also a vertiginous pleasure in the disorientation of falling off” (1998, p.83). My informants placed vertigo at the top of their list of reasons for participation. “It’s all about the stoke, dude, I will travel the world looking for the places that it just goes off, and I’m there [...] everything is about finding that buzz” (Tim, from field notes, May 2009). This aligns with the findings of Belinda Wheaton who notes that: “it is important to emphasise the intense physical and mental pleasure that participants gain from the activity [...] it was a psychological high they needed” (2003, p.87). It would be hard to overstate the importance of the ‘buzz’ individuals get from participation. The accounts they gave me of sessions that epitomised their best experiences windsurfing all included vertiginous pleasure. Harry gave this example:

you get out the back, riding over these hills to get out there, and suddenly the whole ocean in front of you starts jacking up, and jacking and jacking, the horizon is just rising up in front of you, and you think the guy you’re sailing with must have fallen off because he’s just disappeared, but as you near the top of the wave, you realise he’s just in the trough and you’re looking down on top of his mast, and you’re just blasting back in straight at the beach, too scared to try anything but a straight ride, thinking HOLY FUCK (pause) and you *know* you just gotta go back out there.

These kinds of experiences are clearly associated with vertigo and my informants identified them as a powerful motivation.

When asked to articulate their experiences, many informants had some difficulty putting into words what had happened to them. This is because vertiginous experiences are largely not part of our conscious state. I will discuss

this more fully later with reference to the theories of Nigel Thrift. Some were able to give a sense of their excitement in the inadequate medium of words. Patrick managed this description. "I'm at Waitara, big mast high (waves) superb day, and it's just epic, in the water like 8 hours just buzzing out, and everyone's out and so happy... even on the beach afterward everyone's just buzzing with it". All informants described excitement and many related the loss of their sense of time. As Laviolette describes it: "these activities distort conventional notions of time, spatial perception and motion. Events are rushed up or slowed in a disproportional way so that sensations of time shift" (2006, p.196).

Motivations for Involvement in Physical Activity

G. S. Kenyon further explored the motivations for involvement in physical activity. He listed aesthetic, ascetic, catharsis, health and fitness, social and vertigo (1968, cited in Farmer, 1992). I described these fully in my description of Kenyon's work in the literature review. I informally surveyed windsurfers using these six categories as the basis for my enquiry, as well as asking my interview subjects for their primary motivators. There are, of course, many possible motivators for involvement. It is possible that an individual could be motivated by all of these categories. I had 31 responses. By far the most common motivator was vertigo, with 27 naming it as an important or primary motivator. The tendency for informal competitive behaviour both against each other and the elements is a real aspect of the subculture, as outlined above. However, very few listed it as an important motivator, with only two people naming it. I suspect that the ascetic nametag made people think of finely tuned olympic athletes, and windsurfers definitely do not associate themselves with this kind of athleticism.

Catharsis is another important benefit, with 12 naming it as an important motivator (usually behind vertigo). Those participants who had stressful jobs or young families noted the cathartic value of the activity. Informants who sailed in the less extreme environments tended to report cathartic benefits more than those in places such as Wellington, where they were more focussed on the stoke. Women talked more of escape and stress release than did the men, who

reported excitement and risk. For example, Jenny, the mother of two very small children who lives in Auckland, said: “windsurfing is an escape, you just get on your board and go”. Amy, who is a nurse from Christchurch, described these benefits in the following way: “You can zone out, you can forget totally about work, you have a job to do windsurfing, and you just have to do that, so nothing else can get in there”. Another Christchurch informant, Lucy, placed cathartic benefits ahead of other factors, saying: “it’s a good stress release, and it makes you feel (pause) it makes you forget all the stresses of modern life I suppose, it makes you more balanced”. Some of the men also included cathartic benefits, for example, Max, who included stress release amongst the benefits he derives from windsurfing. While not such a powerful driver for my informants as the pursuit of the stoke, catharsis remains an important secondary benefit.



Figure 2.2: Aesthetics are secondary to conditions; the airport and a man-made sea wall as the backdrop. Photo: Mark Gee

Windsurfers also reported that the aesthetic qualities of the activity, particularly in relation to the ocean and the coastline, were important to them. Eight included it as an important motivator, and those that did include it were quite articulate. For example Amy related the following: “it was just beautiful, it was the end of summer, beginning of autumn, nobody else was there, and we had the entire lake, it was a steady nor’wester and sparkly water and it was just

brilliant”. It should be noted that windsurfing advertising, magazines and DVDs are full of imagery of extraordinarily beautiful scenery and seascapes. The dream-world of the subculture is very much one with crystal clear oceans and bright blue sky and sun. The reality for most participants in New Zealand is somewhat different. Even though windsurfers do wax lyrical about environmental beauty, my observation was that core sailors would go out in atrocious conditions in areas lacking in natural beauty – if it meant they could catch a good wave with a cross-offshore wind. Figure 2.2 on the next page is a good example of this prioritisation of conditions ahead of the natural landscape.

As I related in my previous discussion of Mark Stranger’s (1999) work, however, aesthetics are not simply about natural beauty. He argues that the aesthetisation of activities give them meaning, which allows a flow experience. Meaning is not an intellectual process, but one based on affect. As shown earlier, this sensation aesthetic grounds itself in a postmodern aestheticisation of life. This is created by the saturation of life with images that create a response sensation rather than understanding. So we gain meaning from sensation and feelings rather than from interpretation and understanding. The flow experience gained is from the feeling that the activity is good in itself.

Such an interpretation may well be applicable to windsurfers, who derive, as I have shown above, motivation from intrinsic, rather than extrinsic factors. The rewards are internal, as Milly told me:

I enjoy the challenge [...] I mean, if you skateboard, it’s a stable platform. If you snowboard, you go over the same jump every time, and it’s the same jump [...] if you want to learn a new skill, you can practise exactly the same thing over and over, you can isolate a skill and practise it. Whereas, with windsurfing, the wind is different every time, the waves are different every time, it’s not like you have the same ramp every time, so it’s really challenging and constantly changing. You can practise a skill, but I like the dynamic nature of it, but it’s not a competitive thing, it’s a relaxation thing. It’s pseudo-solitary, but not totally on your own.

This passage is particularly apt for those who are involved in the more creative aspects of the activity. That is, those who see their ‘moves’ or ‘tricks’ as a means of self expression and for whom beauty exists in the moves themselves. Even

the taciturn Jim found joy in the successful execution of a ‘move’: “whenever I make a move and I sail away from it (pause) I’m whooping, even if I’m out there by myself”. This is not to say that windsurfers don’t show off for each other. Indeed, whenever cameras appear, the ‘tricks’ suddenly get bigger and more daring.



Figure 2.3: Showing off for the camera. Photo: Chris Brown

However, as Francis said to me at the beach: “it’s better when there’s no-one around sometimes, because then you can really flow with the moves, without pressure, and it all goes that much smoother”. In other words, participants derive the most pleasure from the activity itself, not from the appreciation of others.

Extrinsic factors such as health and fitness were also rated lowly as motivators. My research shows that participants take part because it makes them feel good. However, there are other ways to achieve a flow state that are not as costly on other aspects of participants lives, so achieving a flow state is not sufficient explanation in itself. The concept of *communitas* described by Celsi may be useful in understanding participant’s motivations. The bond that participants

have with one another and the cessation of everyday social order described by Turner (1977) is clear among my informants. I observed some mixing of social classes in my ethnographic work, as it was simply not important what you did for a job. Even though windsurfing tends to be a white male, middle-class activity, there is still more variation in the mix than would normally shown in an average group of friends. At my home spot in Evans Bay in Wellington, there are lawyers, nurses, architects, builders, landscape gardeners, accountants, computer analysts, the occasional unemployed person, university students, engineers, a number of self employed people like plumbers, and sales consultants, amongst others. It is not usual to enquire about the profession of fellow sailors. What you are capable of on the water, and the simple fact of being a windsurfer is what creates the bond.



Figure 2.4: Alone together. Photo: Jeff Blaney

Windsurfers have a common bond of shared participation in their activity. My observations were that the subculture was inclusive of newcomers. Participants share advice freely on such things as local conditions, and equipment choice. If one was clearly a windsurfer, then one would be openly admitted to any group that I observed. Despite the friendly, inclusive and accessible nature of the

subcultural groups, I did not find that *communitas* was a strong motivator for involvement in the activity. Abramson and Laviolette describe tombstoners in the following way: "tombstoners perceive and celebrate cliff-jumping as pure body experience, free of any social or cultural trappings" (2007, p.23). Windsurfers also tend to be individualistic in their approach to the activity.

In my interaction with informants and interviewees, extrinsic factors including social engagement were considered to be relatively unimportant. So the achievement of a flow state is in itself insufficient to explain why participants are so ready to compromise other areas of their lives. Since *communitas* is not the primary motivator either, the work of Nigel Thrift may help provide a deeper insight into these motivations.

Non-Representational Theory and Windsurfing

Embodied experiences such as windsurfing are problematic to write about because they are so difficult to articulate. In both the formal interview phase of my research and the more informal ethnographic experience amongst windsurfers in Wellington, I asked people to recount their best windsurfing experiences. A few were able to express their experience of stoke. Mostly though, even the most articulate of them struggled to put such feelings into words. As Thorpe and Rinehart recount: "alternative sports participants frequently reiterate that it is the embodied, sensual, and immediate experiences of their activities that are central to their specific, grounded cultural practices – and words can only begin to articulate their experiences" (2010, p.1). This means that any attempt to understand their motivations needs to take into account this limitation.

The more articulate of my informants provided some insight into the experiences that make this lifestyle so compelling for those caught up in it.

We went out on 5.8s, I was on a slalom board, and the wind was just a perfect consistency, the chop in the harbour was just a perfect angle for jumping, we were still learning quite a lot, and I remember just blasting along and hitting this chop and getting airborne, and just doing it again and again, and um, that was just the best day of my life (Max).

Windsurfing is primarily a kinaesthetic experience, which, once learned, is a largely unconscious interaction between sailor and kit (Dant, 1998). Much of the experience is unconscious bodily movements. As much as 95% of embodied thought is in non-cognitive aspects of experience (Ford and Brown; 2006). Given this, it is not surprising that it is difficult to recount such experiences later.

