

FEMINISM IN NEW SPORTING
SPACES: GENDER, SUBJECTIVITY
AND THE FEMALE SURFER IN
BRITAIN

GEORGINA ROY

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Feminism in New Sporting Spaces: Gender, Subjectivity and the Female Surfer in Britain

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Abstract

The popularity of ‘lifestyle’ sports like surfing has risen exponentially since the 1990s (Booth, 2004; Wheaton, 2010). The female interest in surfing has been a particularly pronounced feature of this growth; evident not only in terms of participation, but in terms of consumption and visibility across forms of popular culture worldwide (Comer, 2010). This so-called ‘boom’ of interest in surfing amongst women in Britain is an important topic for feminist analysis. In its contemporary form, the sport has particularly strong links to standards of white heteronormativity, and the heterosexy image of the ‘surfer girl’ is a central aspect of surfing’s commercial mainstreaming. At the same time, surfing is still a relatively ‘new’, and so-called ‘alternative’ sporting space, particularly amongst women in Britain. As such, it has the potential to challenge dominant discourses of femininity.

Taking a post-structural feminist perspective, this research focuses on the ways in which females who surf are experiencing, negotiating and challenging issues of gender, sexuality and subjectivity in British surfing spaces. I draw on 32 in-depth interviews with females who surf, and ethnographic fieldwork conducted in four coastal locations; Brighton, Newquay, Newcastle and South Wales. I also offer self-reflexive insights as part of this ethnographic journey. The theoretical approach adopted is informed by the philosophical ideas of Deleuze /and Guattari¹, post-structural and post-modern feminisms and some aspects of queer theory. This ‘meshwork’ of influences makes for a unique epistemological and ontological perspective which I argue facilitates different and emergent ways of thinking about sport and space. In this thesis I weave these theoretical influences into an analysis of the lived experiences of females who surf in Britain. What emerges from the stories of the women and girls in this research is that surfing and surfing culture does in many ways reproduce the narrowly defined cultural norms connected to gender and sexuality. Importantly however, there are also various ways in which female surfers are disrupting these norms. This is made evident in the ways that female surfers are interpreting (sub)cultural values, emotionally negotiating surfing spaces, experiencing feminine body ideals, challenging spatial heteronormativity, and creating ‘female-only’

¹ I use Deleuze/ and Guattari to signify my engagement with both Deleuzian works, and work co-authored by Deleuze and Guattari

spaces. My research demonstrates that gendered power relations in surfing remain contested, and that challenges to dominant power relations are often transient and subtle in nature. However, I argue that because surfing is not as spatially and temporally located as most other sports, the power relations which infuse surfing spaces are less fixed, and thus remain open to more mobile and subtle forms of political agency. It is my contention that women and girls who surf in Britain are actively instigating ruptures in the heteronormalising of spaces, and that 'paddling out' is emerging as a powerful and potentially feminist way of exploring, experiencing and embodying female subjectivities.

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Record of Publications

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Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dated

5th February 2014

Proem

Surfing Females: Two Tales

#WhoAmIJustGuess

Dawn breaks over a beautiful sea-scape.

A slender body lies asleep on a bed. She is naked, except for the teal silken knickers which cover her small backside. Next to the bed, a phone alarm sounds. A perfectly manicured hand reaches over to turn it off. The camera caresses the smooth, tanned skin; her back, her long legs. She rolls over in the sheets to sit up on the edge of the bed. Her long blonde hair tumbles loosely around her shoulders, as she slips on what appears to be a man's shirt.

She walks over to her Surface¹ laptop to check her email, before discarding the shirt and taking a shower. Throughout, there are only glimpses of this beautiful, slender body. A shoulder, a torso, and many times the backside. Tantalising fragments.

She walks out of the hotel in a well styled ensemble. She has a surfboard under one arm. It seems out of place in this slick scenario. She slides her DHD surfboard into the boot of the car, and in the driver's seat she checks her phone. An HTC, clearly. We join her for the drive, as the camera shifts its focus, subtly, from the bracelets on her wrist to the sunglasses she is wearing.

Barefoot, she exits the car and walks onto the beach. The view of her denim covered backside is central to the shot. She slides through a pink curtain, between the O and X of ROXY. Discarding her clothes, she waxes her board, as we gaze at her small, bikini-clad breasts.

Looking out over a peaceful ocean she slips a pink rashie² over her head. "ROXY", "Sosh", "BIARRITZ" branded on the back. Finally, the unidentified surfer enters the water, paddling slowly past the camera and out to sea. Her bikini bottoms ride up between her legs.

¹ Surface, DHD, HTC, ROXY and Sosh are all brand names

² A 'rashie' is a rash guard. Surfers wear them to prevent chafe, and during competition, different coloured rashies are used to identify competitors.

Words filter onto the screen:



³ The Roxy Pro Biarritz is one of seven contests which comprise the ASP Women's World Championship Tour. Teaser video accessed on 3/7/2013 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCji6TiJbE>

Spring-time in Brighton

I pull my hood tightly around my face, shove my hands in my pockets and walk towards the beach. I screw my face up angrily as the cold cross-shore wind catches my hood and blows it off my head. My skull tingles as my hairs stand on end. Reflecting a murky brown colour against the dark grey sky, the sea looks angry. Disorganised lines of white water scurry tirelessly towards the beach, one after the other.

It's so windy... and I can't even see any waves worth surfing. Are they really going to go out in this? It must be at least 30mph... Of course they are. It's what they're used to.

I walk back to the van, just as they arrive, four of them, all in their 30s and 40s, piled into Lynn's "new" car along with all their gear. The car is different to the last one; an estate. Big enough for surf trips. They wave enthusiastically. When they get out they each give me a hug. I've not seen any of them for about 9 months. I feel welcomed. "I think we need to seek shelter" says Ellen. "We're going to get changed, see you at New Beach or the Harbour?".

I give her a thumb's up. It's about all the enthusiasm I can muster up at this point.

In my van, I put my winter wetsuit on, over two rashies⁴. It's May, the water shouldn't be too bad, but I'm not taking any chances. I put my 8mm boots on for the first time in a year. After spending some time abroad over the winter, I had been locked away in the library for months. It feels foreign, but kinda nice. Like a snug suit of armour. It is strangely comforting. Once I'm changed, I feel ready. It's like my body is recalling that a wetsuit means surfing.

I grab my board and begin the 200m walk round to new beach. In the car park a handful of male surfers get into and out of wetsuits by their cars. The wind is picking up. The smell of pine carries over from the dockyard, filling my nostrils. I tighten my grip as I round the corner onto the path which runs parallel to the beach. I stop. The wind, blowing head on now, catches my board and pins it against me. Momentarily, I am unable to move. I grab my board and try to hold it perpendicular to the wind. I press on, but progress is slow. No

⁴ A 'rashie' or a rash vest is often worn under a wetsuit for extra warmth

matter how tightly I hold it, my board trembles at my side, then rolls around behind me, as if something were trying to snatch it away. I hold on, walking backwards, then sideways, all the time leaning. My arm begins to burn. I stop again, hoping the gust will ease.

A man with a shortboard stops as he passes to ask if I'm ok. He is struggling too, but his board is smaller.

"Do you want to double up?" he shouts. "Might be easier?"

"No, I'm alright. Thanks though" I shout back.

He continues on. I grab my board again with both hands and let out an "Argh!!" of frustration as I struggle forward again. It's easily the windiest day I have ever attempted to surf in and I'll be knackered by the time I get there.

Eventually I reach the water's edge. There's about 20 surfers out, and I spot the other women, recognising their boards. I fasten my leash and wade in, pinning my board to the surface of the water. It is raining now, but the water doesn't seem too cold. I begin to paddle, but my arms feel heavy, weighed down by neoprene and tired from fighting the wind. Lumpy mounds of brown water surge towards me, and I punch through. A torrent of rain and surface spray bombards my face, like a million tiny hailstones. The sharp saltiness stings my eyes. I wince.

I paddle past Ellen. The wind is so loud that there is no point trying to communicate through the grimaces. I join the other surfers paddling to stay in position, pulled incessantly sideways by the wind and current. No one speaks. There are only glances, brief acknowledgments, and the odd 'whoop' of encouragement. I see Andrea catch a wave. She pops up, then squats down, as if willing her board to go faster, but there's not enough power in the wave to carry a surfer for much more than a few seconds.

After drifting down the beach, Ellen and Sandy get out of the water and battle with the wind to re-enter further up. I do the same. As I struggle to maintain control of my board I fix my eyes determinedly forwards, towards them.

Ellen and Sandy are both in their 40's. Ellen is a married mother of two, and Sandy is single. They met each other through surfing and have remained good friends. Neither of

them were particularly interested in any other sporting activities, but they have been surfing here regularly for more than 4 years. How do they stay motivated? I wonder. This is such hard work. I love surfing, but if these were my local surf conditions, I honestly don't know if I would enjoy it enough to keep coming. This is certainly windier than it usually is, and it is enough to deter the other women who said they would join us this evening. Goodness knows, I wasn't enthused at the prospect. But these women remain undeterred. As long as it is surfable, and whenever they can, they will come and surf here. Regardless of the conditions. And they will enjoy themselves too.

As I watch the two women wrestling with their boards ahead of me, I realise just how much I respect them. I struggle to catch up. Ellen notices me, veering around behind them. Turning her head in my direction, she shouts "It's not exactly glamorous is it?!"

Introduction

It has become apparent that the landscape of British sports participation is beginning to change. Whilst participation in more traditional ‘formal’ sports has seen a slight decline in recent years, the popularity of ‘lifestyle’ sports like surfing has risen exponentially since the 1990’s (Tomlinson, Ravenscroft, Wheaton and Gilchrist, 2005; Thorpe and Wheaton, 2011). The female interest in surfing has been a particularly pronounced feature of this growth; evident not only in terms of participation, but in terms of consumer and popular culture.

Since the 1990s, the female surfer has proved ‘progressively more valuable’ to the surf industry and fashion companies alike (Comer, 2004: 239). In fact, according to the editor of *Surfer* magazine, ‘if not for the women’s boom, the industry would be half the size’ (New York Times, 2007). As a sport for women, surfing inhabits a conflicted cultural space. Whilst it represents a challenge to dominant discourses of femininity – because it inherently involves a certain amount of power, determination and risk – it is also central to the mainstream commercialisation of the heterosexy female surfer ‘image’. Given this conflicted relationship to gender discourses, I suggest that surfing is a particularly interesting context in which to explore how women and girls experience and negotiate ‘new’ sporting leisure spaces.

In this thesis, I enter into a sociological investigation of how women and girls who surf experience their gendered subjectivities in and through the British surf space. I work through arrangements of surfing and surf bodies, spaces, places, and subjectivities. I argue that paying attention to how women and girls experience surfing spaces is important. It is important in the context of sports studies, it is important in the context of feminist research, and it is important theoretically. It is also important for surfers themselves; regardless of gender.

As several researchers have demonstrated, surfing has particularly strong links to standards of white heteronormativity (Booth, 2001; Evers, 2005, 2006, 2009; Henderson, 2001; Kusz, 2004; Stedman, 1997). In its contemporary form, it is tied to cultural practices that have produced dominant gendered meanings around surfing bodies, and the act of riding waves (Booth, 2001, Evers, 2005). Furthermore, the stories told about modern surfing; its history, values and culture, is a story told - overwhelmingly - by male surfers (c.f. Booth, 2001, 2008, 2009; Evers, 2005, 2006, 2009). Our understandings of what goes on in surfing spaces; understandings of power, competition, style, values, politics, connections, feelings, nature, oceanography, and many things besides, need the input of

female voices. This thesis listens to those voices.

Important too, is the geographical context of this research. Whilst a small number of feminist researchers in the USA and Australia have been talking about the female surfer for more than ten years now (Comer, 2003, 2004, 2010; Henderson, 2001; Heywood, 2008; Stedman, 1997), the cultural representations of surfing in those countries vary quite dramatically from the realities of surfing in Britain. Here, the ocean swells are notoriously fickle, surfing in the sunshine is never taken for granted, and a wetsuit is a year-round necessity. And yet, the commercial imagery, advertising, and media discourses connected with surfing in this country maintain a strong connection to the ideals of tanned, toned, beach bodies and beautiful blue waves. Indeed, it was my embodied awareness of such contradictions which first prompted me to ask questions about female surfers in Britain; the women and girls who pull on damp, odorous neoprene to paddle out into the murky brown water in the middle of winter, because they don't know when the next chance to surf might be.

The theoretical approach I take is a feminist one. I work from the assumption that surfing for women carries feminist potential (academic, and otherwise), both in terms of opportunities to participate, and in terms of how women and girls experience and negotiate gendered bodies, and spatial relations. Furthermore, many commentators agree that 'lifestyle sports' like surfing represent 'an 'alternative', and *potential* challenge to traditional ways of 'seeing', 'doing' and understanding sport' (Rinehart 1998b; Wheaton 2000a; Midol and Broyer 1995, in Wheaton, 2004: 3). Given the ever-increasing popularity of surfing amongst women, it seems appropriate and timely that feminist/sport scholars explore *potentially* 'alternative', or *different* ways of theorising around these 'new' forms of sports participation. In thinking through these issues, I argue that the work of Deleuze/and Guattari offers some useful theoretical concepts which may be 'put to work' as part of a feminist analysis.

Key Research Questions

My analytical consideration of 'the female surfer in Britain' has been motivated by the following key research questions:

1. How do female surfers in Britain interpret and negotiate the commercial and cultural imagery connected to women's surfing?
2. How do female surfers appropriate and negotiate gendered and sexualised power relations as part of their surfing and personal subjectivities?

3. How are local surfing spaces actively experienced, and re/constituted, by the women who participate in and through them?
4. Is there anything distinctly feminist about the subjectivities and spaces created by British female surfers?

Thesis Overview

I begin, in the chapter which follows, by considering the notion that surfing has, in the last decade or so, been undergoing a supposed ‘boom’ of interest amongst women and girls. I locate this ‘boom’ as a global phenomena, evidenced most clearly in cultural, commercial and mediated developments which have played out predominantly in the USA and Australia (where most major surf companies are based), and have been influential worldwide. Since the 1990s the female surfer has proved ‘progressively more valuable’ to the surf industry and fashion companies alike (Comer, 2004: 239). The surfwear industry is enjoying ‘unprecedented economic prosperity on rising consumption of high fashion clothing and accessories’ (Booth, 2001: 3) and worldwide, participation rates continue to rise. In the media, women’s surfing has become increasingly visible, in both mainstream, and niche media.

It is safe to say that the female interest in surfing comprises an integral part of the growth and success of the surf industry, and yet, throughout the sport’s modern history, female surfers have faced a continual struggle for acceptance, respect and equality (Booth, 2001; *Surfer Magazine*, 2003). The focus of chapter one is to contextualise these ‘paradoxical’ struggles from an historical perspective, and I do so through a distinctly gendered lens. My aim is to reflect on some of the key cultural and historical moments which have impacted on the gendered discourses of surfing culture. Film, music, equipment, fashion, surfing style, competition and (sub)cultural media have all fed into the cultural milieu of surfing culture in various ways. Whilst much of the discussion focuses on cultural developments within the USA, and Australia, they are nonetheless contextually relevant. As I demonstrate, they have had a distinct impact of how the gendered cultural values of surfing have been re/constructed and performed in Britain.

In particular I explore the ways in which surfing has become aligned with standards of white heteronormativity, despite the fact that the origins of the sport lie in ancient Hawaiian tribal culture. Much of the academic literature on surfing documents this gendered, sexualised and racialised configuration, and I discuss some of this work in its historical context. I also consider some of the ways in which female surfers have negotiated the gendered power relations connected to participation, competition, surfing

style and media. These negotiations, I suggest, are complicated; sometimes they have challenged gendered assumptions, sometimes they have been complicit with them.

This is a topic I address further in chapter two. In this chapter, I turn my attention to the feminist consideration of ‘the female surfer’, in terms of both her cultural, and physical presence in surfing. I recognise that the ‘surfer girl’ has drawn a significant amount of academic attention from so-called ‘third-wave’ feminists and offer a critical discussion of this supposedly ‘new’ feminist approach. In the latter half of this chapter I focus on the utilisation of feminist perspectives for research conducted with, and amongst, female surfers themselves. Currently, this comprises a particularly small body of literature (Knijnik, Horton and Cruz, 2010; Olive, 2012; Olive, McCuaig and Phillips, 2012; Spowart, Burrows and Shaw, 2010; Waitt, 2008). Subsequently, I draw also on research conducted in skateboarding to explore how women and girls are actively participating in the dynamic re/negotiation of the gendered meanings connected with surf (and skate) identities (c.f. Kelly, Pomerantz and Currie, 2005, 2008; Pomerantz, Currie and Kelly, 2004).

In chapter two I also consider how gendered re/negotiations are reflected in, and connected to, the spatialised power relations of the surf. Waitt and Clifton (2012) have recently made the point that much of the existing literature on gender and surfing has taken a Foucauldian approach, and I discuss the potential limitations of this. I then consider the emergence of Deleuzian concepts in surf research, making reference to work by Evers (2004, 2006, 2009), Waitt (2008) and Waitt and Warren (2008), and to a lesser extent Knijnik, Horton and Cruz (2010). In light of these theoretical ripples I suggest that my research will contribute to the literature on surfing by advancing a fundamentally feminist exploration of how female surfers experience surf space. I propose that Deleuzian philosophy invites a more open, positive and potentially alternative way of theorising this contribution.

In chapter three I outline some of the key concepts which comprise my application of Deleuze in the context of surfing. In particular, I offer an interpretation of the Rhizome; Becoming; territorialisation and deterritorialisation; the Fold; the Nomad and the Body without Organs. These concepts have shaped my analysis in various ways and this is recognised in how I have organised the chapters of this thesis. Some of these concepts have already proven useful in the existing literature on surfing (Evers, 2005, 2006, 2009; Knijnik, Horton and Cruz, 2010; Waitt, 2008; Waitt and Clifton, 2012) and in the last part of this chapter I reflect on how the use of these concepts have contributed to our understanding of gendered relations in the surf.

Like my theoretical framework, my approach to doing research is shaped by feminism and postmodern epistemologies. As such, a key aim of chapter four is to make clear how these influences have impacted and inspired every aspect of the research process. I recognise how my intersectional subjectivity, as a white female, surfer, feminist, lesbian, researcher, and participant/friend is integral to the relations of the research ‘fields’. I argue that this is very much an interconnected process; that doing ethnography is a process of self-exploration, reflection and revelation, and that “entering the field” is not always a return trip. I make a case for the inclusion of my own voice in the ‘findings’ I collect, for remaining open about how I embody my research, and for the ways in which I feel my way through the research space. By highlighting my feminist approach, I demonstrate an appreciation of the ethics at all stages of research, and emphasise the integral importance of a moral stance characterised by honesty, care, respect, trust, and often friendship. In describing my approach to data analysis, I draw on the work of Richardson and St. Pierre (2008) in order to make a case for a postmodern influenced interpretation of findings. This I describe as a loosely-thematic analysis which is led simultaneously by my embodied ‘knowledge’ of the field, and by the open, inventive and productive process of writing research. Chapter five serves as an example of this sort of open and embodied approach. Here I introduce the people and places who have come to shape my multi-sited research journey, and aim to offer the reader a felt connection to these spaces through my own personal reflections

In chapters four and five, I begin to make the case that emotions matter in surf research. In chapter six, I focus more explicitly on this. I consider how emotions comprise one of the most important ways in which female surfers interpret and connect with gendered surf space. Here, I focus on the process of ‘becoming-surfer’ and the negotiation of a mostly male line up by female surfers. I draw attention to how women and girls reflect on these experiences emotionally and how these emotions are bound up with the movement and performances of gendered bodies in surf space. I contend that in a number of important ways, feminism is integral to these processes.

This discussion is developed further in chapter seven, where I shift my focus slightly to explore how women experience their surfing bodies – wetsuited bodies – both in and out of the waves. Advancing my discussion of emotions, I consider how these bodies are felt affectively, through such feelings of shame, disgust and desire. Focusing on the notion of visual appraisal, I argue that the ways in which female surfers “see” their bodies is always in conversation with an internalised and normalised gaze. Utilising Deleuze’s notion of the Body without Organs, I consider how the surfing space intertwines with gendered bodies and their performances. Surfing space is always interspersed with both discursive and

affective relations, which impact on how bodies are “seen”, felt and experienced. My aim here is to explore what happens when gendered discourses and affects gather together to produce, control, and sometimes disperse, the female surfing body.

Given that surfing bodies are always caught up in the re/constitution of surfing spaces, how these issues intertwine with the politics of localised places are also always important. Because this research is multi-sited, and based in Britain, it is vital that I reflect on the issues of the space/place dynamics. This is the focus of chapter eight, which explores the ways in which female surfers experience gendered, sexualised identities within and through re/territorialised and deterritorialised surf space. Utilising these Deleuzian concepts, as well as the notion of the Nomad, I explore the fixity and fluidity of identity through the local dynamics of surfing places, and the movement of surfers within and amongst them.

In the final chapter of my analysis, I turn my attention to the formation of, and participation in ‘female-only’ or female centred surfing spaces. The growth in female specific surf lessons, surf schools, shops, trips, holidays, webpages, groups and clubs has been a marked feature of the so-called ‘boom’ of interest in surfing amongst women and girls. Although these female-only ventures are predominantly commercial enterprises, it has become evident that female surfers in Britain are actively seeking other women or girls to surf with. In this chapter I explore some examples of female surf communities in Britain and consider the various ways in which women and girls participate in them. In doing so, I utilise Deleuze's rhizome to argue that the ways in which women and girls participate in these communities serves to demonstrate the complexity of how becoming-surfer intersects, and connects, with various other aspects of identity.

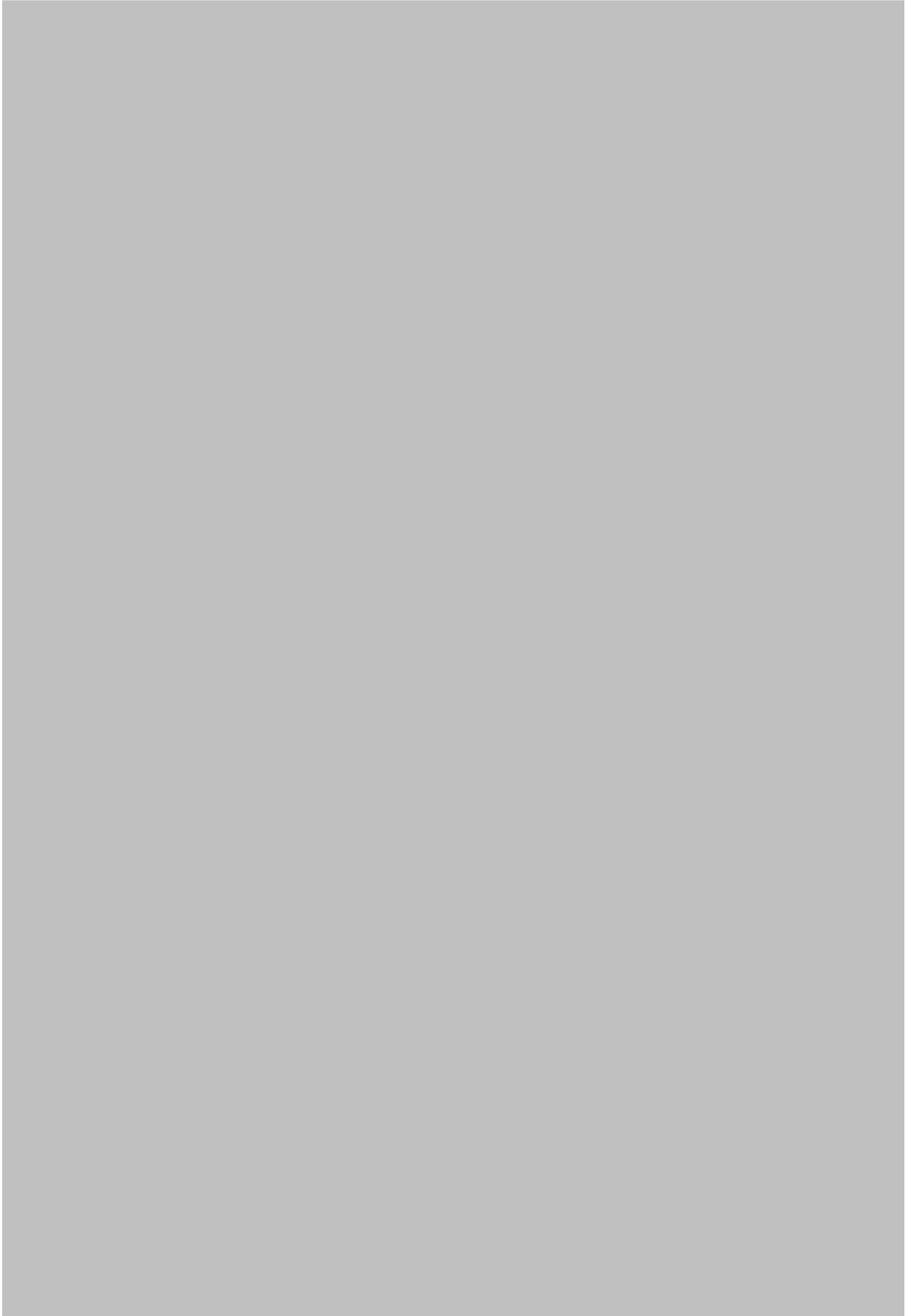
Entering into Research

The notion of thinking ‘rhizomatically’ is a theme which runs throughout this thesis. Indeed, I contend that this philosophical approach, this ‘way of thinking’ is central to the reasons why I have turned to Deleuze. What is clear about modern surfing is that it comprises a complicated multi-faceted milieu of sport, leisure, fashion, politics, entertainment, media, commerce, culture, art, and environment. There are a wealth of ways in which people can connect with surfing, and connect with others who also connect with surfing. Attempting to unravel, navigate and interweave this milieu is equally as complicated. However, thinking ‘rhizomatically’ has enabled me to think apart from the notion that I must somehow ‘capture’ the experiences of ‘the female surfer’; to paint a picture, to tell her story, to offer some sort of singular coherent narrative. As a surf

researcher, this is where I have felt the impact of Deleuze most; not in the extensive inculcation of his concepts, but in the ways I embrace, more subtly – immanently – his philosophy.

When I surf, I *feel* the ways in which surfing constitutes an important surfing space. Intermingling with other surfers, I am made aware of the connections it enables; with spaces, and places, with bodies, emotions, affects, waves, equipment, knowledge, nature, and many things besides. In many ways, these connections are gendered. Female surfers experience surfing in a multiplicity of ways. This thesis is not an attempt at mapping out this multiplicity, but entering into it. Colebrook writes that 'feminist questions and concepts ask what a philosophy might do, how it might activate life and thought' (2000a: 7-8). Similarly, the intention of this work is not about offering coherent answers, it is about joining the milieu; becoming-surfer, activating life and thought, and embracing the in-between. Females and feminists, enter the waves. Let's go surfing.

Line of Flight



Chapter One

The Cultural Status of Women's Surfing: Popularity and Paradox

In recent years the female surfer has become one of the most valuable 'icons' of the surf industry (Booth, 2001; Comer, 2004, 2010; Ford and Brown, 2006; Heywood, 2008). She has helped bridge the gap between female consumers and 'macho' surfer culture, with lucrative results. Figures from the Surf Industry Manufacturers Association (SIMA), for instance, show that in America women's apparel sales alone rose to \$327 million in 2006, up 32% from 2004 (SIMA, 2007). In the waves, British based findings suggest that women account for more than half of those attending surf lessons (Barkham, 2006; Cossar, 2011). And, it is estimated that around 20% of the British surfing population are female (Barkham, 2006), with this figure rising to a third in surfing nations like Australia (Booth, 2001).

The worldwide growth in participation has provided a blossoming market for women only surf schools and surf trips such as *Surf Diva (USA)*, *Surf Like a Girl (Australia)*, *Surf Sistas (UK)*, and many other similarly titled projects. In the media, women's surfing has become increasingly visible since the 1990s (Comer, 2010). This visibility has come in a range of forms, from dedicated surfing magazines such as *Curl (New Zealand)*, *Jetty Girl (Online; USA)*, *Women's Surf Style Magazine (Hawaii, USA)*, and *Surf Girl (UK)*, to ads for surf brands, to fleeting appearances in popular mainstream productions like *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle*. In recent years, women's surfing has also seen a much more marked shift towards the mainstream, providing the central narrative for Hollywood film productions *Blue Crush (2002)* and *Soul Surfer (2011)*, and US reality TV. shows *Alana: Surfer Girl*, *Surf Girls* and *Boarding House*.

In surf schools, surf stores and surf media, the female presence has never been greater, according to the editor of *Surfer* magazine, 'if not for the women's boom, the industry would be half the size' (Higgins, New York Times, 2007). Furthermore, the Fall Youth Culture Study 2011, run by *Label Networks: Global Youth Culture Intelligence*, has reported that for the 8th year running in the US, more females than males aged 13-25 would like to learn to surf (Gasperini, 2011). Yet, despite women's growing interest and success in surfing, Booth (2001) suggests that much of the evidence for a more equal gender balance in the sport itself is 'superficial', and this has been recognised by surfing insiders;

No single group has had a greater struggle for respect and acceptance than female pro competitors, whose course since the mid-1970s has been undermined by pitfalls: gender bias, industry apathy, indifferent media coverage [and] outright hostility from the male pros... Women's professional surfing has hardly flourished over the years, even in the face of a parallel women's movement that has literally exploded in terms of participation and pleasure (*Surfer Magazine*, 2003).

Ten years later, this trend continues. The women's Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) world tour remains troubled by a lack of sponsorship, and in 2011 the coveted Vans Triple Crown Series cancelled all of its women's events due to financial difficulties. There also remains a significant disparity between prize money for men and women in all the ASP events. In the Nike U.S. Open of Surfing, the winner of the men's competition, Kelly Slater, won \$100,000 whilst the female winner, Sally Fitzgibbons, was awarded only half this amount. This discrepancy is a significant one. Particularly given the relatively equal prize money awarded to men and women in the closely related (in terms of brands, marketing and lifestyle discourses) board sport of snowboarding (Gasperini, 2011).

Despite years of struggle, the comparative lack of support for the women's circuit demonstrates that surfing is still broadly defined by male standards. As Comer notes, while women may be the active producers of the current industry boom, 'they are not its principal power players, and they reap but the most negligible fraction of its profits' (2004: 240). This is part of what Booth (2001: 3) calls the 'paradoxes of surfing culture'. In his paper *From Bikinis to Boardshorts: Wahines and the Paradoxes of Surfing Culture*, Booth attempts to disentangle the various aspects of the 'women's boom', considering each aspect in terms of its role in redefining the 'gender order' of surfing. He discusses the following: *the revival of longboards, dynamic new role models, resolution of women's surfing style, a shift in attitudes towards marketing female sexuality, a revitalised professional women's tour, and new dedicated products for female surfers* (2001:10). Each of these factors has played a part in the success of 'women's surfing' but, as Booth demonstrates, rather than feeding in to a linear process of growth, each issue represents part of an intricately connected and often contradictory cultural landscape. For example, he discusses the impact that surfers like 4-time world champion Lisa Andersen have had, not just on the profile of women's surfing, but on young aspiring surfers. Lisa Andersen is a surfer whose talent and popularity was unparalleled by both female, and most male, surfers

throughout the mid-1990s. She was the first female surfer to adopt the previously “male” style of surfing, and give it 'feminine grace' (Beachley, *Surfer Magazine*, 2009). In 1995 she also became the first woman to feature on the cover of *Surfer* magazine, with the tagline 'Lisa Andersen surfs better than you'.

Undoubtedly, the likes of Andersen and her successor, 7-time world champion Layne Beachley have inspired many young women to get “out there”, or at least get out there more often. Yet, as Booth points out, the importance of role models is not a view that is shared by those inside the surf industry:

Lissa Zwahlen, a design director for Roxy, insists that the current generation of young women don't have preconceived ideas of what girls do and don't, should and shouldn't do. They don't wish they could surf, or snowboard, or ride skateboards because they know they can, and they don't need Andersen-type role models (Booth, 2001: 14).

Here, the importance of role models for female surfers is played down, despite the fact that after *Roxy* signed her in 1994; it was Andersen's image and popularity which proved to be one of the main drivers in the sales of their hugely successful female boardshorts range. It is an irony which epitomises the paradox to which Booth refers, and demonstrates the complexity of theorising around the female surfer in the context of the female surfing 'boom'. The statement above suggests that young women don't need role models because they are already aware of the sporting opportunities available to them, and are free to make their own choices, and set their own goals. By emphasising individual choice over social and cultural determinants it is implicitly asserted that the same choices and freedoms are available to all and in doing so, the company rejects the need for feminist concerns within surfing – despite the widely accepted fact that modern surfing has a long history of sexism (Booth, 2001; Comer, 2004, 2010; Heywood, 2008; Pearson, 1982; Stedman, 1997).

For feminists, this notion is troubling. Booth himself describes much of the evidence for a new gender balance in surfing as 'superficial'; a set of 'local circumstances' which have 'converged at a particular moment in time' but do not necessarily challenge 'the broader social structure of gender relationships' (Booth, 2001: 17). If this is the case, how is it possible for a major investor in women's surfing to claim that women and girls no longer need role models? What cultural influences have fostered such a confidence in female freedoms? Particularly in the context of sporting cultures, where not only gender participation, but many other markers of equality, remain vastly disproportionate.

Women's place in surfing is both culturally and historically specific, and as Thorpe (2006: 205) emphasises in her analysis of females in surf, skate and snowboarding culture, a connection with history affords 'a more all-encompassing contextualisation of cultural phenomena'. Furthermore, it is important to recognise the distinctions between, and possible fractures within, the various cultural forms of surfing. For instance, the cultural aspects of surfing are not necessarily synonymous with surfing as a sport, and surfing as a sport may or may not be at odds with the embodied experience of those who take to the waves. In attempting to answer the questions posed above, I would argue that the 'local circumstances' of the women's surf 'boom' – e.g. resolution of women's surfing style, the professional women's tour, and new dedicated products – rather than simply converging, have fed into, and been influenced by, some much more fundamental shifts within women's surfing culture and the wider cultural moment. I therefore propose the importance of a historical and cultural perspective which takes into account a more specific feminist perspective, which focuses on the wider socio-political shifts which have impacted on women's place within society, sport and surfing. In this chapter, I demonstrate how women's surfing and women *in* surfing have, at different moments in time, been bound up in various struggles over gender.

Specifically, I consider the cultural discourses which have influenced the gendering of surfing historically, the protection of the culture as an anti-establishment masculine preserve, and how it has been influenced by the broader gains made by second-wave feminism. In drawing the chapter to a close, I point towards the significance of recent feminist work in the so-called 'third-wave' movement to theorising the female surfer, a discussion of which is developed in chapter two, *The Female Surfer in Feminist Waves*.

A Brief History of Gender in Surfing's Cultural Spaces

Surfing has a strong cultural heritage, dating back to ancient Hawai'i, where women have long been a part of wave riding traditions (Booth, 2001; Ford and Brown, 2006; Nendel, 2009). This cultural heritage has, in the last few decades, collided with modern surfing, which has constructed an entirely new set of meanings around the act of riding waves. It is in this modern era of surfing's history that aspects of the culture have become distinctly and overtly gendered, growing largely out of westernised concerns over economic, physical and cultural capital (Booth, 2001; Ford and Brown, 2006; Henderson, 2001; Lawler, 2011).

The commodified development of surfing, particularly in terms of its cultural

definition, has come mainly from California, USA. The 1950s and 1960s was a time of significant growth and development in surfing. Culturally, this was driven in part by the popularity of iconic surf films like *The Endless Summer* and *Gidget*. Films commonly known collectively as '*Beach Blanket*', and music by the *Beach Boys*, served to romanticise the 'surf lifestyle' in popular mainstream consciousness (c.f. Comer, 2003; Lawler, 2011; Ormrod, 2002). From the beginning of this modern era, gender has been used as a point of leverage in the struggle over surfing style, culture and identity (Booth, 2001; Ford and Brown, 2006; Henderson, 2001; Stedman, 1997). Such cultural discourses constructed a distinctly gendered, raced and classed image of the beach and beach culture, which has since remained central to surf imagery.

An early example of this, argues Comer (2003) is the cultural and subcultural response to the 1950s surf sensation *Gidget*. *Gidget* was originally a book written by Frederick Kohner about his daughter Kathryn's adventures with surfers in Malibu. The book was adapted for a Hollywood film in 1957 and later became a television series. Comer (2003) identifies *Gidget* as a key take-off point in the mainstream popularity of surfing in America, and other authors have recognised a similar impact in both Australia (Evers, 2005) and Britain (Ormrod, 2007). 'Such was the success of the film that surfing was subjected to a wave of up to sixty-six surf-related films between 1959-1966' (Ormrod, 2007: 61).

Comer (2003) and others (Ormrod, 2002; Lawler, 2011; Nash, 2002; Rutsky, 1999) suggest that the surf adventures portrayed in *Gidget*, and other beach based films, such as *Beach Blanket Bingo*, *Beach Party* and *Bikini Beach* served as a popular outlet for feelings of desire and escape at a time of social and political turbulence in the USA. The feminist readings of these films has also proved important in analysing how young womanhood has been constructed in media texts through time, and particularly, how young womanhood came into being as an site where social expectations and anxieties might be played out.

As Doherty describes: 'clean teen pics featured an aggressively normal, traditionally good-looking crew of fresh young faces, 'good kids' who preferred dates to drugs and crushes to crime' (Doherty, in Rutsky, 1999: 12). The strong emphasis on desire in beach films meant that they often featured strongly heteronormative narratives of gender and sexuality which had distinct consequences for young men and women. According to Nash, whilst the increased concern over youthful behaviour revolved largely around the "problem" of pre-marital sex for girls, narratives of male youth 'all but ignored sex' as problematic (Nash, 2002: 345). The representation of women in these films, she posits as symptomatic of a broader cultural 'crisis' of masculinity.

Strong women are either "tamed" or punished. In *Beach Party* and other surf exploitation films, "real" women do not surf, they ride on surfers' shoulders, adore the daredevil exploits of their surfer boyfriends, or wait for their men on the beach... "Bad" girls do not know their place as they usurp male power. Aggressive or clever women are frequently punished or mocked (Ormrod, 2002: online, ¶24).

According to Ormrod, whilst the over-dominant and overtly sexual 'bad girls' were 'regarded as the root of problems with masculinity' (Ormrod, 2002), 'good girls', like *Gidget*, represented a desirable femininity which complimented the unruly male surfer, and in so doing helped to stabilise patriarchal American masculinity at the point of 'crisis'.

Significantly, these strongly gendered media portrayals did not only feed into the increasingly popular surfing culture in the USA; the impact was made very much apparent in the developing surf scene in Britain. Ormrod explains that British surfers had few texts from which to glean cultural knowledge about surfing and therefore mediated representations such as *Gidget* 'were seized upon by surfers avid for every crumb of information about surfing' (2007: 110).

Music and films from the early sixties promoted the hedonistic, affluent and youthful Californian lifestyle, a lifestyle that was attractive to Britain which had for so long suffered post war rationing and austerity. In the early sixties, British youth culture looked to America for its image (Ormrod, 2007: 111).

Indeed, Newquay surfer and author of *The Surfing Tribe: A History of Surfing in Britain* (2009) Roger Mansfield writes:

During the '60s and '70s a testosterone-flavoured atmosphere surrounded British surfing... The music of the era inadvertently reinforced this. In their famous surf song 'Surf City' Jan & Dean told us there were, "Two girls for every boy". The doctrine of the day was that girls were there to decorate the beach, while men rode the waves (2009: 154).

As more and more people fell in love with *Gidget*'s tomboyish femininity and idealistic view of surf culture, the surfing subculture itself 'countered with images of surfers as

rebelliously masculine, sensual, anti-materialist social drop-outs' (Comer, 2004: 239). One notable site for the expression of such masculine distinction was riding style, in particular, the difference between longboard and shortboard riding.

Shortboards, according to longboard riding critics, were partly responsible for the downfall of 'authentic' surfing culture (Booth, 2001). Traditional Malibu surfboards were long, easy to paddle, and stable, they were designed to move with the wave, not against it. The rider glides along the face of a wave, maneuvering in line with its energy and showing skill by 'walking' up and down the board. However, while longboards are cumbersome, and almost impossible to duckdive, shortboards - introduced widely in the later 1960s - are a lot smaller and lighter, making them more suited to bigger faster waves. They require a lot more power to paddle and speed to maintain flotation, meaning the rider must turn, and cut back to stay on the wave. Skill is demonstrated by the quality, tightness and difficulty of the turns, as well as the size of the wave and the incorporation of tricks.

Although longboard riding has remained a significant part of the culture, from the late 1970s onwards, shortboard surfing became increasingly popular and gender began to emerge as a real issue. The boards easily lent themselves to gendered appropriation. Shortboard riders didn't just surf; they 'attacked', 'dominated' and 'conquered'. They didn't just ride the wave, they 'shredded', 'carved' and 'ripped' it. Surfing became increasingly 'aggressive' (Booth, 2001). Such discourse coalesced to create surfing the 'sport'; the new way to measure masculine physical prowess.

Surfboards and Sexism

With the introduction of shortboards, surfing began to become increasingly 'fraternal' in structure; waves were contested terrain, some locals stuck together and protected their breaks from outsiders with hostility. Bigger waves, more tricks and greater air became markers of masculinity and respect, as did shows of sexual dominance over women. As many authors agree (Crosset, 1990; Kimmel, 1990; Messner, 1992), the competition of the fraternal or 'homosocial' sporting environment can promote selfish, hostile and aggressive behaviour towards women as sexual objects (Curry, 1991) and the widespread sexism of the fraternal surfing culture in Australia in particular has been well referenced;

There's nothing more beautiful than a well-shaped girl riding a six-foot wave with the wind blowing through her hair. But one thing I can't stand is women riding (or attempting to ride) big waves... Girls are better off and look more

feminine riding average size waves (Pioneer big-wave rider Buzzy Trent, in Booth, 2001: 3).

By the 1980s, occurrences of sexism - as evidenced in the American and Australian surf media - began to develop into a widespread cultural stance against women in the surf. This was supported and intensified through popular cultural texts and a growing competitive circuit. Whereas the feminising influence of *Gidget* had posed a relatively superficial threat to surfing masculinity in the 1950s, the wider political gains of second-wave feminism and the civil rights movement began to challenge the sport's status as a masculine preserve.

This required a much more fundamental mode of resistance. Surfboards and surf bodies thus became the primary loci of gender appropriations. 1982 saw the formation of the Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) and the emphasis on power surfing was confirmed by the prominence of the aptly named 'thruster' surfboard, which became standard fare amongst top level surfers. Surfing performances were judged more on displays of power rather than aesthetic quality and this meant that shortboards and big waves were valuable sources of cultural capital for all male surfers. Australian writer Southerden remarks, 'anti-female comments such as 'No chicks on sticks!' and 'No boobs in tubes!' were directed at any girl brave enough to paddle out' (2003: 20).

An important medium for the expression of masculinist sentiment was subcultural media. The surfing magazines *Surfer (USA)* and *Tracks (Australia)* were particularly influential in this sense. Established in 1959 and 1970 respectively, these magazines are two of the longest running and culturally valued niche media texts. Their impacts were not just felt nationally; British surfing in the 1970s continued to respond to the available global representations. Stedman (1997) traces the changes in masculinising discourses evident in *Tracks* from the 1970s onwards, drawing particular attention to the contrast in tone between the 1970s and 1980s. She describes the 1970s as a time when gender boundaries were relatively 'blurred' in the sport, many male surfers still connected with the original anti-establishment culture, playing on dominant norms of masculinity by adopting a laid back attitude and long hair styles. There is also evidence to suggest a certain amount of support for female surfers, for example, surfer magazine *Tracks* published messages of support and remained sympathetic towards female surfers throughout the 1970s, and 'for a while, even gay male surfers were tolerated' (Stedman, 1997: 81). By the 1980s, though, occurrences of sexism began to develop into a widespread cultural stance against women in the surf. In the 1970's women were given recognition by *Tracks* as a small but active contingent in the surfing community. By the late 1980s, this recognition had given way to

'continuous and strenuous attempts to assert an image of masculinity' via two main strategies; denying female surfer subjectivities through sexual objectification, and the 'symbolic annihilation' of women as active surfers (Stedman, 1997: 81).

Supporting Stedman's work, Henderson (2001) also analysed the gendered discourses evident in *Tracks*, although her analysis focuses more specifically on Australian masculinity, and has a much firmer grounding in socio-historical context. She demonstrates how *Tracks* containment of 'Woman' in the mid 1970s, a technique she terms 'discipline and punish', came more or less full circle, through periods of ambivalence, outright misogyny and relative support in the 80s and 90s, to re-appear again in mid 1990s with renewed vigour;

Although *Tracks* institutes a regular women's page (predictably titled 'G-Spot') and covers the growing women's pro scene, this coverage is swamped by the juvenile fascination with women's bodies as source of pleasure or humour...women's bodies are positioned primarily as objects not only of desire, but of jokes, play, grotesquery and fear (Henderson, 2001:328).

Like Stedman (1997), Henderson insists that the various strategies of containment imposed on women (surfers and non-surfers alike) by *Tracks* cannot be described as purely reactionary in terms of the gains made by second-wave feminism, nor, given the 'idiosyncratic' nature of the coverage throughout the years, can it be located as a result of the 'onward march of a patriarchal capitalism' (2001: 327). Rather, women's positioning as 'objects' and 'subjects' within surfing culture has remained unsettled and ambivalent, complicated always by the trajectories of modern rationality, postmodernity, and commodification. The 'containment of women', therefore can be seen as a function of, or 'compensation for' the perceived 'containment of surfing' within postmodern consumer culture (Henderson, 2001: 329).

Feminism Paddles Out: The 'coming to light' of the Female Surfer

The history of modern surfing has, overwhelmingly, been defined by masculine norms and values, as well as anxieties over its popularity and commercialisation (Henderson, 2001). The resulting widespread sexism, which has characterised surf culture since the 1950s, has no doubt deterred many women from venturing into the surf. However, despite the machismo of surf culture, for those girls and women who were determined enough to

commit themselves to surfing, the male dominated line ups did not prove a sufficient deterrent.

In Britain, the number of female surfers paddling out were very few and far between (Mansfield, 2009; Ormrod, 2007). Particularly notable exceptions were Gwynedd Haslock, who began surfing in the mid 1960s. *'I was that sort of person that didn't really, I didn't, (chuckle) I wanted to do it so I just went out and did it'* (Personal Interview, 2012). She began surfing in Newquay when she asked the local lifeguards if they would lend her a surfboard. When competitive surfing began in Newquay, Gwynedd entered contests alongside the men and convincingly held her own. This prompted the British Surfing Association (BSA) to introduce a women's division and with only a handful of competitors she became the first British champion in 1969.

Another surfer, Linda Sharp, also made a considerable impact on British surfing. Linda also gained access to surfing through the local lifeguard club; at Aberavon in South Wales. She too, took a 'no nonsense' approach to the all male line up at her local break. Unlike Gwynedd, she quickly got into shortboard surfing and was driven by competitive success. From the 1970s to the 1990s, Linda made a considerable mark on the Welsh, British and European Circuit, accumulating over 30 wins. In 1980, she also reached the finals of the World Championships in Biarritz, surfing alongside the best female surfers in the world.

Internationally, female surfers were beginning to establish themselves. Surfers such as Lynn Boyer, Debbie Beacham, Pam Burridge, Frieda Zamba and Wendy Botha ignored the sexist jibes at their local breaks and adopted an "anything you can do..." attitude, working on aggressive maneuvers they observed amongst the male surfers. In so doing they began to carve out spaces in surf culture for other female surfers. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s women struggled to establish a place to compete, as well as secure professional circuit that would allow them to dedicate their lives to the sport. In Britain, Linda Sharp lobbied the Welsh Surfing Federation to include a women's division, and throughout the 1980s and 90s worked as Secretary for the federation (Mansfield, 2009). In 1976 female surfers in the USA founded Women's Professional Surfing (WPS), but relations with men's surfing, event organisers and sponsors were often troubled, and female surfers repeatedly came up against discrimination (Booth, 2001). By the 1980s, however, the ASP demanded that a women's division be added to world championship contests.

With surfing styles already appropriated, the success of female surfers from the 1970s onwards depended on their ability to prove themselves according to masculine

standards. The contests enabled surfers like Zamba and Botha to demonstrate on a world stage their ability to surf like ‘one of the guys’; “Some people say I surf like a guy” said Zamba, “but I don’t care if that’s what it takes to win” (in Booth, 2001: 11). Another British champion, Eden Burberry also spent a lot of time surfing with top male surfers, in Newquay. Described by Mansfield as ‘something of a tomboy’, she emulated their standard of surfing and won five titles throughout the 1980s (Mansfield, 2009: 157).

According to US based cultural feminists, Heywood (2008) and Comer (2004), striving for masculine standards is characteristic of so-called ‘Generation X’ female athletes. As Beachley recognises, ‘Back in the late ’80s and early ’90s, women’s surfing seemed to lack a sense of identity due to the fact that women felt the need to act and dress like men to earn their respect’ (Surfermag.com, 2009). This largely remained the case until Californian surfer Lisa Andersen rose to prominence in the early 1990s;

The closest thing Lisa did was surf like a man but with feminine grace and fluidity. Her smooth, refined surfing style presented a whole new image, demanded reverence from her peers, and gave the surfing world a revived appreciation of the power of a woman in the waves (Beachley, 2009: Surfermag.com).

Comer describes Lisa Andersen as a ‘Generation Xer who made good’ (2004: 246). As a troubled teenager, she ran away from a turbulent family life to pursue her passion of surfing. She was a gutsy and aggressive surfer, but it wasn’t until 1994, after giving birth to a daughter, that Andersen won her first World Championship. By this time, as Comer (2004) recognises, she had become more mellow than in her earlier years. Andersen’s aggressive surfing and focused attitude were balanced out by her feminine looks and her role as a mother; in other words, she was marketable. Her competitive success also coincided with the establishment in 1991 of Quiksilver’s now hugely successful sister brand Roxy, and in 1994 Andersen became their first major purchase.

The partnership between the two really propelled both sales and the sport forward. Many have commented on how ‘the parallel rise of girl’s surfwear with surfing girls is, in fact, a question of the “chicken and egg”. Which fuelled which first?’ (Jones, 1999: surf.transworld.net). Either way, by the late 1990s the ‘blonde, smiling visage of Lisa Andersen was everywhere: in magazine ads, on posters, in promotional videos’ (Chase and Pepin, 2008: 85). Women’s surfing in the 1990s *was* Lisa Andersen. Indeed, the 1990s marked a turning point for women’s and men’s surfing alike. From the 1990s onwards,

surfing was drawn increasingly closer to global mainstream popular culture, where in recent years it has metamorphosed into a globalised vehicle for the post-subcultural consumerist economy.

Generation Xtreme: the 1990s

The establishment of surfing as a professional sport may have caused a certain amount of fragmentation within surfing communities, but it by no means marked the end of 'authentic' surf culture. Longboarders and shortboarders, free surfers and competitors all co-exist within surf culture today and feature in cultural discourses in different ways. However, in recent decades the mainstream discourses of surfing have been focused almost entirely on pro shortboard surfing and big wave riding. A main reason for this, I suggest is that these two forms are ideal arenas for the demonstration of masculine power, composure and fearlessness; values which, as Kusz (2004) argues took on renewed significance from the 1990s onwards. While competitive pro surfing has continued to push forward the standard of skill and level of risk demonstrated by surfers, the introduction of tow-in¹ surfing in the 1990s, has helped big wave riders to redefine the limits of the humanly possible, risking their lives in the process.

The risk element in these forms of surfing is what qualifies the sport for the category of 'extreme sport'. These sports are characterised by an elevated level of risk, either inherent to the activity (BASE jumping), or through the display of skills and tricks (Skateboarding, BMX) (Rinehart and Sydnor, 2003). Like surfing, extreme sports as a collective have grown evermore popular since the mid-1990s, driven largely by the creation of the X Games in 1995. They have also drawn the attention of sports scholars who have discussed them variously as extreme (Rinehart and Sydnor, 2003), alternative, whiz (Midol, 1993), or lifestyle (Wheaton, 2004) sports.

Culturally, Kusz (2004) has argued that the popular consumption of the X Games might be read 'as a symptom and imagined solution to this post-1960s perceived crisis of white masculinity' (2004: 199). Speaking contextually about the USA in particular, he suggests that the steady decline of economic and social privilege for white working- and middle-class men – resulting from political gains made by feminists and marginalised groups – has fostered reactionary cultural discourses which emphasise ideal masculine values such as self-reliance, courage and confidence. In a world where white masculinity is

¹ Tow-in surfing is used for waves too big to paddle into. It involves a surfboard rider being towed (already standing) into 'monster' waves by a jet-ski.

‘falling down’, extreme sports function as a ‘masculinising corrective’ (Kusz, 2004: 205):

a racially and gender exclusive place...where (white) men can unapologetically perform an ideal masculinity which they covet by taking death-defying risks, enduring the pain of participation, and displaying unwavering confidence and coolness in the face of apparent danger (ibid.).

This gender exclusive place, according to Stedman (1997) was something that – by the mid 1990s - was clearly marked out through the surfing media. As her research of *Tracks* magazine demonstrates, this was achieved in part through the characterisation of women as sex objects and, particularly in the case of feminists, as outsiders; 'Feminists are lesbians and intellectuals' who 'are actually irrelevant to the debate, because they're so out of touch with their womanhood' (Stedman quoting *Tracks*, 1997: 84).

What Kusz highlights, is not just the ways in which extreme sports (and thus certain forms of surfing) become gendered, but also the ways in which extreme sports become racialised in the context of constructing an ideal masculine identity. A central concern of Kusz's research is with 'particularising' whiteness, that is, exposing whiteness 'as a historically specific social construction which is frequently constituted to appear as though it is trans historical or universal' (2003: 156). He suggests that some extreme sport discourses subtly work to normalise and idealise whiteness through a connection with the 'American frontier' and the 'good old days' of sport. This process is complicated further by a somewhat contradictory discourse which works to position white masculinity as marginal and alternative, effectively staking a claim to the status of 'other'. Kusz claims that such discourses have been evident in alternative sport culture since the 1990s, forming part of a 'reactionary racial politics' which positions whiteness as alternative, different and marginal 'in order to undermine the arguments of feminists, multiculturalists and others who have identified whiteness as exclusionary, dominating and oppressive' (2003: 157).

I suggest, that there is a similarly heterogendered, possibly complimentary, relation at work in some of the ways in which the white female surfer ('surfer girl') has been mediated, marketed and theorised since the 1990s. Since that time, the female surfer has proved 'progressively more valuable' to the surf industry and fashion companies alike (Comer, 2004: 239). Worldwide, participation rates have been on the rise since the 1990s and the surfwear industry is enjoying 'unprecedented economic prosperity on rising consumption of high fashion clothing and accessories' (Booth, 2001:3). While the masculine denial of women in surfing's subcultural spaces might have been an effective

strategy in the 1980s, the changing corporate value of the female surfer image, from the 1990s onwards has meant that the surfing industry has had to embrace its so-called "feminine side" (cf. Brown and Ford, 2006).

The Mediated 'moment' of the Surfer Girl

The changing 'status' of women and girls within surfing's commercial sector is evidenced in the growth of surf marketing aimed at women. For instance, since the 1990s there have emerged a small but growing number of magazines which have been targeted specifically at women and girls. The first female specific magazines included *Surfing Girl* and *Wahine* in the USA, and *Shred Betty* and *Chick* in Australia. Booth (2001: 13) reports that, following the consistently limited and often sexist coverage which had been granted to female surfers in the (sub)cultural media, women 'enthusiastically consumed' these new female focused magazines.

"I am so thrilled to see this empowering magazine for women," wrote one correspondent to *Wahine*. "Finally a magazine that portrays women as strong and capable rather than the usual images of us as wimpified, clueless and not to be taken seriously. *Vogue*, *Cosmo*[politian] and *Glamour* could learn something from your style" (Booth, 2001: 13).

At the same time, Booth recognises that the female-specific surf media have utilised gendered discourses in sometimes 'skewed and contradictory' ways (2001: 13). The content of many of the female-focused surf magazines include numerous pages of advertising and/or articles related to fashion and beauty accessories, as well as promoting a somewhat narrowly defined image of the (feminine) female surfer. Booth quotes another respondent to *Wahine* magazine, Kristin Borges, as commenting:

For some women, I'm sure it's liberating to be empowered to be both "feminine" and athletic. But other women cannot, or do not want to, meet restrictive cultural expectations. Meet the challenge, *Wahine*. Give the rest of us, the women who don't buy into so-called "femininity" some inspiration. Show us women from more diverse backgrounds ... At the very least, let's see gear made for a wider variety of body types and aesthetic preferences (Booth, 2001: 15).

In 2012, the main female-focused surfing magazines still in production include *Curl*, which was launched as a New Zealand publication, before expanding to include Australia; *Jetty Girl*, an online magazine originating from California; *Women's Surf Style Magazine* (WSSM), in Hawaii and the USA; and *Cooler* magazine, which is available throughout Europe. In the UK, *SurfGirl* became the first female-focused offering when it appeared as a 'free' supplement inside *Carve* magazine, (established in 1994, and the UK's best selling surfing title).

SurfGirl was launched as a stand-alone publication in 2003, followed by *Curl*, *Jetty Girl*, WSSM and *Cooler* in 2005 and 2006. This new wave of publications coincides with what has been termed the recent female surf 'boom'. Comer (2010) describes how the early 2000s brought with it a marked proliferation in popular culture of surf-related imagery, clothing brands, fashion, surf travel, surf lessons, as well as participation in the sport itself.

It also coincides with the release of the film *Blue Crush* in 2002, the first major motion picture to focus primarily on female surfers. Despite a mediocre performance at the box office, the film was celebrated by the surf industry for showcasing the current level of talent in women's surfing, as well as for planting it in the consciousness of mainstream popular culture. As Sean Smith, executive director of SIMA claims, 'Blue Crush was huge in spurring the modern popularity of women's surfing';

The movie depicted independent, strong, sexy women and its representation of freedom brought the lifestyle element of surfing to the forefront again, which we had not seen since the days of Gidget (SIMA.com, 2007).

The implications of these claims have drawn the attention of academics in sport, media and cultural studies alike (cf. Comer 2003; 2004; Lindner, 2012). *Blue Crush* positions female surfers as lead protagonists, and is aimed at a largely young, female audience; it thus represents the ultimate contrast to *Tracks* (a subcultural text oriented around a largely male audience). According to Comer, the cultural significance of *Blue Crush* lies in the depiction of young women who were 'girl powered', and in the demonstration of how 'girls can hang together and back each other fully' (2010: 99). The lives, experiences, and/or friendships of the characters in the film were intended to be ones with which the young women could and would connect, and this was evidenced in the film's popularity. From the early 2000s onwards, the surf industry saw an accelerated interest in surfing

amongst women. This cultural 'moment' signalled the coming of age of the new 'surfer girl' as cultural icon.

Summarising Thoughts

Although it would be unwise to imply a cause and effect relation between *Blue Crush* and female surf participation, media discourses do help to locate the gendered politics of surfing within the broader socio-cultural context. The emergence of female centred surf magazines can be viewed as part of a growing connection between commercialism and feminine culture, and the coincidence with a cultural 'moment' in which 'the surf archive produced by subculturalists exploded' (Comer, 2010: 8).

Broadly speaking, the content of the magazines include some similar principles evident in *Blue Crush*. As summed up in the words of Smith, these include the representation of independent, strong, sexy women with an emphasis on freedom and lifestyle. Like the extreme male athlete, the female surfer is located within the wider political and social factors which have contributed to her cultural desirability. In the next chapter, I consider in more detail the significance and implications of this rhetoric in relation to how the new 'surfer girl' has been constructed as a female (and feminist?) icon. I recognise that the 'surfer girl' has drawn a significant amount of academic attention from so-called 'third-wave' feminists and offer a critical discussion of this supposedly 'new' feminist approach. I then work towards how we might otherwise use a feminist perspective to think about the female surfer.

Chapter Two

Feminism and the 'Surfer Girl': In and Out of the Waves

Given the ever-increasing popularity of surfing amongst women, it seems appropriate and timely that feminist/sport scholars explore the implications and complexities of this 'new' sporting context, and its cultural representations. Part of this, I argue, involves opening up to potentially 'alternative', or different ways of theorising around these 'new' forms of sports participation. In this chapter, I begin by critically reflecting on the notion of the 'surfer girl' as female icon, through a discussion of how young womanhood and female 'empowerment' has been interrogated in recent feminist literature. In particular, I critique the notion of the 'third-wave' feminism and the related notion of 'stealth feminism'. I then move on to consider how female surfers themselves have come under investigation within the small but growing body of surf research. I suggest that whilst the existing research is invaluable, there are also ways in which we might explore the experiences of female surfers, which are more attentive to how surfing bodies mutually constitute spatial relations of gender. Finally, I put forward the potential of a Deleuzian influenced theoretical framework. In doing so, I highlight some of the important ways in which feminist and surf research has connected with Deleuze, and the possible implications this might have for research into sporting spaces.

Theorising the 'Surf Girl': Is Third-wave Dropping In?

That feminism is now highly complex, confusing and seemingly contradictory, speaks volumes about the nature of the oppression(s) it is trying to eradicate. This does not mark the demise or failure of feminism, but is rather a characteristic of feminism as a constantly shifting, emerging, contesting 'theory in the making' (Raisborough, 2002: 292).

The theorised late-modern (Giddens, 1991) shift in focus, from production to consumption (Bauman, 1999) has produced conditions under which collectivised political activity becomes both difficult and unlikely. Instead, forms of political and cultural critique are absorbed into popular and consumer culture, and packaged as signs which can be incorporated and expressed through an individual's personal identity. Young people today are 'supposed to become unique, successful individuals' (Harris, 2004: 6), and this

obligation to develop a unique personal identity is constructed through popular culture 'as a freedom, a freedom best expressed through the display of one's choices and projects of the self' (ibid.). Subsequently, the new young woman, or 'future girl', is no longer characterised by a normalised, standardised femininity, but nor does she transgress the parameters of the norm; she instead demonstrates an ability to negotiate for herself the challenges and opportunities of the new socioeconomic order. In doing so, she must demonstrate flexibility, tenacity and drive whilst maintaining (and not forsaking) her desirable, youthful femininity. It is the perceived embodiment of these characteristics which make, and continually shape the surfer girl as a figure of 'desirable, global twenty first century womanhood' (Comer, 2010: 8).

So-called 'third wave' feminists have offered some of the more comprehensive considerations of the significance of the female surfer in popular culture. Comer's (2010) book *Surfer Girls in the New World Order* for instance, is one of the only academic texts to have centred solely on surfing. Comer (2004; 2010) positions the 'new surfer girl' as a third-wave icon, describing her as 'a girl-powered Gidget', a 'youthfully feminist' character who couples 'girl bravado' with a need to keep femininity intact, insisting that 'girl-ness be valued' (Comer, 2004: 239). Heywood too, suggests that the female surfer serves as both a sign of the ideal neoliberal subject, and as an example of 'the 'third-wave feminist' rearticulation of gender and femininity' (2008: 79).

According to Heywood, the female surfer (and the female athlete more generally) reflects a representational nexus where the female body, instead of primarily signifying a dependent sexuality as in second-wave feminist analyses that spoke of 'the objectification of women' (Heywood, 2008: 64), has come to signify an independent sexuality that reflects women's potential as 'self-determining' wage earners and consumers (ibid.). She sees surf culture as a landscape which is intersected by post-modern, post-fordist, neo-liberal ideologies and positions the female surfer as an effective vehicle for what she terms 'stealth feminism'. This idea of 'stealth feminism', as Heywood describes it, is mobilised within sport because of the potential it offers women to socially, culturally and literally feel more powerful (Heywood, 2008). It also represents a departure from second-wave feminism in terms of an embracing of femininity and sexuality as important forms of 'empowerment'.

Since its "emergence" in the 1990s, the ownership of 'third-wave' is something that remains – sometimes fiercely – contested, both in terms of the label itself, as well as its relationship to second-wave feminisms.

there has been an explosion of popular and academic texts claiming the existence and delineating the contours and complexities of the 'third wave' as a new (and improved) feminist generation (Whelehan, 2007: xxiv).

My approach to interrogating gender, subjectivity and surfing is one which remains distinctly skeptical about the contributions that a so-called 'third-wave' analysis might offer. 'Feminism... is far from static; it is in a constant state of movement, critique and development, and this resists neat classification into discrete strands' (Raisborough, 2002: 257). Thus, whilst I utilise the term in this discussion, my engagement with 'third-wave' work, does not signify my recognition of it as a distinct moment a feminist genealogy (c.f. Caudwell, 2011). Rather, it serves as an acknowledgement of a theoretical stance with which a number of cultural feminists now align themselves.

What is concerning about this so-called 'third-wave' is the way in which 'third-wavers' appear to so 'hastily dismis[s] existing feminist contributions to theory and praxis (including activism) as obsolete' (Caudwell, 2011:119). In the Foreword to *Third wave feminism: A critical exploration*, (Gillis, Howie and Munford, 2007) Whelehan explains that third-wave feminists have been both keen to 'define their feminism as something 'different' from previous feminisms', whilst at the same time distancing themselves from the notion of 'post-feminism' (2007: xxii). And yet, other feminist scholars contend that 'neither post nor third wave feminism has yet to become an organized (or even disorganized) political movement of any significance' (Lotz, 2007: 83).

According to Comer (2003: 126), the 'third-wave' enables supposedly 'new' political forms which are 'more responsive to the media-saturated culture of today'. This amounts to, what she pithily terms, a 'fresh perspective' (ibid.: 122). Problematically, this has involved a marked shift away from political action and 'movement feminism' to the acceptance of a more 'popular' (normative) feminism, which finds its expression in the realm of popular culture. The 'girl power' slogan serves as a classic example of this sort of 'popular' feminist discourse. Girl power shares a much more settled relationship with mainstream consumer culture because the individualism of the 'I'm not a feminist, but....' attitude denounces any desire for collective social resistance (Karras, 2002). In the words of Taft;

The discourse of Girl Power [was] deployed by various elements of popular culture and the mainstream media in a way that constructed a version of girlhood that excludes girls' political selves (2004: 69).

For the promoters, brands and advertisers for women's sport this sort of empowerment message provides the answer to the 'problem' of strong athletic females. Girl Power is unique in the sense that it not only empowers women and girls, but does so without disrupting the desired (hetero/normative) status quo. Girl Power is strong, yet youthful and feminine (read heterosexual) and therefore shares an affinity with both the new modern 'future girl' ideal and the 'new' commercial friendly 'surfer girl'. Just as McRobbie (2008) observes of popular culture, the surf industry has employed this discourse of 'girl power' in order to draw on the popularity of the meanings now connected to it.

This issue highlights too, the problematic nature of 'stealth feminism'. Heywood and Dworkin (2003) originally utilised the notion as a way of conceptualising the power of the sporting arena to make connections with feminist issues 'without provoking the knee-jerk social stigmas attached to the word 'feminist'' (Heywood and Dworkin, 2003: 51). In other words, they argue that athletes are able to do the work of feminists by promoting 'equal access to institutions, self-esteem for all women and girls, and an expanded possibility and fluidity within gender roles that embraces difference' (2003: 51). However, whilst it is certainly feminist, the supposition which underlies the notion of 'stealth' is a problematic one, because it hinges on a presumed ability to access (even as a guise) the parameters of the 'norm'. As Caudwell notes, this is essentially exclusionary, and 'ignores women who are not able, or who are unwilling, to use their physicality, embodied aesthetic' (2011: 123).

The Problems and Possibilities of the Surfer Girl

The implications of the alliance of neo-liberal consumer culture with the interests of girls and young women are something that has divided cultural feminist writers since the 1990s. This division has occasionally been identified, problematically, as a sort of generational one, between second and 'third-wave' feminists. Thus, whilst Heywood positions the consumer friendly brand of empowerment embodied in the 'surfer girl' as a positive form of 'stealth feminism', McRobbie sees it as entirely the opposite; 'that this popular feminist appropriation permits more subtle modalities of gender reinscription and re-subordination to be pursued' (2008: 533).

McRobbie's argument is that, while elements of feminism have been absolutely incorporated at the political and institutional levels, the neo-liberal discourse of individual choice and empowerment is now being deployed within popular culture 'as a kind of substitute for feminism' (2009: 1). Underpinning this process is the suggestion that 'young women have now won the battle for equality', feminism has been taken into account, and

the recognition of young women in the public and political sphere has replaced the ‘need for the feminist critiques’ of hegemonic relations (2009: 57). In essence, ‘feminism taken into account is also feminism undone’ (2009: 60).

...[t]his is a polemic about affirmation, that young women have more or less gained all the freedom they need, and that it is their feminist elders who need to learn something from them about being ‘strong, smart and bold’ (McRobbie, 2009: 158).

The result is that women come to view empowerment as something which can be individually – and freely – claimed by those with enough drive to do so. This form of empowerment however is never free, and is always subject to societal regulation and control. McRobbie utilizes a Deleuzian notion of luminosity to capture ‘how young women might be understood as currently becoming visible’ (McRobbie, 2009: 60). Luminosities do not illuminate objects, nor do they allow them to show up under light, rather luminosities are ‘created by the light itself and allow a thing or object to exist only as a flash, sparkle or shimmer’ (Deleuze, 1986, in McRobbie, 2009: 60). So while the ‘future girl’ and the ‘surfer girl’ are held up as ‘shining’ examples of the ‘appropriate ways to embrace and manage’ the socioeconomic order (Harris, 2004: 2), the social equality this appears to afford young women is always ‘created by the light itself’. Luminosities act as ‘clouds of light which give young women a shimmering presence, and in so doing, they also mark out the terrain of the consummately and re-assuringly feminine’ (2009: 60).

Put simply, luminosities normalise, and thus diffuse, empowerment through a subtle and pervasive connection with femininity. This idea of femininity as an active part of empowerment is highly problematic, for by using femininity as power, an implicit assumption is made; that the source and condition of this power is distinctly desirable and heterosexual. Those women and girls, therefore, who do not meet the standard of hegemonic femininity, or are unwilling to invite the male gaze, are effectively excluded. Luminous spaces of attention operate in this way ‘to sustain and re-vitalise what Butler has famously called the heterosexual matrix’ (McRobbie 2009: 58). For example, ‘popular feminism’ through the ‘luminous’ notion of girl power, has been used to represent both individual power and consumer power whilst at the same time maintaining a post/anti-feminist culture of young women as ‘noncritical, nonactive subjects’ (Taft, 2004: 70).

The ‘female surfer’ has become a luminous presence in recent years, and I would argue that this was also the case in the 1950s and 60s when Gidget reached the height of her popularity. Whilst the ‘Little Girl with Big Ideas’ (Kohner, 1957) may have embodied

some feminist values, Gidget was also held up as an ideal heteronormative ‘good girl’ at a time of national and patriarchal insecurity (Nash, 2002; Ormrod, 2002). Notably, Gidget’s limelight was, like a flash, sparkle, or glimmer, relatively short-lived, and post-Gidget, the female surfer all but vanished from mainstream popular culture. Today, she is back, and more luminous than ever before. Even Gidget herself is set to make a reappearance, with plans already in place for a film and television re-make of the popular 1950s and 60s phenomenon. According to film producer Mark Canton, ‘Gidget has always been such a strong symbol of girl power.... With female surfing exploding across the globe, the time is right to bring her back in a major way’ (Siegel, 2010). Given this cultural backdrop, it seems important and timely to question whether or not the ‘surfer girl’ does function as an image of empowerment for women and girls who surf. Or does the ‘pro-capitalist femininity-focused repertoire’ of women’s surfing simply play ‘directly into the hands of the corporate consumer culture eager to tap into this market on the basis of young women’s rising incomes’? (McRobbie, 2009: 158). Given the relative ‘newness’ of surfing as a sport for females, the notion that this ‘new surfer girl’ image might function as a set of feminine parameters through which women and girls might be appropriated within surf culture is a troubling one.

Implications for Surf Research

Although I discuss the cultural positioning of the ‘surfer girl’ in this chapter, it is important to emphasise that my research does not centralise the experiences of young women specifically. I place no parameters on the age range of the surfers with whom I do research. I discuss the issues of girlhood here as part of my contention that they hold resonance for all females who surf. In wider popular and consumer culture, girl is a widely used signifier for women of all ages, and females who surf are often referred to as “surfer girls”. As Comer demonstrates, ‘girl culture [has] ultimately found an unforeseen new home in surfing’ (Comer, 2010: 83), and many female focused businesses have ‘keyed off on the term of girl’ (2010: 84). *Water Girl*, a Californian surf shop founded in 1995, *Maui Surfer Girls* surf school, and the UK based magazine *SurfGirl* are just a few examples.

Despite – and because of – its popular usage, it is important that as feminists, we recognise that “girl” is political. The term carries various conflicting meanings related to youthfulness, femininity, racial identity, sexuality and privilege. Whilst some women might choose to adopt girl – perhaps because of its connection to being ‘cheeky’ or ‘playful’ (Comer, 2010: 3) – others do not want to relinquish their womanhood so easily. Comer is not oblivious to this. She recognises the political weight which the term girl

carries, and yet, she does not make explicit the reasoning behind her own utilisation of 'girl' in the title of her latest book.

As I recognised earlier, the so-called 'third-wave' consideration of the female surfer comprises a significant contribution to the existing literature available on the gendered aspects of surfing from a feminist perspective. My engagement with the work of Comer (2003, 2004, 2010) and Heywood (2007, 2008) serves as recognition of this contribution. However, I have also highlighted some of the theoretical shortcomings of this literature, inherent to its positioning as a so-called 'third-wave' analysis. Furthermore, whilst Comer and Heywood make some important observations with regards to the place of women and girls in surfing culture, neither offer any significant insight into the experiences of surfers themselves; in the waves. Very recently, Wheaton (2013) has made an important addition to the literature in this respect. Her latest book, *The Cultural Politics of Lifestyle Sports*, also engages in a critical discussion of the 'third wave', and does so within the context of empirically based research with (predominantly black) surfers in California.

Importantly, my research focuses specifically on the experiences of female surfers themselves, and does so in the contexts of British surfing. Thus, whilst the work of Heywood and Comer has proven useful in thinking through the gendered cultural ideals of surfing, for me, the discourse of the 'third-wave' is not one I find appropriate theoretically. I suggest that there is certainly room for a more fluid conceptualisation of how so-called masculine surf culture is adopted and appropriated by women and girls, not as 'one of the guys', or as girl-powered 'surfer girls' but as part of a renegotiation of dynamic 'femalehoods' in the surf. It is this developing theoretical framework to which I now turn.

In the Waves: Feminist Work Beyond the Textual

Contributions to critical studies of surfing have emerged from a range of (sometimes overlapping) academic disciplines. For example, cultural studies (Heywood, 2008; Comer, 2004, 2010) media studies (Henderson, 2001; Ormrod, 2002, 2007), history (Booth, 1994, 2001; Nendel, 2009, Ormrod, 2007), sociology (Ford and Brown, 2006), gender studies (Evers, 2006, 2009) and geography (Waite 2008; Waite and Warren, 2008). Despite the continued growth in the area, there is 'remarkably little research that has focused on the experiences and subjectivities of the female surfer' (Wheaton, 2010: 1068). While some researchers have focused on analyses of the gendered discourses evident within surfer culture (Booth, 2001, 2004; Comer, 2004; Rinehart, 2005; Stedman, 1997), few have placed enough emphasis on the gendered experiences of women and girls themselves. Some more recent additions to the literature however, have directly addressed issues

surrounding gender and sexualities for women surfers, these include work on competitive female surfers in Brazil (Knijnik, Horton and Cruz, 2010), mother surfers in New Zealand (Spowart, Burrows and Shaw, 2010) and 'women-who-surf' in Australia (Waite, 2008)ⁱ. Furthermore, Olive is also beginning to make an important mark on the field with her ethnographic work amongst surfers in Australia (Olive, 2013; Olive, McCuaig and Phillips, 2012). To date however there remains very little on women's experiences of contemporary UK surf cultures.

Olive et al. highlight that (as I acknowledge above) 'research surrounding women and surfing has largely remained textual' (2012: 5), and further, that much of this research focuses on professional and competitive surfers. They argue that doing research with non-competitive, or 'recreational' female surfers, 'and allowing women to speak for themselves' is important in order to 'reveal [potentially] different kinds of cultural experiences and meanings within surfing than are present in surfing texts' (ibid.). They propose that ethnographic investigation of surfing spaces offers the potential for opening up;

a complex cultural world of meanings mediated by various contextual, cultural, geographic, oceanic, local and personal factors that are always in play amongst surfers. Surfing takes place within multiple sets of relationships between people, places and ways of knowing, as well as cutting across what are assumed to be shared cultural understandings about surfing (Olive et al., 2012: 7).

This highlights the importance of research which involves speaking and surfing with female surfers. What their research demonstrates is that although the surf related media does impact on the ways in which female surfers come to 'know' surfing spaces 'it is the everyday experiences and relationships of surfers in the waves that remain the most powerful in how women understand and experience surfing and surfing culture at an individual level' (2012: 15). In contrast to the textual analyses offered by Stedman (1997) and Henderson (2001) of surfing culture as largely hostile to women, Olive et al. found that the women in their research often felt welcomed and supported by male surfers in the waves. Importantly though, the women acknowledged that oftentimes, this support was felt to be 'patronising', in the sense that they were treated differently because they were women. Subsequently, rather than feeling marginalised the surfers 'described a sense of community and belonging that was variously local, cultural and female-specific' (Olive et al., 2012: 9).

The approach that Olive et al. take to this research is a largely Foucauldian one. They consider the ways in which gendered performances in the surf constitute normalising

power relations in the surf and argue that women negotiate these power relations by variously conforming, resisting or disrupting these knowledges in a 'surfing cultural way' (2012: 16). In a related field of research, a similar Foucauldian-influenced example of female gender disruption has been discussed by Kelly, Pomerantz and Currie (2005, 2008) in their research into 'skater girls'. In their research, 'skater girls' saw themselves as actively constructing an 'alternative girlhood' which was both 'oppositional to emphasised femininity and in resistance to oppressive discourses of sexism' (2008: 123). They seemed to accept that it is "their thing" (as girls) to sit around and gossip and watch the boys, and the only reason why they themselves had decided to reject the dominant culture and take part in skating is because they don't "think like that" ('normal' girls).

[Dominant] discourses operate as a wall that keeps girls out of particular sports, jobs, activities, spaces, conversations, hobbies, and modes of being that they might – if given the chance – find pleasurable.... Alternative girlhoods enable girls to maneuver within and against conventional notions of how girls should be and act, opening up space where none previously existed (Kelly et al. 2008: 123).

This is a promising assertion. But what does it mean to 'open up space where none previously existed'? and in what ways do these *spaces* become manifest? Like the work of Olive et al. (2012) on surfing, Kelly et al.'s (2005, 2008) research into skating also considers the negotiation of gendered space through a Foucauldian approach; highlighting discursive and gendered modes of construction, production and resistance. Undoubtedly, these modes of theoretical interrogation are invaluable to the growing literature on surfing, and they open up important ways in which to converse with, explore and challenge textual and cultural readings such as those offered by Booth (2001), Comer (2003, 2004, 2010), Henderson (2001), Heywood (2008) and Stedman (1997). However, as Waitt and Clifton (2012: 3) points out, this sort of Foucauldian approach often 'anchors men and women into a discursive web of normalising practices that limits their vision of who, and what, they can be in the surf [or skatepark]'. The research of Spowart et al. (2010) on the discursive relations between surfing and motherhood also offers an analysis which supports this observation.

What is absent from these primarily Foucauldian influenced feminist contributions is an explicit engagement with the surf from a spatial perspective. That is, beyond recognising the significance of the local space, they offer limited insight into how normalising practices are performed by gendered bodies and mobilised via the connections

these bodies make with other bodies, and the surfing space itself. The intention of my own study is to explore the ways in which female surfers are experiencing gendered subjectivities in the surfing spaces of Britain. What makes my research unique, in part, is its contextual location within the British surf space, and also the multi-sited, feminist nature of my ethnography. These characteristics of my research highlight the integral significance of considering the specificities of surf locations, and how they affect the power relations at each site. Subsequently, it is important that my theoretical framework is open to the possibilities of exploring potentially 'alternative' femalehoods, whilst at the same time critically exploring how subjectivities and bodies relate to and connect with surfing spaces. As Raisborough contends, 'feminist theories of space both contribute to and are informed by cultural geography' (2002: 286). With this in mind, I recognise the importance of drawing on relevant literature from within the broader disciplines of cultural and human geography. I argue that through making such theoretical connections, we might more effectively "open up" the gendered possibilities of surfing spaces in Britain.

Inspired initially by McRobbie's useful feminist appropriation of Deleuze's work on luminosities, I consider how Deleuzian philosophy might offer some useful ways of thinking about surfing spaces. In exploring the potential of such a theoretical approach, it has come to my attention that, in the past two decades, there has been a notable resurgence of feminist works drawing on Gilles Deleuze/and Felix Guattari. Seemingly, Deleuze/and Guattari have drawn the attention of feminists from a variety of fields; social, cultural, geographical, and more recently, sporting studies (cf. Braidotti, 2003, 2011; Kwan, 2007; Grosz, 1994; Markula, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c; Probyn, 1993, 2000, 2003). In the surfing literature, particular ways of theorising gender and surfing are also emerging which engage with both postmodern feminist theory and Deleuzian concepts. Work by Evers (2004, 2006, 2009), Waitt (2008) and Waitt and Warren (2008) for instance, engage with the work of Probyn (2000, 2004, 2005) in order to look beyond the notion of individuals as 'the isolated and insulated product of subjection', and explore the connections between 'the agency of surfers, the non-human world and geography' (Waitt and Clifton, 2012: 4). These researchers highlight that the meanings which are constituted in surfing spaces 'are always negotiated through the body's own self-reflexive capacities of the experiences of surfing' (Waitt and Clifton, 2012: 4).

Thinking about not only how the material, discursive and embodied dimensions of surfing spaces shape subjectivities but also how subjectivities shape surfing spaces, we become mindful that surfers are both reworking and fixing those categories that define their gendered subjectivities (ibid.).

These are important theoretical developments; and ones which I hope to contribute to with this project. Such research in surfing draws attention to the mutual constitution of subjectivities, bodies and spaces, and does so by paying attention to important feminist work in these areas. To date, however, this sort of theorising has largely been applied to research carried out with and amongst male surfers, in Australia (Evers, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009; Waite, 2008; Waite and Warren, 2008). Although, the work of Knijnik, Horton and Cruz (2010) in Brazil is worth noting here, as an important contribution which focuses on female surf bodies. Their research draws heavily on Markula's feminist applications of Deleuze to female sporting bodies, and is discussed further in the next chapter.

My research focuses specifically on the surfing experiences of women and girls, in Britain, and is defined much more fundamentally by feminist theory. Subsequently, rather than situate my analysis primarily via the existing literature on gender and surfing, I contextualise this study as part of a much broader feminist literature which has placed as central the theoretical acknowledgement of female subjectivities, bodies and space. In working through this literature, I have been inspired by the various ways in which feminist writers from various disciplines have brought to life the issues and politics connected to women's bodies and space; some of them through a theoretical engagement with Deleuze/and Guattari. Amongst others, the work of Ahmed (1998, 2004), Braidotti (1994, 2003, 2011) and Probyn (1993, 2000, 2003) have been particularly influential in the development of my theoretical approach. In the chapter which follows, I offer a more in-depth outline of my theoretical influences, particularly in terms of key Deleuzian concepts. In the final section of this chapter, I briefly turn my attention to the *possibilities* of utilising a Deleuzian influenced approach for feminist discussions of the sporting body.

Turning to Deleuze: Feminism and the Sporting Body

The feminist utilisation of Deleuzian theory is something which has grown more apparent in recent years, despite the fact that numerous tensions exist between certain Deleuzian ideas and feminist theory. This is because the transgressive nature of Deleuze's philosophy does in many ways reflect some of the goals of feminist theorizing (Markula, 2006b), and also because, as Colebrook explains;

Feminist questions and concepts ask what a philosophy might do, how it might activate life and thought... Deleuze's thought provides a way of understanding

the peculiar modality of feminist questions and the active nature of feminist struggle (Colebrook, 2000a: 7-8).

Colebrook asserts that feminism is less concerned with what a theory or body of thought means and more concerned with how it works; posing the question 'What can this concept or theory do?' (2000a: 8). Markula (2006b) has approached this question with regard to applying Deleuzian concepts to sporting femininity. Engaging in a certain amount of self analysis, she begins by reflecting on the importance of breaking down the idea of a stable – what Deleuze termed 'molar' – identity.

Through Deleuzian philosophy, I have begun to understand that my theoretical interpretation of the social construction of feminine identity might resemble the arborescent model of philosophical thought and limit my understanding of the narrowly defined feminine body shape (2006b: 32).

Taking this realisation as a point of departure she attempts to leave behind her existing understandings of dualistic gender power relations, 'divorcing a feminine identity from the dichotomous totality of organising thought', and utilising Deleuzian ideas, explores Pilates as a potential 'zone of transformation for the fit, feminine body' (2006b: 42). For me, the significance of this piece of work lies not in what comes out of Markula's theorising on Pilates (she recognises that the paper was in part an intellectual exercise), but more in its demonstration of how Deleuzian philosophy, as Colebrook (2000a) suggests, can be made to 'work' for feminism.

Like Markula, my interest in Deleuzian philosophy is to a certain extent driven by intellectual curiosity. I wish to discover what it is about this abstract, and at times, convoluted theorising which has drawn the attention of social, cultural and sporting feminists. I am also, however, driven by a desire to make Deleuzian theory 'work', that is, to make it useful, relevant. Markula contends that aspects of Deleuzian philosophy are 'inherently political' because they enable feminists to move beyond a theoretical discourse pre-occupied with 'the binary oppositions of feminine-masculine identities, oppressed-resistant selves, dominant-liberating practices, and representational-material bodies to a more positive and more flexible theoretical framework' (Markula, 2006b: 43).

The centrality of the body to sporting research raises as central the importance of moving beyond such discursive binaries, towards a more open and felt way of thinking. As Probyn has acknowledged;

Following Spinoza, Deleuze succinctly writes that '*on ne sait pas ce que peut un corps*', we just do not know what a body can do (1993: 154)... our ignorance of its capacities, needs to more fully inform theories of embodiment...we need to re-emphasize the promiscuous nature of the body as a sociological object (Probyn, 2000: 14).

Moved by a concern that the body is becoming 'reified in theory' (Probyn, 2000: 14), feminist work has, since the 1990s, turned to the notion of affect as a reactionary theoretical approach to the post-structural 'commitment to linguistic models', such as those which prioritise Foucauldian theory (Liljestrom and Paasonen, 2010: 1). Feminists such as Ahmed (2004), Grosz (1994), Probyn (2000) and Sedgwick (2003) have been instrumental in thinking through the dynamics of the 'affective' and 'affected' body. My consideration of gender and the female surfing body self-consciously pays attention to this literature.

As part of my analysis, I aim to explore the significance of affect, feeling and emotion as ways of knowing surfing spaces. Paying attention to the works of both feminist geographers and surf researchers, I aim to explore the powerful ways in which feelings define places, and vice versa, and 'how emotional relations shape society and space' (Anderson and Smith, 2001: 9). As Markula also alludes to in her work (2006b), only by opening up to such 'lines of flight' might we begin to breakdown the dichotomies – like reason/emotion – which restrict the possibilities of thinking differently.

Making Waves: Towards a 'New' Feminist Approach

In this chapter I have drawn together a range of feminist, and feminist influenced, works from within the sports studies literature, as well as from broader or related disciplines. I have revealed some of the important 'problems and possibilities' connected with theorising the female surfer in and out of the 'waves'; both figuratively and literally. Different feminist perspectives, particularly post-modern theorists, have contributed to my developing theoretical approach in various ways. Significantly, I have highlighted the potential of turning to Deleuze, and have pointed towards some of the important ways in which the ripples of Deleuzian theory have begun to shape feminist work in society, culture, sport and space. This is something I develop on further in the following chapter, where I examine for myself how Deleuze might be put to 'work' within a feminist examination of women's surfing.

ⁱ In addition, Mercer (2006) and Corner (2008) have also explored similar issues in their Masters theses

Chapter Three

Theoretical Underpinnings: Taking Deleuze Surfing

In this chapter I discuss the potential of Deleuzian philosophy as an ‘alternative’ way of thinking about female subjectivities and surfing. What makes Deleuzian philosophy different in this context is that, broadly speaking, few feminists have embraced Deleuze. Indeed, it is fair to say that numerous tensions exist between certain Deleuzian ideas and feminist theorising (Ahmed, 1998; Grosz, 1999). And yet, relatively subtle but productive changes have become evident in the recent resurgence of feminist works drawing on Gilles Deleuze/and Felix Guattari. Here, I explore what it is about this abstract theorising that has drawn the attention of social, cultural and, more recently, sport feminists. Broadly speaking, this chapter constitutes an exploration of the concepts, controversies and political usefulness of Deleuzian concepts for post-modern feminist theory. I propose that Deleuzian philosophy provides some important – though not unproblematic – theoretical ideas which might usefully apply to, connect with or interlace, existing feminist theorisations of gender, subjectivity, bodies and space. Further, I consider how this might be applied in the context of women's surfing.

I organise this chapter into four main sections. In the first section, I focus predominantly on Deleuze's philosophy of immanence. I introduce the key principles of the ‘rhizome’ and ‘becoming’ (and other related concepts), and discuss how these relate to the notion of subjectivity. In the second section I critically discuss how Deleuzian philosophy might coincide with some of the queer-feminist politics and conceptual ideas relating to how subjectivity might be theorised. As part of this section I further discuss the notion of ‘becoming’, and introduce the concepts of the ‘theatre of repetition’ and the ‘Body without Organs’. In the third section I consider how Deleuzian theory might be applied to the feminist exploration of bodies and spaces, by discussing the significance of affect and emotion, and introducing the concepts of the ‘fold’ and the ‘nomad’. In the final section, I focus more specifically on the issue of ‘taking Deleuze surfing’ as part of my feminist approach to researching surf space.

3.1 The Philosophy of Immanence: Deleuzian Concepts and Controversies

Engaging with Deleuze from a feminist perspective is not straightforward. Developing a theoretical approach requires an understanding of a number of abstract concepts. In this first section, I focus on Deleuze's philosophy of immanence, and the rhizome metaphor in particular, as a central concept in my theoretical approach. I also outline the controversial nature of this philosophy through an introduction of the key principles of difference, multiplicity and becoming.

Thinking differently: The Rhizome

According to Deleuze, difference is integral to all things, '*Difference* is the primary trait of anything that is, insofar as any real existing being must be something new' (Due, 2007: 27). 'One of Deleuze's many endeavours has been the redefinition of thought as a 'heterogenesis'', in other words, 'rather than *recognise* thought, philosophy ought to think differently' (Colebrook, 2000: 116). The ontological terms; difference, multiplicity, and becoming form the basis of a specifically Deleuzian way of thinking about reality; what he termed the philosophy of immanence. Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) philosophy of immanence stands in opposition to transcendental thought, that is, to more structural ways of thinking. The principle of transcendence refers broadly to the Cartesian-influenced nature of modern philosophy. Dualisms, identities, hierarchies, and social and theoretical structuralism have formed the basis of modern, "rational" scientific enquiry. Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of immanence on the other hand, offers a means through which to escape such rationality; to literally think *differently*.

In mapping out this philosophy Deleuze and Guattari (1987) use the metaphor of the rhizome, which is a botanical term for a 'network of multiple branching roots and shoots, with no central axis, no unified point of origin, and no given direction of growth' (Grosz, 1994, in Linstead and Pullen, 2006: 1290). The Rhizome represents a radical alternative to what they describe as the root and tree like model of transcendental social thought and organization, where the roots and branches, although constantly diversifying, always lead back to, and cultivate, a central growing structure.

The specific characteristics of the rhizome are defined by Deleuze and Guattari through the following six principles; the *principles of connection and heterogeneity*, the *principle of*

multiplicity, the *principle of asignifying rupture*, and the *principles of cartography and decalcomania* (1987: 7-12). These principles, distinguish the rhizome from the tree root in the sense that, in contrast to the hierarchical organization of a tree-like structure, the rhizome is instead ontologically defined by *connection*, *heterogeneity* (difference) and *multiplicity* (principles 1, 2 and 3). Put simply, a rhizome diversifies more randomly, making connections without order, and without serving a central structure.

The principle of *asignifying rupture* (principle 4) means that the rhizome can have the ability to cultivate itself once detached from its point of growth. This is important, because it means that the rhizome is able to incorporate change, adaptation and movement. Ruptures represent a break from the given order and a growth in a different direction, as Deleuze and Guattari explain;

Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized... as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines always tie back to one another. That is why one can never posit a dualism or a dichotomy (1987: 9).

This characteristic of the rhizome is a significant one because it puts forward some useful conceptual ideas for theorising around identity and difference. In particular, I highlight the terms territorialisation, deterritorialisation, and line of flight. The notions of territorialization and deterritorialization for instance, offer a means through which to discuss how identities might be organised, affirmed, resisted and destabilised, whilst at the same time holding spatial connotations which compliment my focus on surfing spaces. The related line of flight is also a central term. According to Massumi, in the foreword to *A Thousand Plateaus*, the French term 'fuite', from which flight is translated 'has no relation to flying' (Massumi, 1987: xvi). Instead it refers to 'fleeing or eluding but also flowing, leaking, and disappearing into the distance' (ibid.). In this sense then, the 'line of flight' is characterised by movement, change and elusiveness, a refusal to be captured. As a concept it connotes thoughts, ideas and actions which inspire or involve movement in an 'other' direction; away from the norm.

Principles 5 and 6, of *cartography and decalcomania* represent for Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 12), 'perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the Rhizome',

because it is these principles which define its *immanent* epistemological nature; ‘in that it excludes an external definition of its course of development’ (Due, 2007: 129). They refer to immanence as map-making:

The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions... susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted... reworked by an individual, group, or social formation... A map has multiple entryways (1987: 12).

In essence, the radical challenge which immanence presents to transcendental philosophy is to ‘think difference in the absence of conditions of difference’, ‘an immanent philosophy creates its concepts, not according to a pre-established plane, but in an attempt to think new planes’ (Colebrook, 2000: 117). This notion of ‘thinking difference’ as a form of *creation*, as opposed to *reaction*, is fundamental to ‘becoming’, an idea put forward in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Becoming is an example of what Deleuze termed ‘multiplicity’ (the third principle of the rhizome) and refers to a *different* way of thinking about subjectivity. In the following section I outline becoming and consider some of the implications the concept has for feminist theorising.

Seeing Subjectivities Differently: Becoming

Difference and multiplicity form the basis for the notion of becoming in that it ‘initiates an existence whereby subjectivity is propelled into new ways of thinking the immanence of being, as multiple, as highly specific and also as immediate’ (Linstead and Pullen, 2006: 1289). In other words, becoming is not simply a temporal transition from one subjectivity, or state of being, *to something other*, rather one *is always becoming*. The “I” that I was yesterday is not the “I” that I am today, or will be tomorrow. Subjectivity conceptualized in this way is thus fundamentally different to the notion of identity, even as it is conceptualised in post-structural terms as *fluid*, because, ‘becoming cannot support distinctions between before and after, past and future... In this notion of becoming, two meanings are affirmed at once so that identity is evaded’ (Olkowski, 2000: 102).

Becoming lies at the heart of much of the feminist critique directed at *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). The book has met with controversy amongst feminists largely due to the critical reception of the notion of ‘becoming-woman’ (Ahmed, 1998). Becoming-woman is a

term used by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) as part of their notion of ‘becoming-minoritarian’. They claimed that ‘all becoming is a becoming-minoritarian’ and that all becomings ‘being minoritarian, always pass through a becoming-woman’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 291). The concepts of minoritarian and majoritarian, put simply, represent the minority and the majority, and connote a certain relationship to structural power relations, where the majoritarian is centralised, and the minoritarian marginalised. Becoming-minoritarian is therefore a process of *decentring*; a relinquishing of institutionalised power structures, which Deleuze termed ‘strata’.

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 291), ‘man is majoritarian par excellence’, and in order for people to enter into becoming-minoritarian, they must first ‘pass through’ becoming-woman because, according to ‘arborescent’ (hierarchical) logic, woman is positioned closest to man. However, it is important to emphasise that the “woman” in ‘becoming-woman’ does not refer to a stable subject or fixed - what Deleuze termed ‘molar’ - identity. The fundamental notion of becoming is that, unlike molar identity, it is always in motion, in transition, in the middle. In Deleuze’s words, a becoming is ‘molecular’ (like constantly moving particles). Thus, woman is never “arrived at”, nor does it represent a beginning, because;

A becoming is always in the middle, one can only get it by the middle. A becoming is neither one nor two [points], nor the relation of the two, it is the in-between, the border or line of flight (Deleuze and Guattari, in Colebrook, 2000: 45).

Instead, becoming-woman represents an “entryway” into the rhizomatic map of becoming, of immanence, and the deconstruction of ‘majoritarian’ transcendence (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

However, despite this focus on dislodging the ‘majoritarian’, some feminists, such as Jardine (1984), have objected to this call to think *differently*. The key question leveled by feminists in response to immanence – including Braidotti (2003) and Olkowski (1999), who actively connect with Deleuze – is ‘if philosophy is not an explanation of the genesis or possibility of difference but the creation of *different* concepts, what happens to sexual difference?’ (Colebrook, 2000:118). This question is integral to the debate surrounding

becoming-woman, because the idea of all becomings ‘passing through’ becoming-woman, necessarily involves the dissolution of sexual difference, and female identity.

The ‘theoretical disappearance’ of women is obviously ‘of enormous concern to feminist readers’ (Olkowski, 1999: 35). Irigaray (1985) has been particularly critical with regards to the concept. In brief, her concern is that getting rid of sexual difference, and implicitly the existing basis of sexual desire, is a ‘deterritorialisation’ which can only be instigated by the privileged ‘majoritarian’. In other words, her concern is questioning how ‘molar’ woman can relinquish her sexual identity, her subjectivity and her desire before she has politically claimed these as her own: ‘In a fantasmic “becoming-woman”... don’t we run the risk once more of taking back from women those as yet unterritorialized spaces where her desire might come into being?’ (1985: 140-141).

These are important criticisms, the so-called ‘disappearance’ of women *should* be of concern to feminists, particularly since this disappearance is the conceptual invention of what is undeniably a masculine philosophy (Olkowski, 1999). As Ahmed (1998) argues, such a philosophy; ‘of desire, difference and fluidity can easily support the structures of privilege which authorize certain ‘beings’ over others’ (Ahmed, 1998: 78-79). However, it is also important not to dismiss that which may still prove *useful* to feminism (Braidotti, 2003). I would argue that becoming and desire, rather than being the privileges of the majoritarian, instead represents the potential to challenge to arborescent, dualistic thought which is instigated by mobilization ‘in the middle’. In fact, I view Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the majoritarian as the “central point” (1987: 292) as potentially very similar to the idea of heteronormativity, as put forward by queer theorists. Subsequently, thinking about ways of dispersing the majoritarian through becomings, and desires might represent a queering of heteronormativity. I consider this idea further by asking the question; can we queer Deleuze?

3.2 Queering the Differences Between Deleuze and Queer-Feminism

Ontologically speaking, Queer theory remains contested, escaping an agreed definition and origin. What can be said, is that Queer theory has ‘effectively re-opened the question of the relations between sexuality and gender, both as analytic categories and as lived experiences’ (Elia et al., 2003: 341). Most ‘queer theorists’ would agree that Queer theory advocates a problematisation of the sex-gender-desire order, which upholds the ‘heterosexual matrix’

(Butler, 1990). Butler in particular, has been responsible for questioning, not just our conceptualization of gender, but also of the illusory notion that sex is essentially and biologically immutable. She argues that heterosexuality *requires* a stable and binary sex, and this stable sex, is expressed through a stable gender (Butler, 1990).

According to Butler, the stability of this connection is maintained through, what she termed ‘gender performativity’. The notion of performativity refers to the process whereby ‘discourses are productive of the identities which they appear to be merely representing’ (Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon, 2002: 98). Our understanding of the heterosexual status quo therefore, is constituted through, and reliant on the repetitive ‘acting out’ of sex, gender and desire norms. The term ‘heteronormativity’ has come about through queer theorising, as a deliberately non-dyadic notion which is ‘widely used as shorthand for the numerous ways in which heterosexual privilege is woven into the fabric of social life, pervasively and insidiously ordering everyday existence’ (Jackson, 2006: 108)1.

Butler and Deleuze are two ontologically distinct theorists. And yet, there are a number of ways in which Butlerian and Deleuzian concepts appear to coincide. In this section I map out some of the theoretical spaces through which the two approaches might potentially meet and/or entangle. Importantly, I am not proposing that I adopt a 'queer' approach to surfing. However, I do contend that my epistemological 'way of thinking' is shaped by some aspects of queer theory. Thus, as I explain further in chapter four, what I suggest is important is to reflect on queer theory as a mode of 'queering', that is, of thinking *differently*.

Performativity and the ‘Theatre of Repetition’

According to Braidotti, what is crucial to the process of becoming is ‘arousing an affirmative passion for and desire for the transformative flows that destabilize all identities’ (Braidotti, 2003: 52). Whereas ‘Queer’ might be characterized by that which challenges or destabilises heteronormativity, becoming-minoritarian is part of *undoing* the identification with the central majoritarian, and thereby “cutting it loose”. ