“Oh yeah, I’m a skateboarder”

Exploring how girls in Auckland become members of the skate community

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Health Science
In
Environmental Health

at Massey University, New Zealand

Jacquelyn Anne Collins

2021

Abstract

Youth inactivity is a global concern, and girls are a focus of many interventions because traditional opportunities to engage in sport do not appear to meet their needs. Girls' opportunities to be active are affected by a complex network of socio-cultural factors including gender role socialisation, objectification, sexism, and the male coding of many sports and physical activities. This thesis presents research based on hermeneutic phenomenological principles that explores the lived experiences of female skateboarders in Auckland, New Zealand. The multifaceted study focuses on novice female skateboarders and Girls Skate NZ, the girls-only skate school that has brought many girls into the skate community since 2018. Drawing on a focus group with skateboarding girls, interviews with the girls' parents, interviews with adult skateboarders, and quantitative skate park observations, the study investigates what it is like for girls to enter the male-dominated world of skateboarding. The study identified impeding factors to girls' skateboarding, but also that Girls Skate NZ supports girls to overcome barriers to participation and increases their confidence on and off the skate park. Parents reported that learning to skate has enhanced their daughters' resilience and given them opportunities to embrace alternative forms of femininity. The study participants reported that members of the skate community at the skate parks used by study participants have become increasingly accepting of female skateboarders. Although gendered barriers still exist that make it more challenging for girls to become skateboarders, the skate park experiences of the girls suggested that they had not experienced deliberate marginalisation from male skateboarders. Girls Skate NZ was shown to successfully provide opportunities for autonomy and competence-building in a supportive, female-friendly environment, which provides a useful blueprint for future initiatives intended to scaffold girls into male-dominated sports.

Key words: *skateboarding; gender; female skateboarding; gender role socialisation; gender stereotypes*

Acknowledgements

Several people have played a crucial role in supporting me as I completed my research and wrote this thesis, and I'd like to thank and acknowledge them.

Firstly, my husband, Tristan, who has once again demonstrated that he's the kindest and cleverest person alive. His care, support, wisdom, and guidance enabled me to tackle what sometimes felt like an impossible task. Thank you also to Joseph and Harriet for being unfailingly loving and tolerant, even when Mummy was really busy and tired.

Many thanks to my family for their support and encouragement, and in particular to my parents for all of their kindnesses, and for hosting their stressed-out daughter for a week of study leave at a crucial point in the writing process.

I would like to thank Professor Karen Witten and Dr Octavia Calder-Dawe for jointly supervising me through an incredibly challenging 18 months of lockdowns and disruption. They encouraged me to expand the scope of my research and helped me to navigate my way through the challenging thesis-writing process with their thoughtful critiques and feedback.

Thanks is also due to my nephew, Charlie Myer, who transcribed a vast amount of material for me, and my friend Kerry Blackshaw, who did a magnificent job of proofreading my final draft. Thank you also to my manager, Peter Caccioppoli, for his support and good cheer while I was juggling a lot of work- and study-related balls.

Finally, a huge thank you to Amber Clyde, who is a true coach and the reason why this research exists, and to all my study participants for so generously sharing their stories with me.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The international trend of youth inactivity

Across the developed world there is widespread concern that young people are insufficiently active, and that girls are less active than boys. In the United Kingdom the Chief Medical Officer recommended that children and young people engage in at least one hour of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity every day, ideally for several hours daily (Youth Sports Trust, 2018). However, research indicated that only 32% of boys and 24% of girls regularly achieve these recommended levels, and that activity levels lessen from childhood to adolescence (Edwardson, Gorely, Musson, Duncombe, & Sandford, 2014). In the United States of America fewer than 50% of young people achieve a mininum of 60 minutes of 'at least' moderate aerobic activity each day, as well as muscle-strengthening and bone-strengthening activities – the activity goal set by the US Center for Disease Control (The Tucker Center, 2018). Some countries' youth activity recommendations may appear unrealistic in the context of young people's busy lives, but this notwithstanding, available data suggests that many countries are right to be worried about youth inactivity.

1.2 Inactive girls

Youth inactivity is a gendered problem. An assessment of female activity levels across 100 countries identified that 95 per cent of women and girls do not meet a recommended target of 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity each day (Corr, McSharry, & Murtag, 2019). Scandinavian, British, Irish, Canadian, American, and Australian studies have all reported that girls are generally less active than boys, engage in fewer physical activities, and exercise less often (for example, Slater & Tiggemann, 2011; Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2012; Eime *et al*., 2015; Lauderdale, Yli-Piipari, Irwin, & Layne, 2015; O'Connor, McCormack, Robinson, & O'Rourke, 2017). Past studies of physical activity levels have typically focused only on recreational physical activity and have reported that boys are more active because they find more

opportunities for sport and recreation: they play more team sports, engage in active free play in open spaces, and use school breaks and other discretionary time periods to be active (Beighle, Morgan, Le Masurier, & Pangrazi, 2006; Leversen, Torsheim, & Samdal, 2012; Watson, Eliott, & Mehta, 2015). Boys also tend to dominate school PE classes because of their competitiveness, dominance of physical PE space, and superior physical skills, all of which alienate many girls and can contribute to early restrictive beliefs that sport and physical activity is mainly for boys (Azzarito, Solmon, & Harrison Jr, 2006). This reduced engagement in school PE can have lasting consequences for girls, reducing their opportunities to develop the fundamental physical literacy needed to engage effectively in sport and active recreation going forward, which further reinforces gendered perceptions that girls are physically less able to participate (Klomsten, Marsh, & Skaalvik, 2005; Azzarito *et al*., 2006).

1.3 The New Zealand context

Although most young people in Aotearoa New Zealand are active to some extent each week, achieving recommended activity levels varies by age, ethnicity, and gender (Aktive, 2018). The trend of youth inactivity in New Zealand can be tracked for at least 30 years and indicates a decline in activity levels over the past two decades. Data from the late 1990s showed that 74% of boys and 64% of girls regularly achieved the recommendations at that time of at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity on most days of the week, (Hamlin & Ross, 2005). However, more recent data indicated that only 53% of boys and 41% of girls aged 15 to 17 years old meet current recommended physical activity guidelines of at least an hour of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity each day (Sport New Zealand, 2018a).

Changing study parameters and physical activity target amounts make it challenging to directly compare data over time, but the downward trend for youth activity levels appears clear, and also demonstrates the gendered difference in activity levels observed internationally. The 2018 Active New Zealand Survey further emphasised this gendered difference, with 53% of males and only 24% of females being assessed as sufficiently active (Smith *et al.*, 2018). Some past research focused on organised sport and overlooked

other ways to be active, such as walking to school or participating in dance classes, and this may have distorted findings in favour of male-dominated activities. However, in the Sport New Zealand 2011 Young People's Survey participants chose from a broad range of play, recreation, and sport activities and indicated how often they'd engaged in them over the previous year, and despite this wider definition of 'being active', the findings confirmed that boys are more active than girls (Sport New Zealand, 2012). Ongoing concerns about female inactivity have resulted in the New Zealand government releasing its 2018 *Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation Strategy* and increased funding to support initiatives to encourage girls to be active (Sport New Zealand, 2018b).

1.4 The benefits of being active

The phenomenon of inactive young people is a continued topic of research and discussion because being active has significant physical, mental, and emotional health benefits (Tucker Center, 2018). Supporting young people to access these benefits also brings an inherent reduction in the manifold disadvantages caused by being insufficiently active.

1.4.1 Summarising the benefits

Being physically active can support good physical health by reducing the risk of developing chronic diseases like diabetes and acute diseases like cancer, and by strengthening bone density and reducing the risk of osteoporosis. Active people are more likely to maintain good blood pressure and a healthy weight, and these health benefits accrue from as early as young childhood (Fredrickson & Harrison, 2005; Vu, Murrie, Gonzalez, & Jobe, 2006; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Tucker Center, 2018). Active children are also more likely to grow up understanding the lifestyle choices that support good health (Svender, Larrson, & Redelius, 2012; Eime *et al*., 2015; Tucker Center, 2018). Being active as a child boosts physical literacy and the development of motor skill competencies and eye-hand coordination, and these factors increase the likelihood that people will enjoy being active and thus choose to prioritise it (Cherney & London, 2006; Tucker Center, 2018). Sport New Zealand (2019) has also noted

a positive correlation between being physically active and achieving various wellbeing indicators (such as healthy eating and sufficient sleep), all of which further promote good physical health.

Direct benefits of being active include a reduced risk of anxiety, depression, and susceptibility to stress, and increased capacity to manage mental health conditions (Cooky & McDonald, 2005; Sport New Zealand, 2018b; Tucker Center, 2018). Indirect benefits include increased self-determination and confidence, a strengthened positive self-perception and sense of identity, and a greater sense of empathy, and more defined moral identity (Bailey, Wellard, & Dismore, 2005; Fredrickson & Harrison, 2005; Thorpe & Chawanksy, 2016; Tucker Center, 2018). The mental health benefits that accrue from being physically active are stronger for girls than for boys, particularly in the short term (Bailey *et al*., 2005).

Social benefits accrue from regular physical activity because most sport and active recreation involves contact with other participants, in both team and individual sports and activities. This enables young people to make new friends and broaden social networks, building their interpersonal skills (Murray & Howat, 2009; Eime *et al*., 2015; Tucker Center, 2018). Young people may also develop a community identity through physical activity, either by becoming part of a team or by aligning themselves with a sub-culture that surrounds a particular sport or activity (Svender et al., 2012; Sport New Zealand, 2018b; Tucker Center, 2018). Participating in team sports can nurture conflict management and decision-making skills, and an increased understanding of group dynamics (Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2012; Tucker Center, 2018). These benefits can also accrue to participants of individual sports if taking part requires the shared use of a space. Skate parks are an example of this, and constant verbal and non-verbal communication between participants helps to prevent accidents and support multiple users to share a space effectively.

Boys may draw greater social and intrinsic benefits from participating in organised sport and recreation activities. Boys typically enjoy testing and improving their physical competence, including in sports-based activities with a

perceived element of ‘fairness’ – in other words, with agreed rules, and often with competitive elements (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Youth Sports Trust, 2018). Sport participation can support boys’ sense of masculinity and give them a socially acceptable opportunity to have fun with their friends, particularly as older adolescents (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). Many girls are raised to prioritise friendships and social relationships, and Messner (1990) suggested that competitive sport dynamics may potentially threaten social relationships. Murray and Howat’s (2009) study of adult female rugby players emphasised the value of social interaction as a motivator to be active, and Slater and Tiggemann (2010) suggested that enhancing the sociable elements of sport could increase its appeal to girls.

Evidence also suggests that being active may improve cognitive performance. The Tucker Center (2018) highlighted cognitive functioning, intellectual health, and improved critical thinking abilities as benefits of physical activity, and Fredrickson and Harrison (2005) claimed that vigorous physical activity may materially change brain structure and boost cognitive performance. Other contextual factors, including parental involvement, the stability and healthiness of home environments, and access to good nutrition and sufficient rest, also influence young people’s cognitive development.

1.4.2 The gendering of ‘risky behaviour’

Research suggests that physically active young people are less likely to engage in risky behaviour such as substance abuse, truancy, and antisocial acts (Sport New Zealand, 2018b; Tucker Center, 2018). Analysis of this claim reveals the highly gendered nature of identifying ‘risky behaviour’. Studies linking low physical activity levels and risky behaviour often portray girls as particularly susceptible to engaging in behaviour described by researchers as risky. The behaviour of boys rarely attracts similar critiques.

The Tucker Centre (2018) reported that girls who play team sports begin sexual activity at a later age, have fewer sexual partners, and demonstrate a reduced likelihood of substance abuse. This research constructs teenage girls’ sexual activity as ‘risky behaviour’ and equates it to substance abuse, signaling the

enduring stigma of teenage girls as sexually active beings, denying their agency, and challenging their right to feel and express physical desire. Cooky and McDonald (2005) claimed that physically active girls have reduced risk of abuse from male partners, and a lower likelihood of unwanted pregnancies. While a correlation with reduced risk of abuse is obviously a positive finding, the repeated linkage of 'reduced sexual activity' and 'reduced risk of teenage pregnancy' represents a strongly heteronormative attitude towards teenage sexual activity.

Researchers who align girls' sexual behaviour with their physical activity levels suggest a dichotomy of 'good' sporty girls who aren't sexually active and 'bad' girls who are physically inactive but sexually active. This demonises normal sexual behaviour and represents a patriarchal construct that seeks to control and police women's behaviour from young adulthood. These issues are complex and it seems difficult to conclude definitively that being physically active necessarily results in girls avoiding 'risky behaviour'. Questions arise about whether the research findings represent correlation or causation, and The Tucker Centre (2018) acknowledged that further research is required to explore how participation in organised physical activity influences broader behavioural choices. Notwithstanding, future research would be strengthened if the experiences of women and girls were centred in discussions regarding the benefits of girls being physically active, and if research was designed and analysed from a feminist perspective to avoid explicitly or inadvertently describing normal behaviour as deviant. There is merit in the general assertion that making healthy choices in one area of life – such as being active – may support the likelihood of making similarly healthy choices in other areas of life, but care should be taken that, for girls, the idea of 'healthy choices' does not present a patriarchal construct.

1.5 Problematising inactive girls

1.5.1 Framing girls' inactivity

It is unsurprising that many studies have focused on girls' lower activity levels, given the benefits of being active and the health risks associated with a

sedentary lifestyle. Recent research acknowledges that framing the issue as one of personal choice or poor decision-making problematises girls and implies that the solution lies in motivating individual girls to make better decisions about being active (Bäckström & Nairn, 2018). Rather, it acknowledges the complex network of factors that influences girls' choices to be active and advocates that studies should reflect the broader context in which girls are less active than boys (Azzarito *et al.*, 2006; Taverno Ross, Dowda, Beets, & Pate, 2013). For example, Svender et al. (2012) has argued that it is unhelpful to link adolescent girls' susceptibility to obesity and eating disorders with a disinterest in being active, because inactivity may be an outcome of alienation that restricts opportunities to be active.

1.5.2 The impact of gender role socialisation

Inactive girls are a product of the prevailing socio-cultural environment, which systematically undermines girls' agency and participation. Physical activity is one of many arenas in which girls face considerable challenges. The barriers to girls being active are systemic and cannot be 'solved' easily. Gender role socialisation lies at heart these barriers, disempowering girls and influencing their self-perceptions, how the world perceives them, and their likelihood of being active (Vu *et al*., 2006; Paechter & Clark, 2007; Leversen, *et al.*, 2012; Taverno Ross *et al*., 2013). However, being active can also address many barriers faced by girls. Garrett (2004) claimed that being physically active helps girls to construct a version of femininity that challenges gender norms. As the literature review in chapter 3 will discuss, gender role socialisation and gender stereotypes underpin many of the barriers that limit girls' opportunities to be active. Supporting girls to reject those stereotypes may be a transformative way to improve their mental health.

1.5.3 The impact of adolescence

Piran's (2017) Developmental Theory of Embodiment is a theoretical framework that explores the interrelationships between bodily experience and wellbeing. It presents a series of dimensions described as 'Experiences of Embodiment', each with two poles that represent positive and negative experiences. Piran's

work describes how younger girls enjoy significant physical and mental freedom, only to be subject to physical and mental 'corsets' as they grow older and are put under increased pressure to conform to gender stereotypes (Piran, 2017).

Adolescence is regarded as the stage at which girls' activity levels fall behind those of boys. In addition to reduced participation in organised sport, girls also engage in less informal play activity from the age of 12 onwards (Sport New Zealand, 2018c). However, girls in New Zealand and elsewhere become less active than boys before adolescence (Youth Sports Trust, 2018; Sport New Zealand, 2019). This is consistent with Piran's finding that girls start feeling pressure to conform to gender stereotypes and be less playful and active from nine years old (Piran, 2017). Drawing on this evidence, programmes intended to encourage girls to be more active should expand to include younger girls, rather than continuing to focus primarily on adolescents.

1.6 Research focus

1.6.1 Underpinning my research with my values

My decision to pursue research that addresses girls' access to physical activity is values-driven. Feminism is an integral dimension of my identity. I embrace and express feminist beliefs and engage in feminist discourse, and my feminist perspective influences how I construct my identity as a spouse, parent, child, aunt, friend, researcher, employee, and colleague. I have also served as a committee member for the feminist organisation Women in Urbanism Aotearoa.

My feminist identity has influenced my work as an Activation Advisor at Auckland Council, specialising in the development of programmes and initiatives to support young people to be more active. Young women are one of my target populations, largely in response to the Sport New Zealand research that identifies the ongoing need to better support women and girls to be more active.

1.6.2 My previous feminist research

This thesis is my third study regarding factors that influence girls' opportunities to be playful and active. In late 2017 I contributed to *Designing Walkable Future Neighbourhoods: Considering Diversity* by producing a synthesised literature review addressing access to play in neighbourhoods (Austin, Collins, Scanlen, & Smith, 2019). I concluded that boys enjoy far greater independent mobility and therefore have more opportunities to engage in free play (ibid). This work led me to further explore the gender balance of public play space in my Honours dissertation: *No girls allowed? A study of access to public play space in Auckland, New Zealand* (Collins, 2018).

My dissertation research concluded that although public playgrounds are used by both boys and girls, boys enjoy greater overall access to public play and recreation spaces in Auckland (Collins, 2018). The balance is tipped in boys' favour because children who outgrow playgrounds have limited access to public recreation spaces, and skate parks are one of the few leisure facilities provided. My observations demonstrated that skate parks were almost exclusively used by boys, contributing to boys outnumbering girls in play and recreation spaces. My observations indicated that skate parks are gendered spaces. I chose to learn more about skateboarding to better understand whether what I had observed was an accurate assessment of this physical activity. I was also eager to learn how to enhance opportunities for girls to become skateboarders.

1.6.3 Using female skateboarding as a case study

Skateboarding began in late 1950s and is described as an 'alternative' or action sport (although many skateboarders prefer to think of it as art instead of sport), seen as a physically expressive activity that is autonomous, anti-competitive, sociable, and intrinsically satisfying, and provides opportunities for universal participation (Donnelly, 2008; Yochim, 2010; Stormeon, Urke, Tjomsland, Wold, & Diseth, 2016; Glenny & Mull, 2018). Skateboarding was a male-dominated activity from its outset, and although girls participated more extensively in its early days, when freestyle skateboarding on flat surfaces allowed for artistic aerobatic elements to be incorporated, the emphasis shifted

to a more masculine style of participation from the late 1970s onwards, first with bowl skateboarding in empty swimming pools, and later with transgressive street skateboarding and the development of aggressive skate park styles (Yochim, 2010).

Skate culture presents a version of masculinity that differs from the hegemonic ideal, but research exploring the experiences of skateboarding girls and women is rife with descriptions of male participants refusing to take them seriously, deriding their abilities, using sexist names that minimise their value, and treating them as intruders in what are regarded as the exclusively male spaces of skate parks (Pomerantz, Currie, & Kelly, 2004; Kelly, Pomerantz, & Currie, 2005; Atencio, Beal, & Wilson, 2009; MacKay, 2016). The specific challenges faced by female skateboarders will be discussed further in the literature review in chapter 3.

1.6.4 Girls Skate NZ

After highlighting the gendered use of skate parks in my dissertation I was introduced to Amber Clyde, who established Girls Skate NZ, a girls-only skate school that delivers lessons in skate parks and aims to empower girls to become skateboarders who feel comfortable using these spaces. The chapter 2 case study presents more detail about Girls Skate NZ and explains why it has been profiled for this study.

1.7 Research questions

This thesis uses female skateboarding to represent the broader dynamics of barriers and enablers that affect girls' ability to be active. It addresses the following research questions:

- What are the experiences of novice female skateboarders in Auckland?
- How does Girls Skate NZ support girls to become skateboarders?

Guided by the philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenology, I interviewed three female adult skateboarders and three male adult skateboarders, to increase my

understanding of the experiences of skateboarding participants. I also held a focus group session with six girls who currently skate with Girls Skate NZ, to learn about their experiences as novice skateboarders. To obtain further context I interviewed the skateboarding girls' parents, learning about their perspectives as 'invested observers' who have experienced skate culture and witnessed their daughters' participation through adult eyes. I supplemented my interviews and focus group with skate park observations, which quantitatively captured the current typical gender balance of skate park use and noted my non-participant reflections of how the space was used by study subjects.

1.8 The significance of the research

1.8.1 The value of capturing lived experiences

This study explores the lived experiences of girls who have recently become skateboarders, as well as those of adult female skateboarders. By reflecting on the barriers they have encountered and overcome, and the enablers that have supported their participation, we can gain a richer understanding of the conditions that influence whether women and girls can be active.

1.8.2 The value of learning from success stories

Girls Skate NZ is a grassroots organisation that aims to increase girls' participation in a male-dominated physical activity. Although girls remain a minority in Auckland's skateboarding community, Girls Skate NZ has boosted female participation. Reflecting on the experiences of Girls Skate NZ students and their parents' perspectives assists in identifying how Girls Skate NZ supports girls to become skateboarders.

1.8.3 The value of using research to inform future practice

As a practitioner I seek to be guided by research when designing and delivering initiatives and interventions. I contend that some current programmes designed to address female inactivity in New Zealand do not reflect the learnings available in recent research. Therefore I am motivated to extract lessons from

research and apply them productively. As well as exploring the specific context of girls' skateboarding in Auckland, this study synthesises and helps to disseminate research that discusses the barriers and enablers to girls being active, supporting practitioners to design future initiatives that are grounded in appropriate theoretical frameworks and informed by robust studies.

1.9 Thesis structure

This thesis contains seven chapters.

Chapter 1 is the introduction. It has discussed the trend of youth inactivity, physical inactivity in girls, and the various benefits that can be gained if young people are active. It has also explained the context of this study and its broader significance, and presented the research questions.

Chapter 2 introduces the case study of Girls Skate NZ. It briefly discusses the history, practices, and significance of Girls Skate NZ's work, and explains why it has been used as a case study.

Chapter 3 provides a review of relevant literature. After synthesising the findings of several studies that explore the female skate experience, the socio-cultural factors that influence girls being active are discussed. The chapter draws from play, sport, and active recreation research, with a focus on skateboarding and other action/adventure sports, and identifies gaps in existing literature that justify conducting this research.

Chapter 4 presents the methodology. It discusses the hermeneutic phenomenological research approach and the philosophical elements that underpin it. It also presents the Developmental Theory of Embodiment as the theoretical framework that has been applied when interpreting data from the study. Finally, physical data collection and data analysis methods used for the study are presented along with reflexive comments and ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 presents the quantitative findings drawn from skate park observations.

Chapter 6 presents and discusses four key themes identified across the qualitative data: reasons to skate; becoming a skateboarder; participating in the skate community; and Girls Skate NZ.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by answering the research questions and evaluating the methodology, success factors and limitations that have influenced the study. Recommendations are presented to address relevant issues, and future research opportunities are identified.

Chapter 2: Case Study

This chapter introduces Girls Skate NZ, Auckland's first girls-only skateboarding school. The information is drawn from casual conversations with founder Amber Clyde between September 2019 and December 2020, and key informant interviews conducted with Amber in early 2020 as part of the study.

2.1 The history of Girls Skate NZ

Amber Clyde founded Girls Skate NZ in 2018, in response to her own experiences of intimidation and marginalisation as a young female skateboarder. Her goal was to support girls to participate in what she perceived to be a male-dominated activity. Although a skate school was already delivering mixed gender after-school skateboarding classes across Auckland, it appeared that most of the participants were boys. By starting Girls Skate NZ Amber hoped that novice skateboarding girls would receive the encouragement and skills required to become competent participants. Since beginning Girls Skate NZ Amber estimates that she has taught more than 500 girls through the various sessions and programmes she has delivered. The success of Girls Skate NZ has led Amber to hire other female coaches on a sessional basis. Although Girls Skate NZ remains female-focused, Amber also welcomes gender non-binary and gender non-conforming participants to her classes.

2.2 Occupying skate parks for girls-only lessons

Girls Skate NZ lessons are taught in public skate parks. Skate parks are not bookable spaces, so other skate park users are frequently present during Girls Skate NZ classes. Amber shares a schedule of weekly classes and invites participants to attend. The schedule is a mix of fee-paying classes and regular free coaching sessions, which Amber delivers to expand the reach of Girls Skate NZ and support the goal of removing barriers that restrict girls' access to skateboarding. The free sessions provide girls and their parents with a low-risk opportunity to try skateboarding before making a commitment to pay for

lessons. Amber further increases the accessibility of her classes for new participants by maintaining a supply of skateboards, helmets, and pads, which are available to borrow for free during Girls Skate NZ sessions.

Amber's decision to situate her classes in skate parks was a deliberate attempt to exert the right of women and girls to be present in these traditionally male-dominated spaces. Amber's own experiences of trying to use skate parks as a novice skateboarder were challenging because she was typically the only female present, which made her feel intimidated and scrutinised by male skateboarders. She reasoned that, by setting up a girls' skate school and delivering her lessons in skate parks, she would be able to help novice female skateboarders to feel more confident in the space. Teaching in skate parks also represents Amber's reclaiming of the contested space of skate parks for her own participation. By delivering Girls Skate NZ sessions in skate parks she significantly increases the number of girls using the space, forcing male skate park users to concede space. Because the schedule of Girls Skate NZ classes is publicised, male skate park users who do not wish to skate with novice girls can choose to avoid certain skate parks during the lessons.

Situating Girls Skate NZ classes in skate parks supports skateboarding girls to become part of the skate community. There is a clear etiquette to skate park use, and by learning to skate in these spaces Amber's students abide by the mores of skate parks from the outset. Important elements include not cutting off other skateboarders and understanding how to take turns (and exert one's own right to a turn) when sharing facilities like skate park bowls. Amber advocates that learning these 'rules' of skate parks at an early stage can help girls to gain confidence as skateboarders.

Although some casual skateboarding classes are delivered at a South Auckland skate park by a skate park custodian based there, Girls Skate NZ is the only established skate school to focus on skate parks as a location for scheduled lessons. The largest skate school in Auckland teaches its male and female students in after-school sessions held in school grounds, which provides scope for children to learn the fundamental skills of skateboarding, but does not provide the lessons in skate etiquette that skate park lessons can facilitate.

2.3 The Girls Skate NZ approach

Girls Skate NZ's teaching techniques differ from those used by most skateboarding coaches, and may be unique to Amber. She promotes the value of physically supporting novice skateboarders by holding their hands as they learn to balance, drop over ledges, and drop into bowls. Her approach challenges the widely held belief in skate culture that falling and possible injury are an unavoidable part of the learning process. Amber's justification for her approach is that it should not be necessary to risk serious injury in order to establish the muscle memory that helps students to learn basic skateboarding skills and thus feel confident to later attempt the same tricks unaided. After starting off with a student by holding their hands, Amber's approach progresses to holding one hand, then to having a hand available to be grabbed by the student if necessary, then to having a hand nearby in case the student needs to be caught. Throughout the iterative process Amber reassures the student of her capacity to complete the trick, and incremental progress is captured on film and warmly celebrated. This helps to create a sense of community for Girls Skate NZ students, which is further supported by Amber's habit of celebrating the girls' birthdays and sharing merchandise she's given by skate shops.

Amber reports that her coaching techniques are frequently derided by other skateboarders, who appear to perceive them as a soft way to introduce people to what is traditionally seen as a high-risk physical activity. However, she maintains that helping girls to build confidence without the risk of serious injury helps them to progress far more rapidly than if they were learning through unsupported trial and error.

2.4 Expanding the reach of Girls Skate NZ

From 2018 Girls Skate NZ has offered school holiday programmes that take groups of girls to several skate parks during a day, providing opportunities for concentrated coaching and practice sessions. In late 2019 Amber invested in a van to increase her capacity for these programmes.

In 2019 Girls Skate NZ received KiwiSport funding to expand its programme to include school-based lessons, but most lessons continued to be delivered in skate parks. Amber was appointed as one of Aktive's HERA ambassadors, which meant that Girls Skate NZ was promoted as an example of a successful initiative that encourages girls' participation in sport and active recreation.

Amber also recognised an appetite for novice skateboarding lessons for those aged 18 and over. In 2019 she established a programme of Girls Skate NZ evening classes in summer months to provide women with the opportunity to participate. This appears to be a very rare example of recognising that women may want to learn a new sport or physical activity, and require support and tuition in order to become participants.

In 2020 Amber's own schedule of skate park lessons was expanded further when Girls Skate NZ became a contractor through Auckland Council's 'Out & About Auckland' programme of park-based activations funded on an annual basis by individual Local Boards across the city. The Out & About team recognised that Girls Skate NZ had developed a market for girls' skateboarding lessons in skate parks. Providing funded Girls Skate NZ sessions enabled Local Boards to specifically acknowledge that girls may require targeted programmes to encourage them to be more active. The sessions were free for participants, with skate equipment supplied by Girls Skate NZ if required. By being part of Out & About's delivery programme, Amber has been able to geographically expand Girls Skate NZ delivery into different parts of Auckland, which was one of her long term goals.

From the outset Amber has organised girls-only skateboarding competitions, as a way of creating opportunities to compete for girls who would otherwise be grouped together in the same competitive category at mainstream skate competitions (which typically offer age-group categories for male participants, but only one category for female competitors). Amber has worked with the skate community and skateboarding retailers to attract sponsorship and support for her competitions.

2.5 Raising the profile of female skateboarding

Amber is well-known in New Zealand's skateboarding community because of the success of Girls Skate NZ. Her work has attracted widespread mainstream media coverage in the form of radio interviews, television interviews and segments, and newspaper articles.

Girls Skate NZ maintains a strong social media presence. Classes are publicised and filmed content is shared on Facebook and Instagram, and some of Amber's students also upload frequent Instagram content to share their skateboarding achievements. Skate media has often been perceived as misogynistic and a key contributor of negative attitudes towards female skateboarders, and Girls Skate NZ's social media posts represent an example of female skateboarders constructing their own images of participation.