Non-representational theory, as articulated by Nigel Thrift, has considerable potential for exploring these kinaesthetic, embodied experiences in ways not possible with traditional concepts and methods. Scholars interested in the area of lifestyle sports have been quick to recognize the potential of such an approach. Thorpe and Rinehart have recently considered how: "applying this theory to alternative/action/extreme sport marshals a variety of new and exciting approaches to the study of embodied sport forms" (2010, p.3). For their part, Ford and Brown write that Thrift's theories "provide a range of striking resonances with these efforts to explore the direct, embodied experience of surfing" (2006, p.161).

Thrift writes that non-representational theory is his attempt to move theory "towards a poetic of encounter which both conveys a sense of life in which meaning shows itself only in the living, and which [...] recognizes that the unsayable has genuine value and can be 'felt on our pulses'" (cited in Thorpe and Rinehart; 2010, p.3). Doing this will aid in the understanding of such activities. The challenge is therefore to capture that which cannot be put into words in a written format, so that we may evoke the experiences.

Thrift argues that much of embodied thought occurs at a non-cognitive level (2008). Windsurfing is a notoriously difficult sport to learn (Dant and Wheaton; 2007) with a series of quite complicated inter-related actions and balancing, both with the wind, and also the sea, neither of which are steady, before even basic sailing in a straight line can occur. Once these actions have been mastered, however, they become unconscious actions undertaken automatically by the subconscious mind and body of the sailor.

This is the non-cognitive process that Thrift refers to. He writes that the “kinaesthetic sense is a gestalt emerging from the interaction of all other senses” (2008, p.64). This gestalt is part of the stoke of participation in windsurfing, the embodied experience that underlies our conscious experience of it. Douglas Booth (2008) has described stoke as the prime affect of surfing, a completely embodied experience of happiness and pride. This whole body feeling of satisfaction and happiness goes some way to helping us understand the motivations behind windsurfer’s participation.

All of my informants reported being taken to a state of increased awareness of the moment, most for the pure stoke of it. As Tom (32) related “it’s an adrenaline rush, excitement, satisfaction in that moment”. This approach allows peak experiences to be linked in a clear way to ideas of embodiment. So the peak experience of alternative sport is to be linked to the non-cognitive embodied thought of which Thrift (2008) writes. This is not a new idea, as Richard Celsi earlier argued that there were transcendent benefits to high-risk sports (1992). But, according to Ford and Brown, Thrift relates this heightened focus on the present moment to the “perhaps mystical practices of contemplation which, drawing on vitalist modes of thinking, allow a re-enchantment with the world” (2006, p.162). Unlike surfing, where there are spiritual tendencies, windsurfers do not attribute their experiences to any particular mystical qualities. The joy they reported to me was firmly based in physical sensation or an emotional high “just the adrenaline rush, you know, when you do a big jump, it just makes you really happy, it’s good stress release, I just feel really good after sailing” (Max). Even the most poetic of them remained firmly grounded.

There are, however, definitely ritualistic aspects to the activity. Because it is necessary for each session to build the windsurfing assemblage anew, according to the conditions, it is a requirement for a sailor to assess the seastate and wind strength and consistency. This necessitates a period of gazing at the water, to understand how the wind and sea are interacting, and mentally building up the kit most appropriate for the conditions. This can take up to 15 minutes, during

which an experienced sailor absorbs the situation. This has ritualistic aspects because it is part of the internal preparation for the physical and emotional challenges that the environment will offer. A participant will often gaze at the conditions for far longer than is strictly necessary for the assessment of the conditions, in order to prepare themselves. A reading of conditions requires both experience of wind and waves, and of the local micro-climate. Novices and newcomers to a spot can be easily identified because they go from person to person, asking what would be the best sail to rig.

The actual rigging is also a ritualistic affair, although probably in this case more of a routine task during which the equipment is carefully tensioned to its optimal state. Thrift writes that rituals are practices "which offer a heightened sense of involvement in our involvements" (2008, p.66). It has been my observation, however, that windsurfers tend to resent the requirement to rig their sails and build up their equipment. People complain bitterly if they had to re-rig because the wind has changed. Professional windsurfers sometimes employ caddies to rig their sails for them, so this would tend to go against the premise that the rituals involved in the activity heighten the experience. Nevertheless, as I reported in the preface, ritualistic tasks that one does not particularly enjoy may still create a sense of calm and raised anticipation when performed as part of the activity as a whole.

Thrift also writes of the relation between bodies and things as assemblages. In effect, the sailor becomes part of the material culture of the subculture. According to Ford and Brown, Thrift draws upon "Elkaim's notion of assemblages, in which a particular embodied practice involves the interrelation of a series of elements" (2006, p.162). This is of particular relevance to windsurfing, as in order for successful sailing to take place, there needs to be a complex assemblage, the human sailor being only one element among many. Tim Dant writes that "The windsurf kit is not simply a set of material tools that are manipulated and subject to the will of the human sailor, and there is no simple technological domination of the object because the human is kept in thrall by the object's possibilities" (1998, p.89). The assemblage includes but is

not necessarily dominated by, the human sailor. The nature of the assemblage is also a signifier of an individual's subcultural status as only very skilled sailors can sail the smallest boards. The assemblage includes the tools of the activity: the board, sail, boom, mast, fin, universal joint and the wetsuit and harness. It also includes the physical skills to be able to perform the delicate balancing act required to sail, the adapted physiology created by engaging in the activity, and narratives created by the subculture and its media.

Every sailing session requires a windsurfer to create the assemblage anew in different configurations. The interactions between the actants of the assemblage reinforce the whole experience of windsurfing as a: "non-verbal living-thinking embodied knowledge" (Ford and Brown: 2006, p. 163). This interactive experience is the basis of the adventure, and the whole embodied experience is built upon it. This means that it is of great significance in understanding what it is that windsurfers get out of their participation. This was expressed by John as the need to "hold on with your hands, and let go with your brain". This is the very basis of the peak experience gained by participants.

Thrift's work regarding the expressive aspects of performance refers to the work of Radley, who, writing about dance, argues that: "embodiment involves a capacity to take up and to transform features of the mundane world in order to portray a way of being, an outlook, a style of life that shows itself in what it is" (Radley cited in Thrift, 2008, p.116). This kind of embodied activity, according to Thrift is: "one, in other words, in which groups of actors can conjure up virtual as-if worlds, by delineating a space-time in which something significant is to occur and, at the same time, 'the actors are themselves reconfigured in the light of the possibilities that flow from them'" (Radley, cited in 2008, p.116). This is important to my analysis because the performance of the activity does reconfigure the actants. The experience of the activity elevates the human actant beyond the body's normal limitations. The act of windsurfing allows a human to assume 'godlike' powers to skim over the water's surface and even to briefly fly (Dant 1998). Participants are transformed from their normal human roles into a relationship with the elements that would not normally be humanly possible.

This transformation goes some way to explain why people are willing to compromise other aspects of their lives to achieve this state, even if they are largely unable to articulate it.

Conclusion: Lifestyle Consumption and Benefits

Windsurfers are voracious consumers of the equipment required for the activity. It is, however, most useful to consider their situation as the consumption of a lifestyle, because of the level of commitment required to be on the water whenever the conditions are right. The motivations for the obsessive commitment to the activity shown by participants are based upon embodied experiences. These experiences of interaction both with the assemblage of equipment and the natural environment allow participants to surpass the normal limitations of the human body. This affords them flow experiences primarily derived from vertigo or stoke, but also provides cathartic release from stress in other areas of their lives. The aestheticisation of postmodern life also allows them the feeling that the activity is good in itself, divorced from the need for any extrinsic rewards. Because the activity is an embodied one, conscious thought makes up only a small part of the experience. This means participants often struggle to put their adventures into words, but it produces such a feeling of well-being that they are willing to compromise other aspects of their lives to the point of resistance to dominant ideological imperatives, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: “Prior to Being Windsurfers We Were Like Normal People” Deviation from Cultural Norms as a Form of Resistance

Windsurfers like to think of themselves as different from ‘normal’ people. They enjoy the fact that their obsession requires them to live life in a way that departs from cultural norms. In fact, they even enjoy the fact that the activity is unfashionable, both because it ensures easy access to uncrowded subcultural sites, and because it allows the activity to remain free of the co-option that has been the fate of many other lifestyle sports. Sarah Cotton argues that:

windsurfing’s not cool, in fact, it’s really, really not cool. Don’t look so outraged – it’s a good thing! Take surfing. There it was, all hardcore and alternative, and look what happened because people began to think it was ‘cool’. Sold to Hollywood, an uncrowded line up is as hard to find these days as an MP with a clean bill of expenses (UK Windsurfer magazine, September 2009).

My informants agreed with this assessment. Ben told me “I quite like in New Zealand that it’s small, because people are in it because they love the sport. Whereas if it got big there’d be those assholes who do it because it’s big”. Does this desire to be different amount to resistance? This is the question that I approach in this chapter.

The Windsurfing Lifestyle as a Form of Resistance

Windsurfing is an extremely time-consuming activity. It is also entirely wind dependent, and, as New Zealand’s climate is quite changeable, those winds tend to be unreliable. New Zealand’s wind is frontal, that is, based on weather fronts, so the wind can come and go in the space of a few hours. This means that those who are committed to getting maximum windsurfing time have to be able to leave whatever it is that they are doing and get on the water while the wind is blowing. Harry reported that in his life: “everything is geared around windsurfing [...] so that we are free to chase the wind”. This commitment to put windsurfing ahead of the usual priorities amounts to resistance in John Fiske’s terms:

Pleasure, which affords the escape from this power, the escape from the norm, becomes an agent of subversion because it creates a privatised domain beyond the

scope of a power whose essence lies in its omnipotence, its omnipresence. Showing that life is liveable outside it denies it (1989, p.64).

The ways that core windsurfers depart from cultural norms varies according to an individual's circumstances but they all build their lifestyle around getting out on the water when the wind blows. Through practices that in themselves can be seen as a critique of societal norms, windsurfers are showing alternative ways of being. Lefebvre (1979) argued that leisure allows us to create ideas of alternative lifestyles that may be possible. In the case of windsurfing, the ideas are of freedom from the constricting iron cage of consumerism, where everyone is encouraged to consume more than they can afford so that they are forced to always earn more, trapping them in an earn and spend spiral. John is a good example of how this works in practice. He had a successful career as an aerodynamics engineer for a motorcycle racing team in Europe. He is also a keen windsurfer, who travelled to Maui in his holidays. His time in Hawaii gave him time to reflect on his life, and he decided he quit his job: "now I sail here (Christchurch) all summer, then I spend 3 or 4 months in Maui for the winter, do the slalom series or whatever, it's a great lifestyle". He lives a very simple lifestyle, grows his own vegetables to keep his living costs low. He makes his own boards (using his considerable knowledge of aerodynamics), and uses his contacts in Hawaii to get prototype sails for next to nothing. Harry said that he: "could not stand to be in an office while the wind was blowing", so he quit his job and now works in a windsurfing shop. While most of my informants have not quite gone to these lengths, they have all re-evaluated their lives and their priorities using their embodied experiences to provide them with alternative visions of success.

Finding Resistance in Use Value as Opposed to Sign Value

In addition to living their lives outside the prescribed behaviours of the dominant ideology, windsurfers consume the objects of the activity for their use value, as described in chapter two. This is in opposition to dominant consumerist ideology where, according to Iain Borden: "society itself is being ever more organised for the purposes of the consumption of goods and that use values are increasingly denied in the act of consumption - we are encouraged to

consume signs and ideologies rather than uses” (2001, p.239). Individuals within the subculture consume the objects of the activity predominantly for their use value. This is an act of resistance in Borden’s terms, and this position may go some way to clarify how windsurfers can resist consumerism while still consuming the goods of the activity. Windsurfers remove themselves from the urban environment in which ideologies and signs are consumed. In effect their lifestyle is a critique of urban space in that they choose to remove themselves from it. They seek out natural environments in opposition to the overly tamed and civilised environments of the suburbs and cities in which most of them live. As Debbie told me “Windsurfing is an escape, you just get on your board and go into the sunset, the blue sky, the blue water, and that’s all there is”. Their activities take place in natural environments, which create a space for the critique of the consumption of signs, because the very basis of the activity is in the use value of the objects of the activity.

The Rejection of Traditional Sporting Values in Lifestyle Sport

Another way in which windsurfers are oppositional is in their attitude to organised sport and rules. The great majority of windsurfers do not take part in any formal or organised aspects of the activity. In Bourdieu’s terms this amounts to a challenge to dominant cultural values, as I describe more fully in the literature review. Windsurfers participate for intrinsic rewards, rejecting bourgeois values of rules and organisation in favour of freedom. As Amy said “I like solo sports, I’m not a team player. I like the challenge of the self”. When windsurfers do get together for an event, it is usually a pretty unstructured affair. The ‘Harbour Blast’ in Wellington for example, consists of everyone sailing as fast as they can around Somes Island in the harbour, and then across to Eastbourne. There are no rules (other than those imposed by the Harbour Board), and although the winner is celebrated, so too is the person who is the slowest (without irony). There are more formal competitions, but the proportion of windsurfers that take part in these is small. Participants take part in the activity for its own sake, as outlined in chapter one. This is in opposition to the predominant sporting behaviour in New Zealand, which goes into a state of mourning if the All Blacks don’t win. I am not entirely convinced that this is a

form of resistance, however. Windsurfers tend to be people who do not like to be bound by rules. However, taking part in an entirely rule free activity did not represent for them an act of resistance against more rule bound activities, simply the desire to be free of them.

The Use of Time as an Act of Resistance

The use of time is an interesting aspect in the consideration of lifestyle sport as a site of resistance. By using their time in an effort to be free of the requirements of consumerist society, participants are resisting the values of that society. By using the time that could be used for making money, or spending it, they are resisting the consumerist imperative to make as much money as possible, and the imperative to spend as much as possible. They are taking themselves (at least partially) out of that iron cage. Using time that the dominant culture would prescribe as work time for the pursuit of wind is an act of resistance against the ideology of that culture. Michel de Certeau (1984) discusses workers using their employers' time for their own ends. Some of my informants, specifically those who have jobs in sales or as consultants, and who windsurf during time their employers might expect them to be working, are thus indulging in a form of 'la perruque'. As Joshua told me: "it's like with windsurfing, you can't budget time, you have to drop everything and go". In addition, all core members of the subculture spend time windsurfing that is normally time spent in paid employment. In this way they are resisting the power of societal norms, by showing that an alternative lifestyle is possible.

Resistance to the Idea of Economic Capital as the Primary Measure of Success

"It is truly necessary for society as a whole to embrace the idea of stepping back from work as the only measure of success" (Tim). The rejection of monetary accumulation as the primary measure of success is another way in which resistance manifests itself in the windsurfing subculture. My informants do reject economic capital as the measure of success. Within the core of the subculture, economic success counted for very little compared with time spent on the water. As Harry said "I'm glad money's not my priority (pause) and at the end of the day, if the wind is blowing and the sun is shining, I'm stoked".

Some of my informants have made a conscious choice not to take part in consumerist activity. John said "I cannot be bothered with all that competing to see who can get the most money crap". As outlined in chapter one, he makes his own boards, does not engage in paid employment and grows his own vegetables to live off. He also uses his contacts in the windsurfing industry to source free sails, so his windsurfing activities are outside the normal consumption patterns. He *does* consciously resist consumerism, and has created a lifestyle for himself that is as much as possible free from its influences. Most participants, though, are not consciously attempting to bring about widespread social change, their intentions are much more individually or subculturally focussed. It is not so much that they expect society to change, but many of them reject the mainstream idea of success, in favour of a lifestyle that they want. They are not political or consciously counterculture. Despite this, they are, in most cases, resisting the norms of our society. Windsurfing has allowed many participants in New Zealand the opportunity to at least partially escape the iron cage of consumerism. For example, when I asked Ben whether he bought into society's model for success, he replied "nah, I just wanna go windsurfing". So people do use this leisure space as a place to critique the dominant ideology, and most of them have gladly compromised their economic situation to pursue a windsurfing lifestyle. Tim told me "I consciously choose not to follow fashions, or wear name brands, I live a simple lifestyle so I can really live" (field notes, April 2009).

So to what degree are they willing to compromise their economic situation in order to participate? This question gave rise to a wide range of responses, reflecting a number of factors, which I will relate below. The answers ranged from Harry, who told me "I don't have a real job. The trouble with any sport that is based around the wind, you are doing it when you *have* to, not when you *want* to". At the other end of the scale was Jim who, when asked if he had made economic sacrifices to participate replied "no". He was alone in this though, as all my other informants reported at least some degree of economic compromise. Dedicated members of the core windsurfing group face something

of a conundrum. They have to earn enough money to live, of course, and they have to earn enough to fund the activity itself.

Employment

Balanced against these requirements is the desire to be on the water whenever the wind blows. Joshua put it this way:

people choose jobs that will get them enough money to do what they want to do, but that will allow them time off to sail. The sort of jobs they need to do gives them the ability to get time off. But they need to earn quite a bit of money. A couple of guys I know, they're mortgage brokers, so they are out on the road all the time, or consultants. It's like with windsurfing, you can't budget time, you have to drop everything and go.

The observer phase of my research, confirmed by the interviews, showed that there are four broad groups of participants, into which most individuals fit. Each group represents a different way of managing this conundrum.

The first group consists of people who devote themselves entirely to the activity, taking jobs like working in windsurf shops so that they can get cheap gear, and enough money to get by, or simply living off savings and the dole. Individuals in this group tend to live in smaller centres, where the cost of living is lower than the large centres, or they will live where the conditions are seen as optimal for the specific type of sailing that they want to do. This group is small in number, as the economic reality of this life tends to be fairly demanding. John and Harry, quoted above, are both examples from this group.

The second group is made up of those who choose work according to the amount of flexibility allowed, to spend time on the water, during work hours. This is by far the biggest group, and the ways that they manage this compromise are quite varied. Tom told me he had:

decided that contracting is a good lifestyle because if you are light on work they don't really have a problem if you don't show up because there's something else that you had to do. I have a clause in my contract that says that if its 20 knots I don't have to show up.

Contracting, sales, mobile bank manager, and plasterer are all jobs that people

take in order to allow themselves flexibility. Matt, who has a job as a mobile bank manager said "I have two computers set up on my desk, one with 'windguru' and the other with my appointment diary". The windguru website is the most accurate wind forecast available, and is much used by windsurfers. He continued "When someone rings and wants to make an appointment, I check against windguru, and if it's going to be windy, I just tell them I'm all booked up, until the next no wind day". This group, while not compromising their economic situation as much as the first, still see themselves as making considerable economic sacrifices in order to windsurf, as they could often be earning considerably more by taking a 'proper' job.

Another group of people are those that have a profession and negotiate with their employers to be allowed flexibility in the hours that they are at work (while still maintaining a 40 hour week schedule). Engineers are heavily represented in this group. Paul explained his situation as follows

since windsurfing is so dependent on the conditions, if it's windy at two o'clock you gotta go at two o'clock, it's no good waiting until 4.30, 'cause the wind might have dropped by then. But luckily they don't mind if I do that, so I'll just go at 12 or whatever and make up time at some other time.

Because they are typically on a salary and end up working full-time hours, members of this group do not feel that they have significantly compromised their economic situation. Some do refuse to take jobs which are not as flexible, thus limiting their options. These individuals tended to live in lifestyle centres, such as Taranaki or Napier. This is a relatively small group, because of the time demands that windsurfing makes on its participants. Paul and Max both belong to this group.

The last group comprises students. Being a student in many ways offers the perfect opportunity to sail whenever the wind blows, while promising economic security for the future. The undergraduates that I spoke with did not appear to take their studies particularly seriously, with Ben saying that he had given up a job because he wanted to study, but it was really so he could go windsurfing. These participants are definitely poor, and generally rely on the goodwill of their parents and their student loans for their economic necessities. They did, as

a group, feel that they had compromised their economic situation so they could go sailing “especially if I fail all my exams because I’ve been sailing too much” as Patrick said laughing.

Other Economic Sacrifices

Employment is only one aspect of an individual’s economic circumstances. On the other side of the ledger from the way that an individual earns their money are the ways in which they choose to spend it. This is key to understanding how participants resist consumerism. As Milly told me “we could have a much nicer house, nice things, I don’t spend any money on clothes”. The simplification of other aspects of participants’ lives serves two purposes. Firstly, it means that people don’t have to earn as much to maintain their lives, and secondly, it frees up more time to spend on windsurfing. Because they have fewer expenses, they can afford to take more time away from paid employment to pursue perfect conditions in Maui, the Mediterranean or wherever the best conditions are for their speciality. Milly went on to say “when I think of ways of increasing my wealth, I’m thinking of increasing the amount of time away from work that I can spend windsurfing, not accumulating more stuff”. The tendency to simplify other aspects of their lives to limit expenditure, and therefore the amount they had to earn was a common feature amongst my informants.

There are also those who choose not to have proper jobs, as outlined above. These individuals tended to have plenty of time, even more than is demanded by their windsurfing lifestyle, and they limited their dependence on money through a variety of self-sufficiency tactics. For example, Ben lives by the ocean in a quite rudimentary bach-like structure. He further limits his expenditure on food by spear fishing and collecting shellfish for his dinner. John, who sails mostly in the lakes in the South Island, keeps a large vegetable garden to limit his food bills. The more safely middle-class participants tend to view this self-sufficiency as a tad excessive. Joshua referred to Ben’s activities as “that feral man thing you’ve got going on” (Forum exchange on www.sessionlogs.com). The majority of core participants that I interviewed do not go to the extent of feeding themselves from the land. However, all but one did report spending less

on other aspects of their lives in order to windsurf more.

The most common thing that people mentioned economising on were the houses they lived in. Participants had dual motivations regarding their homes with regard to windsurfing. Firstly, they downgraded their expectations of the size and ostentation of their houses, so that they would not get caught in the mortgage trap where they had to earn a lot of money just to pay off the interest on their bank loans. This is not to say that they lived in hovels (with the exception of Ben) but they tended not to live, or aspire to live, in exclusive suburbs or in 'fancy' houses. The second requirement they had of their homes was that they be close to the subcultural spaces of the activity. Living close to the sea is often expensive though, which created a conflict with their primary goal of keeping their housing costs low. Individuals managed this conflict by buying or renting a cheap house in the right spot. For example, Paul lives right next to the beach in Napier in an old, modest house, surrounded by redeveloped postmodern apartments. He could, no doubt make a substantial profit by following suit, but he's right where he wants to be.

Another aspect of participants' expenditure which they altered to fit their lifestyle is the vehicle that they drive. All informants mentioned this change. Harry's comment is typical "my vehicle is always chosen for how much it can carry, not how flash it is". Often participants leave their vans loaded up with gear so that they can get to the beach that much faster. The Christchurch group I spoke to all proudly showed me their laden vans ready for a trip to Lake Clearwater, where they had caravans parked up so they could stay as long as the wind blew. This is a further example of attaching importance to use value as opposed to sign value, as discussed above. In driveways where one might expect to see a BMW, I have seen beaten up Toyota Hi-Aces loaded up to the gunwhales with boards, sails, masts, and general kit associated with a windsurfing lifestyle.

It could, of course, be argued that participants are buying the signifiers of a lifestyle sport vehicle through the purchase of their banged up vans. This is not how my informants see it, however. They see their vans (or station-wagons) as

purely practical, professing not to care what those outside the subculture think of their vehicles. I have met a few sailors who buy expensive recreational vehicles, but these are people who tend to be more peripheral in their involvement in the subculture. The core members that I interviewed did not want to 'waste' money on expensive vehicles. There was one exception to this. Jim, a well off lawyer, was able to both sail when he wanted to, as well as keep his board on top of a Porsche four-wheel drive.



Figure 3.1: Paul's van loaded up for a trip to Mahia. He considered this to be a modest amount of kit to take on a road trip. Photo: Craig Goodier

A further way in which participants compromise their economic position is in choosing to live in geographic locations that are not economically advantageous to them, but are great windsurfing spots. This is particularly true in Wellington. All my informants who are resident in the capital city said they had either moved there, or remained there, because of the ideal windsurfing conditions, even though it meant compromising their economic opportunities. For example, Simon (the chief financial officer of a law firm) told me that he could have a "much bigger job" if he left the capital, but remains because of

windsurfing. Richard is a film editor who returned to Wellington from a much better paid job in Auckland because he wanted to “get back to some decent wind”. Ben and Max both moved to Wellington because they heard the conditions were perfect. South Island participants do not have such perfect windsurfing conditions, mostly because it is so cold in winter as to be unsailable. They generally combine their windsurfing lifestyle with skiing or snowboarding so that they could maintain their outdoor lifestyle year-round. This is in common with many who I spoke with around the country, who have said that if they were unable to pursue a windsurfing lifestyle, they would adopt a different activity. Their attitudes to life and society are not restricted to windsurfing, but are based in the adoption of an outdoor lifestyle. Those who live in Auckland tend to be those who have lived there all their lives, because from a windsurfing perspective it is a pretty dire environment. They are also the people who have sacrificed least in the pursuit of windsurfing, and those who are least resistant to dominant consumerist culture. Those who were more committed to windsurfing tended to leave Auckland, such as Richard, or were planning to leave, such as Patrick, who told me “I guess I’ll just travel until I find an epic spot, and just settle there”.

Participants in the core of the windsurfing subculture are willing to compromise their economic situation; the work they do, the house they live in, the cars they drive. They are willing to live in centres that are not economically advantageous, but where the wind blows.

The Significance of Economic Sacrifice

Through taking jobs that do not pay as much as they could otherwise earn, or not working at all, by living in a cheaper house, driving a beaten up Toyota Hiace van instead of a BMW, participants are resisting consumerism in a direct way. They choose to create their own narratives in which success is determined by their own standards, like a great day in the wind and waves. As Harry said “I’m glad money’s not my priority, and at the end of the day, if the wind’s blowing and the sun’s shining, I’m stoked”. They are rejecting consumerism’s emphasis on monetary accumulation as the only measure of success. It is worth

bearing in mind that most of my informants could, by consumerist standards, be 'successful', as they are typically well educated people. The fact that they have chosen a simpler lifestyle so they "can really live" (Tim) shows that they are resisting monetary accumulation as the measure of success. This does not mean that they have 'dropped out' of consumerist society (with the exception of John). Most have jobs, a house and a car. Their idea of what makes them successful though, departs from the societal norms of consumerism. Within the subcultural core those that have the greatest skill and sail the most are considered the most successful.

Windsurfers are aware of the contradictions in their lifestyle, identifying the general tendency to buy new kit regularly as a significant contradiction to any anti-consumerist sentiment. Max said to me:

I don't know, there's a lot of people who just *have* to have the new kit every year because it's the new thing and it keeps you excited and I think there's quite a bit of consumer behaviour, people buy as much as is economically viable for them. Because it is quite an image kind of sport, the sails are real colourful, thing is, they don't actually change much, it's just they look new and, I probably feel that people are not actually anti-consumerist although they *do* compromise their work situation, so...

He trailed off at this point, aware of the contradiction between compromising their work situation and thus their economic opportunities, and being big consumers of kit for the activity. This contradiction is not surprising. If consumption is seen solely as the purchase of goods, then windsurfers are certainly big consumers. But it is more useful to see them as consumers of a lifestyle and of lifestyle objects; as discussed earlier. It is this lifestyle that may be seen as resistant to mainstream values. The lifestyle is not only resistant in a purely economic sense, however. The way that participants organise their lives has far wider manifestations, and further reinforces their divergence from the dominant ideology's version of a good citizen.

Resisting Cultural Expectations: Relationships

There was one way in which all of my informants were consistent: the ways in which they managed their relationships with other people. All of my informants said that they would not plan family or social events ahead of time during the

weekend or during daylight hours on weekdays, just in case it turned out to be windy. Milly told me:

yeah, prior to being windsurfers we were like normal people (laughs), you know, we'd commit to meeting people for dinner, and social events. I mean, even our friendship circle is different, I do have friends who don't windsurf, but our friends that do, either because you see them windsurfing or because they understand the need not to plan, or plan around the weather, it's like, it's cool, let's meet for drinks or dinner at 8:30, but people who don't windsurf are like, what am I going to do between work and 8:30, and I'm like, I don't know what you're gonna do, but I know what I'm going to be doing.

Jim was more succinct "I do not plan any events on the weekend or in the middle of the day, no family events, no parties. So if there is wind, I'm out there. I avoid any commitments so I can sail as much as I can". Even if they do find themselves at a social function, it may be curtailed for the sake of getting a good windsurfing session in. According to Harry:

every time nature rattles those leaves, whether it is midnight, and you're at a party, the wind comes up to 25 knots, and even though you're having a great session, you put the beers back in the fridge, excuse yourself and go home, 'cause you tell yourself, if I get up at 7.00, I can go for a sail.

As well as social relationships, informants were willing to compromise their domestic situation. Paul reported "I do less things with my family, less time with my wife, I have sacrificed my family life to do it". All informants who were in relationships referred to the need for an understanding spouse. Even those who were very young either did not have partners because they took up too much time, or they arranged things to allow themselves time on the water. Max told me in Wellington: "my girlfriend lives in Christchurch, but I purposely book my flights when I go to see her so that I can come back Sunday morning and at least hit one day sailing in the weekend, every time I go away (laugh)". Some people reported the demise of relationships in which the partner could not cope with the obsession. Simon said that he had "burned off" his wife when she objected to the amount of time he spent windsurfing. While I was conducting an interview with Tom, his wife interjected and said "his daughter has complained that daddy loves windsurfing more than me". Participants are willing to sacrifice their social and domestic lives in order to be able to sail whenever the wind

picks up. In this regard there was little variation between geographic groups, across gender lines, or between socio-economic groups.

The Significance of Resisting Cultural Expectations

This refusal to allow relationships to interfere with participation is significant because it shows the level of commitment to the activity, and the refusal to allow cultural expectations to interfere with their activities. My informants are displaying resistance because there is a real sense of struggle with societal expectations (including expectations as to what it means to be a parent, spouse, or friend). The degree to which they sacrifice their relationships to the pursuit of a windy day also shows the significance it takes in their lives. This may be considered to be resistant behaviour to the dominant culture because the ideology of the dominant culture is reinforced through people living according to the norms of that ideology. By living their lives differently to those norms, participants are showing that it is possible to live according to different priorities. Given that Beal (1995) argues that consent to the dominant ideology is mostly given unconsciously simply by arranging one's life according to those norms, the act of refusing to accept them is significant. By refusing to accept the limits of what is acceptable behaviour, participants are, in Gramsci's terms, resisting the ideology of the dominant culture.

My informants themselves considered the ways that they had altered their relationship patterns as very significant, and most of them keenly felt that they were resisting 'normal' behavioural expectations, which brings them firmly within Becky Beal's argument that deviance from social norms does represent resistance, and that "resistance to hegemonic forms of everyday life represents a significant foundation for social change" (1995, p.253).

Conclusion: Windsurfing Lifestyle as a Form of Resistance

Through challenging the dominant ideology as to what is perceived to be acceptable or even possible, core windsurfing subcultural members are resisting that dominant ideology. Most of my informants did not see their actions as a political act of resistance, focusing rather on the intrinsic benefits that they get

out of the activity. Nonetheless, in organising their lives around windsurfing, at some considerable economic cost, they are departing from the demands of a consumerist society. Thus they are challenging the dominant group's version of what is acceptable or possible. This allows us to view their activities as resistance, and their lifestyle as a critique of cultural norms. In the next chapter I will describe how the subcultural media manages the relationship between a lifestyle that is resistant to consumerism, and an activity that requires the purchase of a great deal of equipment.

Chapter 4: "Big Guys Doin' Heroic Stuff": The Ways Visual Culture Mediates the Contradiction of Resisting Consumerism Through Consumption

It is most useful to consider windsurfing as the consumption of a lifestyle rather than consumption of objects, and that lifestyle can be seen to be resistant to the imperatives of mainstream consumerism. Nonetheless, it is necessary in order to participate to consume a wide variety of kit. Therefore windsurfers are prodigious consumers simply because of the nature of the activity. This paradox is mediated by the visual culture of the subculture, particularly through advertising. In this chapter I show the ways in which this is done, beginning with an explanation of the importance of the subcultural media to the lifestyle. I move on to magazines and a description of their advertising content, followed by an hermeneutic analysis to get to the underlying messages of the advertisements. I then consider the responses of my informants to these messages. The "dreamworld" created in DVDs is in many ways more complex than in print advertising. Nonetheless the same intentions are evident. Finally, I describe and analyse the dreamworld created in these DVDs, followed by my ethnographic findings with regard to this aspect of the visual culture of the lifestyle.

In the first instance, it is necessary to distinguish between the general media and specialist media of the subculture. Windsurfing has almost no presence in the general media, and when it does appear, participants feel that it is misrepresented. All of my informants referred to the dowdy image projected by Olympic "board sailing". This class of sailing gets the only regular coverage and the core members of the subculture that I interviewed all felt that this coverage damaged the reputation of the activity and that it wasn't "real windsurfing". TV One's screening of the 2009 Wellington Free-wave competition was likewise derided by participants. This was partly due to the reporter arriving at the beach in high heels and a suit in a freezing 30knot southerly gale. She also misnamed

the activity as board-surfing. The specialist media on the other hand is solely aimed at the subculture and its lifestyle.

The Significance of Niche Media to Lifestyle Sport Subcultures

The specialist media consists of magazines, DVDs, and, of increasing importance, websites. Websites are of great consequence to the subculture. My informants all reported using them, primarily to network with other windsurfers, to organise sessions and to befriend potential sailing buddies. They are also using them for inspiration, especially the younger participants. This will have significant impact on the ways that companies market their products. However, no-one within the windsurfing industry appears to have formulated a successful business strategy to capitalise on this media, and at this point it appears to remain largely in the hands of the participants (the exception to this are online magazines, which conform entirely to the forms of printed magazines). For example, www.deepfried.tv and www.sessionlogs.com are both run by Chris Brown of Wellington, a windsurfer who runs them for the love of the lifestyle. Because websites therefore remain outside the influence of businesses that have goods to sell, they are outside of the scope of this thesis. It is within magazines and DVDs that the complex relationship, between anti-consumerist consumers and the industry that creates the consumer goods necessary for the activity, is mediated.

As I outlined in the literature review, the niche media have an important role in determining the nature of subcultural groups. The influence of these media on all aspects of the subculture is marked. From the creation of a subcultural identity to the landmarks of an individual’s subcultural development, to the types of sailing that newcomers aspire to. As Simon related: “people read mags when they’re learning, and set their own goals based on what they read, so people *are* influenced”. Milly went a step further: “I think the notion of what constitutes a good sailor comes from DVDs and that”. So within the subculture itself, an individual participant’s progression is given direction by the media, and those that are considered to be “good” are also determined by the ideals that the media creates. Joshua opined: “cultural landmarks are influenced by

subcultural media a hell of a lot, the media know what they want to promote, and what they say is good is generally perceived as good”. My informants did not see the media’s influence as a bad thing. It provides guidance to novice windsurfers, not only in their skill development but also lifestyle signifiers. Simon told me that he had consciously emulated what he saw in the media: “I remember I got a pink sail made in exactly the same colours as Robbie Naish and a custom board made with colours I got out of a magazine”. It is worth remembering that this is not a one-way transaction. The media in many ways reflects the subculture back to itself. As Milly said: “I think the magazines echo the culture”. So the relationship between media and subculture is a complex form of discourse, not simply a one-way indoctrination.

The media is seen by some of my informants to use its influence in determining the shape of the activity itself by dictating new disciplines, which are sometimes seen as a blatant attempt to sell more gear. This commercial influence is described by Simon in the following way:

the media has a big influence, and they like changing things, like board manufacturers will say twin fins are the best thing, and the whole shorter/wider board thing to the extreme, and the media will promote them, and people will try them because of that, there’s been a lot of change over the years, and the media help to make that happen.

Tom agreed, saying: “the media is all about the new shit, gotta turn over the new stuff, to keep the industry going”. This influence goes to the heart of my thesis, and next I look to the part that magazine advertising plays in this.

Magazine Advertising

Magazines have traditionally been the most important medium in an individual’s subcultural development. As Joshua argued: “the media plays a huge part. Without them the sport wouldn’t exist. So we’re really reliant on magazines”. Simon described his early involvement in the lifestyle: “when I started out I used to buy every single mag without fail and read every page and kept them all”. Magazines are easily accessible and relatively cheap. They are also the main means for manufacturers to advertise their goods. Changes in the ways that participants consume media mean that magazines are beginning to lose some of their significance. The younger participants that I interviewed tend

to use online video sites for their inspiration. This will influence the way that new participants get guidance in their subcultural development, and is changing the activity in ways which are beyond the scope of this work, but that will certainly bear future research. At this point in time, however, magazines remain the most significant point of contact between individuals and the manufacturers of consumer goods and the desire for those goods.



Figure 4.1: The February 2009 issue of *Windsurf* magazine used in my interviews

I used the UK *Windsurf* magazine as the material artefact of the visual culture of the windsurfing subculture in New Zealand. This magazine is by far the most popular and widely available, and importantly, all of my informants are familiar with it. I analysed the content of 20 issues (two years of publication) to ensure the content of the issue I used in my interviews was typical of that magazine and to provide context for that issue. There are two main forms of advertising in the magazine: brand and retail⁵. My focus here is the manufacture of desire, which

⁵ Brand advertisements are designed to create loyalty and profile for a specific brand. They are typically designed with a 'creative' idea, and seek, through the methods that I discuss in the text, to involve the

retail advertising does not attempt, so I describe and analyse only the brand advertising.

The issue of the magazine that I have used had 114 pages, of which 38 pages are advertising. There are 20 pages of brand advertising. The world depicted in these ads is one in which the sun always shines, the ocean is turquoise and the wind is perfect. The waves peel just right and the sailors are prodigiously skilled.



Figure 4.2: Blue skies, perfect waves, heroic sailors. *Windsurf Magazine* January 2009.

There are 23 individuals depicted in these ads. Of these, 22 are windsurfers who are shown in various challenging or extreme situations. The dangers that these sailors face are real. Baptiste Gossein who is shown in one of these ads, broke his spine later that same year, and remains in hospital as I write this. All

viewer in the advertising, and thus in the brand being advertised. Retail advertising is typically done by a retail outlet, and is designed to drive sales specifically. For example, the Briscoe's advertising that goes something like: Buy now, get 20% off. This kind of advertising does not attempt to create a dreamworld or even desire, and so is not really of interest to my thesis.

of the windsurfers who feature in these ads are male. All but one of them are in their 20s. The dreamworld created by the advertising is thus one of perfect conditions and young godlike (male) individuals daring monster waves under blue skies. This is what Carol Grbich refers to as the “obvious reading” (2007, p.159) in ethnographic visual analysis. Advertising does not, however, simply work on this level. An analysis of the ads is necessary to get to: “a meaning behind or beyond it - or even inside it” (Williamson, 1978, p.71).

So what are the underlying messages or codes that lie behind or beyond the print advertising in the UK *Windsurf* magazine? These ads, with one exception, are on the face of it fairly straightforward. There are, however, a number of signs within the ads that aim to create a sense of involvement in the viewer. The ‘action’ ads all work in exactly the same way. I will begin with these, as they are by far the majority (19/20) of the brand advertising in the magazine.



Figure 4.3: Heroes as signifiers. *Windsurf* Magazine January 2009.

The individuals portrayed are all young men who are professional windsurfers performing highly skilled and dangerous manoeuvres. These individuals are all well-known to core members of the windsurfing subculture. They are identified in the small print of the advertising, partly because their faces are typically obscured in the photographs. This is because in the context of the ad they have

to become signifiers as opposed to individuals. For the advertising to work as intended, the sailors have to be signifiers for the viewers of the image (Williamson, 1978). The idea is to generate the feeling that you, as the viewer, replace the actual sailor in the action depicted. Thus what is signified is the freedom and excitement that is available to the viewer. The windsurfing product is the transforming factor that can provide access to this lifestyle. In the *Starboard* ad shown in figure 3.3, the single word headline is “flare”. This is the name of board, and a pun on the description of the flair of the freestyler. The advert invites the viewer to make this connection, particularly freestylers who would recognise the trick Frans is performing. By involving its viewers in an interpretation, it makes them feel as though they are participating, and showing their expertise in being able to understand his performance. As with all ads, however, there is of course only one answer to the question raised. The viewer can only really come to the decision that both the board and the rider have flair.

These ads all attempt to create affect in their viewers. As I outlined in chapter one, windsurfing is a kinaesthetic activity that affords participants a flow experience. This is experienced primarily in a non-cognitive subconscious way that is difficult to articulate. This form of advertising attempts to tap into this subconscious flow experience to evoke an affective response in its viewers (Booth, 2008). The limitations of the medium mean, of course, that they are limited to using images to convey this affect, and to invoke the viewer’s own experiences to draw them into an affective experience that produces a flow experience in the viewer. Belinda Wheaton reports that her informants were drawn into the dreamworld depicted: “I used to look at these pictures of Mike Waltz and Mark Angulo...sailing in these waves in Hawaii, and just looked gorgeous, and I just used to dream about going to Maui” (2003, p.164). Similarly, Douglas Booth relates the words of a correspondent to *Tracks* magazine: “I recently returned to the coast and started buying tracks again. I wanted to tell you that the skin-creeping buzz I felt from the anticipation of an impending new issue has returned, and I love it” (2008, p.17). My own informants were more reserved. When I asked them how they responded to the imagery in the advertising they replied guardedly. Simon was not impressed by

the action shots, he felt that: “anyone could sail that good in those places”. So he did not feel that he was transported into the action. Joshua opined that the photography had become too predictable: “the action shots, I think you see them over and over again, you get immune to them”. The difference between my informants and those reported by Wheaton and Booth may be based on the level of experience of the individuals involved. Because I selected informants who had chosen a windsurfing lifestyle, they were all very committed and skilled windsurfers. This greater level of skill explains Simon’s response that the conditions are so good that anyone could sail well there, and Joshua’s response that he had seen it all before. This finding should be of concern to the advertisers, because it is these highly skilled sailors that should be able to imagine themselves as part of the action. This is particularly so because many actually felt somewhat alienated by the imagery.

The windsurfing community is more diverse than one might believe from viewing the print media that serves it. The participants that I interviewed ranged in age from 17 to 57 and were of both genders. This provided a sense of dissonance with the advertising among them. As Douglas Booth relates, the affective qualities of an image can be lost if even a very minor thing is ‘wrong’ in a photograph (2008). *Windsurf* magazine has a wide age range to cover, and both genders. This naturally creates difficulties for advertisers in creating connections with the viewers of its images, and having created a connection involving the viewer in an affective way. As I described earlier advertisers do not attempt to reflect the diversity of their target market.

Those of my informants who are not young men reported a degree of alienation from these images. When I asked Lucy if she found the ad depicted in figure 4.4 inspirational, she replied: “for me, it doesn’t, these guys are young guys, gung ho, it doesn’t have anything to do with me”. The sense of alienation was not restricted to the women. Those with more human limitations also found the images created a sense of distance rather than involvement. When I asked Jim if he was caught up by the advertising he responded: “nah, because what’s in the mags is just so far removed from what any normal human can do that it’s just

kind of irrelevant”. This sentiment was echoed by Paul, who felt that the ads were not affective: “not really, most of the moves are just really big guys doin’ heroic stuff”. Zac went even further, saying: “If I was buying a wave board, that guy (indicating the right hand side of figure 4.4) is a freak, and I’m never going to be able to do to any of the stuff that he can do”.



Figure 4.4: “It doesn’t have anything to do with me”. *Windsurf Magazine* January 2009.

There were two groups that did respond well to the advertising. Not surprisingly, the young, elite male participants did find the images in the ads affective. Ben enthused: “the ads are inspiration value really, to see what people can do, just the photo, not the ad itself”. Patrick agreed that they were inspirational and provided a degree of stoke: “a bit of inspiration for new moves, you can go I’d like to try that [...] it’s exciting”. This is exactly what the adverts are designed to do. Another group of people who responded positively were those who were able to recognise a location that they had travelled to in an advertisement (this was always the Hawaiian image in figure 4.4 as none of the other ads feature recognisable landscapes). These people largely ignored the action itself, but responded to the memories sparked by the image. Amy told me: “now that we’ve been to Maui, you can recognize places you’ve been, and it sparks memories again which is really nice. It’s nice wind and you get plenty of

sailing which is really good”. This comment is interesting because it shows the way that affect functions in advertising. Amy begins talking about the image in the advertising, but by the time she gets to the end of her sentence, she is talking about her own experiences in Hawaii. This is the desired effect but runs contrary to the technique used by most of the adverts in the magazine.



Figure 4.5: Could be anywhere. *Windsurf Magazine* January 2009.

All of the ads apart from the one shown in figure 4.4 deliberately do not have any landmarks. This is in order to make it easier to imagine yourself in the picture, because the environment is rendered in such a way that it could be your local break. Those who found affect in the action images were far outweighed by those who found them ho-hum at one end of the spectrum, or were actually alienated by them. Advertisers would do well to consider the makeup of their target market.

There is one ad in the magazine that does not depict the act of windsurfing at all. Instead it focuses on an aspect of the windsurfing lifestyle that everyone is able to relate to. As I discussed in chapter three, core members of the windsurfing subculture all reported the sacrifice of their domestic lives in order to sail as much as possible. The advertisement for Gun Sails shown in figure 4.6 is a clever interpretation of this aspect of the lifestyle.



Figure 4.6: Bringing the lifestyle home. *Windsurf Magazine* January 2009.

Like the action advertisements, this ad works by attempting to draw the viewer into the story created therein. It depicts the bathroom of a (non-windsurfing) girlfriend that has been taken over by windsurfing gear. The (male) windsurfer is absent, allowing the viewer to do the work of the advert, subconsciously placing himself into the situation, and thus relating more closely to the product. The wide range of windsurfing kit assembled performs the dual role of being signifiers of the level of commitment of the absent windsurfer, and to show the range of equipment available from the manufacturer. The woman becomes a

signifier of the relationships sacrificed to the activity. What is signified is the lifestyle of a committed windsurfer. An oppositional reading is also possible. The ad could be seen to encourage self-centred consumption at the cost of those around the individual whom the ad is aimed at. It also reinforces gender stereotypes, why not have a female windsurfer invade her partner's space? However, this was not how my informants interpreted this advertisement. All responded positively, including the women. The humour in the ad was appreciated – the punchline is: "I haven't even asked him to move in yet". As Zac said: "I like the gun sales ad, that gives you a giggle". Mostly, though, they like it because every windsurfer can relate to the taking over of one's domestic life by the activity, and it is that feeling that the ad taps into. John summed it up succinctly: "Yeah, I like that (laughs) it's just so true". The women's reactions were also positive, but for slightly more complicated reasons. They liked it because they were *not* victims like the woman in the advert, they were the ones who were committed to the lifestyle. People liked the ad because they could relate to it, hence it spoke to a much wider group. The young, the old, male, female, skilled, and not so skilled people could all see their own lives in it. It depicts and valorises the lifestyle in a somewhat more subtle way than the majority of the ads. However, it still privileges the activity as male, and more explicitly excludes women.

The majority of the advertising did not succeed in drawing my informants into the dreamworld created to provide a flow experience. All of my informants are committed to a windsurfing lifestyle, but the dissonance created by the universally young male world of the ads prevents them engaging in the process that the ads require (other than the minority who are actually young males).

Dreamworlds and DVDs

After magazines, DVDs are the primary marketing tools for windsurfing companies. By far the most popular and widely seen of these is the Fanatic *Addicted to Ride* series. Because everybody I spoke to had seen this DVD, I chose to use it as my case study into this aspect of the visual culture of the lifestyle subculture.



Figure 4.7: Fanatic: *Addicted to ride*.

There is no direct advertising on the DVD, instead, it is one long product placement for the board manufacturer Fanatic. The DVD is distributed free via windsurfing shops, which in some part explains its popularity especially with the more economically challenged of my informants. The contents of the movie diverge somewhat from the typical 'lifestyle' DVDs on which it is loosely based, in that the primary focus appears to be on the Fanatic team riders.

In many ways the DVD mirrors the lifestyle imagined and the dreamworld of the magazine advertising. It is full of beautiful tropical imagery and perfect waves and wind. *Addicted to Ride* also takes its viewers on a journey around the world to great windsurfing spots. These are commonly used devices. The dreamworld of the windsurfing subculture features wild nature and an escape from cities and crowds and perfect, beautiful locations. Where this story differs from the world created in magazine advertising is in the diversity of the sailors who make up the Fanatic team. They have riders from Ecuador, Gran Canaria, Germany, Venezuela, France, Britain, the Netherlands, and Israel. This diversity is certainly not accidental. In addition to national diversity, there are two (out of ten) female sailors on the team, and the action includes sailing from two Fanatic executives in their 30s or 40s.

The story works through having members of the team introduce each other, and describe their characteristics both on and off the water. The sailors then travel to various windsurfing spots around the globe and take turns describing

the conditions and strengths of each place. This device works to create a sense of intimacy with the riders, as it provides a situation in which you are introduced into a group of friends in much the same way as if you had met them at the beach. This is continued as sailors describe the conditions at each location they travel to. They chat directly with the camera, outlining the strengths and dangers of the spot to you (the viewer), as though you were a visitor to that beach. This mirrors the kinds of interactions that windsurfers experience in the very friendly and inclusive subculture of which they are a part. This pseudo-intimacy creates a sense that one knows these sailors and creates a kind of relationship with them, and by extension with the brand.



Figure 4.8: Depicting women as participants (still from *Addicted to Ride 5*).

A number of themes emerge from a “dominant” reading of this DVD. The first is that windsurfing is a global activity in two senses: first, in the sense that the participants are of truly international stock and second, in the sense that there are great spaces for windsurfing all over the world. The second theme that may be identified is diversity. As earlier outlined, women are celebrated as highly skilled professional windsurfers, and the action features riders in their 30s and 40s. A third theme privileges wave sailing as the pinnacle of the activity. Those who participate in this form are given the most airtime and are introduced in the

most detail. The final and most universal theme which underlies all windsurfing dreamworlds relates to the beauty of the natural environment, and the escape from cities (the escape from urban existence is usually depicted in a speeded up scene of a pickup truck driving out of town loaded up with sailors and gear).



Figure 4.9: A chat with Victor at the beach about the conditions. (still from *Addicted to Ride 5*).

An alternative or oppositional reading of the DVD might be that the activity is still dominated by young privileged men who have the economic wherewithal to participate. Women and older individuals are marginalised by their relatively low level of representation. Fanatic pushes consumption of products made of toxic compounds which are destructive of the natural environments so celebrated in the narrative.

Applying an hermeneutic analysis, *Addicted to Ride* functions primarily on the basis of an absence. That is, you (the viewer) are invited to enter the dreamworld by filling an absence. Williamson (1978) argues that this is one of the most obvious ways that advertising works to involve us. The sailors in the story talk to us directly as though in conversation. There is no interviewer, and so it becomes as though we were simply chatting with friendly locals at their

spot, and being introduced to their friends. The sailors become signifiers of these locals. There are many signifiers of a windsurfing lifestyle in these shots. The beach, the vans full of windsurfing gear, the casual beach wear (see figure 4.9) that the sailors wear while chatting about the local break. All of these are signifiers. The signified is a life spent windsurfing in a lifestyle of hedonistic pleasure. Because the riders in the video talk directly to us, we become participants in the dream work interpreting the signifiers of the lifestyle and taking part, rather than simply viewing the action.

My informants all liked *Addicted to Ride*. Max told me: "you look at the videos, and see the stuff (Fanatic Boards) being used, and subconsciously put yourself into it, is that me?" Which is exactly what Fanatic are hoping you will do. Joshua also felt that the Fanatic strategy was effective: "look at Fanatic, they do lot of DVDs - with marketing, it's who shouts the loudest that gets seen the most. And shout loud enough and people think you are an expert". (Joshua is a local representative for Naish, a competitor brand, so he did not view their marketing activities in an entirely positive light, although he did enjoy watching the action). Lucy told me that she had been influenced by the video: "I would consider it (buying a Fanatic), definitely; it does change the way you think, I know everyone here talks about JP's and I've rented JP's and they're fine, but I'd probably be interested in Fanatics first, partially because of the DVD". Milly felt that it did create positive attitude to the brand: "I'm sure that they do drive desire and consumption, for me it is about warm fuzzies around the brand". Most of my informants, though, simply enjoy the story for its action sequences, and ignore the fact that it was a promotional tool for Fanatic. Patrick for example, said: "I watch them, it doesn't bother me about the Fanatic sponsorship thing - I mean it's not as if I'm going watch it and then *have* do go out and buy Fanatic or anything. Just because these guys are ripping on it. It's a free marketing gimmick, and I'd rather have it free than have to pay \$50 for it". Tom was more succinct: "I like watching the Fanatic DVDs, but I haven't bought Fanatic, I've got my own allegiances". These comments, or variations on the same theme, account for all the rest of my informants.

However, I believe that *Addicted to Ride* does have an impact on the subculture, and certainly raised the profile of Fanatic. For example, in the original *Addicted to Ride* there is a scene in Pozo, where Jonas Cabellos and Klaas Voget are in a state of adrenalin fuelled high excitement. They are exchanging stories about a high wind session they had just completed. Jonas, barely able to speak through his laughter, says: "3.3, full-power" (3.3 refers to the sail size in square metres that he was using. This is a very small sail, so to be fully powered the wind would have been over 50 knots or just short of 100 km/h). For some time after the DVD came out, sailors could be heard at the beach yelling 4.2 - full power into the wind and laughing.

Mediating the Contradiction Inherent in Resisting Consumerism Through Consumption

It can be seen that my informants are quite resistant to advertising in and of itself. This may be an extension of the general resistance to consumerism that I described in chapter two. As Paul said: "there are a lot of ads around that have no info apart from promoting the brand name sometimes. I'm a bit cynical though. I think about 99% of ads are useless". It seems doubtful from my ethnographic work whether brand advertising actually sells any product as such. It is arguable that this is not its primary purpose in any case. How then does the visual culture mediate the paradox of a lifestyle that resists consumerism through consumption?

The answer is most evident in the DVD, but is still apparent in the print advertising analysed earlier in this chapter. The visual culture these constitute primarily acts to promote a kind of lifestyle, not to sell consumer goods. For example, in *Addicted to Ride*, Viktor and Jonas (amongst the others) introduce each other and the places that they ride. They do not focus on the boards they happen to be riding (The slalom riders do, at the end of the story, discuss particular aspects of their boards, which may reflect a more technical level of interest amongst sailors who race). Craig Gertenbach, the brand manager for Fanatic boards, the man responsible for marketing in this form has this to say:

they are all addicted to windsurfing, the same way we are, and their goal is to have the best possible boards, and have the most time windsurfing. Because we are windsurfers, that's what we have the most fun doing. We hope like us you are going to share the addiction for the best sport there is, and that's windsurfing. (*Addicted to Ride 1 DVD*)

He is a marketing man and cannot resist mentioning the boards, but his main focus is on the lifestyle itself. This illustrates the main thrust of the advertising generally. The visual culture of this windsurfing subculture valorises the lifestyle and encourages people to be part of that. Consumer goods in the form of windsurfing equipment are shown in images or action sequences as a means to achieve that lifestyle, and not in and of themselves.

This is a common enough technique in advertising, as I showed in the literature review. It is interesting here, because the technique is used to mediate the contradiction between an anti-consumerist lifestyle, and consuming the necessary equipment to take part. Mostly this technique is used as a way of selling goods that *signify* resistance, such as the advertising for *Volkswagen* in the 1960s (Frank, 1997). Windsurfers are living a life that *is* resistant to consumerist dictates, and they do so using consumer goods. That is the distinction. As outlined earlier, it is not possible to buy your way into the subculture, so the purchase of the kit is for its use value as an enabler of the activity. The visual culture mediates the contradiction by pointing this out.

Conclusions: “Nah, I just Wanna Go Windsurfing”.

This thesis is designed to give an understanding of the ways that a lifestyle sport subculture can be resistant to consumerist society through the consumption of consumer goods, and the ways that the visual culture of the activity mediate this apparently contradictory relationship. In order to gain this understanding, I undertook an ethnographic study of the participants of the windsurfing subculture. This was aimed at achieving knowledge of a number of factors. Firstly, the motivators that inspire members of the subculture to be part of a lifestyle that requires such a degree of sacrifice in the other areas of their lives. Secondly, I needed to know whether their lifestyle actually amounted to resistance to consumerist ideology, so my research had to establish the ways in which people compromised other areas of their lives. Finally, I wanted to establish the ways that the visual culture of the subculture mediated the paradox of resisting consumerism through consumption. In order to do this, I performed both dominant and oppositional readings of the advertising in UK *Windsurfer* magazine and the *Addicted to Ride* DVD published by Fanatic. In addition to this I undertook an hermeneutic analysis of these same media. As ethnographic research is the backbone of this thesis, I also asked my informants for their reaction to the dreamworlds created by these media.

My research suggests that the core of the windsurfing subculture is resistant to consumerist ideology, in a number of ways. Resistance to a dominant ideology may manifest in a number of ways which are demonstrated by my informants. In departing from cultural norms by prioritising the pleasure of the flow, that they can achieve windsurfing ahead of the usual priorities in our society, the lifestyle itself may be seen as resistant. There are also a number of specific ways that they may be seen as resisting consumerist ideology. These include: the rejection of traditional sporting values (and therefore the dominant ideology), using time in such a way as to subvert the priorities of the dominant ideology, and resistance to the idea of wealth as the primary measure of success, my informants put their lifestyle ahead of the accumulation of material wealth, and this may be seen as resistance to consumerist ideology. My informants also expressed their struggle with societal expectations and their relationship with

others, refusing to allow these expectations to interfere with their priorities. So resistance is manifest in the way they choose to live their lives according to their own priorities as opposed to the dominant ideology.

My analysis of magazine advertising and DVDs, the aspects of the visual culture that attempt to mediate the paradox, reveals that they do this by celebrating a lifestyle, not directly trying to sell consumer goods. *Windsurf* magazine and the Fanatic *Addicted to Ride* DVD create a "dreamworld" in which conditions are always perfect, the oceans crystal clear and the sun always shines. By attempting to create affect through their imagery, they attempt to involve the viewer, inviting them to imagine themselves as part of the action (using the advertisers' product, of course). The DVD was able to take this one step further, by 'involving' viewers in a pseudo-intimacy with Fanatic team riders who chat with the viewer as though you were there on the beach. This intimacy creates the sense that you know these riders, and by extension, the brand they represent.

My analysis shows that this is part of the way that consumerist ideology works: it offers the dream of escape from the very trap that it creates, but only through consumption, thereby deepening the trap. What it typically offers though, are the signifiers of escape, or the image of freedom. My informants have taken the tools offered by consumerist society, and actually created a lifestyle that is resistant to the demands of consumerism. They are not, in any case, convinced by the images of the visual culture, those dreamworlds are too distant from their own experiences. They create their own lifestyle using the tools made available to them by consumer society. This lifestyle offers them a degree of freedom. The space this creates for them affords them a place to step back and critique the society they live in because they are not so deeply immersed in it. This allows them to question the values of that society. The most extreme example of this is John, having given up his job altogether and living cheaply. He used his windsurfing experience as a chance to critique his "successful" life, and chose to simplify so that he could live a more rewarding life. Not many have the courage or resources to completely give up work, but all except one of my informants have rearranged their economic situation as a result of their participation. In

effect they have critiqued society’s version of success and have found it wanting. Harry, who now works in a windsurfing shop, Ben pursuing whatever course of study he could find in Wellington that would allow him time to windsurf, Bob and his self-owned plastering business, and Tom choosing contracting instead of being an employee are all examples of ways that my informants have modified their economic expectations to allow them the ability to be on the water when the wind blows. This is crystallised in the response Ben gave me when I asked him if he wanted to be ‘successful’ in the eyes of the wider society: “Nah, I just wanna go windsurfing”.

Most participants are not consciously counterculture individuals. They are not actively attempting to bring about widespread social change. Their intentions are much closer to home. To improve their own lives, and establish their place in a subculture that matters to them. Windsurfers take the stoke that they derive from their activity, and create a whole lifestyle around the play or art-form that they participate in. They may not be trying to change the world, but the dominant ideology *is* challenged by their activities, and so they provide a place for the critique of those ideologies, by showing that it is possible to live differently. Perhaps they will change the world.

Limitations

My research has necessarily been limited to fit the constraints and parameters of a Masters thesis. There are, therefore, a number of caveats to be considered alongside this research. During the complete participant phase of my ethnographic research, I became well-known in the local subculture as well as coming to know other participants quite well. This meant that I was able to choose my interview subjects with a reasonably good understanding of their place in the subculture, and their level of commitment (a key subcultural signifier, see Wheaton (2003) for example). When I came to select interviewees in other areas, however, I had to rely on my knowledge of subcultural participants from my interactions with them on the internet, particularly www.deepfried.tv and www.sessionlogs.com. This worked quite well in places that use these sites to network and log their sailing sessions, as I was able to

assess their levels of commitment using www.sessionlogs.com in particular. My presence on these sites also made me a familiar figure, at least in the virtual world, to those I wanted to interview, so they had a sense of my own level of commitment to the activity. People in Christchurch, however, steadfastly refuse, for reasons known only to themselves, to network on www.deepfried.tv or to log their adventures on www.sessionlogs.com. I therefore had no way of knowing the level of commitment of the sailors I was to interview, and they had no knowledge of my own involvement. Subcultural groups are typically suspicious of outsiders, and so I had some work to do with people to establish sufficient trust so that they were willing to be interviewed. Once I had established one such relationship with a participant, others in her group of friends were willing to participate. The Christchurch results are therefore likely to be skewed to a particular group of friends. However, in the larger study this is unlikely to be of significance, simply their levels of commitment tended to be somewhat lower than the interviewees that I had chosen because they were core members of the subculture.

Because I was interested in people who had made the activity their lifestyle, casual or occasional participants were not interviewed. Their views are therefore less represented here, although I did interact with them and observe their involvement during the complete participant phase. A discussion of levels of involvement leads into a reflection upon status within the subculture, which prizes commitment above all else (Wheaton; 2003). Subcultural status is a significant factor within lifestyle sport activities. For example, see Donnelly and Young (1988) regarding the creation of subcultural identities and status or Wheaton (2003) regarding levels of commitment and subcultural status. My work here does not focus upon status within the subculture, except in a peripheral way, in that all of my interviewees were core participants, and therefore of high subcultural status.

Further Research

As well as questions of who was included in my sample and their status within the subculture I was examining, there are also significant gender issues around

lifestyle sport subcultures, which deserve scrutiny. These issues are one of a number that could be explored in further research, but which are outside the scope of this thesis. There is a body of work, including that by Wheaton (2004), and Beal and Wilson (2004) which concludes that lifestyle sport subcultures tend to valorise male participants at the expense of female involvement. This is in contradiction to the open access ethos that lifestyle sport is grounded upon. There are, no doubt, issues around the participation of women in lifestyle sports which I briefly touch upon in my analysis of the texts of the visual media of the subculture. A detailed discussion of gender issues surrounding lifestyle sports would reward more research.

Another set of issues which I have not been able to consider are ideas around the male gaze. During my work as a complete participant, I noted that people are always conscious of being watched by other sailors. Part of the ritual of preparing to windsurf involves gazing at the water to get a feeling for the conditions. This includes watching other sailors to see how they are handling the situation and what equipment they are using. People told me that they are always aware of this as they are sailing. This seems to me to be something of a divergence from the otherwise very apt theories of Csikszentmihalyi (1990) of the flow, and Nigel Thrift's (2008) non-representational theory. Both of these theories are predicated to some degree on the loss of self-consciousness that takes place in flow or deeply affective activities. It is not within the capacity of my thesis to go into this in any depth, but it is certainly an interesting disparity, and would bear further research.

Other opportunities for further research would include an investigation of the impact on the subculture of the use of *YouTube* by participants. Prior to the existence of *YouTube*, windsurfers were dependent largely on magazines and DVDs for visual representations of their lifestyle. These media were entirely dependent on the support of businesses that wished to sell product for their survival. Therefore, depictions of the lifestyle were naturally very heavily influenced by these businesses. My analysis of samples of advertising and DVDs in chapter three shows this quite clearly. By publishing their own videos directly

on *YouTube*, without the influence of publishers and sponsors, individuals may well produce a completely different representation of their lifestyle. My ethnographic work revealed that people are turning more and more to the self-made videos on *YouTube* and *Vimeo* for the creation of the dreamworld of their culture. Consequently, detailed analysis of this turn may well produce interesting results. This trend is bound to have a significant impact on the way that businesses promote their product, which would also provide a fruitful source for research.

This thesis is an ethnographic work which seeks, through the involvement of participants themselves, to understand a paradoxical relationship between consumerist society and a lifestyle sport subculture which is resistant by nature to consumerism, but which could not exist without consumer goods. To finish, I will allow them to speak for themselves, as I have attempted to do throughout: "A job is the last thing you want...who needs money when you can go windsurfing?" (Ben).

Afterword

David struggles back toward the beach we had started from with considerable difficulty. He has to keep his rig submerged or the whole thing will just take off without him. By the time he makes it back he's looking exhausted, and weak. "Bloody Hell" he yells at me as he reaches the relative shelter of the bay. "Beats being at work though, doesn't it?" We smile and gaze back out at the writhing sea.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions

1. Establish informants position in the subcultural lifestyle.
 - How skilled a windsurfer are you?
 - How long have you been windsurfing?
 - How old are you? Does getting older make any difference?

2. Establish level of commitment to the subculture.
 - How often do you sail?
 - How much time you spend planning to WS?
 - i. Networking on subcultural websites?
 - ii. Checking weather sites
 - How much time do you spend on subcultural media?
 - To what level have you altered your life to accommodate the activity?
 - i. The place you live?
 - ii. Domestic life?
 - iii. What effect do these choices have on work?
 1. Career chosen for accessibility?
 2. Jobs chosen for flexibility?
 - iv. Do you feel you have compromised your economic potential in order to windsurf?

 - Does the adoption of an activity that requires extensive time commitments signify resistance to mainstream consumerism?
 - Is this a rejection of mainstream ideas of success?
 - How would you describe the windsurfing subculture?
 - Has it changed in your time as a windsurfer?
 - What would you say are the landmarks of someones development in the subculture?
 - How much are these cultural landmarks influenced by the

subcultural media?

- What reward do you get from sailing?

3. Consumption of Objects

- How much kit do you own?
- How often do you upgrade/replace it?
- What is the relationship between windsurfing and consumption?

4. Media

- What subcultural media do you consume?
 - i. Magazines?
 - ii. DVDs?
 - iii. Web Sites?
- Which is the most important to you? Why?

Content questions

- Ads
- DVDs
- What influence does each type of media have?
 - i. Why do you buy them?
 - ii. information or inspiration/both?
 - iii. Does the lifestyle shape the media or the media shape the lifestyle?
 - iv. Do you consciously emulate the figures in the media?
- Do the subcultural media manufacture the desire for consumption of new gear?
- How much of the lifestyle is actually created by subcultural media in order to sell gear? (eg freestyle?)

5. Can you recount for me your best ever windsurfing experience?

Appendix 2: My Informants

I began the interview phase of my ethnographic work in April 2009, and it continued until my belated trip to Dunedin in August 2009. I travelled to Lake Ferry in April, Christchurch in May, continued interviewing throughout May in Wellington, I went to Napier and Auckland in June, and finally visited Dunedin in August. The generosity of my informants was one of the most pleasurable aspects of the research.

The recordings of the original interviews remain in my possession.

A brief description of each of my informants follows, in no particular order.

Ben: 19 year old university undergraduate, and one of the most talented freestylers in the country. I met him at Fidel's café in Wellington, until our interview was cut short by a favourable wind shift. University study is a means to allow him to windsurf. He logged the second highest number of windsurfing sessions on www.sessionlogs.com in 2009 (behind Patrick).

Simon: 47 year old CFO for a large law firm. Has been windsurfing since 1981, and competed up to nationals level in wave, slalom, and freestyle. We met in a noisy pub in Featherstone Street in Wellington.

Milly: 35, market researcher. She has been windsurfing for 10 years, and has travelled extensively windsurfing around the globe. She is closely aligned with the soul surfers in that she does it purely for pleasure, and competition does not feature in her experience. She is a keen snowboarder during the winter months. She invited me to interview her at her home in Miramar in Wellington.

John: 57, lifestyle windsurfer. Windsurfing for 23 years. Spends 1-3 months a year in winter in Maui, windsurfing the perfect tropical conditions there. The rest of the time he sails in the southern lakes. He is the most committed of my informants to the lifestyle, having quit his job and deciding to live simply so that he could pursue a life of speed and fun. I interviewed John after a dinner party

in Christchurch, along with all but one of the other of my Christchurch informants (the dinner party was set up by a mutual friend so that I could interview them).

Patrick: 18, university undergraduate. Arguably the best freestyler in the country. We met in an expensive café in Takapuna, close to his parents home. He sees his study as a means to get on the water. He logged the most windsurfing sessions in 2009.

Bob: 57, plasterer. He has been windsurfing for 22 years. His self owned business allows him to sail when he wants to. He invited me to his home in Dunedin, where his dog tried to eat me, only half-heartedly discouraged by its owner.

Max: 22, engineer. Max has been windsurfing for 10 years to a high standard, mostly freestyle. He met with me at a waterfront café in Wellington.

Tim: 25, software engineer (contracting). I met with Tim, and interviewed him in less than ideal conditions at a pub during a WWA event. I have referred to his interview as field notes, because I did not record the interview, and wrote down his responses in less than perfect conditions. His contracting work allows him plenty of time on the water.

Amy: 44, Nurse. She has 8 years experience as a windsurfer. She was part of the Christchurch dinner party group. Shift work as a nurse allows her to sail during the day.

Matt: 42, Mobile Bank Manager. 20 years experience as a highly skilled sailor. He uses the flexibility of his job to get on the water as much as possible. I met him at Maranui café in Lyall Bay in Wellington. My recording device was unavailable for this interview, and so I transcribed it by hand at the time.

Josh: 36, self employed graphic designer. 23 years of sailing. The instigator of

both www.deepfried.tv and www.sessionlogs.com, and so very influential in the local subculture. I met with him at Floridita's in Cuba Street in Wellington, a place notable for its terrible acoustics, and which rendered my tape recorder almost useless (luckily I was able to decipher his voice amongst the almost white noise). Being self employed is, naturally, a good way to go sailing quite a lot.

Lucy: 43, business owner. 15 years sailing. Notable as the only informant of non-european origin (she is of Chinese descent). Another of the Christchurch dinner party crowd. Owning her own business allows for flexibility in sailing time.

Ian: 27, unknown occupation. 20 years of sailing, national slalom champion 3 times. I met with him in the windsurfing shop in Dunedin.

Jim: 35, lawyer. Sailing for 23 years to a high standard. I met with him at his beautiful house in an expensive part of town in Auckland. He manages to get out sailing a lot, but still has a Porsche 4-wheel drive to carry his windsurfers around on.

Harry: 42, windsurf shop worker. Windsurfing for 27 years, and goes to Maui during the winter for a month. I met him at the shop in Christchurch, where he works because he couldn't stand to be in an office. He is right next to the estuary, so can get out as soon as the conditions are right (as long as the shop is attended).

Richard: 46, film editor. Windsurfing for 20 years, lives in Wellington because that's where the wind is. I met him downtown in Wellington. He works from home, so he can sail when the wind is right. My recording device was unavailable for this interview, so I transcribed it manually.

Zac: 43, business owner. Windsurfing for 17 years. Part of the Christchurch dinner party group, probably the least committed of all of my interviewees.

Tom: 32, IT contractor. Windsurfing for 22 years. His occupation allows him to get out sailing when it is windy (which in Auckland is not very often). He invited me to his home where he lives with his wife and 5 daughters (they got triplets this time round).

Paul: 44, engineer. Windsurfing for 5 years. A self-proclaimed 'hippy' Paul has a marked anti-consumption ethos, probably the strongest of my informants in that regard.

Jenny: 45, mother. Windsurfing for 17 years. Unusual in that she is a truly working class participant, having been a steel mill worker (as opposed to choosing to be self employed for lifestyle reasons). She invited me to her home where I met her young children, the youngest of whom has just started kindergarten, so she can go sailing every day.