2.6 The value of Girls Skate NZ as a case study

Female skateboarding is a niche activity in New Zealand, and Girls Skate NZ is one of a small number of nationwide initiatives intended to boost girls' participation. It is also the best-known female skateboarding school in the country, and the only one operating in Auckland. Its growth and popularity suggest that the Skate NZ approach is striking a chord with girls who want to skate. Its popularity with the girls' parents also indicates high trust levels.

Research has identified several 'enablers' that support girls to be more active, and it appears that Girls Skate NZ fulfills some of those conditions. By interviewing Amber, as well as girls who have learned through Girls Skate NZ and their parents, this study endeavours to capture in more detail what those conditions are. Focusing on the factors that make a positive impact on girls' participation in the male-dominated world of skateboarding can help to better understand what has contributed to Girls Skate NZ's success. Learning more about the experiences of novice female skateboarders, and about Girls Skate NZ's approach, can help to inform new interventions in other contexts where female participants are under-represented.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

In the past three decades there has been extensive research exploring the positive and negative experiences of women and girls in sport and active recreation. This literature review presents a discussion structured around a series of socio-cultural factors that emerge from that research. It uses previous studies of skateboarding and skate culture to illustrate how these socio-cultural factors influence female skate participation. The discussion then expands to consider strategies identified in past research that can support girls to become more active. The chapter concludes by identifying gaps in the current body of research and the rationale for the current study to help to address them.

3.1 Conducting the literature review

The literature search was conducted using online search functions and databases in the Massey University library website to identify relevant English-language peer-reviewed studies. Databases used for the literature search included EBSCOHost, Informit, JSTOR, Ovid, ProQuest, and SAGE Journals. Non-academic sources of research included reports published by agencies such as Sport New Zealand. I also used grey research literature to enhance my general knowledge of skate culture and values, and to contextualise findings from the peer-reviewed studies. I began with a narrow literature focus, which broadened later to situate some studies in the wider context of action sports, and to learn about key theoretical frameworks that emerged from the literature. Key words and phrases from the first stage of the search (research of female skate experiences) were:

- Skateboarding
- Female / women / girls + skateboarding
- Skate + culture
- Skate + masculinity
- Female + skateboarding + barriers
- Female + skateboarding + enablers

For the second stage of the search (supplementary studies that explore female experiences in other action sports) the key words and phrases were:

- Female + sport
- Female + sport + barriers
- Female + sport + enablers
- Female + action + sport
- Female + surfing (+ snowboarding)

The third stage of the search (further information about relevant theoretical frameworks and concepts discussed in previous studies) included the following keys and phrases:

- Gender + stereotypes
- Objectification; Self + objectification
- Emphasised + femininity
- Stereotype + threat
- Self + Determination + Theory

3.2 Studies of female skateboarding

The female skate experience has been minimally researched, with few studies focusing on women and girls in the sport. This reflects the minority status of women and girls participating in the sport – as Pomerantz *et al*. (2004) noted, "Skateboarding is not a common activity for girls and finding a girl on a skateboard is rare" (p. 550). The literature search did not find studies about the Australasian female skate experience.

Some skate studies include male and female perspectives, but they typically include the voices of only a small number of women. However, these studies contribute to discussions about the universal nature of many female skate experiences, as the points made by female participants tend to be reflected across the broader body of female skate literature.

The literature search also failed to uncover previous research exploring the experiences of queer, gender non-binary, or trans young people in the context of skateboarding or other action sports. As this chapter will later discuss, homophobia within skateboarding may present a significant barrier to LGBTQI+

participation. Although this study focuses on the skate experience of women and girls, it may also resonate with LGBTQI+ skateboarders and the potential for marginalisation that exists for them within skate culture.

Table 1 summarises the studies of female skateboarding that are used throughout this chapter to illustrate how different socio-cultural factors influence opportunities for women and girls to be active.

Citation	**Research summary**
Beal, 1996	Colorado-based study of 41 10 – 25-year-old skateboarders, including four female participants
Beal & Weidman, 2003	US study of male and female teenaged and adult skateboarders
Young, 2004	US study of ten 18 – 29-year-old male and female skateboarders and snowboarders (including three female skateboarders)
Pomerantz *et al*., 2004 Kelly *et al*., 2005 Kelly *et al.,* 2008	Canadian study of eight 14 – 15-year-old novice female skateboarders, focusing on their entry into skateboarding and negotiations for access to space in a skate park
Kelly *et al*., 2008	Canadian study of 20 13 – 16-year-old skateboarding girls
Atencio *et al*., 2009	Californian study of 33 16 – 28 male and female skateboarders (including eight female skateboarders)
Bäckström & Nairn, 2018	Swedish study of 61 12 – 16-year-old female skateboarders

Table 1: Summary of previous studies of female skateboarders

3.3 Factors that influence girls to be active

The following socio-cultural factors have an influence on opportunities for women and girls to be active in many contexts, but for the purposes of this chapter the discussion focuses on female skate participation, as illustrated by examples drawn from previous skate studies.

3.3.1 Gender role socialisation

Gender role socialisation is the process of embedding a gender schema that teaches children how they should behave to conform to the current constructed meanings of 'being a boy' or 'being a girl' (Little, 2010; Leversen *et al*., 2012; O'Connor *et al*., 2017). Parents are typically the earliest proponents of gender role socialisation (both consciously and unconsciously), but it is normalised and reinforced by peers and wider society. It influences girls' opportunities to be active from early childhood. Boys are encouraged to be active, adventurous, and independent, with toys that provide opportunities for mechanical and constructive play, but girls often lack encouragement to play in similarly active and adventurous ways (Hargreaves, 1994; Cherney & London, 2006; O'Connor *et al*., 2017). Many parents also demonstrate strongly gendered beliefs about rough-and-tumble play, expecting it of their boys but not of their girls (Women in Sport & Youth Sports Trust, 2015).

As children grow older and are expected to be active in some capacity, they are typically encouraged to play sports or engage in physical activities that reflect what is considered appropriate for boys and girls, and often children grow up without any opportunity to consider the validity of trying 'opposite-sex' sports (Leversen *et al*., 2012). Male sports typically celebrate physicality and competition, and female sports focus on aesthetics and qualities such as gracefulness (Klomsten *et al*., 2005; Murray & Howat, 2009; Leversen *et al*., 2012; Joncheray & Tlili, 2013).

Some elements of physical literacy – such as running and throwing – required to participate in many sports are nurtured in boys but not in girls, increasing the likelihood that girls will develop less competence (Garrett, 2004; Clark *et al*., 2011). Studies that test children's physical literacy indicate that girls typically score lower than boys in measures such as strength, endurance, and coordination (Klomsten *et al*., 2005). Many boys are encouraged to try skateboarding because it provides an opportunity to demonstrate stereotypically masculine traits of strength, boldness, and aggressiveness, and because it is more socially acceptable for boys than for girls to bear the scars of past physical endeavours (Young, 2004). Young (2004) asserted that gender

role socialisation had reduced the likelihood of girls becoming skateboarders because they had been raised to avoid activities that involve a risk of injury. Kelly *et al.* (2008) made a similar point, highlighting that it takes some female skateboarders considerable effort to overcome the inhibiting influence that reduced childhood physicality has on their ability to engage in such a demanding activity.

Gender role socialisation also influences the development of social skills that can influence the likelihood of girls playing sport or being active. From early childhood girls' play rarely focuses on games that produce clear winners and losers, because girls are raised to prioritise their relationships with others ahead of individual gain, and this focus on the importance of friendships and social status increases from puberty onwards (Bailey *et al*., 2005; Brown, Mackett, Gong, Kitazawa, & Paskins, 2008; Hohepa, Schofield, & Holt, 2006; Yungblut, Schinke, & McGannon, 2012; Women in Sport & Youth Sports Trust, 2015; Cardoos *et al*., 2017). This means that competitive behaviour can be seen as a potential threat to relationships with friends (Boyatzis, Mallis, & Leon, 1999). Boys are far more likely than girls to value competition and achievement as a source of enjoyment when playing sport, and don't perceive it as something that can undermine friendships (Bailey *et al*., 2005; Hohepa *et al*., 2006).

3.3.2 Gender stereotypes

Gender role socialisation both reflects prevailing gender stereotypes and helps to perpetuate them. Because of the messages they receive in their formative years, children of both genders grow up with a perception that girls are weaker and less physically skilled than boys, and in many cases this is assumed to be a biological fact that can be used to explain girls' apparent lack of interest in sport (Beal, 1996; Garrett, 2004; Cooky & McDonald, 2005; Swain, 2005; Donnelly, 2008; Watson *et al*., 2015; DiCarlo, 2016). Male skaters disregard their female counterparts based on stereotypes that girls lack physical bravery, coordination, and other natural traits required to skate well (Beal, 1996; Karsten & Pel, 2000; Borden, 2001; Beal & Weidman, 2003; Young, 2004; Kelly *et al*., 2005; Donnelly, 2008; Sisjord, 2009). Broader studies of the gender dynamics of physical activity showed that boys will sometimes bully girls in physical

education and sporting contexts because of their beliefs about girls' lack of ability, and may even convince themselves that their negative behaviour will motivate the girls to improve (Vu *et al*., 2006; Watson *et al*., 2015). Clark and Paechter (2007) theorised that boys who feel particularly threatened within masculine hierarchies are more likely to criticise girls' sporting abilities as a way of trying to bolster their own self esteem.

The existence of negative stereotypes about girls' ability or inclination to be active may affect whether some girls can actually engage effectively in sport or physical activities. Hively and El-Alayli (2014) claimed that girls' awareness of negative stereotypes can create a 'stereotype threat' and that may contribute to female underperformance in tasks or activities, even if the girl who is participating in the activity does not actually believe the stereotype themselves. This demonstrates the pervasive nature of the social construct of gender in sport, although the impact it has on girls will be influenced by other previous experiences and wider perceptions, and may impact girls' differently at various points in their development.

Gender stereotypes can often thrive despite efforts to dispel them. For example, the prevalent stereotype that women and girls do not wish to participate in risky sports or physical activities endures despite the existence of many women and girls who enjoy the risk-taking elements of skateboarding and other action sports, and have continued to skate despite incurring injuries (Atencio *et al*., 2009). Female skateboarders identified gender stereotypes and the impact they have on male skateboarders' attitudes towards them as a significant barrier to participation (Pomerantz *et al*., 2004; Kelly *et al*., 2005; Kelly *et al.,* 2008; Atencio *et al*., 2009).

3.3.3 Emphasised femininity

Many girls grow up to embrace female stereotypes and use them as a fundamental identifying factor (Whitehead & Biddle, 2008). Female gender stereotypes can take the form of emphasised femininity, which for many girls has a significant impact on their likelihood of being active. Emphasised femininity represents a type of idealised femininity that requires women to

personify gender stereotypes directing them to be attractive, non-competitive, hesitant, nice, graceful, physically weak, dependent, and concerned primarily with the welfare of others (Pomerantz *et al*., 2004; Kelly *et al*., 2005; Jarvis, 2006; Hardy, 2015; Holland & Harpin, 2015). Emphasised femininity is regarded as a patriarchal social construct that reflects the interests and desires of heterosexual men and diminishes female agency (Hardy, 2015). Gender role socialisation influences the construction of emphasised femininity by shaping girls' sense of appropriate interests and behaviour from infancy (Young, 2004; Lodge, 2005; Granié, 2010).

Most girls experience significant pressure to comply with gender stereotypes and emphasised femininity from puberty onwards, which (not coincidentally) is the age at which studies suggest that girls' activity levels begin to reduce (Nayak & Kahily, 2008; Piran, 2017). Emphasised femininity is largely incompatible with female physical activity because elements such as being competitive, breaking a sweat, or valuing performance above appearance contradict this social conduct (Henderson, 1993). Studies showed that, although teenagers view it as socially acceptable for boys to break a sweat from physical activity, girls who sweat from sport are regarded as dirty and criticised for failing to pay sufficient attention to their appearance (Vu *et al*., 2006; Clark *et al*., 2011; Yungblut *et al*., 2012; Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2016; Piran, 2017; Youth Sports Trust, 2018). The message transmitted by this version of femininity is that 'real' girls are disinterested in sport and the sweaty messiness and competitiveness that it embodies (Whitehead & Biddle, 2008). However, women and girls are also frequently subject to messaging that presents contradictory expectations of being fit, healthy, and active, without transgressing from the values of emphasised femininity (Yungblut *et al*., 2012; Piran, 2017). In other words, girls are raised to believe that they should look like they have regularly engaged in physical activity in order to maintain a slim physique, but without actually playing sport or being active.

For female skateboarders, choosing to skate seems to represent a deliberate rejection of the standards of emphasised femininity. Kelly *et al*. (2008) identified two key themes in young women's talk about skateboarding: the girls' deliberate and calculated transgression of gender norms in order to enjoy their chosen

activity; and the value placed on skater style and its role in assisting the girls to reject emphasised femininity and its expectations of beauty and display. In critiquing the study of novice Canadian female skateboarders presented by Pomerantz *et al*. (2004), Bäckström and Nairn (2018) commented that these skateboarding girls have "…therefore been constructed as 'other' in relation to men, but also 'other' in relation to other women, especially those perceived as displaying stereotypical heterosexual hyper-femininity" (p. 427). Young (2004) also noted that the three female skateboarders regarded their participation in skateboarding as a way to differentiate themselves from the standards and expectations of mainstream femininity, helping them to develop a sense of individuality. Although there are sexist elements of skateboarding that will be discussed later in this chapter, many of the women and girls who skate recognise that their participation provides them with the personal agency to construct their own versions of femininity.

3.3.4 The male coding of sport

The growth in girls' interest in traditionally male-dominated sports has been seen as evidence of a new 'post-feminist' context wherein previous gendered restrictions no longer apply (Pfister, 2010). While this behaviour is tolerated and often celebrated in younger girls, older girls who choose to forge alternative identities beyond the realms of emphasised femininity past puberty can be regarded by some as committing a deliberately transgressive act (Nayak & Kahily, 2008; Holland & Harpin, 2015). The reason being active is seen as transgressive is because sport has been regarded historically as a masculine activity (Pfister, 2010) and risky and demanding action sports such as skateboarding and snowboarding have been coded as 'male' almost from their outset (Sisjord, 2009, Olive & Thorpe, 2011).

Sport has also been regarded as a way for male participants to prove their masculinity, and so female participation in sport and physical activity has been viewed as something fundamentally abnormal because it transgresses stereotypical beliefs, leading to the "cultural contradiction of female athleticism" (Malcom, 2003, p. 1388). Meân and Kassing (2008) described sport as a "gender demarcator" because sporting activities tend to present such a strong

binary between male- and female-appropriate activities, reproducing the attitudes that gender role socialisation instills and gender stereotypes perpetuate (Meân & Kassing, 2008, p. 127). Joncheray and Tlili (2013) presented sport as a male construct that values power and dominance and is therefore representative of masculinity and the patriarchy in general. Research also suggests that girls internalise gendered ideas that being 'good at sport' is important for boys but not for them, which reinforces the masculine coding of many sports (Klomsten *et al*., 2005; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Corr *et al*., 2019). Female sports are also widely regarded as less skilled and less exciting to watch than male sports (Fink, LaVoi, & Newhall, 2016).

Skateboarding is ingrained with 'maleness'. One skateboarding book I reviewed, *The Concrete Wave: The History of Skateboarding*, illustrated this element of skate culture. 'Legends' were identified from different decades, with the 1970s legends comprising 16 male skateboarders and one woman; the 1980s legends comprising nine skateboarders and no women; and the 1990s legends comprising 19 male skateboarders, and one woman (Brooke, 1999). A list of the best pro-skateboarders over a 40-year period included 63 males and only six females (ibid). Several eminent skateboarders contributed articles to the book, but they were all male. The language used to describe male and female skateboarders was highly gendered and suggested different standards being used to assess the value of male and female skateboarders – for example, Laura Thornbill is "A graceful freestylist", but Tony Alva is a "legendary skater" (Brooke, 1999, p. 75; p. 78). Karsten and Pel (2000) claimed that skateboarding did not originate as a masculine activity. However, Brooke's masculine focus is not an anomaly within skateboarding publications, and unless an academic article is seeking specifically to explore the sport from a feminist perspective, female skateboarders are seldom mentioned. Studies frequently present the experiences of male skateboarders as being universal for the sport without acknowledging the lack of female skateboarders involved in the work, and it is commonplace for studies to use male pronouns exclusively when referring to skateboarders (for example, Petrone, 2010). Female skateboarders have reported that their entry into skate culture is often facilitated by brothers or male friends, which is interpreted in some studies as a perceived

requirement because of the male coding of skateboarding and its perceived lack of suitability as a female pastime (Pomerantz *et* al., 2004; Young, 2004).

The inherent maleness of skateboarding affects the gender balance of skate culture, and sites that are popular for street skating (Pomerantz *et al*., 2004; Kelly *et al*., 2005; Kelly *et al.,* 2008; Atencio *et al.*, 2009). Male participants frequently spend time together at skate parks, whereas female skateboarders are far fewer in number and therefore often lack opportunities to benefit from the camaraderie that male skateboarders take for granted (Young, 2004). Although skateboarding is regarded by male and female participants as an activity that is non-competitive and intrinsically satisfying, championing values of individualism, nonconformity, and creative self-expression, many of these benefits seem to accrue primarily to male skateboarders, because female skateboarders must negotiate their right to participate in the principally male domain of skate parks and other skate sites (Beal & Weidman, 2003). However the gendered hierarchies of sport and physical activity mean that skateboarding girls who can construct an identity in what is regarded as a challenging, male-dominated culture are afforded significant cultural capital by non-skating peers who hold them in high esteem (Kelly *et al*., 2005).

A challenge for girls attempting to integrate into skate culture is the apparent cognitive dissonance they experience regarding skate masculinity. Skateboarding studies have highlighted its 'alternative masculinity', with Beal (1996) claiming that skateboarding differs from the hegemonic masculinity enacted in organised sport because of an emphasis on participation and cooperation instead of competition. Signifiers of skate masculinity identified by researchers include the baggy clothes and longer hair common in skateboarding males, which have been seen as evidence of a softer persona that is likely to embrace all participants in the sport, including females, in a way that does not tend to occur in traditional sports (Karsten & Pel, 2000). However, Donnelly (2008) challenged this construction of skate masculinity. She noted that, although skateboarding and snowboarding cultures are portrayed in academic and mainstream articles, athlete interviews and event commentary as representing an alternative gender dynamic that embraces female participants, these sports are still heavily male-dominated and have formal and

informal practices that maintain stereotypical gender relations (Donnelly, 2008). Kelly *et al*. (2008) agreed, commenting that skate masculinity is less competitive than traditional sports but still relies on presenting a binary opposition to females and femininity to construct itself. Mechanisms designed to increase gender equality in sport, such as the USA's Title IX legislation, have been largely ineffective in sports like skateboarding because action sports often operate outside the structure of mainstream sport and typically lack organising mechanisms to effect change (Wheaton & Thorpe, 2018).

In contrast to its nonconformist and accepting reputation, skate masculinity presents as rigid a model as hegemonic masculinity in issues such as dealing with pain, as Petrone (2010) described: "…heckling was used as a way to implicitly teach the younger skater the appropriate cultural responses – psychologically, emotionally, and physically – to handling "failure" and pain" (Petrone, 2010, p. 123). The behaviour that Petrone described – heckling (verbal criticism) and snaking (deliberate close skating to unsettle or disrupt a fellow skater) is arguably aggressive, alienating behaviour that seeks to exert dominance over others. Skateboarding may claim to support different versions of masculinity – an article by Yochim (2010) mentioned 'hardcore', 'poetic', and 'sensitive' personas – but these are all still masculine personas. From the perspective of female participants in past studies, the skate masculinities often seem to have the same limiting impact on their participation as hegemonic masculinity has on females in other sporting contexts.

3.3.5 Surveillance and objectification

Several studies featuring female skateboarders identified surveillance by male skateboarders as one of the most significant barriers to their use of skate parks. Male to female surveillance in skate parks is grounded in a broader issue: objectification, described by women and girls as the constant feeling of being watched by males in a way that reduces them to 'things' rather than recognising them as people (Fredrickson & Harrison, 2005; Klomsten *et al*., 2005; Piran, 2017; Bäckström & Nairn, 2018). At puberty "girls learn that this new body *belongs* less to them and more to others" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p193, original emphasis). Surveillance and objectification often extend beyond what

women and girls do, to include what they look like. This sense of girls' bodies being 'in the public domain' underpins men's assumed right to observe and evaluate female appearance, which lies at the heart of objectification (Greenleaf, 2005). This type of body-based harassment can begin from as young as eight years old and is almost ubiquitous by the time girls reach their 'tween' years of nine to 12 (Holman, Johnson, & Lucier, 2013; Piran, 2017).

Male skateboarders spend a lot of time at skate parks and customarily sit around the edges of the space while others are skating. Although skate park surveillance may simply reflect the sport's cultural norms of skateboarders watching and critiquing each other's performances, it is experienced by female skateboarders as intimidating and marginalising in light of the wider cultural practices of men objectifying women and men consistently devaluing female proficiency in sport and physical activity, reflecting the challenging gender imbalance that women and girls experience at skate parks (Pomerantz *et al*., 2004; Kelly *et al*., 2005; Kelly *et al.,* 2008; Atencio *et al*., 2009; Atencio, Beal, McClain, & Wright, 2016; Bäckström & Nairn, 2018). Girls are also likely to attract more attention than other skateboarders because they are such a rare presence in skate parks (Bäckström & Nairn, 2018). Bäckström and Nairn (2018) describe the tension experienced by female skateboarders who wanted to be free to use skate parks simply as participants, and not as the subject of unwelcome scrutiny and criticism. One study described the feedback skateboarding girls received from male observers:

> …the park proved to be a location of struggle that was dominated by skater boys, who put the girls under surveillance. The skater boys were always asking members of the Park Gang to show them what they could do and Zoey spoke of the constant questioning of the girls' abilities. They often asked her, "Why don't you skate *more*?" She admitted that "sometimes we don't want to skate around them 'cause, like, they do really good stuff and we're just kind of learning. (Pomerantz *et al*., 2004, p. 551)

A study by Bäckström & Nairn's (2018) captured female skateboarders' contradictory experiences of visibility and invisibility as female-focused

skateboarding media grew in Sweden and contributed to a growing awareness of their presence, contributing to more frequent feelings of surveillance that left female skateboarders feeling less free to concentrate on practising (Bäckström & Nairn, 2018). However, the study also acknowledged that increased visibility had brought with it material support that had previously been reserved only for male skateboarders, such as free equipment – and yet this was seen by female skateboarders as a mixed blessing, given that the recognition of being a 'sponsored' skateboarder also meant that female skateboarders' performances were further scrutinised (ibid).

Some skateboarding girls respond to surveillance by choosing to schedule or locate their practice sessions to avoid male skateboarders, enabling them to feel less self-conscious and more able to concentrate on the activity (Bäckström & Nairn, 2018). One group of skateboarding girls chose to retreat from a skate park and improve their skills to avoid negative comments from the male skateboarders who watched them (Pomerantz *et al*., 2004). Some girls choose to wear loose clothing when exercising, to conceal their bodies and minimise the risk of objectification (Holman *et al*., 2013). Many girls embrace the baggy clothing synonymous with skateboarding in order to reduce the likelihood of body-based harassment. Skateboarding is in direct contrast with sports such as gymnastics, swimming, and beach volleyball, which require girls to wear skimpy or close-fitting clothing to participate (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). This may partially explain why girls who seek to reject emphasised femininity could be attracted to skateboarding as a stage upon which to challenge gender stereotypes.

3.3.6 Self-objectification

If objectification is internalised it becomes self-objectification, described as "a form of self-consciousness characterised by vigilant monitoring of the body's outward appearance" (Fredrickson & Harrison, 2005, p. 82). Self-objectification is a common feature in many women's lives and affects them beyond the realms of being active, but it has particular impact with regard to sport and active recreation because it diminishes women's capacity to prioritise how they feel and what they are capable of achieving when their primary concern is how they

may appear to observers (Fredrickson & Harrison, 2005). Self-objectification also contributes to heightened anxiety and reduces opportunities to enjoy activities (ibid).

Greenleaf (2005) commented that self-objectification can provide motivation for some girls to be active. However, this may be based on a desire to achieve the type of female body idealised through emphasised femininity, which for many women does not tend to represent a healthy or realistic goal (Hohepa, Schofield, & Kolt, 2006; Guérin *et al*., 2012; Holman *et al*., 2013). Self-objectification may limit skateboarding girls' opportunities to enjoy the freedoms that the sport provides to its participants because it nurtures a state of self-consciousness. Csikszentmihalyi's concept of 'flow' explains how a person who is absorbed in achieving a self-directed task that they find intrinsically satisfying can derive great enjoyment from that task, and that self-consciousness is a barrier to achieving a flow state (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Stormoen, Urke, Tjomsland, Wold, & Diseth, 2016). Self-objectification can therefore prevent female skateboarders from fully enjoying the intrinsic benefits that skating typically offers its participants.

3.3.7 Sexism

Sexism in skate culture is both a manifestation of the male coding of skateboarding and the gender stereotypes that underpin it, and a contributor to the ongoing marginalisation that many female skateboarders face. Studies of skate culture reinforce a sense that male skateboarders regard most females in skate parks as passive spectators, and girls must demonstrate competence and a consistent presence if they wish to gain any status as participants (Pomerantz *et al.*, 2004; Atencio *et al.*, 2009; Sisjord, 2009; Petrone, 2010; Yochim, 2010). Pomerantz *et al*. (2004) suggested that female skateboarders experienced hostility and marginalisation from male skateboarders at a skate park because the boys struggled to see the girls as anything other than spectators or girlfriends. Sexualised attitudes expressed by male skateboarders are also a factor that may undermine female skateboarders' participation (Atencio *et al*., 2009). Practices such as referring to female skateboarders as 'groupies' and questioning their motivations for participating

(such as suggesting that they skate to meet men) are not uncommon (Beal & Weidman, 2003). Researchers of street skateboarding noted:

> In describing the women skaters as sexually promiscuous, unskilled and afraid to take risks, the men positioned the women as being outsiders to street skateboarding. In this way, the men reified their own authentic status. (Atencio *et al*., 2009, p. 11)

Many male skateboarders fail to differentiate between participant and non-participant females in a skateboarding context – they are all described disparagingly as 'Skate Betties' and seen as affiliated with male skateboarders, not as skateboarders themselves (Beal, 1996). In snowboarding circles, the equivalent dismissive term 'babes' is used to describe females linked with the sport, either as participants or as spectators (Sisjord, 2009).

Some researchers have suggested that action sports such as skateboarding are less affected by institutional sexism and imbedded gender stereotypes than traditional sports, because they have emerged more recently and have involved women from the outset, albeit in smaller numbers (Wheaton & Thorpe, 2018). However, sexist attitudes within skateboarding make this a difficult claim to defend. Male skateboarders in one study criticised female professional skateboarders as only being good according to (lesser) female standards, and would not take them seriously as participants because of their gender (Atencio *et al*., 2009). This suggests that the male skateboarders do not object to female participants because they lack skill or courage – they base their rejection on the participants' gender.

Some male skateboarders enact patronising and infantilising behaviour that reinforces the belief that female skateboarders do not really belong in the skate community (Beal, 1996; Beal & Weidman, 2003). One challenging way this behaviour can manifest itself is through benevolent sexism, where men offer excessive unsolicited support and guidance in the guise of helping women and girls to participate. For new participants it may seem positive to be helped by more experienced participants, but there can be a fine line between offering genuine help and marginalising through the medium of assistance. Ruiz (2019)

has traced how helping behaviour can be a way to express benevolent sexism. Benevolent sexism has three components: protective paternalism (the idea that females need protection from males); complementary gender differentiation (the belief that females possess certain positive traits that are typically absent in males); and heterosexual intimacy (the idea that men need a female partner) (Ruiz, 2019). Proponents of benevolent sexism are likely to provide dependency-based help, which does not empower the person being helped to navigate their own solutions in the future, but instead positions the helper as being of a higher status than the person being helped (ibid).

Being the recipient of unsolicited help or excessive concern is marginalisation that "can differentiate women just as much as more exclusionary, sexist behaviours", and its friendly tone makes it difficult for women to combat or challenge the help they're receiving, because of "the apparent need women feel to be careful not to respond too harshly to such behaviour, but instead to appreciate men's efforts" (Olive, McCuaig, & Phillips, 2015, p. 268). Female skateboarders reported similar experiences with over-enthusiastic male skateboarding friends who, through their tendency to worry about female participants and celebrate their smallest achievements, succeed in reinforcing a sense that girls need special attention to take part in the otherwise male world of skateboarding (Beal & Weidman, 2003). The challenge of navigating unsolicited help is something also uncovered in broader studies about the impact on women of helping behaviour, with Ruiz (2019) explaining how accepting help makes women appear as friendly but incompetent to observers, but rejecting help makes them appear competent, but cold.

3.3.8 Skate media

Skate media was identified in research as a factor that contributes to and perpetuates sexist attitudes within the skate community (Beal & Weidman, 2003; Wheaton, 2003; Rinehart, 2005; Atencio *et al*., 2009). Online and printed skate media has historically been entirely skewed to a male readership, frequently denigrating and trivialising female skateboarders (Atencio *et al*., 2009). Skateboarding media celebrates masculinity in a mainstream context regarding gender relations, with female models used to attract male

skateboarders in the same way as virtually all other advertising media aimed at male consumers, portraying antifeminist messages (Beal & Weidman, 2003; Wheaton, 2003; Rinehart, 2005). The misogynist tone and content of skateboarding print and online media was also noted for the role it plays in reinforcing negative stereotypes and helping to legitimise and thus privilege male skateboarders (Atencio *et al*., 2009).

Skate print media and its advertising content emphasises the inherently masculine nature of the sport, celebrating male-coded risk-taking and including overtly heterosexist content and little representation of female participation beyond being a recipient of the male gaze (Beal & Weidman, 2003). The heteronormative and sexist elements of skateboarding media underpin female objectification and sexualisation of female participants by presenting women as attractive accessories who exist for male skateboarders' sexual gratification (Beal & Weidman, 2003; Rinehart, 2005). Male skateboarders reported frequently consuming skate media and using it to inform their skateboarding attitudes and practice, so sexist media messaging has likely helped to shape male skate sensibilities, with male participants reporting that they consume it frequently and use it to inform their skateboarding attitudes and practice (Atencio *et al.*, 2009).

Given the young age at which many boys become skateboarders, it seems reasonable to theorise that skate media may shape their views of female skateboarders, and of women in general, contributing to their view of women and girls at skate parks only as groupies or potential girlfriends. Sexualised content also contributes to female self-objectification as girls internalise messages about how they are supposed to represent themselves, which feeds the sense of marginalisation reported by many female skateboarders (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

3.3.9 Homophobia

Beyond marginalising women, sexism in skate media and within the wider skate community demonstrates a strong level of heteronormativity that has potential to make skate parks threatening environments for the LGBTQI+ community.

Homophobia appears to be prevalent, and one study identified that a barrier to female skateboarders' participation was the risk of their sexual orientation being questioned because of their decision to take part in a masculine-coded sport (Young, 2004). This attitude is predicated on heteronormative beliefs that portray alternative sexualities as inherently negative, and the social penalties for failing to conform to dominant sexual orientations may be severe enough to limit participation from puberty onwards. Male skateboarding participants make frequent use of homophobic slurs to dismiss others (Petrone, 2010). Petrone (2010) defended the use of the terms 'gay' and 'faggot' as insults within skate masculinity, claiming that viewing this language as homophobic "would not do justice to the complexity of gender construction within this community of practice" (Petrone, 2010, p. 123).

Borden (2001) argued that homophobic behaviour in skateboarding may be used to reaffirm heteronormative attitudes in a homosocial environment that involves young men reading about, spending time with, and displaying themselves to other young men. In their research of the construction of identities of 17-18-year-old British male secondary school students, Edley and Wetherwell (1997) made the point that concepts of masculinity, like all other concepts, are relational and are constructed in relation to others. With regard to masculinity this means constructing a sense of self in opposition to the most obvious binary – femininity – but also provides scope for more finely honed versions of masculinity that are formed in opposition to other forms of masculinity (Edley & Wetherwell, 1997). In the context of skateboarding this oppositional construct takes several forms: soft, non-competitive skate masculinity vs hard, competitive hegemonic masculinity; male skateboarders who embrace and express stereotypical beliefs regarding appetite for risk and tolerance for pain vs female skateboarders who lack physical courage and 'grit'; and male skateboarders as heterosexual males vs everybody who isn't heterosexual. Homophobia is used by male skateboarders to demonstrate their masculinity and denigrate others. This further emphasises that, although skate masculinity claims to be a departure from hegemonic masculinity in sport, it still represents a very narrow construction of masculinity. If homophobic slurs are the most insulting terms male skateboarders can use to criticise each other it

suggests a world view that is grounded in hegemonic masculinity and heteronormative values.

3.3.10 Participant legitimacy

The battle for skate legitimacy is a recurring barrier faced by female skateboarders, who claim that male skateboarders fail to respect them or take them seriously as participants (Beal & Weidman, 2003; Young, 2004; Kelly *et al*., 2008; Atencio *et al*., 2009). Competence in skateboarding and other action sports is assessed against male standards, which automatically positions male participants as legitimate skateboarders and marginalises those who cannot achieve those standards (Thorpe & Olive, 2016). A common theme emerging from skate research is the efforts undertaken by female skateboarders to 'prove themselves' to male skateboarders, often by performing physical feats and taking physical risks (Pomerantz *et al*., 2004; Young, 2004; Young & Dallaire, 2008; Atencio *et al*., 2009). Girls use various strategies to identify as legitimate skateboarders including clothing choices, the use of skater slang, overt avoidance of behaviour that is synonymous with emphasised femininity, and the embracing of peripheral elements to skater culture, such as punk rock music (Beal & Weidman, 2003; Kelly *et al*., 2005).

Male skate legitimacy can be expressed from the outset when male skateboarders act as gatekeepers to female participation, either by introducing female skateboarders to skating or by restricting their access to skate parks and other skate sites (Pomerantz *et* al., 2004; Young, 2004; Kelly *et al.*, 2005; Atencio *et al.*, 2009). Although many male skateboarders regard skate parks as their domain, in Atencio's (2009) study others dismissed skate parks as safe, sanitised spaces and were equally dismissive of skateboarders who chose to use them. In this street skateboarding study, female participants reported being restricted from using their favoured street sites, leaving them with nowhere but skate parks as sites for practice (ibid). The male skateboarders were therefore able to both control female skateboarders' access to space and cast doubts on their legitimacy as skateboarders for using what they regarded as 'lesser' sites. Female skateboarders were rarely seen in a street skating context because male skateboarders constructed social conditions that made female

skateboarders feel more comfortable in specific locations, preferably skating with other women (Atencio *et al*., 2009). Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of symbolic capital, the researchers concluded that differing male and female habituses influenced the social capital created and acquired within skateboarding, with female skateboarders regarded by males as lacking sufficient social and cultural capital to embrace the risk-taking and competence-building behaviour required to become 'real' skateboarders (ibid).

Despite the efforts of female skateboarders to be accepted, male skateboarders – and participants in other action sports – are skilled at finding ways to undermine the value of female experiences as an expression of their gendered socialisation and social environment. Even when girls are confident about their physical abilities in their chosen sport or physical activity, they risk not being accepted by male participants unless they are very fit and highly skilled, and being an exceptional female athlete does not prevent men from dismissing females' abilities (Boyle, Marshall, & Robeson, 2003; Cooky & McDonald, 2005; Swain, 2005; Fink *et al*., 2016). Female skateboarders reported that errors or mistakes made by skateboarding boys are disregarded or brushed off by their peers, but girls' mistakes are harshly judged and good female skateboarders are frequently dismissed as only 'good for a girl' (Kelly *et al*., 2005; Kelly *et al*., 2008; Olive *et al*., 2015).

One group of skateboarding girls chose to withdraw from a skate park – a site of tension with the skateboarding boys who did not take them seriously – to concentrate on developing their skills so they could claim the label 'skater' (Pomerantz *et al*., 2004). They demonstrated a sense of agency and formed their own identities as skateboarders at their own pace, which "took authorizing power away from the boys and legitimated themselves" (Pomerantz *et al*., 2004, p. 552). When they returned to the skate park the skateboarding boys were reportedly impressed with their progress, which suggests that their actions broadened the male skateboarders' understanding of who a legitimate skateboarder could be (Pomerantz *et al*., 2004; Kelly *et al*., 2008).

When discussing gendered power dynamics in other action sports, Sisjord (2009) used Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, and masculine domination,

explaining that male participants are the dominant agents in the field of snowboarding, committed to excluding those they perceive as outsiders. This produced what Bourdieu described as doxa: the establishment of traditions and customs that are defined as the 'natural world' – the authentic way of doing things (Donnelly, 2008; Sisjord, 2009). The same dynamics seem to apply in skateboarding. Across all action sports dominant male participation is the doxa – as Sisjord (2009) noted, "the 'core' – male participants – enjoy a great deal of respect, not only because of their high volume of subcultural capital, but also from their role in defining and creating it" (Sisjord, 2009, p. 1305). Donnelly (2008) claimed that the behaviour of many male skateboarders is "elitist and exclusionary" and contradicts their self-perception as inclusive because they react negatively towards any skateboarders who do not comply with the culture they have constructed (Donnelly, 2008, p. 202).

Donnelly (2008) theorised that in both skateboarding and snowboarding women and girls benefit from enhanced credibility within their sports if they can achieve male approval to participate, and Sisjord (2009) agreed. Although many female skateboarders expressed frustration at the effort they felt they had to exert to gain credibility in the eyes of male skateboarders, some female skateboarders seemed to internalise the construct of male legitimacy, leading them to also regard female participants as inferior and judge female skateboarders against male skate standards (Donnelly, 2008).

Some skateboarding girls cast themselves as the arbiters of skate legitimacy by challenging the legitimacy of girls on the periphery of skate culture, particularly if they spent time at skate parks without participating (Kelly *et al*., 2005). The skateboarding girls deliberately excluded the 'poser girls' by using their own slang terms, classified non-skating girls according to uncomplimentary stereotypes, and made assumptions about the values and priorities of those girls, suggesting that the girls only came to skate parks to be popular or attract boys (ibid). It may be that, as a transgressive minority within girlhood, the skater girls decided that attack was the best form of defense. It may also be that, given the fragility of their own status as skateboarders, distancing themselves from passive non-participating girls was intended to enhance their own credibility. This suggests that 'us against them' identity work

may be a tactic used by male and female skateboarders if they feel that it is important to emphasise their own skate legitimacy.

3.3.11 Participant marginalisation

In order to assert their own skate legitimacy male skateboarders do not necessarily seek to deliberately ostracise female skateboarders, criticise their skills, or deny them space to practise (although some do), but these strategies are ways that male skate legitimacy is reinforced. Beal (1996) reported that male skateboarders seldom reflect on the significant gender disparity in skateboarding, making it difficult for them to identify clear reasons why women and girls don't participate, and leading them to attribute the male domination of skateboarding to biological or social preferences and personal choice. This was interpreted as evidence that male skateboarders' marginalisation of females is unintentional and merely demonstrates their fundamental beliefs that skateboarding is a masculine sport that does not attract girls (Beal, 1996). Regardless of whether actions that result in marginalisation are deliberate or unintended, the outcome is the same: female skateboarders feel that they are not accepted in the skate community and not taken seriously as participants (Beal & Weidman, 2003; Young, 2004; Kelly *et al*., 2008; Atencio *et al.*, 2009). As with many forms of discrimination, the marginalisation process can also be insidious, subtle, and even well-meaning, making it difficult for female skateboarders to object and for male skateboarders to recognise that a problem exists.

The instances of benevolent sexism discussed earlier in this chapter illustrated how innocuous behaviour can contribute to marginalisation. Another example of marginalisation is the use of gender markers in action sports: they are not 'snowboarders' or 'skateboarders', they are 'female snowboarders' or 'skater girls' (Thorpe, 2005). MacKay (2016) and others noted the role played by sports media in perpetuating these constant reminders of female participants' gender. A further example of marginalisation is in the exclusion of many female skateboarders from the bonding processes between male skateboarders, which are often predicated on spending long periods of time together at skate parks (Beal, 1996).

In the context of being outnumbered at skate parks, some mores of skate culture might be interpreted as gendered marginalisation practices by female skateboarders. Practices such as snaking and heckling are employed by experienced skateboarders to teach novice participants the 'rules' of the skate park, demonstrating overt expressions of power and the regulation of space from those in the park who feel that they have sufficient legitimacy to enforce other participants' behaviour (Petrone, 2010). Male skateboarders may intend heckling and snaking to be customary behaviour to school new participants, but female skateboarders may interpret such behaviour as marginalising, and designed to force them away from the skate park. Given the documented sexism and disregard for female participants that is evident in many male skateboarders' attitudes, this kind of interaction could extend beyond tutoring a novice skateboarder about skate etiquette and also include a demonstration of gendered power relations if the novice skateboarder is female and the experienced skateboarder is male, and particularly if the female skateboarder is the only female at the park.

3.4 Supporting girls to be active

Researchers have endeavoured to identify strategies to encourage girls to be active and thus experience the tangible and intangible advantages of an active life. Some strategies are drawn from practice, while others have been developed to address barriers and enhance enablers identified, particularly in qualitative studies.

3.4.1 Girls-only spaces, groups, and events

Female skateboarders identified the presence of other women at skate parks as a critical enabling element to their participation (Atencio *et al*., 2009). Participating in physical activities with same-sex peers enhances girls' enjoyment of physical activities because negative comments and criticism from boys reduces girls' opportunity to enjoy sport and active recreation (Bailey *et al*., 2005; Brown *et al.*, 2008; Whitehead & Biddle, 2008; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Burrows & McCormack, 2011; Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation,

2012; Bocarro *et al*., 2015; Lauderdale *et al*., 2015). Access to physical activity spaces that are not dominated by boys and that provide for a range of sporting and recreational activities would therefore be likely to support girls to be more active (Beighle *et al*., 2006; Bocarro *et al*., 2015; Eime *et al*., 2015; Watson *et al*., 2015; Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2016; Usher & Gomez, 2018). Another option could be to make teasing, and gender- and body-based harassment completely unacceptable and thus stamp it out, but reserving spaces exclusively for female participation may be a more realistic short-term goal than dismantling the patriarchy.

Many parents, as gatekeepers to younger children's activity opportunities, are reluctant to encourage their girls to engage in unsupervised physical activity in parks and public spaces. Providing targeted girls-only activities delivered in public spaces by qualified facilitators may increase the likelihood of these parents supporting their daughters' participation (Bocarro *et al*., 2015).

Some researchers argue that female-only groups can also reinforce marginalisation within a sport by positioning women and girls outside of the mainstream participants and further emphasising the differences between male and female sport (Svender *et al*., 2012; Comley, 2016). Integrating sport from childhood could help to disrupt binary attitudes about competence that have been shaped by gender stereotypes (Fink *et al*., 2016). However, the argument in favour of sex segregation in sport fails to acknowledge that boys and girls have different formative experiences that influence their accumulation of physical skills and can be seen in the differing physical literacy levels demonstrated from a young age. Bringing boys and girls together in integrated sport could emphasise girls' reduced competency and increase the risk of negative attention from the more competent boys, which would be likely to diminish girls' enjoyment of the experience and could dissuade them from continuing.

To supplement regular girls-only opportunities to participate, girls-only events can build a sense of community and celebrate diversity within skateboarding, giving women and girls opportunities to develop their skills, meet each other, and identify role models (Thorpe, 2005; Donnelly, 2008; Kerr & Obel, 2018).

Female skateboarders reported that female-only skateboarding events were valued because they offer opportunities to network with other participants, and because cash prizes were seen as recognition of their status as legitimate skaters (Atencio *et al*., 2009).

Auckland's skate parks are not bookable spaces and therefore could not be reserved exclusively for a particular group of participants, although they can be used for skate competitions, which have included girls-only competitions in the past. Implementing a policy to allow for skate parks to be reserved for the exclusive use of female skateboarders would require consultation with the predominantly male skate community, who may not accept that girls require dedicated space and time to practise.

3.4.2 Opportunities to develop competence

Female skateboarders in international studies have identified that their actual or perceived lack of competence, and the negative attention it attracted from male skateboarders, was one of the main barriers to their participation in the skate community (Beal & Weidman, 2003; Pomerantz *et al*., 2004; Young, 2004; Kelly *et al*., 2005; Kelly *et al*., 2008). Girls are more likely than boys to express concern about their sporting abilities, particularly as their physical self-confidence declines during adolescence, and they often struggle to access opportunities to gain new physical skills or improve their abilities, and girls who lack physical competence often find it stressful to be active and don't want to draw attention to their lack of skill by trying to participate (Malcom, 2003; Garrett, 2004; Whitehead & Biddle, 2008; Burrows & McCormack, 2011; Clark *et al*., 2011; Holman *et al*., 2013; Women in Sport & Youth Sport Trust, 2015; Stormoen *et al*., 2016; Sport New Zealand, 2018a; Corr *et al*., 2019; Sport New Zealand, 2019). This can have a lasting impact on girls' enjoyment of sport and active recreation and their long-term interest in being physically active.

Girls who acknowledge and celebrate their own competence are more likely to continue participating in sport and physical activity through and beyond adolescence (Eime *et al*., 2015; Watson *et al*., 2015). This is because "…women's perceived ability or skill at an activity determined their preference

for it: women who were not successful when they tried an activity did not want to continue participating in the activity" (Usher & Gomez, 2018, p. 152). Confidence is also a prerequisite to enjoying physical activities, and building competence provides that confidence (Women in Sport & Youth Sport Trust, 2015). Girls who do not feel competent are far less likely to enjoy an activity and, unsurprisingly, are less likely to want to continue that activity (Whitehead & Biddle, 2008).

Directly supporting girls to gain critical physical competencies in a supportive and non-judgmental manner could increase their likelihood of trying new sports and physical activities as girls find physical activities more enjoyable if they are facilitated by adults they know and trust (Beighle *et al*., 2006; Clark *et al*., 2011; Corr *et al*., 2019). Positive feedback from peers and adults is also a powerful motivator that supports ongoing participation (Rutten, Boen, Vissers, & Seghers, 2015; Corr *et al*., 2019).

3.4.3 Flexible and enjoyable ways to be active

Enjoyment is a key motivator for young people's participation in sport and active recreation, and girls identify the opportunity to have fun with friends as a primary motivation for being active (Burrows & McCormack, 2011; Rehrer *et al*., 2011; Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2012; Tannehill, MacPhail, Walsh, & Woods, 2015; Women in Sport & Youth Sports Trust, 2015; Cooky, 2018; Youth Sports Trust, 2018; Corr *et al*., 2019; Sport New Zealand, 2019). 'Having fun' can be as simple as making jokes about the activity and generally reducing the perceived seriousness of taking part (Yungblut *et al*., 2012). Girls' motivation to take part in physical activity increases in line with how enjoyable they find the activity (Barr-Anderson *et al*., 2008; Whitehead & Biddle, 2008; Rehrer *et al*., 2011). Conversely, if a sport or physical activity isn't regarded as enjoyable most young people will not wish to continue participating in it (Whitehead & Biddle, 2008; Tannehill *et al*., 2015).

The inflexible scheduling and time commitments involved with many organised sports can be a barrier to girls' participation (Svender *et al*, 2012; Eime *et al*., 2015). Increasing access to sports and active recreation opportunities that can

be engaged with flexibly and combined with other interests and activities may increase girls' participation. Autonomy is one of skateboarding's main attractions, with its lack of restrictions, rules, and adults telling participants what to do (Beal & Weidman, 2003; Seifert & Hedderson, 2010). The lack of structure in the skateboarding world enables participants to continuously choose their own challenges and then strive to achieve them, and skateboarders report that they value the lack of standards that empower them to determine for themselves what they want to draw from the activity (Beal & Weidman, 2003).

Girls need access to a range of opportunities to be physically active that extend beyond the traditional focus on organised competitive sport. While some girls enjoy competing, research has suggested that strong focus on being competitive reduces many girls' enjoyment of sport and can sometimes dissuade them from participating (Burrows & McCormack, 2011; Clark *et al*., 2011). Giving girls opportunities to try many different activities with their peer group, and expanding the definition of 'being active' to include everything from organised sport to unscheduled activities that support social interaction, such as dancing and going for a walk with friends, may also increase their enjoyment and strengthen their motivation to be active (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Clark *et al*., 2011; Taverno Ross *et al*., 2013; Eime *et al*., 2016; Corr *et al*., 2019). Empowering girls to determine their own preferred activity choices is likely to be more intrinsically motivating than telling them what to do (Beighle *et al*., 2006; Clark *et al*., 2011; Lauderdale *et al*., 2015).

Skateboarding is the type of activity that could attract girls who want to participate in non-competitive recreation. Skateboarders report high levels of enjoyment and personal satisfaction, and for many participants the sole reason to skate is to have fun (Seifert & Hedderson, 2010). Although it is described by some researchers as a sport, its uncompetitive culture and the value placed on enjoyment for enjoyment's sake align it closely with play. It fits Work-Slivka's (2017) five criteria of play: it is not necessary for survival; it enables participants to express autonomy and freedom of choice; it is not a functional activity and enables social norms to be pushed; it enables participants to repeat and build on previous pleasurable experiences; and it occurs when the participant's basic needs (such as shelter and hunger) are met. Skateboarding therefore has high

potential to provide enjoyment to participants – after all, from a participant's perspective the purpose of play is to have fun. The way in which this enjoyment is experienced varies according to the skateboarder, but the sense of being fully absorbed in the activity is described by many participants and indicates that skateboarding enables people to experience the concept of flow (Seifert & Hedderson, 2010). Skateboarders explained that skating "liberated them from stresses and pressures, giving them a feeling of immense freedom as though the cares of the world had been lifted from them" (Seifert & Hedderson, 2010, p. 285). The state of flow was described as "a moment of peak performance – a moment in which they felt they were able to execute their performance perfectly" (Seifert & Hedderson, 2010, p. 287). This type of opportunity to be active and have fun has high potential to meet the physical activity needs of girls who are disengaged from organised sport.

3.4.4 Role modelling active behaviour for girls

Role modelling is recognised as a valuable way to encourage girls to be active (Holland & Harpin, 2015; Cooky, 2018). In sports like snowboarding increased attention given to female participation has helped role models to emerge (Thorpe & Olive, 2016). The use of social media in skateboarding and other action sports has enabled female skateboarders to reject mainstream skate media and its opportunities for publicity in favour of shaping their own narratives, providing skateboarding girls with an opportunity to find female role models within skate culture (MacKay, 2016).

Peer role modelling is also a strong influence on girls, who may become involved in a sport or try a physical activity primarily because a friend is taking part (Hohepa *et al*., 2006; Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2012; Cooky, 2018). During adolescence peer influence is a more powerful motivator than parental encouragement (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Eime *et al*., 2016). However, the influence of peers can be a double-edged sword, as one girl giving up a sport may inspire her friends to follow suit (Whitehead & Biddle, 2008; Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2012).

Despite the reduced influence that parents have on their adolescents, role modelling within families can also be a powerful tool to encourage girls to be more active, although this may require challenging gender stereotypes about adult women's participation in sport and active recreation (Whitehead & Biddle, 2008; Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2012; Eime *et al*., 2016). Developing programmes that create opportunities for mothers and daughters to be active together could be effective, particularly if these also met the social relatedness needs of both generations by bringing together existing groups of friends, or like-minded women and girls who could become friends through participating in the same activities.

3.5 Gaps in the existing research

3.5.1 Summarising the scope of past studies

The literature review demonstrated that there has been a small number of studies dedicated to girls' skateboarding, and apart from Bäckström & Nairn's 2018 study the work that has been done in this area is at least ten years old. It therefore seems timely to explore girls' skateboarding now and explore whether girls' experiences have changed since the earlier studies were conducted.

There is also no research exploring female skateboarding from in Aotearoa New Zealand. This represents a significant gap in the existing research. New Zealand is markedly different from North America and Scandinavia in terms of demographics and national values, and factors that affected skateboarders in the studies conducted there may not apply here.

The voices of novice skateboarding girls have largely been absent from past studies; most research has featured relatively experienced female skate participants. Researching the experiences of novice girls skaters will contribute to the existing body of research and enable a better understanding of what it is like to start participating in this male-dominated activity.

3.5.2 Crafting the research questions

This chapter has presented the complex and interrelated barriers that may influence girls' participation in skateboarding and other sport and active recreation. It has also demonstrated the value of research that draws on the lived experience of participants and places their voices at the centre of the work. The lessons drawn from the literature review shaped my research questions and study approach, which are presented in chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter revisits the research questions and describes the ontological and epistemological stand points of my research approach, as well as the hermeneutic phenomenological methodology I followed. It also presents the study structure, describes the participant recruitment and data analysis processes, and discusses the Developmental Theory of Embodiment used to provide a framework for much of the interpretative analysis.

4.1 Research questions

4.1.1 Background

Girls who wish to be physically active face systemic barriers that begin with gender role socialisation in early childhood and are amplified through puberty and beyond. This affects their capacity to access the physical, mental, and emotional health benefits of being active. However, some enablers do exist that support continued physical activity, and case studies drawn from female skateboarding may help to illustrate how barriers can be overcome and enablers can be supported.

From an academic perspective I was mindful of a lack of Australasian studies in the existing body of research, and as a practitioner my goal was to further my understanding of the conditions that influence girls' decisions to be active or inactive.

4.1.2 Research objectives

My study had three objectives:

- to learn more about the experiences, motivations, and aspirations of skateboarding girls in Auckland, both as novice participants and as members of the broader local skateboarding community;

- to develop a deeper understanding of the Girls Skate NZ approach to try to identify the critical success factors that support girls to participate in skateboarding; and
- to produce a piece of skateboarding research that adds female New Zealand skateboarders' experiences to the international body of work exploring skateboarding culture and practice.

To achieve this the research questions are:

- What are the experiences of novice female skateboarders in Auckland?
- How does Girls Skate NZ support girls to become skateboarders?

4.2 Methodology

4.2.1 Ontology and epistemology

The ontological position of this hermeneutic phenomenological research is relativist: it "looks at reality as made up of the perceptions and interactions of living subjects" (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015, p. 56). Each study participant has offered their own version of reality drawing on their lived experience as a skateboarder or as the parent or coach of a skateboarder. This is a relativist ontological stance: that there cannot be one 'truth' of what has occurred in that lesson and at that skate park because reality is constructed by each person who experiences it (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Accordingly, this study orients to an interpretivist epistemology, with knowledge emerging intersubjectively as the researcher's own beliefs, values, and experiences mediate their access to participants' own meaning-making and experiential worlds.

4.2.2 Hermeneutic phenomenology

Phenomenology is the intentional questioning of how people know and experience the world (van Manen, 2016). The goal of a phenomenological researcher is to capture the "nature and meaning of things – a phenomenon's

essence and essentials that determine what it is" (Saldaña, 2011, p. 7). However, the goal is not merely to represent the lived experiences of those who participate in a phenomenological study, but to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences being described and what they mean to the participants. Savin-Baden and Howell-Major described this as an "intent to reduce the experiences to a description of a universal essence or the very nature or essence of a thing" (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, pp 214-215). The goal of phenomenological research is therefore to gain insights that can increase one's ability to understand other ways of experiencing the world and different contexts, producing descriptions of participants' lifeworlds that have "a universal (intersubjective) character" (van Manen, 2016, p. 58).

Phenomenological research can be transcendental or hermeneutic. The hermeneutic research approach embraces the role of the researcher in interpreting the data gathered for a phenomenological study (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). It recognises the impossibility of a researcher compartmentalising their own lifeworld during the interpretation process, and instead sees value in the perspectives of the researcher, encouraging them to acknowledge their preconceptions, and "reflect on how their subjectivity is part of the analysis process" (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019, p. 95). This reflexivity enables the researcher to demonstrate through their work that they are conscious of how their own values, beliefs, and previous experiences will influence their interpretation of research data (Bynum & Varpio, 2018).

A hermeneutic phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study because my aim is to better understand what it means to be a novice female skateboarder in Auckland, and why it is that Girls Skate NZ appears to support novice skateboarding girls successfully – not just to become more aware of the lived experiences of women and girls who enjoy this physical activity, but to seek opportunities to understand their experiences to apply insights beyond the world of skateboarding. A phenomenological study requires a researcher to be genuinely engaged in the phenomenon being explored (van Manen, 2016). My interest lies in the barriers and enablers to girls being active. Although female skateboarding is the focus of this research, the phenomenon being studied is: what is it like to participate in a traditionally male-coded physical activity? The

hermeneutic phenomenological methodology used for this study enabled me to work with skateboarding, to learn more about female experiences of participating in male-coded sports and physical activities in general.

4.2.3 Orienting to the phenomenon

By orienting oneself to the phenomenon being studied a researcher contextualises their work and enables a richer understanding of why they have chosen to pursue the research: what it is about the phenomenon that interests them and prompts them to conduct the research (van Manen, 2016). When I presented the significance of this research in chapter one, the introduction, I explained the influence that my feminist beliefs have had on my research and employment decisions, and the extent to which my feminist identity shapes my interactions with everybody in my life. To fully orient myself to the specific phenomenon of girls being active further context is required.

Aside from my professional interest in learning more about the conditions that support girls to engage in physical recreation and sport, I am also a mother of two children, one of whom is a highly active pre-pubescent girl who does not appear to feel curtailed by gender stereotypes regarding sport being a 'boy thing'. Although I am not a skateboarder, my own experience of being active as a child and teenager involved horse riding, which was similar to skateboarding in several ways: it was an individual activity that could also be enjoyed in the company of other participants; it was autonomous (particularly for me, as I had my own horse); and it required a high degree of competence in order to be enjoyable (and growing competence brought with it increased confidence, further increasing the capacity for enjoyment). However, a key difference between skateboarding and horse riding is that horse riding is a female-dominated leisure activity. I seek to understand whether there are qualities evident in an activity like skateboarding that may support girls like my daughter to remain active through puberty and beyond. In summary, I orient to life as a parent, researcher, and active recreation practitioner, and my feminist values shape my interactions with the world around me.

4.2.4 Multifaceted study

The study had four components:

- Skate park observations;
- Key informant interviews;
- Girls Skate NZ student focus group session; and
- Parent interviews.

Each element of the data collection had a separate purpose within the scope of the study. This multifaceted approach was designed to produce a rich data set that would offer multiple perspectives on skateboarding in Auckland. Combining researcher observation with direct participant data-gathering through interviews and focus groups helps to increase the credibility of a study, with each element of the study helping to mitigate deficiencies in other elements of the study (Saldaña, 2011).

The *skate park observations* provided an opportunity to experience the dynamics of skate park usage as a non-participant and collect data regarding the gender balance of skate park use. Although gathering and interpreting quantitative data is not the focus of a phenomenological study, doing so helps to reveal relevant behavioural patterns and contextualise the phenomenon being explored (Saldaña, 2011). Using an observational element to collect my own non-participant impressions of skate park dynamics provided an additional perspective to complement the data gathered from participants (van Manen, 2016).

The *key informant interviews* grounded the study in the context of Auckland's skateboarding community, and involved both male and female participants to give a broad perspective and to assess whether the differences in data from male and female participants might represent gendered patterns of difference between the male and female skate experience. One of the key informants was Amber Clyde, the founder of Girls Skate NZ, and her participation both represented a voice of female skateboarding and provided specific information about her coaching techniques and the philosophy that underpins it.

The *focus group session* captured the experiences and aspirations of girls who are novice skateboarders, enabling a greater understanding of the Girls Skate NZ approach and presenting further opportunity to understand the lifeworld of female skateboarders in Auckland. Finally, the *parent interviews* provided additional information about and impressions of Auckland's skateboarding culture. Speaking to parents also complemented the data collected from the girls who participated in the focus group, further enriching the overall data set, and enhancing the credibility of the study (Saldaña, 2011).

4.2.5 Ethical considerations

The Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Human Ethics Northern Committee granted the study ethical approval on 13 December 2020 (ref. NOR 19/61). The ethics application included all supporting paperwork to be distributed to participants: consent forms, assent forms, demographic forms, whānau/family information sheets, and participant information sheets (included as Appendix 1). The paperwork summarised the study as 'exploring girls' use of skate parks', which reflected the intended focus of the study at the outset. However, the interview and focus group schedules included as Appendix 2 reveal that the scope of the study expanded to include further discussion about participants' personal skate histories.

4.3 Skate park observations

4.3.1 Study locations

The skate park observations were conducted at three North Shore skate parks. These were Hooten Reserve Skate Park in Albany (Site 1), Browns Bay Beach Reserve Skate Park in Browns Bay (Site 2), and Birkenhead War Memorial Skate Park (Site 3).

Sites 1 and 2 are adjacent to playgrounds and Site 3 is in a sports park. Proximity to playgrounds mean that Sites 1 and 2 seemed to attract the broadest range of users, including children who visit the playground but also

take scooters or skateboards to play on the skate facilities. Site 2 is also located on a popular beach reserve, and is the least challenging skate park from a technical perspective because it lacks a skate bowl. These study sites were chosen based on my prior knowledge of which North Shore skate parks were likely to attract the highest number of users and thus provide the greatest opportunity to collect data. Figure 1 shows the relative locations of the three skate parks.

4.3.2 Observation schedule

I conducted 47 timed five-minute skate park observations on 22 dates in January and February 2020. The dates and times of the observations are set out in Appendix 3. The observations took place throughout the week during January's school holiday period, and on weekends and public holidays throughout February. The observations were spread evenly across the three sites: 17 observations at Site 1, 14 observations at Site 2, and 16 observations at Site 3. Site 3 is a skate park used for Girls Skate NZ classes, so observations were not held there during scheduled classes or close in time to scheduled classes, to capture an accurate gender balance of general skate park use. I recorded my data using the 'notes' function in my phone and transferred the data to a spreadsheet when I returned home after each observation.

4.3.3 Conducting the observations

My data gathering practice was guided by Gehl and Svarre (2013), who recommended that observers should aim to be inconspicuous and not interact with users of a space, to accurately capture data without influencing it. I stood or sat in locations that gave me discreet but clear views of the study sites. I interacted with other people in the study sites only insofar as they initiated contact, which was limited to exchanging a smile with a parent or other adult in or near the sites. To differentiate between the participants of key informant interviews, the focus group, and the parents' interviews, skate park users observed as part of the study are referenced as 'study subjects'.

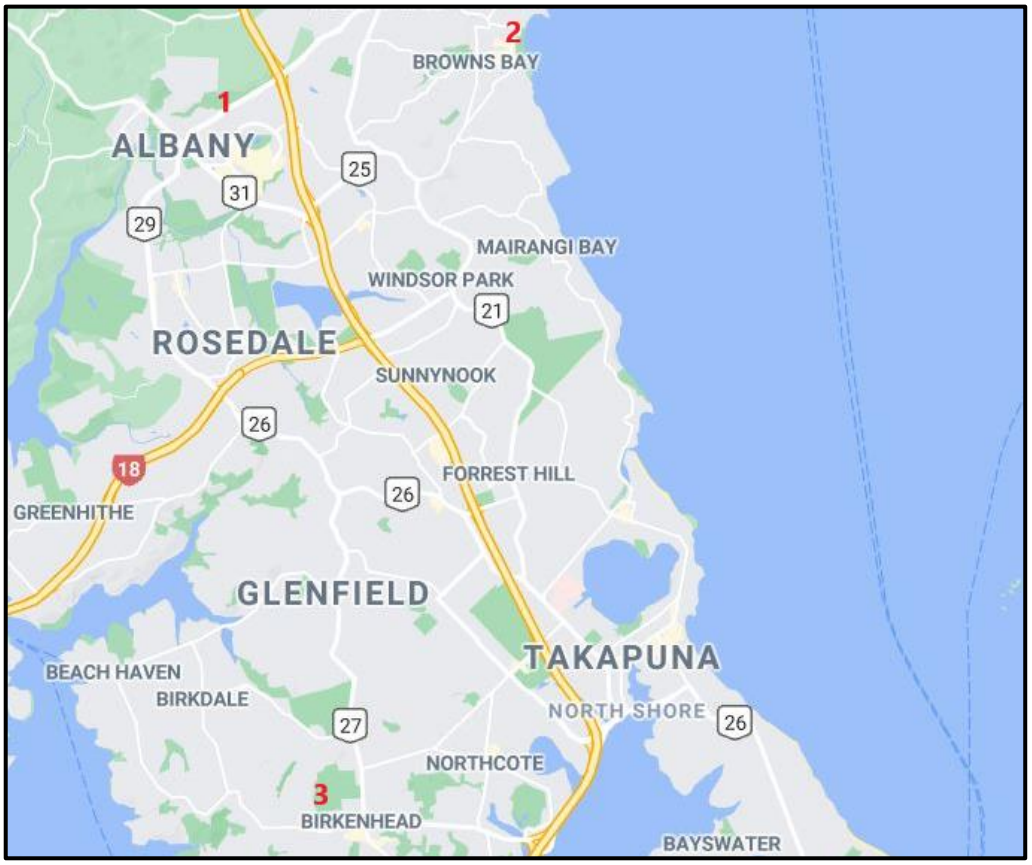

Figure 1: Locations of skate parks used as study sites

During each observation I counted the number of study subjects and noted their apparent gender and estimated age range (for example 'primary-aged child', 'young teen', 'older teen', or 'adult'). I also noted each study subject's activity during the observation (for example 'skateboarding', 'scootering', or 'sitting with others').

Capturing study subjects' activities illustrated the diversity of skate park use. Not all skate park users are skateboarders: increasingly scooter riders (also referred to as 'scooterers' or 'scooter boys' by skateboarders who participated in my qualitative studies) are frequent users of these spaces. I had learned from previous discussions with skateboarders that scooter riders can cause tension in skate parks, so it was relevant to record their presence.

4.3.4 Gender assessments

To assess the gender of study subjects I followed guidance provided in a school-based study conducted by Boyle *et al*. (2003), which discussed gender stereotypical appearance as a way of identifying children's gender. I used the appearance-based signifiers of clothing style, clothing colour, and hair length to guide my assumptions about gender. However, without communicating with each study subject to confirm their gender the use of the terms 'girl' or 'boy' can only accurately represent 'child presenting as girl' or 'child presenting as boy': some study subjects may identify as non-binary, or I may have misgendered them. The baggy clothing favoured by many skateboarders may have increased the risk of misgendering in this study.

4.4 Key informant interviews

4.4.1 Purpose of the interviews

Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) described the dual purpose for interviews in hermeneutic phenomenological studies, which are intended both to gather narratives of lived experiences – the choices they have made and what has happened to them, and to provide an opportunity for conversational interchanges with participants to better understand the meaning of the experiences they have shared – what those experiences represent or signify.

The key informant interviews were held with male and female adult skateboarders. The intention was to contextualise the focus group findings with key informants' knowledge of the broader skateboarding culture and practice in Auckland. Speaking to adult participants also provided scope to hear different perspectives about why the lived experiences of female and male skateboarders may differ and whether the themes identified in the literature review were relevant in an Auckland skateboarding context. In addition, encouraging adult participants to tell their skateboarding 'origin stories' provided opportunities to contrast their novice experiences with those of contemporary 'origin stories' told by the girls who participated in the focus group session. Involving both male and female skateboarders enabled the inclusion

of male perspectives and provided opportunities to reflect on whether novice skateboarders' experiences differed because of their gender.

4.4.2 Participant recruitment

Amber Clyde was one of the key informants, and her willingness to participate influenced the decision to use Girls Skate NZ as a case study for this research. The remaining five key informants were recruited through personal and professional networks, and initial contact was made via email.

4.4.3 Confidentiality and consent

Auckland's skateboarding community is small, and the key informants knew each other personally or by reputation. Participant confidentiality was an important consideration.

As the founder of Girls Skate NZ Amber Clyde's real name has been used, but all other key informants were invited to choose a pseudonym. Several participants said they were comfortable using their real names, but after consultation with my supervisors and in keeping with assurances made that their anonymity would be protected, I assigned pseudonyms. These were recorded on a Demographic Form for Individual Interviews for each participant.

Each key informant was required to read the Information Sheet for Key Informants and then complete a consent form (which included an acknowledgement that the interviews would be audio-recorded).

4.4.4 Conducting the interviews

The key informants were interviewed individually and in person during January and February 2020, before any Covid-19 restrictions were in place. This was also before the focus group session was held, which was a deliberate decision intended to increase my broad knowledge of skateboarding in Auckland before learning about experiences relevant to Girls Skate NZ participants. Each interview site was chosen by the participant and included my house, key

informants' houses, public cafés, and a council meeting room. Amber was interviewed twice; all other key informants were interviewed once.

The semi-structured interview approach enabled me to ask questions that drew on the key themes that had arisen from the literature review, while still retaining sufficient flexibility to let conversations take their own course and enable the participants to raise whatever points they felt were relevant to the discussion. This approach enables richer data to be gathered than a structured interview because participants can interpret and respond to questions in their own way, but it also provides opportunities to compare different participants' answers to the same questions in a way that wouldn't be possible with unstructured interviews (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). The tone was kept relatively informal and conversational to encourage participants to share their insights.

The interviews lasted for 26 – 72 minutes. Each interview was recorded using the 'voice memo' function on an iPhone. This was a convenient and portable recording option that captured sound to a sufficiently high quality and kept the interview data secure through online 'iCloud' data storage. Notes were not taken during the interviews, to avoid the risk of becoming distracted and missing opportunities to ask supplementary questions.

4.5 Focus group session and parent interviews

4.5.1 Purpose of the focus group session and parent interviews

Phenomenological focus groups recognise that participants' interactions with each other during the session can add richness to the data gathered (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). The aim of the focus group session was to learn about the experiences of current and recent Girls Skate NZ participants, which included their experiences as novice skateboarders in general, and as Girls Skate NZ students in particular.

The parent interviews increased the richness of the focus group data by providing additional context regarding the girls' skateboarding experiences. Saldaña (2011) commented that this additional parental context can be

particularly useful to enrich data drawn from children. Interviewing the parents also captured perspectives and insights from adults who were non-participants in skateboarding but had spent time in skate parks and around skateboarders. The parents of skateboarders often spend a lot of time at skate parks, particularly when their daughters are younger, and it stood to reason that their non-participative, but frequent, presence could enable them to observe skate park dynamics in a different way to the lived experiences of their skateboarding children.

4.5.2 Participant recruitment

The focus group participants were recruited via Girls Skate NZ's social media presence. Amber Clyde promoted the study to skateboarding girls and their parents and encouraged them to take part. The parents contacted me directly to confirm their daughters' involvement. Managing the logistical arrangements with the parents ensured that they were cognisant of the purpose of the study and what would be involved. Six girls were recruited as participants, two of whom were sisters.

Planning the focus group session provided an opportunity to recruit parents as participants. Four out of the five parents agreed to take part: three mothers and one father.

4.5.3 Confidentiality and consent

Adult study participants completed consent forms and focus group participants completed assent forms, with their parents completing consent forms on their behalf. Confidentiality was important for both the focus group participants and the parent participants, both singly and in relation to each other, and to assist with this all participants were asked to choose pseudonyms.

4.5.4 Conducting the focus group session

The focus group session was held on 2 August 2020 and lasted 57 minutes. It occurred in a council-owned meeting room at Birkenhead War Memorial Park,

and took place immediately after a Girls Skate NZ lesson at the adjacent skate park. The six focus group participants ranged in age from eight to 15 years. Although the girls varied by age and by experience as skateboarders, the fact that they shared the identity of 'skateboarder' provided sufficient commonality for the focus group session to function well. Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) acknowledged that participants of focus groups are more likely to share their experiences in the company of those with whom they share similar interests or characteristics.

A semi-structured facilitative approach was used, with open-ended questions designed to address key themes while retaining sufficient flexibility to follow up in response to the girls' comments. The session was audio-recorded. To mitigate the risk of uneven participation from the girls, I varied the order in which I addressed the participants with the questions, giving all the girls an opportunity to offer the first comments in response to a particular question. As the discussion progressed, I occasionally directed the first opportunity to speak to a particular girl in the group, if her previous comments suggested that she might have further comments to add that were relevant to the current topic.

The goal of the questions was to encourage the girls to share their own personal skate histories, challenges, and values, enabling me to capture their lived experiences. To support this goal, I focused on the girls' entry into the skateboarding (to learn how they became skateboarders), their other sporting and active interests (to build a profile of the type of girl who may be attracted to skateboarding), and their reasons for continued participation – what they gained from being skateboarders. I used neutral language in my questioning, to avoid presupposing that the girls had encountered any of the challenges and difficulties that previous skate research has identified. I reasoned that, if they *had* felt uncomfortable or unwelcome in these spaces, the session would enable them to share their experiences. Similarly, I was neutral when discussing their past interactions with male skateboarders, but when the girls spoke of how they enjoyed skating with other girls I encouraged them to explain why that might be. If the girls had not experienced negative attention at skate parks, I did not want to cause anxiety, or make them feel that such attention was inevitable.

4.5.5 Interviewing the parent participants

The four parent interviews were held online during 5 – 12 August 2020 and ranged in length from 23 to 49 minutes. I used Zoom to enable a face-to-face interviewing style, and audio-recorded each interview. It was clear from the participants' comments that they had a keen personal interest in the study, and the semi-structured interview approach proved to be useful because it provided flexibility that enabled dynamic discussions in response to some of the questions. As van Manen (2016) noted, "the hermeneutic interview tends to turn interviewees into participants or collaborators of the research project" (van Manen, 2016, p. 63). These interviews had a lively conversational tone that enabled broader concepts concerning girls' activity levels to be brought forward. Van Manen (2016) noted that conversational interviews can have a potential positive effect on interviewees by increasing their self-awareness, and the tone and content of the parent interviews suggested that this was the case.

This element of the study was planned initially to gain additional perspectives about the girls' skate experiences about the observed dynamics of skate park use. However, it became evident that the three female parent participants were also skate park users, albeit as regular observers. The chapter 3 literature review did not uncover any studies that captured skateboarders' mothers' experiences of skate parks as potential places of conflict for them (instead of for their daughters). Using a more structured interviewing style could have prevented these lived experiences of women as non-skating skate park users from emerging, and I was grateful that the semi-structured and conversational interviewing method I used enabled this data to be revealed.

4.6 Data analysis

4.6.1 Analysing data in a hermeneutic phenomenological study

A salient feature of hermeneutic phenomenological research is the flexibility it provides, with no firm analytical approach being prescribed (Bynum & Varpio, 2018). The principal aim of the phenomenological researcher is to engage deeply with the data through close reading of transcripts, data coding, writing,

re-reading, and thematic clustering that informs further reading and eventually supports the researcher's nuanced understanding of what the data reveals about the phenomenon being studied (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013; Neubauer *et al*., 2019).

The process of engaging with the data began from the first key informant interview. As I collected my data I made notes of recurring patterns and possible themes emerging from the work, and in many cases used these as a prompt for further theoretical reading and reflection. Saldaña (2011) described this process of reading and reflection as taking 'cognitive ownership' of the data. The data coding process began after all the data was gathered and transcribed, after which I limited my reading to the data itself to identify commonalities and interactions, and to ensure a strong orientation to the phenomenon I was studying: that of girls being active as it is expressed through skateboarding. This constant engagement with the data through reading, writing, and rereading forms a hermeneutic circle that is more iterative in nature than the thematic content analysis approach used for other types of qualitative research (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Bynum & Varpio, 2018). There was not a linear progression from coding, to categorisation (which identified linked coding, such as 'deliberate practice' and 'gaining competence'), to thematic grouping, to the confirmation of the themes. I began to identify themes and sub-themes during the coding, and these were confirmed as the work of analysis progressed. The three data sets (focus group participants, parents, key informants) were analysed independently until the thematic grouping stage, at which point the data was considered collectively to assess how the themes had been represented by each of the three participant groups.

The data itself drove the initial open coding and the subsequent themes that were identified, demonstrating an inductive approach. However, I could not eradicate from my consciousness the socio-cultural factors that had emerged from the literature review as being relevant to the phenomenon of girls being active, and these provided a deductive element that became apparent as the initial coding was grouped into categories and later formed into themes (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). My familiarity with the socio-cultural factors that had featured in the literature review helped me to

identify them in the lived experiences of the participants. Reflecting on the data at a thematic level enabled me to interpret the participants' individual experiences in terms of representing the essence of the phenomenon of girls participating in a male-coded physical activity.

4.6.2 Transcription

The 11 individual recordings were transcribed verbatim and, in the case of the focus group recording, including some non-verbal elements, such as laughter, but not other elements such as pauses or sighs. The transcriber who assisted me signed a copy of the transcriber confidentiality agreement (Appendix 4). The study generated nearly 92,000 words of transcription. The skate park observations also generated data in the form of written notes.

4.6.3 Data coding

Coding data is a heuristic process that helps the researcher to discover meanings in individual data sections (Saldaña, 2011). I followed Saldaña's (2011) recommendation of combining different coding approaches for my analysis and not feeling restricted to just one coding model.

Descriptive coding was used to summarise more straightforward points raised by participants – for example, comments relating directly to Girls Skate NZ were coded 'Girls Skate NZ', assisting me to later bring together all relevant comments into a category. Values coding was used more extensively, and signaled the start of the interpretative process by seeking the meaning beneath the participants' words – what Saldaña (2011) summarised as "the values, attitudes, and beliefs of a participant, as shared by the individual and/or interpreted by the analyst" (Saldaña, 2011, p. 105). An example of values coding from the analysis is this comment from one focus group participant:

> *Yeah, like, just – it kind of makes me feel more tougher? With, like, sports and stuff.*

This was coded as ‘confidence’ because my interpretation of feeling ‘tougher’ was that the speaker was portraying a sense of feeling more able to deal with challenges, which is an indicator of confidence.

The coding process was not straightforward, and much of the data contained nuanced thoughts and ideas that were coded in multiple ways: for example, a comment about how a female skateboarder started participating could be coded to reflect their ‘origin story’ (to allow later comparison between male and female novice skateboarders’ experiences), the role and relevance of parents in the participant’s experience, skate culture in general, and female skateboarding norms in particular.

4.6.4 Themes

In the context of any qualitative research the role of themes is to identify dominant ideas or concepts in the data (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). In hermeneutic phenomenological research, with its overriding philosophy of capturing and describing the essence of a phenomenon, themes help to make sense of what participants have shared, thus supporting the goal of describing the phenomenon (van Manen, 2016). The coded data was grouped into categories to identify patterns that would assist in later developing themes. Following a long iterative process of immersing myself in the data set, during which I followed what van Manen (2016) described as the ‘selective reading approach’ of being alert to phrases in the data that might represent broader ideas being expressed, I identified four themes, each with sub-themes. These are summarised in Table 2.

Theme	Sub-themes
Reasons to skate	• Skateboarding as a source of enjoyment • Skateboarding as a way to be active • Skateboarding as an autonomous activity • Skateboarding as a transgressive act
Becoming a skateboarder	• Gaining competence • Developing confidence • Building a network • Acknowledging skateboarding's didactic origins • Constructing a skate history
Participating in the skate community	• The barrier of intimidation • The barrier of gender disparity • The barrier of sexism • The enabler of physical freedom • The enabler of parental support • The enabler of community acceptance
Girls Skate NZ: supporting girls to learn to skate	• Providing a different approach to skate coaching • Enabling self-determination • Creating a community of female skateboarders • Serving as a role model for skateboarding girls

Table 2: Study themes and sub-themes

4.7 Data interpretation

4.7.1 Moving from analysis to interpretation

The process of interpreting data represents a shift in focus within a study: "analysis involves uncovering patterns in data and interpretation involves uncovering meaning" (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 452). Data interpretation is integral to hermeneutic phenomenological study (Neubauer *et al*., 2019). The interpretative process enabled me to draw out what the participants' comments and responses represented in the context of the phenomenon of girls' skateboarding. I sought to ensure that my interpretation was grounded in the data, which is why the findings and discussion of my study are presented together in chapter 6.

4.7.2 Using a theoretical framework

I applied Piran's (2017) Developmental Theory of Embodiment as part of my interpretive process. Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) suggested that the role of theoretical frameworks in hermeneutic phenomenological data interpretation is minimal because the essence should be drawn from the experience being studied, and not influenced by theory. However, Neubauer *et al*. (2019) noted the value of theoretical frameworks both in the design of a hermeneutic phenomenological study, and as an aide to understanding its findings.

Piran's (2017) Developmental Theory of Embodiment was devised from a piece of significant longitudinal research involving more than 1,500 Canadian women and girls, bringing together findings from three interrelated studies that drew on the lived experiences of participants with considerable ethnic and socioeconomic diversity (Piran, 2017). The theory seeks to understand the relationship between women's and girls' embodied experiences and their social experiences, using three interconnected 'pathways': the Physical Domain; the Mental Domain; and the Social Power and Relational Connections Domain (ibid). Each Domain contains Categories that group together relevant Experiences.

The entire Developmental Theory of Embodiment offers rich guidance for the hermeneutic analysis of feminist qualitative study findings, and as such has played an important role in my data analysis and interpretation. A table presenting the most relevant Domains, categories, and Experiences is included as Appendix 5. These were applied to the study data at the sub-theme level through repeated rereading of both the data and Piran's (2017) descriptive passages of how the Development Theory of Embodiment had been applied to Piran's own research. As Piran's work is concerned specifically with women's and girls' embodied and social experiences, her framework was useful for interpreting both the focus group participants' data and the female key informants' data.

4.8 Reflexivity

The process of designing and conducting the research provided many opportunities for reflection. Key insights are presented below.

My identity as a middle-class, middle-aged, articulate and educated Pākehā woman will have influenced the interactions I had with my study participants. This impact has potential to be both positive and negative. For example, my age, ethnicity, life experience, and role as a parent helped me to form positive relationships with the parent participants. Conversely, my age may have been a barrier to drawing out insightful comments from my focus group participants, who could have responded more openly to somebody closer to their age. Similarly, my gender may have made it challenging for male study participants to feel empowered to share their views regarding the gender dynamics of skateboarding, but could have also supported female participants to feel confident about relating their experiences. My age and gender likely enabled me to conduct my skate park observations in an inconspicuous manner, both because to a casual observer I could have been mistaken for a parent of one of the skate park users, and because women tend to be viewed as an unthreatening presence in youth-oriented spaces, whereas a male observer could have been viewed with suspicion regarding their motives. I did not gather information about my study participants' ethnicities, so it is difficult to assess whether my Pākehā identity influenced my interactions with them, but being a Pākehā researcher during my skate park observations may have contributed to my ability to conduct my study inconspicuously, as Auckland's North Shore has a high percentage of Pākehā residents.

My professional status as a council employee may have affected the power dynamic with four of the key informants, given that they are contracted to provide services on the council's behalf. Their awareness of my role could have influenced their decision to participate in the study and may have impacted their willingness to speak freely.

Finally, my status as a non-participant undoubtedly affected my interactions with those participants who skate. They were unable to assume that I

possessed any nuanced knowledge of skateboarding, and while my lack of skateboarding experience may have helped me to bring a nonbiased eye to my study design and data interpretation, it may have frustrated participants. The participants may have been more open and felt more confident to discuss the dynamics of skate culture and the female skate experience with a researcher who had credibility as part of the skate community.

Chapter 5: Skate Park Observations

5.1 Quantitative study

The skateboarding studies discussed in chapter 3 portrayed skate parks as male-dominated spaces. My dissertation research in 2018 concluded that 88% of North Shore-based skate park users were male, based on a gender coding method that drew on how study subjects presented their gender (Collins, 2018). The quantitative component of this study was intended to further explore the gender balance of North Shore skate park use. Appendix 3 provides the dates and times of the 47 timed five-minute observations at the three study sites. Appendix 6 provides the raw skate park observation data, organised by site, date, and activity.

5.2 The gender balance of skate park use

Table 3 presents the overall gender balance of the study sites, using percentages to enable comparisons to be drawn. The data represents all skate park users, not just skateboarders.

Study site	Female study subjects %(N)	Male study subjects %(N)
Site 1	5.4% (7)	91.1% (123)
Site 2	11.0% (13)	89.0% (106)
Site 3	9.8% (21)	90.2% (194)
All sites (combined)	8.9% (41)	91.1% (422)

Table 3: Gender balance of study subjects

Women and girls are under-represented as skate park users. This disparity varies slightly across the three sites, with Site 2 likely to have a higher proportion of female study subjects (perhaps because of its proximity to other attractions, including a playground and a beach). It is also the least technical skate park used as a study site, which may broaden its general appeal as a site for play.

5.3 Skateboarders at the study sites

The study noted 200 skateboarders. Their gender balance is presented in Table 4.

Study site	Female skateboarders %(N)	Male skateboarders %(N)
Site 1	3.3% (2)	96.7% (59)
Site 2	11.5% (3)	88.5% (23)
Site 3	10.6% (2)	89.4% (101)
All sites (combined)	8.5% (7)	91.5% (183)

Table 4: Gender balance of skateboarders in the study

This data reaffirms that skateboarding remains heavily dominated by male participants. Table 5 further contextualises the marginal status of female skateboarders by representing them as a percentage of all users at each study site.

Study site	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3
Female skateboarders as % of all study subjects at site	1.5%	2.5%	5.6%
Male skateboarders as % of all study subjects at site	45.4%	19.5%	47.0%

Table 5: Skateboarders by gender as a proportion of all skate park users

As well as being significantly outnumbered by male skateboarders at all three sites, women and girls who skate are also marginalised in the context of all site users observed in the study.

5.4 Activities at the study sites

In light of the findings presented in Table 5 to illustrate what percentage of skate park users are skateboarders, it is valuable to consider who else is using these spaces. Table 6 presents this data.

Viewed collectively, the data from Tables 4, 5, and 6 further illustrate that female skateboarders are poorly represented at skate parks, both within the skate community and in the context of all skate park users. A female

skateboarder who wishes to practise at one of the study sites is likely to be the only woman or girl skating at that site.

Study site	Activities undertaken by study subjects		
	Skateboarding	**Scootering**	**Bike-riding**
Site 1	46.9%	47.7%	5.4%
Site 2	22.0%	76.3%	1.7%
Site 3	52.6%	44.2%	3.3%
All sites (combined)	43.2%	53.3%	3.5%

Table 6: Activities at study sites

Skateboarders on the North Shore may prefer Site 3 to the other two study sites because it offers the greatest range of skate facilities. It is also the only study site that is not adjacent to a playground, which may increase its popularity with skateboarders because this factor reduces the likelihood of non-skateboarders using the space as part of a general playground visit.

Scooter riders ('scooterers') outnumber skateboarders across the study, and Site 3 is the only study site where skateboarders were the dominant user group. The interview and focus group schedules did not include any specific questions about scooterers, but when they were asked about their experiences as skate park users many of the participants highlighted problems in dealing with scooterers.

A high number of scooterers in a skate park might therefore be an actual or perceived barrier to using that space for skateboarding girls. Table 7 compares female skateboarders and male scooterers as user groups at each of the three study sites and confirms that female skateboarders are heavily outnumbered by male scooterers.

Study site	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3
Female skateboarders as % of all study subjects at site	1.5%	2.5%	5.6%
Male scooterers as % of all study subjects at site	45.4%	67.8%	40.5%

Table 7: Female skateboarders compared with male scooterers

5.5 Observations of study subjects

I took notes during the observation sessions to capture details of the study subjects' behaviour. Two main observations emerged: the range of skill levels on display; and the way that the sites were used by study subjects.

5.5.1 Gender and competence

As well as being far more numerous than female skateboarders, male skateboarders differed from female skateboarders because of the wide range of skate abilities they displayed. Many of the male skateboarders were highly skilled and made full use of all elements of the study sites, but there were also several instances where it appeared that several skateboarding boys were new to the activity and saw skate parks as a site for independent learning. The more experienced male skateboarders were notably tolerant of novice skate park users and shared the space considerately. More than once I witnessed experienced male skateboarders either asking politely for a less experienced study subject to move from an area of the park or waiting patiently while the novice user finished their activity. I didn't observe any instances of impatience or intolerance from experienced skateboarders towards other users of skate parks. This is an encouraging finding that supports a premise that experienced skateboarders are willing to share skate parks with beginners.

In contrast with the wide range of competency levels on display from male skateboarders, the women and girls I observed skateboarding appeared to be fairly competent (for example, they could skate on small ramps), and in several cases the female skateboarders were highly competent, as evidenced by performances where they dropped into bowls and performed other skilled manoeuvres. I only saw one instance of novice skateboarding girls during the study.

5.5.2 Gender and territorial practices

On several occasions I observed that male skateboarders seemed to spend as much time sitting at the edge of a study site and observing others as they did

skating. On at least two occasions male skateboarders also played loud music while spending time with friends, which further emphasised the sense that this was a space they had claimed to use both to practise the activity and to spend time with friends. Another common feature of groups of male skateboarders was their loud interactions with friends. Although this type of socialising may not be unusual for youth spaces, in the context of the study sites it may contribute to creating an environment that is potentially alienating for younger users, or for users who do not fit in with the dominant group. The patterns of use observed in male scooterers mirrored those of male skateboarders, with Site 2 being a particularly popular site for young male scooterers to spend time with friends.

The female skateboarding study subjects were present alone or in pairs, and there were no groups observed with more than two women or girls.

5.6 Conclusion

The quantitative component of this study has confirmed that skate parks are male-dominated spaces, and that female skateboarders are a minority user group at the three study sites. They are outnumbered within the community of skateboarders, and the growing dominance of scooterers at skate parks further marginalises them.

Chapter 6: Findings and Discussion

The data analysis process produced four broad themes, each with several sub-themes, and these are presented and discussed in this chapter. While the four themes are interrelated, the first three themes primarily address the first research question, “What are the experiences of novice female skateboarders in Auckland?”, and the final theme directly responds to the second research question, “How does Girls Skate NZ support girls to become skateboarders?”.

The first theme, ‘Reasons to skate’, explores the factors that motivate girls to try skateboarding. The second theme, ‘Becoming a skateboarder’, continues tracing the journey of girls as novice skateboarders by progressing through sub-themes that capture different elements of the learning experience. The third theme, ‘Participating in the skate community’, considers the barriers and enablers that affect skateboarding girls as they become more proficient and start to interact with the wider skate community. The fourth theme, ‘Girls Skate NZ: supporting girls to learn to skate’, focuses on the specific approach taken by Amber Clyde’s skate school to mitigate barriers and amplify enablers that support girls to become skateboarders.

The voices of the focus group participants and female key informants are centred through the analysis and discussion, with parent interviews supporting the focus group girls’ narratives and male key informants’ contributions providing a broader context of the skate community and, in some cases, demonstrating the differing lived experiences of male and female skateboarders.

The study involved 14 participants. Table 8 provides a summary of the participants in each part of the study, including relevant familial relationships, and is included for ease of reference.

Focus group participants ('the girls')	Brooke (mother: Charlie) Ciara (mother: Molly) Hailey Lexa (sister: Millie; father: Henry) Millie (sister: Lexa; father: Henry) Meena (mother: Cassie)
Female key informants	Amber Mandy Rose
Male key informants	Carl Matt Andrew
Parent participants ('the parents')	Cassie Charlie Henry Molly

Table 8: Study participants

6.1 Reasons to skate

The first theme explores factors that influence girls to learn to skate. Skateboarding is revealed in the findings as a source of autonomous physical activity that provides female participants with enjoyment and also serves as an opportunity for girls to engage in what is traditionally seen as a male-dominated activity.

6.1.1 "It's a really fun sport": skateboarding as a source of enjoyment

The girls decided to learn to skate because they recognised that it might be enjoyable. Lexa's introduction to skateboarding was prompted by a school project that required her to try a new activity, and when she saw a skateboarding video she thought the activity looked "fun and interesting". Millie, Ciara, and Brooke all encountered skateboarding through Lexa's involvement, and described that witnessing her enjoyment made them see the opportunity it provided to have fun. The girls also described not wanting to miss out on that fun that they could see others experiencing. When speaking of Lexa starting to

skate, Ciara said, “I was really jealous of her and her board and wanted a go”. Brooke began to skate after seeing how much fun Lexa and Ciara had.

Doing a physical activity ‘just for fun’ is something that Piran (2017) identifies as an experience typically enjoyed only by younger girls, when “[t]heir focus is on doing physical activities with immersion and joy” (Piran, 2017, p. 45). From a theoretical perspective this connects with the Development Theory of Embodiment experiences of Physical Freedom, Mental Freedom, and Social Power (Piran, 2017). The experiences of Hailey, Millie, and Meena, the three younger girls, reflect Piran’s findings, given that they started to skate when aged between six and nine. Lexa, Ciara, and Brooke’s experiences are less consistent with Piran’s analysis because they were in their early teens when they began skating as a way to have fun. Piran (2017) described how the ‘tween (ages 9 – 12)’ and ‘early adolescence (ages 13 – 14)’ stages of life are often characterised by girls beginning to experience the Physical Corsets that restrict their ability to engage in activities for the sake of enjoyment. The experience of these three older girls therefore contrasts with those of many of their peers, who might drop out of physical activities in line with research discussed elsewhere in this thesis regarding girls’ lower activity levels in adolescence, and in keeping with the impact of Physical Corsets that Piran (2017) identified.

The female key informants also linked their early skateboarding experiences with their appetite for having fun. Amber watched skateboarding videos as a nine-year-old and began to skate, at first in her driveway and later at a skate park. Mandy and her sisters were given a skateboard for Christmas as young girls, and her early play with her board later led Mandy to become fully engaged in skateboarding as a teenager. However, Rose didn’t try skateboarding until she was an adult, living in Sydney. She said:

> *I just had some time to kill, and so I was really intrigued by his* [her partner’s] *skateboard, I literally had never skateboarded before … so I just grabbed the board and went skating all around the Opera House and the Botanical Gardens, and I just was hooked straight away.*

Rose's narrative captures the sense of freedom she felt when using a skateboard to travel around Sydney's scenic waterfront. Piran (2017) noted that this Freedom in Physical Engagement and Movement is rare for adult women, but that, as adults, it is possible for women to re-engage with opportunities to be active, often as a conscious act of defiance in the face of corseting that may have restricted them as adolescents.

When Mandy engaged seriously with skateboarding as a teenager she had a network of surfing and skateboarding friends who encouraged her to participate. She was also very comfortable to take part with male friends, describing herself as "a bit of a tomboy for having picked up skateboarding in the first place". Skateboarding became a source of great pleasure for Mandy, who commented, "I was just doing something I enjoy – what's the point of life if you don't do stuff you enjoy?".

Mandy's narrative contrasts with Piran's (2017) findings that "acutely missing in the narratives of girls in late adolescence are narratives about *joyful physical immersion* – in particular, joyful group-based physical activities" (Piran, 2017, p. 150, original emphasis). However, Amber's narrative more closely reflects the patterns of experience that Piran (2017) identified. Although she began to skate as a young girl seeking enjoyment, the tween and early adolescence periods of Amber's life presented her with experiences akin to what Piran (2017) described as Blocked Physical Engagement, when she felt unwelcome at her local skate park. Amber lacked friends who also skated, and without a support network her negative interactions with skateboarding boys eventually made her feel that she couldn't use the skate park.

6.1.2 "We've always encouraged them to play sports": skateboarding as a way to be active

The girls all described skateboarding as the latest in a series of sports and physical activities they had tried. Ciara commented:

I used to be a gymnast, do gymnastics, and I did that for, like, three years. And then I did lots of… I did ballet, jazz, hip hop. Flipperball and water polo. I did netball. Football, hockey…

Lexa and Brooke also listed several ways that they've been active, and the three younger girls each mentioned participating in at least two or three sports or physical activities before becoming skateboarders. The range of activities the girls have tried provides a marker of opportunity and socio-economic status, as participation is generally contingent on their family's ability to pay activity fees and to arrange transport, clothing, and equipment to participate. It's also likely that their past experience of other sports and physical activities will have enabled the girls to develop high levels of physical literacy, equipping them with the balance and strength that skateboarding requires of its participants. This may have contributed to their positive early experiences. Piran (2017) highlighted the early adolescent stage of 13 – 14 years old as a point at which girls' opportunities to be active were increasingly restricted, commenting "[f]or most girls, joyful and immersed physical engagement in the world ceases" (Piran, 2017, p. 112). However, the girls' narratives demonstrate that this restriction has not occurred for them, and skateboarding appears to be one of the reasons why they continue to be active.

Rose and Mandy grew up as active, sporty girls, and Amber described how she played soccer and always enjoyed being outdoors. Mandy said she was willing to try any sport, and Rose commented that she was "really sporty". Although Rose's early physical activities didn't include skateboarding, she had parental support to pursue other sports and recreational activities. Mandy reflected that she was given considerable freedom to pursue any sporting or active opportunity that appealed to her. Piran (2017) noted that, for girls to resist the corsets that aggregate to restrict their capacity to be active, "special conditions are needed to facilitate continued engagement, in particular, encouragement by parents or coaches, and financial means" (Piran, 2017, p. 112).

It was clear from the girls' narratives that they have the type of support Piran described. In this context parental support to be active can be regarded as an enabler for the girls to become skateboarders, as their parents have normalised

being active as part of their daughters' lives and created an expectation that their girls will find ways to engage in sport and physical activity. However, the parents' motivations for enabling physical activity differed. Cassie is very conscious of the stereotypes that may negatively influence girls. She described reacting to those stereotypes by ensuring that she didn't perpetuate them when raising Meena:

> *So I started, when she was quite young, to notice the coddling of girls at the playground versus the "you'll be alright" of boys at the playground and I was, like, "she'll be right!" She's tough, she was a chunky little baby … As she got older and could choose things to do she is just quite naturally active and I've always encouraged that.*

Although Meena couldn't clearly describe how and why she started to skate, beyond seeing an after-school class advertised and deciding to join it, the context Cassie provided suggests that there was an expectation that Meena would engage in extracurricular physical activities, and that she understood the value her mother placed on her being active. Cassie also mentioned that Meena's father had bought her a skateboard on a whim when she was three years old, although she was too young to do much more than play on it. So although Meena was uncertain about why she started skateboarding (or was unable to articulate why, which may simply reflect her young age and the associated context of being shy to express herself in a focus group that included older girls), parental encouragement, evident in the skateboard bought for her, may have primed her awareness and interest.

Charlie was mindful of the high attrition rate from sport as girls get older. She wanted to prevent that from happening and described the benefits of her daughters being active. She commented, "you're healthy, you sleep better, I think you learn better, and also it keeps you out of the house and off devices". Charlie is highly motivated to support and enable Brooke to be active because she perceives being active as a way for girls to accrue several other health and wellbeing benefits. She was eager to support participation in any physical activity and saw skateboarding as simply another way to be active. She also explained that she'd laid the foundations for her girls to be active from a young

age, commenting, “we’ve always encouraged them to play sports since they were really little, they’ve always played since they could walk”. In this context, it is unsurprising that Brooke has had parental support to participate in several sports and recreational activities. Charlie also believed that active girls were less likely to engage in the kind of ‘risky behaviour’ discussed in chapter 1. She shared the advice given to her by another parent: “keep your teenagers busy, bushed, and broke”.

Molly shares Charlie’s views about the importance of keeping teenagers busy and active as a way of encouraging healthy life habits. She spoke of her eagerness to continue supporting Ciara to stay active by skating and playing sports into adulthood. Henry didn’t highlight the health benefits of his daughters being active, but he enthusiastically supports Millie and Lexa to skate. Both girls recalled trying several number of sports and physical activities, which speaks to the ongoing support to be active they receive from their parents. Henry’s interest in his daughters’ physical activities were a welcome contrast with Piran’s (2017) finding that few fathers are involved in their daughters’ attempts to be active. Piran (2017) highlighted that a father’s interest in his girls’ sporting and recreational participation could result in “opening the door for them to succeed and be empowered in an arena that otherwise would have been closed to them” (Piran, 2017, p. 141).

6.1.3 “It’s so much more relaxed”: skateboarding as an autonomous activity

The study revealed that autonomy is a key attraction of skateboarding – as Ciara said, “you don’t have scheduled dates, and you can just do it whenever you want”. When discussing skateboarding in the context of other sports and activities, the girls emphasised the freedom and casual approach of skateboarding, which Millie contrasted with her past experiences of gymnastics, commenting that “it wasn’t as relaxed”. Ciara has continued to play football in a team, but for other focus group girls skateboarding has become their main physical activity. Lexa described why she’s chosen to focus on skateboarding:

> *It's so much more relaxed. Like, I don't have to go to the skate park at, like, 11 o'clock or whatever … it's not really a commitment, 'cos, like, it's all personal and you can just do what you want.*

Rose believes that skateboarding offers similar social benefits to team sports, but without the corresponding disadvantages:

> *It's done in a team environment, but it's an individual sport, so that takes a lot of pressure away from performance – you're not going to let anyone down, you know, it's not like you'll miss a goal.*

Rose's comment highlights a barrier that frequently emerges from research regarding the high attrition rate of girls in sport: the fear of letting people down. For girls who may be less skilled or experienced, worries about being conspicuously incompetent in a group environment are heightened if there's a sense that others may depend on their performance.

For Lexa, Brooke, and Ciara, their autonomous experiences of skateboarding have been heightened as they've become sufficiently competent and confident to spend long periods at skate parks, without adult supervision. This captures what Piran (2017) described as the Agency and Functionality dimension of her theory of embodiment. She noted that, after puberty, many women and girls face a barrage of restrictions on their agency to be active, and are steered towards a more passive existence, but that "[a]dolescent girls and adult women who are able to maintain agency in the physical environment during and following puberty … report having more positive embodied experiences" (Piran, 2017, p. 7). This enables Freedom in Physical Engagement, where girls can continue to enjoy "joyful, non-objectifying, non-sexualizing, non-appearance- or weight-related physical activities" (Piran, 2017, p. 17). Skater style, with its gender-neutral baggy jeans and big t-shirts, may also help to enable physical engagement by reducing the emphasis on appearance that Piran described. This contrasts with many team sports and other individual sports, where girls must wear restrictive or revealing uniforms.

Cassie also touched on the benefits of skateboarding as a vehicle for self-expression through clothing choices. She described how Meena has developed her own sense of style at a young age:

> *I think she's got a really great style in her dress and she's very confident in what she wears … it's very different from the other kids at school and what they wear. … You wear pants because you're skating and you're not wearing skirts all the time anyway, and skating shoes, all that kind of stuff.*

6.1.4 "It just makes me feel liberated": skateboarding as a transgressive act

In chapter 3 the adolescent girls in the Canadian study (Pomerantz *et al.*, 2004) described choosing to skate as a deliberately transgressive act, intended to signal their deliberate rejection of prevalent gender stereotypes. Although the focus group girls did not specifically identify the subversion of gender norms as a reason for learning to skate, they were aware that they'd chosen to participate in an activity in which they are the minority. Feedback from Ciara's friends emphasised the transgressive nature of female skateboarding and further enhanced her sense of doing something unusual by becoming a skateboarder:

> *If I'm at school and I'm, like, "oh yeah, I'm a skateboarder", my friends are always, like, "oh my God, that's so cool, I thought that was just for boys", and it just makes me feel liberated.*

Lexa has also found that revealing herself as a skateboarder generated social capital with her peers, remarking, "when I moved to high school my new friends were like 'that's really cool'". The positive reactions from Lexa's school friends echoed the point made in chapter 3 about girls accruing credit socially if they can engage successfully in a male-coded sport (Kelly *et al*., 2005).

6.2 Becoming a skateboarder

The second theme explores how girls develop as skateboarders. It includes a discussion about the value placed on autodidacticism within the wider skate community, and how this is reflected in the girls' personal narratives.

6.2.1 "The hype when you learn a trick is also really good": gaining competence

Many of the female study participants spoke of the pride they take in developing competence as skateboarders. Brooke reflected on the satisfaction of improving her skills:

> *I love when, 'cos you've been trying a trick for ages and then you, like, finally land it, like the feeling you get after you land it – just, like, makes you want to, like keep doing it and keep doing more tricks.*

Brooke's comment captures the intrinsic nature of skateboarding, where pleasure is drawn primarily from personal satisfaction at achieving a goal. This philosophy of continuous improvement is one of the mores of skate culture, and all the study participants who skate referred to practising for long periods to master specific tricks or manoeuvres. Mandy recalled her commitment to honing her skills in her early days as a skateboarder, commenting, "I remember when I was learning to skate a ramp, I'd be out skating every day". Amber's narrative reflected the cumulative benefits of practising. She said, "with skateboarding it gets better and better – the more you do, the more fun it is." Matt described his devotion to deliberate practice, remarking:

> *You'll try tricks over and over – like, semi-recently [I] tried a trick for six months. I went back there five times in six months and tried it for five hours every time.*

The study participants suggested that the physical risks of skateboarding heighten the sense of accomplishment that comes with mastering new tricks. Charlie said:

For Brooke, probably more so than the other two, she had a pretty major fear factor of dropping in, so it took her a lot longer to do that than some of the others. So that, for her, was a massive achievement.

The girls' parents commented on their daughters' commitment to deliberate practice to improve. Molly said:

I think about Ciara and her determination to learn a kickflip. She spent, honestly hours and months and months, and when she landed it, it was, like, the best thing ever. … It's that intrinsic thing of 'you just keep going and keep doing it and keep doing it', and if you can do that, that's such a good life skill to have.

Cassie also commented on her daughter's tenacity when she was trying to master a new skill:

I've spent hours with [Meena] just doing one trick … We've spent so long learning how to balance on skate ramps and things like that, because she wants to practise it. So yeah, she definitely has the tenacity when she wants to master a trick.

6.2.2 "It kind of makes me feel more tougher": developing confidence

Becoming skateboarders appears to have increased the girls' confidence. Learning to skate has been empowering for Millie, who said, "when I started skateboarding I wasn't very confident, and that really helped". The parents also noted how skateboarding has increased their daughters' confidence. Molly celebrated the impact that skateboarding has had on Ciara:

I love that she's found skateboarding because for her it's done huge things for her self-esteem and confidence. She's able to rock on at a skatepark and, because she's quite good, it just gives her that confidence of 'I can be here and I'm allowed.'

Molly believes that Ciara's increased confidence has extended beyond skateboarding, sharing a story of her recent willingness to step into her school's top soccer team at short notice – an opportunity her parents initially thought she'd be too nervous to pursue. Molly explained, "that was a prime example … she would never have done that before – 'Oh, I can't. I'm not good enough.'".

The way that the three older girls dress also may reflect their increased confidence as skateboarders, as Amber commented:

> *They used to come down in their normal clothes and I see them now, and they're skating around in their sports bras and mini shorts … now that they're older they dress differently. But I don't notice self-consciousness at all.*

The girls' decision to change what they wear was not discussed in the focus group session, but it could be interpreted as evidence of increased confidence as the girls choose to dress in a way that will focus attention on them as female skateboarders participating in the predominantly male environment of a skate park. This would appear to be an unusual decision to make if one lacked confidence and didn't want to be noticed by others. While there may also be some socio-cultural pressure at play to meet the appearance standards of emphasised femininity, the fact that the girls' changing personal image coincides with their growth in competence to the point where they now skate independently at skate parks suggests that the girls feel empowered to wear what they want, without needing to adhere to a dress code as a way of fitting in.

6.2.3 "We're still friends 'cos of skating": building a network

Skateboarding has helped Lexa, Ciara, and Brooke to remain friends as they progress through high school, after being friends at primary school but splitting into different schools from intermediate school onwards. Molly celebrated the role that skateboarding has played in keeping Ciara connected to the other two girls:

This has kept them really close friends, and it's great for Ciara. … it took her three years to find her tribe, and it was really hard for her. Now she's fine, but she's always got Lexa and Brooke, which is really cool.

Although Brooke and Lexa are at school together, their friendship is entirely skateboarding-related and they don't have the same friend group at school. Skateboarding has therefore provided the three girls with an opportunity to maintain friendships that are independent of daily school relationships and dynamics. Ciara also mentioned having a casual friendship at school with an older girl she's seen at skate parks, because of their shared identity as skateboarders.

Brooke credited her two friends with helping her to develop her skills and be brave enough to try new tricks, commenting, "they're a lot more braver than I am, so they, like, always try to do things and I always, like, ask them to hold my hands". Lexa agreed, saying, "yeah, we like helping each other as well".

Amber and Mandy both reflected on the value of friendships as an enabler for girls as skateboarders. Mandy appreciated the male skate friends she had as a teenager, but described unsuccessfully trying to encourage her high school girlfriends to join her at the skate park. Amber also struggled to tempt her female friends to come to the skate park with her, and commented, "that's what I needed when I was younger … a little friend to skate around with".

6.2.4 "We just learned from watching videos": acknowledging skateboarding's autodidactic origins

Although many of the personal skate histories shared by the key informants and focus group participants were closely aligned and reflected the unchanging nature of what motivates people to become skateboarders, one point of difference was the role that formal learning has played in different skaters' lived experiences. For the girls, learning to skate has involved attending Girls Skate NZ sessions, complemented by their own self-directed practice. For key informants, learning to skate was an autodidactic and iterative process that did not involve coaching, but was driven instead by early opportunities to try

skateboarding, exposure to skate culture through skate media, and extensive deliberate practice. The three male key informants described childhood experiences in which skateboarding was ubiquitous, enabling them to engage with it as one of many active leisure options. Nobody needed to teach them how to skate, because skateboarding was just part of boyhood and everybody who wanted to skate learned it in the context of wider neighbourhood play. Matt said:

> *I've always skateboarded from when I was a kid, I've always had an interest in that. I used to go to Tole Street Bowl and look around but I wasn't a skateboarder, I was just a kid with a skateboard… I skated with four of my mates and you just get the skater bug.*

This dichotomy between being 'a kid with a skateboard' and 'a skateboarder', illustrates the prevalence of skateboarding for boys who grew up in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Opportunities to skate were always present and it was easy to find like-minded friends as skating companions. It also hints at the requirement within skate culture to commit to the activity by developing technical competence, in order to be recognised as a 'real' skateboarder.

Mandy and Amber also described learning to skate organically, without formal lessons. Their self-described 'mucking around' on skateboards enabled them to gain enough confidence and competence to stay upright and navigate themselves, and to then try skating at skate parks. However, Rose didn't choose to learn independently, although she was exposed to skateboarding when she watched competent male skateboarders as a teenager. She explained:

> *The guys were kind of fine about it, they were, like, "Oh, give it a go", but they were kinda talking about ollies and all these tricks you had to do … Like, no-one said, "Oh, you know, like, if you get on a board I'll just show you how to skate around the park on the concrete, I'll give you a hand".*

Rose needed scaffolding to be supported as a novice skateboarder, and it was not available. Although she was highly active and took many opportunities to play different sports and engage in recreational activities, when it came to skateboarding she was relegated to what Piran (2017) would describe as a 'sedentary girl' who would watch boys participate, rather than participating herself.

Given that they likely had easy access to skateboarding and other leisure options as children, it is unsurprising that some male skateboarders struggle to understand the barriers that women and girls can face to participate in this and other physical activities. Carl personified this lack of understanding when he said, "If they want to do it there's nothing stopping them from doing it". Piran (2017) described the constraints facing women and girls who wish to be active, including the mental corseting of Engagement in 'Feminine' Activities, and the physical corseting of Blocked Physical Engagement and Constriction of Movement and Physical Space. However, male skateboarders have not grown up experiencing those constraints, and this is reflected both in their skate histories, and in the difficulty in comprehending that women and girls may not have enjoyed the same easy access to the activity.

6.2.3 "We started on our own": constructing a skate history

For the girls, learning to skate has been more of a formal process that has involved organised lessons from the outset. However, there is a difference between how the younger girls and older girls construct their identities as skateboarders. The younger girls acknowledge the role skate lessons have played in building their competence. Meena started with after-school school-based lessons before moving on to Girls Skate NZ's skate park-based lessons, which gave her an opportunity to extend her skills with more tricks and the ability to drop into a bowl and navigate ramps. Millie and Hailey both skated with Girls Skate NZ at the earliest stages of their skate experience.

By contrast, the three older girls presented their personal histories of learning to skate with greater emphasis on personal agency:

Ciara: No, we learned – well, me and Lexa learned to drop in on our own
Brooke: I didn't get help from Amber
Lexa: We didn't start with Amber, we started on our own
Ciara: So we just started before, like, learning
Brooke: Yeah
Ciara: How to do stuff by ourselves

Amber presents a differing narrative that positions her as central to the girls' skate histories. These contrasting narratives reflect the girls' and Amber's current contexts and their historic relationship as 'learner(s)' and 'coach'. Amber said:

> *I have these three girls – I don't know if you've seen me mention them on Instagram, I'm so proud of them, I've had them from day dot – who I've been pushing and all three of them are beyond me now, they are incredible. … They're all 14 years old, I've had them since they were 12.*

She also reflected on her history with the three girls as skateboarders when discussing the challenge of convincing long-standing students to work with new coaches, remarking:

> *I get them [coaches] to go with the new girls but the older girls don't want to go with them. I think it's a trust thing, I've held their hands on the ramps so many times they know that they're safe with me.*

The girls' accounts reflect their determination to take ownership of the competence they've developed, which illustrates the context in which they now participate. These girls are sufficiently competent and confident to join the broader skate community and skate without parental supervision, which has enabled them to make friends with many male skateboarders. Given the didactic approach reflected in older skateboarders' personal histories, the girls may have internalised this way of becoming a skateboarder as the legitimate method of learning to skate, leading them to construct their own origin story that

emphasises their didactic practice and more closely aligns them with other skateboarders' histories.

Amber's narrative reflects her role as the founder of Girls Skate NZ, and portrays her motivation to support young female skateboarders. Her comments reveal an emotional investment in the girls' skate histories and her pride in their accomplishments. By appearing to minimise Amber's involvement in their skate histories, the girls are demonstrating the degree to which they have internalised their learning process and constructed it as a self-directed experience, which could be interpreted as Amber having successfully delivered autonomy-supportive coaching, providing her students with intrinsic, self-determined learning opportunities (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003).

Burr (2015) noted that we each construct our experiences of the world according to "our current accepted ways of understanding the world" (Burr, 2015, p. 5). As the three girls develop further as skateboarders and feel even more secure within the skate community, their self-defining narratives may be in a fluid state of construction and reconstruction, and they may one day greater emphasis on Girls Skate NZ as an element of their skate histories.

6.3 Participating in the skate community

The third theme presents a series of barriers and enablers that affect girls as they join the skate community. The sub-themes draw on some of the socio-cultural factors discussed in chapter 3, demonstrating that many girls seem to experience similar barriers and enablers when trying to be active, particularly in male-dominated sports.

6.3.1 "You feel very much watched": the barrier of intimidation

This study suggests that women and girls are more likely than men and boys to experience skate parks as intimidating spaces. This is not because of the spatial design of skate parks, but because of the gender balance of their use, how those users interact with others, and what impact these dynamics have on women and girls visiting the space. The extent to which a person is intimidated

by circumstances, spaces, or people is influenced by their confidence, past experiences, power relations held regarding others, the time of day, attributes of the built environment, social capital, and many other factors. For girls, being constantly outnumbered by boys at skate parks may contribute to feelings of intimidation. When asked what it would be like to be the only girl in a group of skateboarding boys at a skate park, Lexa immediately replied:

> *Very intimidating … especially if you were a beginner and they were all better. It would be quite scary, going there with lots of better boys. I don't think they, like, do anything that makes it bad – it's just them and the whole – lots of them at once.*

Lexa's comment reflects that girls may feel judged or criticised by boys who are more skilled than them. Piran (2017) discussed the need for girls to be highly skilled to 'earn' male recognition, commenting that girls with enhanced skills were more likely to be chosen to participate in co-ed sports teams, or be invited by boys to participate in their games. This perceived pressure for girls to demonstrate competence as a way of minimising the risk of male criticism may explain why I noted several novice skateboarding boys during the skate park observations but did not see any inexperienced skateboarding girls. The parent participants agreed that novice skateboarding girls would be unlikely to use skate parks. Charlie remarked:

> *It would be very rare to find a beginner skateboard girl anywhere, but certainly not on her own and potentially not unsupervised, either. "I'm going to go down to the skate park and give it a go" never happens.*

Lexa recalled how insecure she felt in skate parks when she was inexperienced:

> *I don't think I ever went by myself. I'd always go with Ciara. And we'd always, like, get nervous if there were tons of guys there – we'd be, like, scared – we'd just, like, stand around because we didn't want to embarrass ourselves or anything.*

Amber's narrative also reflected a similar sense of intimidation:

> *I'd just stand there and look at everyone, and I'd go 'I'm the only girl here, this is really scary' … I never wanted to fall over in front of anyone. I'd just be so embarrassed if I fell in front of someone, but they're falling, so I don't understand why it was, like, a big deal for me – but it's something I hear from the girls as well, that they don't want to fall in front of dudes. I think they're scared that they'll get laughed at or something.*

This sense of intimidation is not linked to female skateboarders' age. Amber mentioned that participants in her over-18 classes also felt too scared to visit skate parks, making comments to her like, "there's no way I would have come down here if you didn't do this". Rose is a competent skateboarder, but when asked about using skate parks she replied:

> *It's quite an intimidating environment. … It's just not my style of skating, but I would be quite intimidated to get involved with that [skating at a skate park] unless things are changing. … hopefully soon girls won't have to feel so intimidated.*

Rose also explained that she felt conscious of taking up space, remarking, "I don't wanna get in the way of people who are quite good – I would rather sort of accept my level." This reflects Piran's (2017) physical corset represented by the dimension Constriction of Movement and Physical Space. The novice skateboarding boys I observed at skate parks showed little sign of having similar concerns about whether they were preventing more experienced participants from using the space.

As a highly experienced skateboarder Mandy could describe how skate parks feel intimidating for women and girls. She said:

> *It was just … being a female, knowing that there's a very strong element of that, and most of the boys at the skate park… you feel very much watched, you feel very much, like, you know, the male gaze, basically. So it doesn't matter what your level of skateboarding is, or whether*

you're entitled to be there, or how you feel, you still have that feeling, like "I'm not really supposed to be here, I'm more something to look at…".

These comments and the skate park observations suggest that novice skateboarding girls may feel less entitled than novice skateboarding boys to use skate parks. This may reflect the historical male-coding of skateboarding, empowering boys to feel that they are entitled to use skate parks. Another factor may be the mores of skate culture, that include stepping up to take one's turn on a ramp or to drop into a bowl. Physical and mental confidence is required, and this may be hard to embody as a new skateboarder – hence the scared feeling that Lexa described.

Parent participants also identified that skate parks are intimidating spaces for women and girls, and described how, even as non-skating female visitors, they found them intimidating. Charlie commented, "I don't feel as relaxed there as I would on a playground", and Molly remarked, "I never felt comfortable walking into a skate park". This suggests that, although concerns about competence may contribute to some female skateboarders' feelings of intimidation, the broader issue is one of women and girls feeling uncomfortable in male-dominated spaces. When the male key informants were asked about girls' feelings of intimidation it seemed that the subtleties of girls' lived experience of feeling intimidated were difficult to grasp for those who hadn't shared these experiences. Matt commented, "I've skated for 25 years and there's never been any bullying against girls, it's only been welcome and appreciated". It seemed that Matt found it easy to conceptualise overt bullying, but more difficult to understand what it is like to feel intimidated. However, he later acknowledged that "girls do find the boys intimidating" and recalled that some parents of his female students had reported their girls feeling intimidated when learning with groups of boys. With further reflection Matt demonstrated a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play when he explained:

The boys don't do anything, they're not mean or anything, it's just the fact that they're boys and they're there and there's more of them than the girls.

Carl pointed out that 'male skateboarders' are not a homogenous group, and that as a young male skater he didn't fit the stereotypical mould, which affected his experiences of skate parks:

> *I was … quite conservative and sort of interested in my long-term investment in life, and not such a ratbag as some of the other kids, so they saw that as a weakness. I used to get pushed around a bit at the skate park.*

It is true that many boys may also feel intimidated at skate parks. Members of the LGBTQI+ community may also experience skate parks as contested or uncomfortable sites. However, my skate park observations noted the presence of many inexperienced skateboarding boys who seemed confident to skate in the presence of more competent skaters. There are differing power dynamics at play if a boy encounters negative interactions in the predominantly male environment of a skate park, and if a girl has negative experiences in that same predominantly male environment. The consequences of skate park marginalisation further reflect the unequal gendered power relations. Carl's and Amber's experiences help to illustrate this. Carl could respond to being 'pushed around' by pursuing the many opportunities to skate that he described in his interview, including skating on the street, catching public transport to other skate parks, or travelling into the city to skate in Aotea Square. Amber did not have freedom that Carl described, so when she encountered negative, intimidating behaviour in a skate park it effectively removed her opportunity to skate.

6.3.2 "It's a tougher sport, so more boys are inclined to do it": the barrier of gender disparity

The girls recognised that the stereotypical skateboarder has traditionally been male, and that they're in the minority within the skate community. The male coding of skateboarding has been discussed in previous research, such as Beal's 1996 study of Colorado skateboarders, which highlighted that "even though this subculture's values did not reflect mainstream masculinity, the participants defined skateboarding as a masculine practice" (Beal, 1996, p.

204). Rose expressed an assumption that skateboarding is a male activity when she commented that a goal of supporting women and girls to learn to skate was so they would "then be able to skate with their brothers, or dads, or husbands, or, you know, boyfriends".

This sense of being in the minority as skateboarders contributes to the feelings of intimidation that have already been described, and also affects the girls' perceived enjoyment of skateboarding experiences. Millie recalled being one of only two girls at a skate school's one-day skate park tour, and said, "It was with one girl, a friend … it wasn't like, bad, it was still fun. But it would have probably been better with a lot of girls". A couple of the older girls had joined one-day skate park tours together, and one of the girls commented, "they were fun because we had each other, but the rest were boys". The skate lessons provided by other skate schools were also seen as environments where boys dominate, and Meena found this isolating when she participated in after school skate classes. She said, "I think there was only one girl there with me … there were some younger girls, but I was the only one at the higher level".

The observation findings in chapter 5 confirmed that boys significantly outnumber girls at skate parks, so it seems very unlikely that skateboarding boys would ever experience being in the minority at a skate park unless they skated at a park during a Girls Skate NZ lesson. Amber and Mandy both described choosing to visit skate parks in the early morning or later in the evening, to avoid dealing with large groups of male skateboarders.

The male key informants acknowledged the gender imbalance within skateboarding, but tended to believe that things were improving. Matt estimated that some of his skate school classes have a 50/50 gender split, and Andrew reported that, although girls were very much the minority at the skate parks where he works, the numbers are steadily increasing. Key informants had differing views about how best to encourage more girls into skateboarding. Andrew believes that the Girls Skate NZ girls-only approach was a positive factor, and commented, "Amber's doing well, she's doing awesome". But another male study participant questioned whether taking a 'girls-only' stance would be beneficial in the longer term:

I think she thinks "if more girls are skating in general, it's going to get rid of the problem". I just personally think the 'girls only' thing makes the 'girls only' thing a bit strong. It just keeps it 'girls only', it doesn't exactly integrate them.

However, the three older focus group girls have become integrated in the skate community after being coached by Amber, which suggests that the Girls Skate NZ approach can be effective at supporting integration.

6.3.3 "For a girl that is so good": the barrier of sexism

Chapter 3 highlighted that skate culture has been influenced by skate media, which has historically provided content intended for a heteronormative and male-oriented readership. Matt acknowledged this when reflected on why there weren't more girls skating when he grew up:

I mean, there's always some girls, and just the way it was back in those days it wasn't very PC, you know? The magazines and the videos that we'd all watch were – there was all sorts of antics going on.

Male skateboarders who grew up reading and watching sexist skate media that did not recognise female skateboarders as valid participants might have skewed perceptions of women and girls who skate. The organic nature of skateboarding, with its emphasis on autodidactic learning in the company of peers, could result in sexist attitudes about female skateboarding being perpetuated. As a life-long member of the skate community, Mandy expressed frustration that many male skateboarders struggle to grasp that the male-coded media, history, and practices that characterise skateboarding contribute to the feelings of intimidation and marginalisation experienced by female participants.

Some sexist comments did emerge in key informant interviews. One male participant clearly believed that girls and women are inferior to boys and men in most sports, and as skateboarders. When questioned about his views, he replied, "It's not a perception, it's a reality. If there were women that were better, I guess, that perception would not exist". He also suggested that girls had

typically preferred snowboarding to skateboarding because “do you think you’re going to meet your wealthy husband at the skate park or the snow park?”. Aside from the offensive assumption that female skateboarders are motivated to attract partners, this comment reflects the kind of heteronormative discourse of gender that may contribute to the apparent invisibility of LGBTQI+ people in the skate community.

Later, the male key informant questioned the likelihood of female participants making a lasting impact as skateboarders:

> *They might have top female athletes if it brings more women into the game, but the guys are unfortunately always going to be more physically better. … it would be interesting enough if there’s a trick that a woman has developed. So they’re all things where guys have pushed the boundaries.*

These comments demonstrate why the lived experiences of male and female skateboarders differ. Assumptions that men are physically stronger and more competent than women are more grounded in gender stereotypes than in reality. This key informant has not acknowledged female skateboarders’ historical lack of support from the skate community, the lack of sponsorship opportunities afforded to them until very recently, and the broader socio-cultural factors that influence the choices women and girls can make to be active. This stance continues to marginalise women and girls. It dismisses the validity of their contributions and judges them and their abilities against the standards of participants who have had more time, support, and social capital to become competent. Making sexist assumptions that women and girls engage in sport and active recreation to meet men is exactly the type of marginalising behaviour that alienates them from skateboarding.

Amber recalled instances of sexism where her skate achievements were diminished by male skateboarders as being good ‘for a girl’. Mandy has also experienced that sense of being judged because she’s a female skateboarder, as she explained:

And not only checked out in a sexual way, but in a "oh, let's see what she can do", you know, and I don't think that the boys really feel that. And I think that's part of the reason why I had to make sure I could skate before I went to the skate park, because, you know, you just don't want that feeling of, like, they all said this girl can skate hard – well, she can't skate because she's a girl.

Mandy has captured the way that, as a minority participant in an activity, your successes and failures are often seen as representative of everybody else who is like you, whereas those who are in the majority are regarded as individuals who do not represent a wider group.

On a positive note, the three older focus group girls did not describe any experiences that were overtly sexist, although some of the support they receive from older male skateboarders at skate parks could be interpreted as the type of benevolent sexism that was discussed in chapter 3. Amber shared a story about the girls' use of skate parks that suggests they are aware of sexist beliefs and expectations, but actively choose to challenge and subvert them through their skating:

*I watched one of those girls, she is so savage and awesome. These boys were trying to ollie this four stair and they were there for almost 45 minutes. I watched her, she watched them the whole time, and then she takes her pants off, her helmet on, she pushes through them and she does it on her first try, and she doesn't even look back. They're looking like *gasp*, and I heard one of them say, "I don't mean to be sexist, but that is so good for a girl".*

6.3.4 "I just like watching them progress": the enabler of parental support

Parental support has been a critical element of the focus group girls' skate journeys. All of the parent participants described taking their daughters to skate parks to enable them to practise, as well as transporting them to and from Girls Skate NZ lessons. Molly described how Ciara's father built her a ramp at home

during the 2020 Covid lockdown, so Ciara could continue to practise while skate parks were closed. Hailey shared that her father's enthusiasm for supporting her initially outstripped her confidence to skate in public:

> *When I was a beginner my dad always used to ask me "do you wanna go to a skate park", but I always used to say no because I was scared and I didn't like… 'cos I could barely go down a ramp or drop in, and I only like staying at home and not going to skate parks.*

The hands-on involvement described by the parents appears to reflect a modern expectation that parents will accompany their children in public spaces, and that children's participation in sport and recreation must involve their ongoing engagement and presence. When Amber was an adolescent she needed parental support to skate because her mother was unwilling to allow her to spend time in the local skate park without supervision. Amber explained:

> *My mum would go "I'm not leaving you here" – she'd sit in the car and watch me, or come and sit down. … It was because there were teenage boys there, so mum was just, like, "I'm not letting my little girl around…"*

Amber's mother's concerns regarding her safety in the presence of older boys reflect the physical corseting regarding the risk of Exposure to Violations (Piran, 2017). Concern about what might happen to a girl in the company of older boys appears to explain why many girls experience significantly less freedom than boys to spend time in public spaces throughout childhood and adolescence (Austin *et al*., 2019).

For Amber, her mother's presence wasn't enough to quell the anxiety she felt about skating in the bowl, and she described how her mother would grow impatient, recalling, "my mum would get so angry at me – she was like, 'I didn't come down here to sit for 40 minutes to watch you just stand there'". Amber's reliance on her mother's presence to use the skate park contributed to her eventual departure from skateboarding. She had experienced tension with local male skateboarders and no longer wanted to skate where they were, but her mother couldn't to take her elsewhere:

Mum wouldn't drive me off to any other skate parks because it was too far, she was like "no, I'm sorry". She worked full time and didn't have any free time.

Amber's experiences reflect Piran's (2017) description of early adolescence as a time when girls often lose the opportunity to be physically active alongside boys in their neighbourhoods or at school. Without the safety net of ongoing parental support, Amber's experiences as a young skateboarder illustrate how difficult it can be for girls to remain active. She faced "restricted access to sites of physical engagement in the public sphere" (Piran, 2017, p. 75), and gave up skating at 14, only beginning again when she was 21.

6.3.5 "I asked if I could go down to the skate park": the enabler of physical freedom

Amber's experiences as a young skateboarder encapsulate the reduced capacity of many girls to access sport and recreation sites. Amber grew up in the 1990s, the decade in which the pejorative terms 'bubble wrap kids' and 'helicopter parenting' were coined to suggest that modern parents were unduly curtailing their children's freedom to play and be active because of unfounded concerns about risk in its various forms. These concerns about unsupervised children in public continue today, but other key informants grew up in the 1970s and 1980s and reported enjoying widespread freedom to roam. Mandy said:

I had heaps of freedom, before I was into skateboarding. They [her parents] were just fine – we'd go down to the pool, and go swimming, go bike-riding … Oh, from as long as I can remember. But things were different back then.

Carl used his skateboard to travel to a neighbouring suburb and spend all day at its skate park, or caught a bus into the city to skate in Aotea Square. As an adolescent Andrew did not face any geographical restrictions:

We used to hitchhike into town with $2 for our drink, and then we'd go and skate Aotea Square, and hitchhike back home.

The male key informants had little to say about physical freedom and gave no indication that their parents had curtailed their movements or restricted them from spending time at skate parks. During the skate park observations it was clear that most of the male skateboarders were unaccompanied by adults, which suggests that boys continue to enjoy greater access to unsupervised public spaces. The physical freedom to spend long periods in skate parks is a fundamental component of skate culture, providing opportunities for deliberate practice and exposure to other skaters' activities. This has been challenging for the parent participants as their daughters became skateboarders, particularly because skate parks have been regarded as dangerous places. Charlie remarked, "skate parks are notoriously a bit… not a great place to be". Molly's older son was a skateboarder in his youth and she had similar concerns about his safety at skate parks, so the issue is not solely one of trying to protect girls from harm in this context. As well as the societal norm of being supportive parents and their ongoing motivation to encourage their girls to be active, the parents said that they were unwilling initially to encourage their daughters to visit skate parks without them. Henry spoke of his early concerns about the skate park environment:

> *I don't know how many times in the early days I would take the girls to a skate park and leave pretty soon afterwards because there were too many people, or 'this' type of people.*

However, as their daughters have gained experience, and they and their parents have spent more time in skate parks and around older skateboarders, the parents acknowledged that their initial impressions of the skate community were incorrect, and that realising this has helped them to feel more comfortable with giving their girls freedom to skate. The three older girls' freedom to skate without supervision removes for them the physical corset of Constriction of Movement and Physical Space (Piran, 2017). This freedom to skate has also been enabled by the girls' habit of skating together. Molly and Charlie also explained that they have taught the girls to deal with challenging situations, imparting advice such as "if you ever feel unsafe, you remove yourself".

6.3.6 "We'll just have fun sessions at the bowl": the enabler of community acceptance

Despite the systemic challenges that can curtail girls who wish to skate, the three older girls have become fully engaged members of the skate community. Brooke explained that the girls no longer feel self-conscious at skate parks, and instead recognise that "everyone's just, like, skating on their own vibe". Ciara spoke of being accepted by other skateboarders:

> *At Valonia, our main park we go to, we have lots of people that are just, like, our friends, and we can just skate with them. And they're, like, boys. … And just, like men – like, old men.*

Molly also discussed how the skate community has embraced the girls:

> *There's a group of people at Valonia – the girls get invited to come down for a skate, so these older guys went out and bought massive big lamps from Bunnings or Mitre 10 so they can skate at night. "Oh, any time you wanna come down and have a jam, girl."*

For Molly, Charlie, and Henry, knowing that older skateboarders at the park watch out for the girls has increased their willingness to give their daughters freedom to skate unsupervised. Molly said, "they arrive, they get greeted by these old people who look after them, they feel very safe", and Charlie described how the girls experience "a real camaraderie with skateboarders". Charlie also noted that Amber's positive reputation in the skate community provides a form of patronage, commenting, "we know all the male skateboarders know Amber too, they look after the girls". Amber's influence extends beyond Auckland, as Charlie discovered when Brooke stopped at a Tokoroa skate park during a road trip:

> *She was skating and there were these guys there skating who were probably in their 30s, and they got chatting, and they all knew Amber. So there's a real tight knit community, so no matter where you go –*

Brooke would've been safe there on her own because they know Amber.

The parents' shift in attitude regarding skateboarders shows that they've overcome some of the prejudices that Matt described as being rife within the culture:

Sure, some skaters dress intimidating looking and might have tattoos, but most of them are the friendliest people ever. They're all happy because they're skateboarding.

Carl and Matt both claimed that negative behaviour at skate parks is seldom caused by skateboarders, because they are there to skate and enjoy the space, and that antisocial behaviour such as drinking, drug-taking, or vandalism will not be the fault of skaters. They typically held scooterers responsible for negative behaviour. This may be somewhat inaccurate, as skate parks had a poor reputation long before scooter-riding became widespread, but the ongoing positive experiences of the three skateboarding girls and their parents' changed beliefs support the assertion that most skateboarders are simply in skate parks to enjoy the activity.

The girls' narratives captured their pride at being accepted by the wider skate community. This has enhanced the skate experience, as Ciara explained:

I love the satisfaction of landing a trick, and then, especially when there's other people around you that support you, and they know you've been trying this trick for ages, and then you land it and they're all, like, "yay!", and just so hyped for you.

Amber acknowledged that skate culture has evolved to welcome female participation, commenting, "I feel like men are more open to the fact now". Mandy agreed:

Girls are, like, reclaiming skateboarding and saying ... "We don't have to be a certain way". ... And now I feel like it's more mainstream, and all

sorts of different people can skate now, and then girls are, like, "OK, we'll do it our way", and there might just be a completely different culture around it.

Mandy's comment reflected that the general history of skateboarding did embrace female participation in the 1960s and 1970s, but a shift to the more aggressive skate park style in the 1980s alienated and excluded women and girls. So, it may be that skateboarding is evolving once again to become more accessible for female participants. Mandy credits initiatives such as Girls Skate NZ for providing support and encouragement for girls to get involved. Henry also commented on the changed attitudes towards female participation that he's seen in the two years that his daughters have been skateboarders.

Skateboarding has become the girls' passion, and being able to spend time at skate parks contributes to the benefits they can gain from their participation. Lexa commented:

If I have a bad day at school I just go to the skate park, it just calms me down. … there is the competitive side of skateboarding – the competitions – and I do enjoy that, but I also just like going to skate parks, just chill with my friends, learn new tricks, and stuff.

6.4 Girls Skate NZ: supporting girls to learn to skate

The final theme revisits some sub-themes from earlier in this chapter and re-examines them to consider the role that Girls Skate NZ plays in amplifying enablers to support girls' skateboarding and mitigating barriers that might limit their participation. It builds on the information shared in chapter 2 by highlighting the impact of the Girls Skate NZ approach on study participants.

6.4.1 "No-one wants to lean into the concrete": providing a different approach to skate coaching

Amber's approach to skate coaching has two distinctive elements within the context of Auckland's skate community: her hands-on technique, and her use

of skate parks as sites for delivery. This sub-theme addresses each element in turn.

Amber's coaching technique was explained in chapter 2. It appears to be an effective way of helping girls to develop competence to skate independently on a variety of skate park elements, and Amber claimed that her students "learn way faster than other kids", which she directly attributes to her approach:

> *I can get someone dropping in in about seven minutes, by themselves. They can go from not skateboarding ever, from never being on a skateboard, to dropping in … they can do it because it's like muscle memory.*

But Amber's approach has attracted criticism from other skate coaches. She remarked, "I get pooed on about holding hands. I get 'Don't hold hands, Amber' … I said, 'I always hold my babies' hands, I don't care…'". She acknowledged that she sometimes has to push girls to encourage them to engage, commenting, "most of the time when they first go I pull them down, because no one wants to lean into concrete". Her justification for directly supporting her students, rather than leaving them to attempt challenging manoeuvres unaided, is that it reduces the girls' risk of hurting themselves, which increases their confidence. She described how this seems to be a point of difference from the prevalent attitude towards injury risk within the skate community:

> *They're so tough on what skateboarding is – it's like, "nope, to learn, you're going to fall. You'll learn to figure it out for yourself". And I'm, like "well, if you want to do it that way that's cool, but at the end of the day I can't see a seven-year-old girl wanting to drop in on a ramp by herself straight away". She's going to want someone there to tell her that it's going to be OK and, like, "I'm here", because then they feel like it's not as hard as it looks or seems if you can commit, and then they do it.*

Amber's approach challenges the dominant narrative that pain and injury are unavoidable elements of learning to skate. She also contends that her coaching technique mitigates the risk of injury. She did acknowledge that skateboarding

is an activity with inherent injury risk, but her point was that the learning process does not necessarily need to involve a constant fear of getting hurt.

The ubiquity of injury risk within skateboarding was captured in several of the skate studies discussed in chapter 3. The key informants in this study also reflected this by sharing details of their own skate injuries, which for two of the participants included serious fractures. Mandy commented, “pain’s obviously unavoidable when you fall off … and it’s concrete, and it really hurts – it’s just a lot harsher than, say, learning to snowboard or surf”. Rose said the risk of injury is one of the reasons for her reluctance to push further with her skating and use skate parks, particularly as she fears that it would negatively impact her livelihood if she hurt herself.

The risk of injury has often been highlighted in research as a possible reason why women and girls might be less willing to skate. Amber’s approach appears to reduce that risk of injury for girls who are new to skateboarding. However, she doesn’t entirely remove the risk of falling, and she’s careful not to suggest to the girls that they will never fall. Cassie explained how Amber’s approach helps the girls to deal with falls and reduce their risk of injury, without losing confidence:

> *They teach them how to fall on their knees. It’s really quite amazing, and so she [Meena] can learn to fall on her knees and the front of her hands with her pads, and they just get up again. So it teaches them that falling is OK, that failing is OK, and that if you do hurt yourself it’s OK. She’s fallen and smashed her face before, and I’ve been like *gasp* - don’t show fear that she’s broken her face. I’m, like, “do you want to go home?” and she’s, like, “no, I want to do it again!”. She shows courage from it, it definitely teaches her that she can fall over and hurt herself and do it again, and she’s OK, that’s cool.*

The focus group girls had their own views about Amber’s coaching techniques. It appears that her students experience a gradual reduced need for hands-on help, as Hailey commented:

Sometimes I like trying to do things by myself, but when it's something really big I wouldn't want to do it by myself, but like, things like fifty-fifties, I'd want to try to do that by myself.

However, Lexa, Brooke, and Ciara questioned the impact that Amber's approach has had on their development as skateboarders, claiming that it reinforced a sense of dependency that hindered their progress:

Ciara: I find that, like, I always wanted help, so that's why I never progressed – like, now I try not to get help, that's why I don't really like getting help – I'd rather get hurt.
Brooke: And after you, like, start getting help and have her [Amber] holding your hands, and you don't wanna try.
Ciara: Yeah, you don't wanna progress.

Ciara further emphasised her views later, saying, "there's the mental part of holding hands – it's not really, like, getting hurt…". This suggests that Ciara has internalised the broader skate community's belief that getting hurt is an unavoidable part of learning to skate. As discussed earlier, the older girls are comfortable with helping each other to learn tricks, even employing Amber's technique of holding hands when required, so it seems that their concern is less with being helped, and more with being helped by somebody who is so clearly cast in the role of a coach or teacher. The issue seems to lie in the unequal power dynamic between Amber as a coach and them as students, which is represented if they are being physically assisted by a coach. The girls' attitude towards the 'helping' nature of Amber's coaching technique has the effect of distancing them from the safe, lower risk environment of Girls Skate NZ, and aligning them more with the grittier world of autodidactic skateboarding practice that many of their new friends in the skate community have experienced.

The second distinctive feature of Girls Skate NZ's approach is its skate park-based delivery model. Delivering classes in skate parks for 20 or 30 novice skateboarders at a time requires tacit cooperation from other skateboarders who use the parks, and the parent participants commented on the willingness of the skate community to accommodate the skate sessions. Charlie remarked:

It's interesting as it's progressed over a couple of years, you can see the boys now know when Amber's skate classes are, and they stay away, which is great because it gives the girls more space.

Cassie agreed, and explained how Girls Skate NZ's occupation of skate parks works in practice:

They create this sort of bubble around themselves, which means they own this part of the park. It's sort of – they feel like they can do stuff. It's not always there, sometimes there's too many people and that bubble isn't strong enough.

The 'bubble' that Cassie described seems to be a social and spatial exclusion zone that provides a safe and accepting space for Girls Skate NZ students to learn. Cassie also observed that Amber is not afraid to enforce her girls' right to occupy the skate park if necessary:

If there's anyone who looks like they are not giving the girls space when they should be, she will call them out. She'll be like "guys" – it's always guys – "You need to look; you can't be cutting them up. You need to wait or skate somewhere else for a little bit, and let these guys practise". She's really good at that.

By ensuring that her students have sufficient space to practise, Amber is demonstrating to the girls that they have the right to speak up if other skaters infringe on their access to space in skate parks. This is important because, as chapter 5 showed, girls are significantly outnumbered at skate parks and have to deal with a range of users. This includes scooterers, who are the most numerous users of skate parks and were identified by focus group girls and key informants as a source of conflict in many instances. The common complaint was that scooterers lacked an understanding of skate park etiquette, which caused them to disregard skate conventions about not cutting off other users. Study participants explained that skateboarders are more vulnerable than scooterers because they cannot change direction or keep their balance as

easily, and that novice skateboarders are at greater risk of falling because of this kind of aggressive behaviour. Amber explained:

> *Then there's times where I'm just trying to skate around and they just don't look where they're going. I think because they don't really need to, they've got brakes, they can steer, so they know if anything goes wrong they can stop, they're sweet, they can hold on. But if I go fast for a trick, or my girls go fast for a trick we can't just stop or turn fast out of their way.*

Parent participants reported incidences of scooterers deliberately disrupting Girls Skate NZ lessons, and refusing to share skate spaces with girls at other times. Amber also described how scooterers have verbally harassed girls in her classes. She commented that skateboarding boys tend to respect and admire her students, but scooter-riding boys react negatively. She remarked:

> *They drop in on the girls when they're skating in the bowl and I have to yell at them all the time. I think skateboarders realise that you don't want to get snaked because you can't stop, whereas scooter[er]s are like "I don't care, I can stop".*

Amber also described an occasion when she had to confront an adolescent boy on a scooter who deliberately blocked the girls' access to a ramp, and how the exchange later escalated to include the boy's mother when she complained to Amber about the girls using the space. Amber's willingness to advocate for the girls' right to be taught in skate parks helps them to feel entitled to use these spaces, and her school holiday skate tours increases their confidence in different skate environments and boosts the visibility of girls' skateboarding in the skate community. This represents what Piran (2017) described as the domain of Empowering Relationships for the girls, where Amber models empowering skate park interactions by providing the girls with opportunities to experience social power.

6.4.2 "Most of the time it's just me encouraging them": enabling self-determination

The importance of exercising autonomy, developing competence, and learning with social support has been discussed earlier in this chapter, but this sub-theme revisits these conditions to focus on the specific role that Girls Skate NZ plays in supporting girls to become skateboarders.

Girls Skate NZ appears to offer greater potential for autonomy than other skate schools. When reflecting on her experiences with another skate school's after school sessions, Meena commented, "you had to do exactly what they did … and, like, with Amber's class, you can go wherever you want". This approach builds participants' competence at a pace that suits them. At a typical Girls Skate NZ session, the girls will divide into small groups, each practising a different trick or trying to conquer a specific physical element of the site. Although there is a natural progression in the order that novice skateboarders tend to develop competence and learn new tricks and techniques, there was little sign that the girls were being told what to practise. Amber and her coaches circulate around all the groups, offering help and encouragement when required, but much of the learning is autodidactic, and groups of girls frequently support and assist each other (for example, providing 'bracing' by holding somebody's hands as they're about to skate down a ramp). This self-directed approach to learning increases the level of autonomy in the context of what is already an autonomous activity.

A further autonomous element of Girl Skate NZ's approach is the lack of pressure to skate competitively. This is also a feature of skateboarding more generally. Within most team sports there is an unavoidable requirement to compete, even if the team is 'social'. None of the key informants identified skate competitions as a driver for their participation, and Amber spoke of how she found the prospect of competitive skating particularly challenging:

> *I'm already quite anxious skating around a lot of people watching. I don't know, I've got a bit of anxiety, so if a lot of people are at a comp I physically can't actually skate that well.*

Although she does not enjoy competing, Amber has recognised that some of her students value the extrinsic motivation of competition. By organising her own girls-only skate competitions Amber has responded to her students' interests, enabling the girls to test their growing competence against their peers and as part of the skate community. Lexa mentioned that she enjoyed the competitive side to skateboarding, but explained that much of the enjoyment came from the understanding that she could choose to compete, rather than being compelled to participate (as is the norm with team sports). Brooke and Ciara also described themselves as competitive. Amber encourages the three girls to enter open skate competitions, including the annual Mangawhai Bowl Jam, which is arguably New Zealand's best-known skate event and, in non-Covid years, attracts competitors from around Australasia. Lexa placed in the Open Women's event as a 14-year-old. Molly described how participating in this event demonstrated the extent to which learning to skate has boosted Ciara's confidence:

> *She would have never done anything like that – putting herself out there is a real struggle for her … her self-belief is, like "well, I'm not good enough to compete". … just for her to get in there and do it, she was buzzing!*

Cassie highlighted an additional benefit of Meena being given opportunities to participate in skate competitions:

> *She loves skate competitions because there's nobody in the bowl then. The only time she gets the entire park to herself, so she's super confident doing a skate competition, I was so surprised. She has no fear of people watching her, the only fear she has is of other people being in the skate park.*

The narratives offered by the focus group girls and their parents indicate that Girls Skate NZ provides a supportive opportunity for girls to develop their skate skills. The girls-only environment is also a critical element of Girls Skate NZ's offering, and will be discussed further in the following sub-theme. The Girls Skate NZ approach therefore meets the conditions regarded as necessary to

achieve participant self-determination, which emphasises the value of developing competence in an autonomous, supportive environment with like-minded peers (Rutten *et al.*, 2015). By fulfilling these conditions of self-determination and helping them to develop core skate competencies in a safe manner, Girls Skate NZ supports girls to experience intrinsic motivation (Lauderdale *et al.*, 2015). This is evident from the commitment the focus group girls show to self-directed practice and the enjoyment they experience – they engage in skateboarding "because of the pleasure and satisfaction derived from participation" (Lauderdale *et al.*, 2015, p. 155).

The strong intrinsic motivation to skate may also help to insulate the girls against the mental corseting dimension of Woman's Body as Deficient, which is often reflected in the physical activity choices made by older adolescents and adult women (Piran, 2017). Piran (2017) described how "[r]egimented physical activity becomes a component of engagement in body alterations and is often practiced alone, toward weight- and shape-related goals (Piran, 2017, p. 150). This description of a deficit-driven approach to being physically active contrasts strongly with the satisfaction and motivation to strive towards intrinsic goals described by the focus group and key informants.

6.4.3 "With lessons the park's flooded with girls": creating a community of female skateboarders

Girls Skate NZ's girls-only approach to skate tuition has two purposes: it responds to the well-researched issue of the presence of boys being a barrier to girls being active; and it provides opportunities for girls to build their own network of like-minded skateboarding friends. The focus group girls captured both benefits in this brief exchange:

> *Ciara: And everyone's also learning as well, so you're not, like, the only…*
> *Brooke: And with lessons the park's flooded with girls, and it's just all girls when the lessons are on. … Everyone else is learning, there's no-one judging.*

The girls acknowledged that a key advantage of learning to skate with Girls Skate NZ is the opportunity to be in a skate environment where, for once, they're not outnumbered by male participants. Lexa remarked:

> *We, like, started going to the lessons when we were, like, beginners, to get better, and then we started going because of the environment… Because of the vibe, and, well, to learn things, obviously, and to feel more confident, and to just, like, be with lots of different girls.*

They provided several examples of how skating with other girls had encouraged and motivated them to participate. Hailey commented:

> *I like skateboarding because if you, like, see people the same age as you and they – and you've been trying to do that trick, and you want to do that trick but you think it's too hard, then if someone your age does it then you go ahead and go, "I can do that if they can do that".*

This sense of being one of many people who are learning seems to empower girls to progress at their own pace, and is reflected in previous research about enablers to girls being active. Lexa also commented further on the social benefits of taking part, saying, "you'll meet lots of new people, you'll make lots of new friends". Study participants also celebrated the diversity of the Girls Skate NZ community. Cassie described the group as "quite quirky kids" and said that the range of personalities at a typical session helps Meena "feel like she's OK to just be herself". Cassie explained that Meena is often "quite quiet and studious" in other contexts, but at Girls Skate NZ lessons "she's super chatty" and "really loud" – which suggests that Amber has created a socially safe environment where young people can express themselves.

As adult female skateboarders, Rose and Mandy were very enthusiastic about the opportunities Girls Skate NZ provides to bring girls into the skate community. Mandy described the benefits in her comment:

> *Having actual lessons at skate parks is amazing. Really, that opens up a lot of possibilities – you know: they're in a supportive environment,*

they don't feel like they're alone, they're not doing it on their own – they can feel safe to make mistakes in front of other people, 'cos everybody's learning.

The girls' parents are also strong supporters of Girls Skate NZ, and word of mouth has played a significant role in growing the profile of these girls-only classes. Several parent participants explained that they'd heard about Girls Skate NZ through conversations with other parents at skate parks, and they said that they also promote the classes if they see a skateboarding girl they don't recognise as a current Girls Skate NZ student.

As Girls Skate NZ grows, Amber faces the challenge how to maintain the tight-knit community she has created. This seems to be partially linked to the widening range of skill levels represented in the participants. The challenge of finding girls of the right ability to skate and learn with is something that Meena has also experienced as a younger skater with a relatively high level of competence. Girls of her age typically lack her skill, and girls who skate at her level tend to be older, as Cassie explained:

She's too good a skateboarder to hang out with the young ones, and she's too young to hang out with the ones that are probably like her skating. She's right in the middle, so it's quite awkward for her.

Lexa, Brooke, and Ciara have skated with Amber for two years and are very competent, which influences what they can do during Girls Skate NZ sessions and reduces what they have in common with girls who are newer to the classes. The girls were absent from the sessions for a while because of injuries, and Lexa described how they felt out of place when they returned, commenting, "now when we come back it's just like we don't know as many people, and it's just, like, more younger girls". Amber is aware of the challenges of catering to the needs of her more experienced students. She spoke of developing Girls Skate NZ to include a skate club that is less about lessons and more about groups of competent skateboarding girls meeting to skate together. She said she's tried to encourage the older girls to share their expertise with newer participants, but the girls have responded by saying "I don't want to teach, I

want to skate!". Amber also pointed out that, even though the older girls may find Girls Skate NZ sessions less fulfilling than in the past, their presence at the classes provides valuable role modelling for less experienced girls who would benefit from seeing what they can do. The three older girls are also no longer reliant on Girls Skate NZ to provide them with access to skate parks, given that they use them independently.

In chapter 3 female skateboarders from past studies commented that they felt excluded from the camaraderie of skateboarding because it seemed to exist only for male participants (Beal, 1996; Young, 2004). Girls Skate NZ appears to have contributed to the growth of skate camaraderie for women and girls in Auckland. Amber's social media presence has helped to build the profile of opportunities for girls to learn to skate, and other key informants commented on the role that social media has begun to play in helping female skateboarders to contact each other and meet independently to skate together. Mandy contextualised this in the broader history of skateboarding and felt confident that it represents a shift in attitudes towards female skateboarders, commenting:

> *There's a new kind of movement now with skateboarding, and it's kind of back to that '70s kind of look and feel. So, Venice Beach, places like that, massive groups of girls get together and just go skateboarding … just to kind of bring some solidarity to it … maybe a hundred girls will meet up and all go for this huge big skate. And yeah, I feel there's this kind of claiming that back a bit.*

A legacy of Girls Skate NZ might therefore be an influx of girls who collectively form Auckland's resurgent female skate community.

6.4.4 "She also just teaches them life lessons": serving as a role model for skateboarding girls

Parents appeared to regard Amber as a role model for their daughters. Amber's status as a role model seemed to be predicated on three elements: her willingness to demonstrate how women and girls can exert their right to use

skate parks; her capacity to celebrate her own position as an evolving skateboarder; and her ability to share life lessons with the girls in an open and honest manner. The first element has been discussed earlier, so this sub-theme focuses on the second and third elements.

Amber occupies a dual role of coach and learner; in that she is still mastering many of the elements of skateboarding that her more experienced students are also attempting to tackle. Given the disjointed nature of her own skate history, it is unsurprising that she is still developing her own competence. Molly mentioned how Amber's quest to improve her own skills has been motivated by the rapid progress her three older students have made, commenting, "these girls, they come along, and oh my gosh, she'd spend all week trying to nail the thing those girls were getting better at". By still being willing to inhabit the role of learner, Amber promotes the idea of continuous learning that characterises skateboarding. Her limited experience was mentioned in a negative context by one of the male key informants, who contrasted her unfavourably with other local female skateboarders that he regarded as more skilled. However, Amber's ongoing growth as a skateboarder does not seem to diminish her value as a coach in her students' eyes. Cassie discussed the mutually supportive relationship between Amber and her more competent students:

> *The cool thing the girls can see is that Amber is not, like, the perfect skater. She, when we started, wasn't a great skater, and she's improved so much since she's done this because she talks to the girls and they kind of help her, and she celebrates her achievements as well as theirs. So she's grown as a skater at the same time as them.*

Amber mentioned how she's embraced her own skateboarding struggles – like skating in front of crowds – to motivate her older three students to overcome their nerves and compete in the Mangawhai Bowl Jam. She promised them that she'd also compete if they took part. Approaching her role as a coach who is prepared to be vulnerable and imperfect appears to make it easier for Amber's students to relate to her.

The final element of Amber's influence over her students is the open approach to life that she brings to her engagement with them. The parent participants explained that this extends beyond skateboarding to include life choices, which they valued because it enabled their daughters to reflect on and learn about different lifestyles to what they may experience in their own families. This comment from Cassie captured the views shared by a couple of parents:

> *She's really honest and open with them. When they go on the skate tours they talk about life and boys and love. It's really nice because she's so young, they can connect with it and I don't mind Meena listening to that stuff. I'd rather she got it from someone who's responsible, like Amber, who's awesome, and she'll talk about her own mistakes. … That's quite cool, so it's more than just teaching them about the skate park. A lot of it is sometimes wider than that, it's nice that it's teaching them to be nice human beings as well.*

The parents' attitude demonstrates a high degree of trust in Amber. Because Amber presents herself as somebody who is flawed, she normalises for the girls that they don't need to be perfect. Piran (2017) reflected this in the Empowering Relationships dimension, commenting that the influence of people who empower girls, particularly in late adolescence, can help to combat "embodied demotion, body-based harassment and violations, and appearance-based pressures", while also "providing safety, acceptance, and inspiration" (Piran, 2017, p. 194). It would appear that Amber has become that type of role model for many girls who have learned to skate in Auckland.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Addressing the research questions

This study was designed to address the two research questions:

- What are the experiences of novice female skateboarders in Auckland?
- How does Girls Skate NZ support girls to become skateboarders?

7.1.1 The experiences of novice female skateboarders

The study findings show that, although male skate park users overwhelmingly dominate skate parks and the skate community, some girls who want to learn to skate feel supported and entitled to do so. Elements that scaffolded participants into skateboarding include supportive parents and their own history of being physically active. Although the socio-cultural factors that can diminish girls' opportunities to be active are evident locally and can make it more challenging for girls to skate, the determination and resilience of the girls who featured in the study illustrate that with support it is possible to overcome challenges and become competent, confident members of the skate community. The study also revealed that for the study participants, in specific settings, Auckland's skate culture can offer a positive environment for girls who want to skate, with widespread acceptance of their efforts and a welcoming attitude to those who are ready to skate independently at skate parks. Given the traditional male coding of skateboarding, this is an encouraging example of how the culture of a sport or physical activity can adapt to include diverse participants.

7.1.2 The role played by Girls Skate NZ

The study suggests that Girls Skate NZ has played an integral role in the growth of Auckland's female skate community since it was established in 2018. Amber Clyde's coaching philosophy of encouraging girls to develop skate competence

in a safe and supportive culture of girls-only classes, and the specific, hands-on coaching techniques she employs, can accelerate the rate at which girls become confident skateboarders, thus equipping them to join the wider skate community. By delivering her classes in skate parks, Amber carves out space for girls in these male-dominated spaces and sets the example to her students that they are entitled to skate.

7.2 Research review

The study successfully gathered extensive data from several sources and enabled sound conclusions to be drawn, but some limitations influenced opportunities for a richer study. These included:

Participant diversity

Nearly all of the study participants were middle-class Pākehā (New Zealand Europeans), which offers a poor representation of Auckland's multicultural population. The range of participants could have also been broadened to include, for example, girls who had started but not continued to attend Girls Skate NZ lessons, and skateboarding boys (to provide a comparison with girls' experiences).

Geographical focus

The skate park observations were conducted on the North Shore, one of Auckland's most socio-economically advantaged areas, and the study participants were nearly all drawn from similarly comfortable parts of the city. The opportunities and experiences of girls of different ethnic groups are also a factor that this study did not capture. A study of 'Auckland' that does not include the diverse experiences of a range of Aucklanders is, unfortunately, a study that is limited in scope, given the significant disparity between South Auckland and the rest of the city.

Time restrictions

This was ambitious research to attempt as part of a Masters thesis, and time restraints affected my capacity to design a broader study.

Study design

In retrospect, the focus group session would have been more effective if older and younger participants had been involved in two separate sessions, to afford the younger girls a greater opportunity to share their views. There was a seven-year age range in the focus group, which broad a corresponding disparity in life experience, maturity, and capacity to reflect on ideas and concepts. A more creative or active research method could have increased the capacity of the younger girls to share their views. Another modification of the study design would have been to have capacity to speak to skate park users during the observation sessions, to learn more about their experiences.

7.3 Recommendations

The study results confirm that girls can be supported to become active and confident participants in a physical activity that, because of history, gender role socialisation, and the male coding of sport, has not been widely regarded as something that would be of interest to them. I therefore offer the following recommendations that may help to further support girls to be active.

1. Invest more time and energy into fully understanding the complex range of socio-cultural factors that influence girls' opportunities to be active. The challenges that girls face to be active are multifaceted and interconnected, and simple solutions are unlikely to address them effectively. Work with young people and their parents to actively dismantle those socio-cultural barriers.

2. Acknowledge the deep-seated challenges of factors such as the presence of boys as a barrier to girls being active. Invest in supporting girls to access girls-only spaces and opportunities to be active.

3. Continue to broaden the opportunities for girls to be active beyond traditional organised, competitive sports. If sport was the answer for girls as it is currently configured and delivered, there would not be an enduring problem of girls' inactivity.

4. Co-design with girls to create participant-led initiatives that enable them to identify opportunities to be active that are of interest to them and find cost-effective ways to provide those opportunities.

5. Nurture female leaders who can work effectively to support girls to be active. Acknowledge their expertise and seek opportunities to transfer their techniques and philosophies into other environments.

7.4 Future research opportunities

Ideas for future research include:

1. A comparative study of the experiences of novice female skateboarders in other neighbourhoods, towns and cities in New Zealand and Australia, to explore what factors can support girls to become members of the skate community.

2. A study with pre-adolescent and adolescent girls, to replicate the research conducted by Piran (2017) and increase our understanding of the intersectional barriers and enablers to girls being active in New Zealand.

3. A study into scooter culture in Auckland, to investigate the mores of the scooterer community and inform attempts to limit tensions between it and the skate community.

References

Ajjawi, R. & Higgs, J. (2007). Using Hermeneutic Phenomenology to Investigate How Experienced Practitioners Learn to Communicate Clinical Reasoning. *The Qualitative Report, 12*(4), 612-638.

Aktive. (2018). *Aktive – Strategic Plan 2040 Issues Paper*. Auckland: Aktive.

Atencio, M., Beal, B., McClain, Z., & Wright, M. (2016). 'No One Wants to Mess with an Angry Mom': Females' Negotiation of Power Technologies Within a Local Skateboarding Culture. In H. Thorpe, R. Olive (Eds). *Women in Action Sports Cultures* (175-191). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Atencio, M., Beal, B., & Wilson, C. (2009). The distinction of risk: urban skateboarding, street habitus and the construction of hierarchical gender relations. *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise, 1*(1), 3-20.

Austin, P., Collins, J., Scanlen, K., & Smith, P. (2019). *Designing Walkable Neighbourhoods: Considering Diversity*. Working Paper 19-03. Auckland: National Science Challenge 11: Building Better Homes, Towns and Cities.

Azzarito, L., Solmon, M., & Harrison Jr, L. (2006) "…If I Had a Choice I would…" A Feminist Poststructuralist Perspective on Girls in Physical Education. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 72*(2), 222-239.

Bäckström, A. & Nairn, K. (2018). Skateboarding beyond the limits of gender? Strategic interventions in Sweden. *Leisure Studies, 37*(4), 424-439.

Bailey, R., Wellard, I., Dismore, H. (2005). *Girls' Participation in Physical Activities and Sports: Benefits, Patterns, Influences and Ways Forward*. Christ Church University College, United Kingdom: World Health Organisation.

Beal, B. (1996). Alternative Masculinity and Its Effects on Gender Relations in the Subculture of Skateboarding. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 19*(3), 204-220).

Beal, B., & Wiedman, L. (2003). Authenticity in the Skateboarding World. In Rinehart, R., Sydnor, S. (Eds) *To the Extreme: Alternative Sports Inside and Out* (337-352). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Beighle, A., Morgan, C., Le Masurier, G., & Pangrazi, R. (2006). Children's Physical Activity During Recess and Outside of School. *Journal of School Health, 76*(10), 516-520.

Bocarro, J., Floyd, M., Smith, W., Edwards, M., Schultz, C., Baran, P., Moore, R., Cosco, N., Suau, L. (2015). Social and Environmental Factors Related to Boys' and Girls' Park-Based Physical Activity. *Preventing Chronic Disease, 12*(E97).

Borden, I. (2001). *Skateboarding, Space and the City: Architecture and the Body*. Oxford, UK; New York, NY: Berg.

Boyatzis, C., Mallis, M., & Leon, I. (1999). Effects of Game Type on Children's Gender-Based Peer Preferences: A Naturalistic Observational Study. *Sex Roles, 40*(1/2), 93-105.

Boyle, E., Marshall, N., & Robeson, W. (2003). Gender at Play – Fourth-Grade Girls and Boys on the Playground. *American Behavioral Scientist, 46*(10), 1326-1345.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners.* New York: Sage Publishing.

Brooke, M. (1999). *The Concrete Wave: The History of Skateboarding.* Toronto: Warwick Publishing.

Brown, B., Mackett, R., Gong, Y., Kitazawa, K., & Paskins, J. (2008). Gender differences in children's pathways to independent mobility. *Children's Geographies, 6*(4), 385-401.

Burnard, P., Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., & Chadwick, B. (2008). Analysing and presenting qualitative data. *British Dental Journal, 204,* 429-432.

Burr, V. (2015). *Social Constructionism*. Abindon, Oxon: Routledge Publishing.
Burrows, L. & McCormack, J. (2011). *Young Women's Engagement in Sport.* Wellington: SPARC.

Bynum, W. & Varpio, L. (2018). When I say … hermeneutic phenomenology. *Medical Education, 52,* 252-253.

Cardoos, S., Suleiman, A., Johnson, M., van den Bos, W., Hinshaw, S., & Dahl, R. (2017). Social status strategy in early adolescent girls: Testosterone and value-based decision making. *Psychoneuroendocrinology, 81,* 14-21.

Channon, A., Dashper, K., Fletcher, T., & Lake, R. (2016). The promises and pitfalls of sex integration in sport and physical culture. *Sport in Society, 19*(8-9), 1111-1124.

Cherney, I. & London, K. (2006). Gender-linked Differences in the Toys, Television Shows, Computer Games, and Outdoor Activities of 5- to 13-year-old Children. *Sex Roles, 54*, 717-726.

Clark, S. & Paechter, C. (2007). 'Why can't girls play football?' Gender dynamics and the playground. *Sport, Education and Society, 12*(3), 261-276.

Collins, J. (2018). *No girls allowed? A study of access to public play space in Auckland, New Zealand.* (Unpublished honours dissertation). Auckland: University of Auckland.

Comley, C. (2016). "We have to establish our territory": how women surfers 'carve out' gendered spaces within surfing. *Sport in Society, 19*(8-9), 1289-1298.

Cooky, C. (2018). "Girls Just Aren't Interested": The Social Construction of Interest in Girls' Sport. In C. Cooky, M. Messner (Eds.). *No Slam Dunk:*

Gender, Sport and the Unevenness of Social Change (113-138). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Cooky, C. & McDonald, M. (2005). "If You Let Me Play": Young Girls' Insider-Other Narratives of Sport. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 22,* 158-177.

Corr, M., McSharry, J., & Murtagh, E. (2019). Adolescent Girls' Perceptions of Physical Activity: A Systematic Review of Qualitative Studies. *American Journal of Health Promotion, 33*(5), 806-819.

DiCarlo, D. (2016). Playing like a girl? The negotiation of gender and sexual identity among female ice hockey athletes on male teams. *Sport in Society, 19*(8-9), 1363-1373.

Donnelly, M. (2008). "Take the Slam and Get Back Up" Hardcore Candy and the Politics of Representation in Girls' and Women's Skateboarding and Snowboarding on Television. In Giardina, M., Donnelly, M. (Eds). *Youth Culture and Sport* (127-143). New York: Routledge.

Edley, N. & Wetherwell, M. (1997). Jockeying for position: the construction of masculine identities. *Discourse & Society, 8*(2), 203-217.

Edwardson, C., Gorely, T., Musson, H., Duncombe, R., & Sandford, R. (2014). Does Activity-Related Social Support Differ by Characteristics of the Adolescent? *Journal of Physical Activity and Health, 11,* 574-580.

Eime, R., Casey, M., Harvey, J., Sawyer, N., Symons, C., & Payne, W. (2015). Socioecological factors potentially associated with participation in physical activity and sport: A longitudinal study of adolescent girls. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport, 18,* 684-690.

Fink, J., LaVoi, N., & Newhall, K. (2016). Challenging the gender binary? Male basketball practice players' views of female athletes and women's sports. *Sport in Society, 19*(8-9), 1316-1331.

Fredrickson, B. & Harrison, K. (2005). Throwing Like a Girl: Self-Objectification Predicts Adolescent Girls' Motor Performance. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 29*(1), 79-101.

Fredrickson, B. & Roberts, T.-A. (1997). Objectification Theory: Toward Understanding Women's Lived Experiences and Mental Health Risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 21,* 173-206.

Garrett, R. (2004). Negotiating a physical identity: girls, bodies and physical education. *Sport, Education and Society, 9*(2), 223-237.

Gehl, J. & Svarre, B. (2013). *How to study public life*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

Glenny, B. & Mull, S. (2018). Skateboarding and the Ecology of Urban Space. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 42*(6), 437-453.

Granié, M. (2010). Gender stereotype conformity and age as determinants of preschoolers' injury-risk behaviors. *Accident Analysis and Prevention, 42*(2), 726-733.

Greenleaf, C. (2005). Self-Objectification Among Physically Active Women. *Sex Roles, 52*(1/2), 51-62.

Hamlin, M. & Ross, J. (2005). Barriers to physical activity in young New Zealanders. *Youth Studies Australia, 24*(1), 31-37.

Hardy, E. (2015). The female 'apologetic' behaviour within Canadian women's rugby: athlete perceptions and media influences. *Sport in Society, 18*(2), 155-167.

Hargreaves, J. (1994). *Sporting females: critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sports.* London: Routledge.

Henderson, K. (1993). Feminist Perspectives on Leisure Constraints. *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity / Recreation and Leisure, 17,* 29-40.

Hively, K. & El-Alayli, A. (2014). “You throw like a girl:” The effect of stereotype threat on women’s athletic performance and gender stereotypes. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 15,* 48-55.

Hohepa, M., Schofield, G., & Kolt, G. (2006). Physical Activity: What Do High School Students Think? *Journal of Adolescent Health, 39*, 328-336.

Holland, S. & Harpin, J. (2015). Who is the ‘girly’ girl? Tomboys, hyper-femininity and gender. *Journal of Gender Studies, 24*(3), 293-309.

Holman, M., Johnson, J., & Lucier, M-K. (2013). Sticks and stones: the multifarious effects of body-based harassment on young girls’ healthy lifestyle choices. *Sport, Education and Society, 18*(4), 527-549.

Jarvis, P. (2006). “Rough and Tumble” Play: Lessons in Life. *Evolutionary Psychology, 4,* 330-346.

Joncheray, H. & Tlili, H. (2013). Are there still social barriers to women’s rugby? *Sport in Society, 16*(6), 772-788.

Karsten, L. & Pel, E. (2000). Skateboarders exploring urban public space: Ollies, obstacles and conflicts. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment, 15*(4), 327-340.

Kelly, D., Pomerantz, S., & Currie, D. (2005). Skater girlhood and emphasized femininity: ‘you can’t land an ollie properly in heels’. *Gender and Education, 17*(3), 229-248.

Kelly, D., Pomerantz, S., & Currie, D. (2008). “You Can Break So Many More Rules” The Identity Work and Play of Becoming Skater Girls. In Giardina, M., Donnelly, M. (Eds). *Youth Culture and Sport* (113-125). New York: Routledge.

Kerr, R. & Obel, C. (2018). Reassembling sex: reconsidering sex segregation policies in sport. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 10*(2), 305-320.

Klomsten, A., Marsh, H., & Skaalvik, E. (2005). Adolescents' Perception of Masculine and Feminine Values in Sport and Physical Education: A Study of Gender Differences. *Sex Roles, 52*(9/10), 625-636.

Lauderdale, M., Yli-Piipari, S., Irwin, C., & Layne, T. (2015). Gender Differences Regarding Motivation for Physical Activity Among College Students: A Self-Determination Approach. *The Physical Educator, (72),* 153-172.

Leversen, I., Torsheim, T., & Samdal, O. (2012). Gendered Leisure Activity Behavior Among Norwegian Adolescents Across Different Socio-Economic Status Groups. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies, 4*, 355-375.

Lodge, A. (2005). Gender and children's social world: esteemed and marginalised masculinities in the primary school playground. *Irish Journal of Sociology, 14*(2), 177-192.

MacKay, S. (2016). Spreading the Skirtboarder stoke – Reflexively blogging fluid femininities and constructing new female skateboarding identities. In Lombard, K.-J. (Ed.). *Skateboarding: Subculture, sites and shifts* (121-135). London: Routledge.

Mageau, G. & Vallerand, R. (2003). The coach-athlete relationship: a motivational model. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 21,* 883-904.

Malcom, N. (2003). Constructing Female Athleticism – A Study of Girls' Recreational Softball. *American Behavioral Scientist, 46*(10), 1387-1404.

Meân, L. & Kassing, J. (2008). “I Would Just Like to be Known as an Athlete”: Managing Hegemony, Femininity, and Heterosexuality in Female Sport. *Western Journal of Communication, 72*(2), 126-144.

Messner, M. (1990). Boyhood, Organized Sports, and the Construction of Masculinities. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 18*(4), 416-444.

Murray, D. & Howat, G. (2009). The ‘Enrichment Hypothesis’ as an Explanation of Women’s Participation in Rugby. *Annals of Leisure Research, 12*(1), 65-82.

Nayak, A. & Kehily, M.J. (2008). *Gender, Youth and Culture.* Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave McMillan.

Neubauer, B., Witlop, C., & Varpio, L. (2019). How phenomenology can help us learn from the experiences of others. *Perspectives on Medical Education, 8,* 90-97.

O’Connor, D., McCormack, M., Robinson, C., & O’Rourke, V. (2017). Boys and girls come out to play: Gender differences in children’s play patterns. In *9th International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies.* The University of Notre Dame, Australia.

Olive, R., McCuaig, & Phillips, M. (2015). Women’s recreational surfing: a patronising experience. *Sport, Education and Society, 20*(2), 258-276.

Olive, R. & Thorpe, H. (2011). Negotiating the ‘F-Word’ in the Field: Doing Feminist Ethnography in Action Sport Cultures. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 28,* 421-440.

Paechter, C. & Clark, S. (2007). Learning gender in primary school playgrounds: findings from the Tomboy Identities Study. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society, 15*(3), 317-331.

Petrone, R. (2010). “You have to get hit a couple of times”: The role of conflict in learning how to “be” a skateboarder. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 26,* 119-127.

Pfister, G. (2010). Women in sport – gender relations and future perspectives. *Sport in Society, 13*(2), 234-248.

Piran, N. (2017). *Journeys of Embodiment at the Intersection of Body and Culture.* London: Elsevier Inc.

Pomerantz, S., Currie, D., & Kelly, D. (2004). Sk8ter girls: Skateboarders, girlhood and feminism in motion. *Women’s Studies International Forum, 27*, 547-557.

Rehrer, N., Freeman, C., Cassidy, T., Waters, D., Barclay, G., & Wilson, N. (2011). Through the eyes of young people: Favourite places for physical activity. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health, 39*, 492-500.

Rinehart, R. (2005). “Babes” & Boards – Opportunities in New Millennium Sport? *Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 29*(3), 232-255.

Robbins, L., Pender, N., & Kazanis, A. (2003). Barriers to Physical Activity Perceived by Adolescent Girls. *Journal of Midwifery & Women’s Health, 43*(3), 206-212.

Ruiz, A. (2019). White Knighting: How Help Reinforces Gender Differences between Men and Women. *Sex Roles, 81,* 529-547.

Rutten, C., Boen, F., Vissers, N., & Seghers, J. (2015). Changes in Children’s Autonomous Motivation Toward Physical Education During Transition From Elementary to Secondary School: A Self-Determination Perspective. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 34,* 442-460.

Saldaña, J. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Savin-Baden, M. & Howell Major, C. (2013). *Qualitative research: the essential guide to theory and practice.* Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge.

Seifert, T. & Hedderson, C. (2010). Intrinsic Motivation and Flow in Skateboarding: An Ethnographic Study. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 11,* 277-292.

Sisjord, M. (2009). Fast-girls, babes and the invisible girls. Gender Relations in snowboarding. *Sport in Society, 12*(10), 1299-1316.

Slater, A. & Tiggemann, M. (2010). "Uncool to do sport": A focus group study of adolescent girls' reasons for withdrawing from physical activity. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 11,* 619-626.

Sport New Zealand. (2012). *Sport and Recreation in the Lives of Young New Zealanders.* Wellington: Sport New Zealand.

Sport New Zealand. (2018a). *Girls and Young Women Profile.* Wellington: Sport New Zealand.

Sport New Zealand. (2018b). *Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation.* Wellington: Sport New Zealand.

Sport New Zealand. (2018c). *Active NZ Main Report – the New Zealand Participation Survey 2017.* Wellington: Sport New Zealand.

Sport New Zealand. (2019). *Active NZ 2018 Participation Report.* Wellington: Sport New Zealand.

Stormoen, S., Urke, H., Tjomsland, H., Wold, B., & Diseth, Å. (2016). High school physical education: What contributes to the experience of flow? *European Physical Education Review, 22*(3), 355-371.

Svender, J., Larsson, H., & Redelius, K. (2012). Promoting girls' participation in sports: discursive constructions of girls in a sports initiative. *Sport, Education and Society, 17*(4), 463-478.

Swain, J. (2005). Sharing the same world: boys' relations with girls during their last year of primary school. *Gender and Education, 17*(1), 75-91.

Tannehill, D., MacPhail, A., Walsh, J., & Woods, C. (2015). What young people say about physical activity: The Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity (CSPPA) study. *Sport, Education and Society, 20*(4), 442-462.

Thorpe, H. (2005). Jibbing the Gender Order: Females in the Snowboarding Culture. *Sport in Society, 8*(1), 76-100.

Thorpe, H. & Olive, R. (2016). Introduction: Contextualising Women in Action Sport Cultures. In H. Thorpe, R. Olive (Eds). *Women in Action Sport Cultures* (1-20). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport. (2018). *The 2018 Tucker Center Research Report, Developing physically active girls: An evidence-based multidisciplinary approach.* Retrieved from https://z.umn.edu/tcrr-r3

Usher, L. & Gómez, E. (2018). Female Surfers' Perceptions of Regulatory Constraints and Negotiation Strategies. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration, 36*, 149-165.

Vu, M., Murrie, D., Gonzalez, V., & Jobe, J. (2006). Listening to Girls and Boys Talk About Girls' Physical Activity Behaviors. *Health Education & Behavior, 33*(1), 81-96.

Watson, A., Eliott, J., Mehta, K. (2015). Perceived barriers and facilitators to participation in physical activity during the school break for girls aged 12-13 years. *European Physical Education Review, 21*(2), 257-271.

Wheaton, B. (2003). Lifestyle sport magazines and the discourses of sporting masculinity. *Special Issue: Sociological Review Monograph Series: Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines, 51*(S1), 193-221.

Wheaton, B. & Thorpe, H. (2018). Action Sports, the Olympic Games, and the Opportunities and Challenges for Gender Equity: The Cases of Surfing and Skateboarding. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 42*(5), 315-342.

Whitehead, S. & Biddle, S. (2008). Adolescent girls' perceptions of physical activity: A focus group study. *European Physical Education Review, 4*(2), 243-262.

Women in Sport, & Youth Sport Trust (2015). *The Tipping Point: confidence and attitudes in seven- and eight-year-old girls – Provisional findings.* London: Government Equalities Office.

Work-Slivka, J. (2017). A Rhizomatic Exploration of Adolescent Girls' Rough-and-Tumble Play as Embodied Literacy. *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures, 9*(1), 37-56.

Yochim, E. (2010). *Skate Life: Re-Imagining White Masculinity.* Ann Arbor, USA: Michigan Publishing.

Young, A. (2004). Being the 'Alternative' in an Alternative Subculture: Gender Differences in the Experiences of Young Women and Men in Skateboarding and Snowboarding. AVANTE, *10*(3), 69-82.

Young, A. & Dallaire, C. (2008). Beware*#! Sk8 at your own risk: The Discourses of Young Female Skateboarders. In Atkinson, M., Young, K. (Eds). *Tribal Play: Subcultural Journeys through Sport*, 235-254. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing.

Youth Sports Trust. (2018). *Stepping up for Change Summary Interim Research Report*. Loughborough, United Kingdom: Youth Sports Trust.

Yungblut, H., Schinke, R., & McGannon, K. (2012). Views of adolescent female youth on physical activity during early adolescence. *Journal of Sports Science and Medicine, 11*, 39-50.

Appendix 1: Participant paperwork

This appendix contains the participant paperwork for the qualitative elements of the study. The documents are:

- Whānau / family information sheet
- Participant information sheet for focus groups
- Information sheet for key informants
- Consent form for participation in focus group sessions
- Assent form for participation in focus group sessions
- Consent form for participation in parents' individual interviews
- Consent form for participation in key informant interviews
- Demographic form for participation in focus groups
- Demographic form for individual interviews
- Further information and support for participants

Exploring girls' use of skate parks
Whānau / family information sheet

Kia ora! My name is Jacquelyn Collins and I am a student at Massey University, currently working on my Master of Health Science thesis. My research is supervised by Karen Witten, who is based at Massey University's SHORE and Whāriki Research Centre. I also work at Auckland Council as an Activation Advisor, helping young people to be active. My research project explores girls' use of skate parks in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland. Skate parks are public spaces that should be available for everybody to use, but they appear to be used mostly by boys. I want to understand when and how girls visit them, what they like about them, and how we could make these spaces more welcoming for girls. I am inviting you and your daughter to take part in my research.

Taking part in the research

Your daughter is being asked to join my study because she attends Amber Clyde's Girls Skate NZ classes at Birkenhead War Memorial Park. I would like her to take part in one or two focus group sessions to talk about her skateboarding experiences with other girls from the classes. These focus group sessions will be held after Amber's weekend lessons. They will take place from 12pm – 2pm at Birkenhead Pool and Leisure Centre, and lunch will be provided. Because your daughter is aged 16 or under, I will need you to complete a consent form on her behalf to give your permission for her to be involved. If you do not give your consent, she will not be able to participate in the study.

As part of my research I would also like to talk to you as the parent of a skateboarding girl. This is because previous studies have shown that parents have a big influence on their children's choice of activities and access to public spaces like playgrounds and skate parks. I would like to arrange a telephone interview with you, to ask you a short series of questions about girls' skateboarding. The interview will take 30 – 60 minutes You will need to complete a simple consent form to confirm that you are willing to participate in my study. I welcome your feedback about the design of this study and any cultural preferences you may have about engagement that could affect your or your daughter's participation (e.g., if you would to meet me face to face for an interview).

Confidentiality

I will ask you for your permission to audio record the interview and focus group session(s), and these recordings will be transcribed into a written record. Everybody involved in this work will sign a confidentiality agreement. Your information and your daughter's information will be stored in a secure place and I will ask you both to choose a pseudonym for me to use when I refer to each of you in my study. These pseudonyms will be used for your privacy. However, please note that the other parents and their participating children may know that you took part in the research,

and that the girls will hear each other's focus group session comments. Any information I keep on file about you both will remain confidential. Quotes or descriptions from my research might be used for reports, presentations, or public discussions. The records from my research will be kept for at least five years, or until I am no longer studying girls' play and recreation habits. If you are interested in knowing more about the findings of my research, I will be able to share them with you when my study is finished. You will be able to give me your contact details if you would like to stay informed.

Further information

To learn more about this study please contact:

- Jacquelyn Collins
  Email: [redacted] Phone: [redacted]
- Professor Karen Witten, SHORE and Whāriki Research Centre, Massey University
  Email: k.witten@massey.ac.nz Phone: 09 366 6136

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 19/61. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor David Tappin (Committee Chair), Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Exploring girls' use of skate parks
Participant information sheet for focus groups

Kia ora! My name is Jacquelyn Collins and I am a student at Massey University, currently researching girls' use of skate parks in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland. Skate parks are public spaces that should be available for everybody to use, but they appear to be used mostly by boys. I want to understand when and how girls visit them, what they like about them, and how we could make these spaces more welcoming. This work is part of my Master of Health Science studies, and is supervised by Karen Witten, who is based at Massey University's SHORE and Whāriki Research Centre. I also work at Auckland Council as an Activation Advisor, helping encourage young people to be active.

I am using Amber Clyde's Girls Skate NZ classes to contact girls like you who like skateboarding. I would like to work with girls aged between eight years old and 16 years old, who skate on a regular basis (at least twice a month). I'm also asking your parents to be part of my study and share their views about skateboarding and skate parks.

Taking part in the research

I plan to run one or two focus group sessions, where I bring together four or five girls to talk about skateboarding and skate parks. As well as asking you some questions, I'd like you and the other girls to think about how skate parks are designed, and who uses them. Each two-hour session will be run after Amber's weekend Birkenhead lessons, at Birkenhead Pool and Leisure Centre. Lunch will be provided. I'll ask you to confirm that you're happy to take part in my study by signing an 'assent' form. Your parents will also need to give their permission for you to take part, by signing a 'consent' form (and if they do not give their permission, you will not be able to join my study).

Confidentiality

'Confidentiality' means keeping things you hear or are told private. I will ask you for your permission to record what you say. These recordings will then be typed up ('transcribed') into a written record of what was said. Everybody involved in this work will sign a confidentiality agreement. Your information will be stored in a secure place and I will ask you to choose a different name (a 'pseudonym') so I can refer to you when I write about my study. This different name is used to protect your privacy. Any information I keep on file about you will remain confidential. However, please remember that other girls and their parents will know that you took part in the research, and the other girls will hear your comments at the focus group sessions. I will remind you all at the start of each session that you should keep each other's comments private and not talk about them with anybody else, but please be aware that I cannot control whether girls respect each other's privacy.

Quotes or descriptions from my research might be used for reports, presentations, or public discussions. The records from my research will be kept for at least five years, or until I am no longer studying girls' play and recreation habits. If you are interested in knowing more about the findings of my research, I will be able to share them with you when my study is finished. You will be able to give me your contact details if you would like to stay informed.

Further information
To learn more about this study please contact:

- Jacquelyn Collins
  Email: [redacted] Phone: [redacted]
- Professor Karen Witten, SHORE and Whāriki Research Centre, Massey University
  Email: k.witten@massey.ac.nz Phone: 09 366 6136

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 19/61. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor David Tappin (Committee Chair), Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Exploring girls' use of skate parks
Information sheet for key informants

Kia ora! My name is Jacquelyn Collins and I am a student at Massey University, currently working on my Master of Health Science thesis. My research is supervised by Karen Witten, who is based at Massey University's SHORE and Whāriki Research Centre. I also work at Auckland Council as an Activation Advisor, helping young people to be active. My research project explores girls' use of skate parks in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland. Skate parks are public spaces that should be available for everybody to use, but they appear to be used mostly by boys. I want to understand when and how girls visit them, what they like about them, and how we could make these spaces more welcoming for girls.

As well as talking to skateboarding girls and their parents, I would like to speak to some 'key informants': adults who are skateboarders now or have been skateboarders in the past and can offer their own thoughts on skate parks and the people who use them. You are somebody who I have identified as a potential key informant. Given your experience of skateboarding as an activity your perspective will help me to better understand this sport, and the dynamics of skate park use. I therefore invite you to take part in my research.

Taking part in the research
I would like to meet you for an informal interview, which will take 30 – 60 minutes. I will ask you about your history as a skateboarder, your use of skate parks as a young person and as an adult, and your thoughts and feelings about young people as skateboarders and their use of skate parks. I would like to schedule our interview for January 2020, at a time and place that is convenient for you. You will need to complete a simple consent form to confirm that you are willing to participate in my study. I welcome your feedback about the design of this study and any cultural preferences you may have about my research design that could affect your participation.

Confidentiality
I will ask you for your permission to audio record the interview. These recordings will then be transcribed into a written record of what was said. Everybody involved in this work will sign a confidentiality agreement. Your information will be stored in a secure place and I will ask you to supply a pseudonym (for both your own name and for the name of any organization you might represent and discuss, and any specific skate parks you mention) and a role description so I can refer to you when I write about my study. These pseudonyms for names and places will be used for your privacy. Any information I keep on file about you will remain confidential. Quotes or descriptions from my research might be used for reports, presentations, or public discussions. While we will make every effort to maintain your confidentiality, there is always the possibility that your identity could be guessed by someone who knows you well;

please bear this in mind. The records from my research will be kept for at least five years, or until I am no longer studying girls' play and recreation habits. If you are interested in knowing more about the findings of my research, I will be able to share them with you when my study is finished. You will be able to give me your contact details if you would like to stay informed.

Further information
To learn more about this study please contact:

- Jacquelyn Collins
  Email: [redacted] Phone: [redacted]
- Professor Karen Witten, SHORE and Whāriki Research Centre, Massey University
  Email: k.witten@massey.ac.nz Phone: 09 366 6136

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 19/61. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor David Tappin (Committee Chair), Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Exploring girls' use of skate parks
Consent form for participation in focus group sessions
(to be completed on behalf of child participnts)
(This form will be held for a period of five years)

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and understand the nature of the research and why my child has been invited to participate. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction

- I agree for my child to take part in this research under the conditions set out in the Participant Information Sheet.
- I understand that my child can change her mind about taking part at any time before or during the focus group sessions, without giving a reason.
- I understand that the focus group sessions will be sound recorded.
- I understand that my child will be asked to choose a pseudonym, which will be used to refer to her and her views in the research. All information about my child will be kept confidential and stored securely.
- I understand that part of what my child says may be quoted (using their pseudonym) and may be used in publications, report, presentations, and other public discussions.
- I understand that the audio recordings of the focus group sessions will be transcribed by a contractor employed to do this job, or by a researcher. The written transcript will be seen by other university staff. These people will have signed an agreement to keep what they hear or read confidential.
- I understand that recordings and transcripts will be kept for a minimum of five years, or until such time as the researchers are no longer working in this general area of research, after which time they will be destroyed by deleting the digital files and shredding any hard copies.

☐ I would like to be notified when the outcomes of the research are available.
(Please tick the box if you agree to this)

☐ The researchers can contact my child for further comments after the focus group sessions.
(Please tick the box if you agree to this)

Participant's name: _____

Parent's name: _____

Parent's signature: _____

Date: _____

Contact details: _____
(email and phone)

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 19/61. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor David Tappin (Committee Chair), Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Exploring girls' use of skate parks
Assent form for participation in focus group sessions

(This form will be held for a period of five years)

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and talked to my parents about taking part in the research. I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and my questions have been answered

- I agree to take part in this research, as discussed in the Participant Information Sheet.
- I understand that I can change my mind about taking part at any time before or during the focus group sessions, without giving a reason.
- I understand that the focus group sessions will be sound recorded.
- I understand that I will be asked to choose a pseudonym (a different name), which will be used to refer to me and my views in the research. All information about me will be kept confidential and stored securely.
- I understand that part of what I say may be quoted (using my pseudonym) and may be used in publications, report, presentations, and other public discussions.
- I understand that the audio recordings of the interview will be transcribed by a contractor employed to do this job, or by a researcher. The written transcript will be seen by other university staff. These people will have signed an agreement to keep what they hear or read confidential.
- I understand that recordings and transcripts will be kept for a minimum of five years, or until such time as the researchers are no longer working in this general area of research, after which time they will be destroyed by deleting the digital files and shredding any hard copies.

☐ I would like to be notified when the outcomes of the research are available.
(Please tick the box if you agree to this)

☐ The researchers can contact me for further comments after the interview.
(Please tick the box if you agree to this)

Participant's name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 19/61. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor David Tappin (Committee Chair), Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Exploring girls' use of skate parks
Consent form for participation in parents' individual interviews

(This form will be held for a period of five years)

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and understand the nature of the research and why I have been invited to participate. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction

- I agree to take part in this research under the conditions set out in the Participant Information Sheet.
- I understand that I can withdraw this permission at any time before or during the interview, without giving a reason. I can also withdraw my information up to one month after the interview is held.
- I understand that the interview will be sound recorded.
- I understand that I will be asked to choose a pseudonym, which will be used to refer to me and my views in the research. All information about me will be kept confidential and stored securely.
- I understand that part of what I say may be quoted (using my pseudonym) and may be used in publications, report, presentations, and other public discussions.
- I understand that the audio recordings of the interview will be transcribed by a contractor employed to do this job, or by a researcher. The written transcript will be seen by other university staff. These people will have signed an agreement to keep what they hear or read confidential.
- I understand that recordings and transcripts will be kept for a minimum of five years, or until such time as the researchers are no longer working in this general area of research, after which time they will be destroyed by deleting the digital files and shredding any hard copies.

☐ I would like to be notified when the outcomes of the research are available.
(Please tick the box if you agree to this)

☐ The researchers can contact me for further comments after the interview.
(Please tick the box if you agree to this)

Participant's name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Contact details: _____
(email and phone)

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 19/61. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor David Tappin (Committee Chair), Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Exploring girls' use of skate parks
Consent form for participation in key informant interviews

(This form will be held for a period of five years)

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and understand the nature of the research and why I have been invited to participate. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction

- I agree to take part in this research under the conditions set out in the Participant Information Sheet.
- I understand that I can withdraw this permission at any time before or during the interview, without giving a reason. I can also withdraw my information up to one month after the interview is held.
- I understand that the interview will be sound recorded.
- I understand that I will be asked to choose a pseudonym, which will be used to refer to me and my views in the research. All information about me will be kept confidential and stored securely.
- I understand that part of what I say may be quoted (using my pseudonym) and may be used in publications, report, presentations, and other public discussions.
- I understand that the audio recordings of the interview will be transcribed by a contractor employed to do this job, or by a researcher. The written transcript will be seen by other university staff. These people will have signed an agreement to keep what they hear or read confidential.
- I understand that recordings and transcripts will be kept for a minimum of five years, or until such time as the researchers are no longer working in this general area of research, after which time they will be destroyed by deleting the digital files and shredding any hard copies.

☐ I would like to be notified when the outcomes of the research are available.
(Please tick the box if you agree to this)

☐ The researchers can contact me for further comments after the interview.
(Please tick the box if you agree to this)

Participant's name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Contact details: _____
(email and phone)

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 19/61. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor David Tappin (Committee Chair), Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Exploring girls' use of skate parks
Demographic form for participation in focus groups
(This form will be held for a period of five years)

Kia ora,

To help me to describe my study sample when writing about my research findings, I would appreciate it if you could provide me with some information about yourself. Please note that, other than your name and the name you would like me to use when I refer to you in my study (a 'pseudonym'), the following questions are optional.

Ngā mihi nui,

Jacquelyn Collins.

Name: _____

Chosen pseudonym: _____

Age: _____

Auckland suburb where you live: _____

Participant code: *(Researcher to complete)*	

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 19/61. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor David Tappin (Committee Chair), Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Exploring girls' use of skate parks
Demographic form for individual interviews

(This form will be held for a period of five years)

Kia ora,

To help me to describe my study sample when writing about my research findings, I would appreciate it if you could provide me with some information about yourself. I would also appreciate your help in defining how you would like me to describe you in the study (for example 'skateboarding coach', or 'skate park steward'). Please keep in mind that your role description could assist people who might read the research findings to guess your identity.

Ngā mihi nui,

Jacquelyn Collins.

Name: _____

Chosen pseudonym: _____

Preferred pronouns: _____
(e.g. she/her, he/him, they/them)

Role description: _____

_____

Participant code: *(Researcher to complete)*	

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 19/61. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor David Tappin (Committee Chair), Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Exploring girls' use of skate parks
Further information and support for participants

Thank you very much for helping me with my research. I really appreciate you taking the time to tell me what it is like to be a skateboarding girl. I hope you have enjoyed our focus group sessions.

Sometimes conversations can bring up thoughts and feelings that might be upsetting. If anything we talked about in the focus group sessions upset you, please remember that there are people who can help you! Here are some people and organisations that are available if you need to talk:

- **Your parents**: if you feel comfortable about talking to your parents about how you're feeling, please tell them.
- **Your school**: most schools have a staff member who is available to talk to any student who is worried about something or needs help figuring out what to do about a situation.
- **The Lowdown:** this service helps young people who might be dealing with anxiety or depression. You can call them on 0800 111 757 or text 5626, or visit them online at www.thelowdown.co.nz.
- **Youthline**: this service offers general help to young people with whatever issues they're facing. You can call them on 0800 376 633, or text 234, and you can visit www.youthline.co.nz and chat online with a Youthline worker.
- **What's Up?**: this service also offers help and support about any issues that might be bothering you. Call 0800 942 8787, or visit www.whatsup.co.nz to chat online.

Thank you again for your help!

Best wishes,

Jacquelyn Collins.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 19/61. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor David Tappin (Committee Chair), Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix 2: Interview and focus group schedules

This appendix contains the schedules used in the semi-structured interviews and focus group for the qualitative elements of the study. The documents are:

- Focus group schedule
- Key informant interview schedule
- Parent interview schedule

Exploring girls' use of skate parks

Focus Group Schedule

Opening

Blessing / acknowledgement of the food; invitation to begin eating.
Background information: reminder that the session will be recorded; reminder that the discussion is confidential.
Explain how the focus group will be run: a few questions to learn about the girls' history and experiences as skateboarders, and whether they use skate parks; a creative activity to think about how to make skate parks more welcoming for girls.
Brief discussion about ground rules: importance of not talking over people (difficult for recording), etc.
Invite questions at the start. Check everybody is comfortable with plans for the session.

Background

My background (parent of two children, student, works for Auckland Council); what I liked to do when I was their age (riding horses, freedom, adventure).
Briefly explain the purpose of the research.

Your journey

- I'd like to hear about how you all started skateboarding. How did you get involved? How old were you when you tried it for the first time?
  - *Seeking information about how their interest in the sport grew.*
  - *Follow-up questions: Were any of your friends or family skateboarders? Where did you try it (At home? At school? At a skate park?) Do any of your school friends like skateboarding as well?*

Skateboarding

- I've never been a skateboarder and I'm probably too old to try now! What do you love about it so much? How could people encourage more girls to try skateboarding?
  - *Seeking descriptions of the experience – emotional reactions – how it feels to go fast / master tricks*

Skateboarding classes

- When did you start skateboarding classes? Have you done any classes with boys? What's so good about the girls-only classes?
  - *Probe in relation to the qualities of girls-only classes/female coaching that enables participation*
  - *Possible answers may include: friendships with other girls; leadership from founder/coach; space to learn without boys present – probe further as required.*

Skate parks

- I'm keen to hear about visiting skate parks. What skate parks have you used? Which ones are your favourites? What do you like about them?
  - *Possible answers may relate to specific design features that enable the girls' preferred style of skateboarding, practising tricks, etc.*
- I know that these lessons are at a skate park, but do you use them to practise when you're not having lessons?
  - *Follow up questions: Why not? I've been doing some observations at skate parks and I haven't seen many girls – why do you think that might be?*
- Are there any skate parks that you haven't liked visited? What didn't you like

about them?

- *Possible answers may relate to design, or to other users – probe further as required.*

Skate park design

- I work for Auckland Council, which designs and builds skate parks around the city. Let's try to design the perfect skate park? What would it be near? What would be in it? Who would use it?
  - *Art-based activity – sketching / collage / interactive word clouds – not just talking. Seek further information about the enablers that girls can identify about skate parks – good things that make them want to visit.*

Closing

Thank you for taking part; check contact details.

Exploring girls' use of skate parks

Key informant interview schedule

Opening

Reminder that the conversation will be recorded. Introduce myself (parent, student, working at Auckland Council). What's led me to this research: other work I've done regarding gender and play, current research interests / why I've focused on girls and skateboarding. What I hope to achieve through this work.

Background

Ask about the key informant's history as a skateboarder.

- How old were you when you started?
- What was it like to be a skateboarder when you were a kid?
- Where did you skate? Who with?
  - *Seeking to learn about how skateboarding and skate culture may have changed or developed.*

Girls and skateboarding

- In my past research and during this project I've done a lot of skate park observations and I haven't seen many girls taking part in the sport – why do you think that might be?
  - *Hoping that this may prompt a discussion about skate park design and use, past experiences of key informants, what they've seen or heard about skate parks, etc.*
  - *Possibility that the conversation may stretch into more general discussion about girls' activity levels, preferred activities, perceived dislike of higher-risk activities, etc.*
  - *Might also lead to discussions about the gendered nature of skateboarding as a sport, how girls are perceived by male skateboarders, etc.*

Skate park design

- How do you think skate parks can be more welcoming for girls? Is it design? Culture?
  - *Seeking key informants' views about how / whether skateboarding and skate parks can become more female-friendly.*

Closing

Thank you for taking part; check contact details.

Exploring girls' use of skate parks

Parent interview schedule

This project will explore the enablers and barriers that influence girls' use of skate parks. The parents' interviews will be conducted individually over the telephone. Consent forms will be completed and demographic information will be provided before the sessions begin.

Opening

Reminder that the conversation will be recorded. Introduce myself (parent, student, working at Auckland Council). What's led me to this research: other work I've done regarding gender and play, current research interests / why I've focused on girls and skateboarding. What I hope to achieve through this work.

Background

- Introductory question about life as a parent of an [x] year old girl – what challenges? What's it like? Is it like life was when we were that age, or does it seem different?
- I'd like to hear about how and when your daughter started skateboarding. How old was she? How did she first learn about it?
  - *Follow-up questions: Were any of her friends or family skateboarders? Where did she first try it?*
- Is she an active kid in general (and what does that mean for your girl)? What other things does she enjoy?
  - *Seeking to establish a picture of the kind of girl who gets involved in skateboarding – focus on sport and active recreation.*
- Does she have friends who are also into skateboarding?
  - *Seeking to explore whether the girls-only classes provide social connection that skateboarding girls might not find elsewhere.*
- How has becoming a skateboarder affected / changed her?
  - *Possible answers may include: new friends; more active; more risk-taking; less concerned with injury or pain; changes in clothing and/or music preferences, etc.*

Girls-only skateboarding classes

- You've obviously made a choice to enroll her in girls-only skateboarding. How did you hear about the classes? What made you choose a girls-only option?
  - *Seeking to explore parental attitudes to mixed activities vs single-sex activities. Touch on logistics of the girls-only choice – travel across the city to reach classes, etc.*
- From what I've seen, the girls seem to really enjoy the classes. What do you think they like most about them?
  - *Probe in relation to the qualities of girls-only classes/female coaching that enables participation*
  - *Possible answers may include: friendships with other girls; leadership from founder/coach; space to learn without boys present – probe further as required.*

Skate parks

- Does she spend much time practising skateboarding, aside from at the classes?
- Aside from the classes, does she spend any time at skate parks?
  - *Follow up questions: (If yes) – Who with? Is she allowed to go by herself? Or only with you or the coach/founder? (If no) – Why not?*

- *Possible answers (if no) may include: safety; other users; proximity; time / other commitments – probe further as required.*
- *Further follow up questions (if no): are you happy for her to go to other places without you (e.g. school grounds, playgrounds, park)? (Seeking clarification about whether concerns are with skate parks specifically, or girls' independent mobility in general – could also ask about comparison with their own childhood freedom to roam)*

- I've been doing some observations at skate parks and I haven't seen many girls – why do you think that might be?
- I work for Auckland Council and I'm keen to better understand how the skate parks we provide could be more welcoming for girls. Do you have any thoughts about that?

Closing

Thank you for taking part; check contact details.

Appendix 3: Skate park observation schedule

Date	**Skate park observations: start times**		
	Site 1: Albany	**Site 2: Browns Bay**	**Site 3: Birkenhead**
Wednesday, 1 January 2020	1315	1300	1340
Sunday, 5 January 2020	1430	1400	-
Tuesday, 7 January 2020	-	-	1345
Saturday, 11 January 2020	1400	-	1425
Sunday, 12 January 2020	1135	-	-
Tuesday, 14 January 2020	1035	1140	1220
Friday, 17 January 2020	1205	-	1130
Saturday, 18 January 2020	1325	1310	1345
Sunday, 19 January 2020	1425	1415	1450
Tuesday, 21 January 2020	1420	1435	1400
Friday, 24 January 2020	-	-	1140
Saturday, 25 January 2020	1525	1535	1435
Sunday, 26 January 2020	1525	1535	1500
Monday, 27 January 2020	1525	1540	1205
Saturday, 1 February 2020	-	0905	-
Sunday, 2 February 2020	1335	1325	-
Thursday, 6 February 2020	1345	-	-
Saturday, 8 February 2020	-	-	1240
Sunday, 9 February 2020	1440	1450	1305
Sunday, 16 February 2020	1535	-	1440
Sunday, 23 February 2020	1600	1620	1440
Friday, 28 February 2020	-	1700	-
Observations per site – total:	17	14	16

Appendix 4: Transcriber confidentiality agreement

This appendix contains a copy of the transcriber confidentiality agreement used for transcribing the qualitative elements of the study.

Transcriber confidentiality agreement

(This form will be held for a period of five years)

I, _____ agree to transcribe the recordings provided to me.

I agree to keep confidential all information provided to me.

I will not make copies of the transcripts or keep any record of them, other than those required for the project.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 19/61. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor David Tappin (Committee Chair), Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix 5: Developmental Theory of Embodiment

Domains of Social Experiences According to the Developmental Theory of Embodiment (Piran, 2017, p. 16)

PHYSICAL DOMAIN	**PHYSICAL FREEDOM** **A. Freedom in Physical Engagement and Movement** 1. Freedom in Physical Engagement 2. Freedom of Movement and taking Physical Space **B. Safety for the Body Territory** 1. Safety from Violations 2. Safety from Coercive Body Alterations and Practices **C. Care of the Body** **D. Freedom of desire**	**PHYSICAL CORSETING.** **A. Corseted and Blocked Physical Engagement and Movement** 1. Blocked Physical Engagement 2. Constriction of Movement and Physical Space **B. Violations to the Body Territory** 1. Exposure to Violations 2. Engagement in Coercive Body Alterations and Practices **C. Neglect of Body Care** D. **Restriction of Desire**
MENTAL DOMAIN	**MENTAL FREEDOM** A. **Critical Stance toward Social Discourses**	**MENTAL CORSETING** **A. Appearance-related Discourses: Body as a Deficient Object** 1. Body as an Object of Gaze 2. Woman's Body as Deficient **B. Comportment-related Discourses: Women as Docile** 1. Engagement in 'Feminine' Activities 2. Woman as Submissive / Demure 3. Woman as Desired but Desireless 4. Patriarchal Shaping of Relational Patterns **C. Regulating Dichotomies and Labels**
SOCIAL POWER AND RELATIONAL CONNECTIONS DOMAIN	**SOCIAL POWER AND RELATIONAL CONNECTIONS** **A. Freedom from Prejudice and Harassment** 1. Access to Resources 2. Freedom from Body-based Prejudice and Harassment **B. Freedom from Appearance-based Social Power** **C. Empowering Relationships** D. **Membership in Equitable Communities**	**SOCIAL DISEMPOWERMENT AND DISCONNECTION** **A. Exposure to Prejudice and Harassment** 1. Restricted Access to Resources 2. Exposure to Body-based Harassment **B. Appearance-based Social Power** **C. Disempowering Relational Connections** D. **Membership in Inequitable Communities** (or no access to desired communities)

Appendix 6: Skate park observation data

Site 1: Hooten Reserve Skate Park, Albany

Date	Skateboarders		Scooterers		Bike riders		All users	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
01/01/2020	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
05/01/2020	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	5
11/01/2020	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	5
12/01/2020	0	1	1	2	0	0	1	3
14/01/2020	0	5	0	5	0	1	0	11
17/01/2020	1	3	0	1	0	0	1	4
18/01/2020	0	4	1	4	0	1	1	9
19/01/2020	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
21/01/2020	0	11	0	3	0	0	0	14
25/01/2020	0	3	1	2	0	0	1	5
26/01/2020	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
27/01/2020	0	2	0	0	1	2	1	4
02/02/2020	0	7	0	5	0	0	0	12
06/02/2020	0	5	0	6	0	0	0	11
09/02/2020	0	5	0	13	1	0	1	18
16/02/2020	0	3	0	4	0	0	0	7
23/02/2020	1	6	0	9	0	0	1	15
Totals	**2**	**59**	**3**	**59**	**2**	**5**	**7**	**123**

Site 2: Browns Bay Beach Reserve Skate Park, Browns Bay

Date	Skateboarders		Scooterers		Bike riders		All users	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
01/01/2020	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
05/01/2020	0	2	1	6	0	0	1	8
14/01/2020	0	1	2	6	0	1	2	8
18/01/2020	0	1	0	6	0	0	0	8
19/01/2020	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
21/01/2020	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	11
25/01/2020	0	3	1	5	0	1	1	9
26/01/2020	0	4	0	4	0	0	0	8
27/01/2020	0	0	1	8	0	0	1	8
01/02/2020	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
02/02/2020	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	1
09/02/2020	0	0	3	6	0	0	3	6
23/02/2020	0	3	1	6	0	0	1	9
28/02/2020	1	6	0	15	0	0	1	21
Totals	**3**	**23**	**10**	**80**	**0**	**2**	**13**	**105**

Site 3: Birkenhead War Memorial Park Skate Park, Birkenhead

Date	Skateboarders		Scooterers		Bike riders		All users	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
01/01/2020	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
07/01/2020	1	1	1	5	0	0	2	6
11/01/2020	2	8	0	12	0	0	2	20
14/01/2020	1	1	1	11	0	0	2	12
17/01/2020	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	11
18/01/2020	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	9
19/01/2020	0	7	2	2	0	1	2	10
21/01/2020	0	1	0	7	0	0	0	8
24/01/2020	1	21	0	1	0	0	1	22
25/01/2020	1	8	1	6	0	0	2	14
26/01/2020	1	9	1	4	0	0	2	13
27/01/2020	0	9	1	5	0	1	1	15
08/02/2020	0	6	0	5	0	0	0	11
09/02/2020	4	6	0	3	0	0	4	9
16/02/2020	0	7	1	5	0	3	1	15
23/02/2020	1	8	0	10	1	1	2	19
Totals	**12**	**101**	**8**	**87**	**1**	**6**	**21**	**194**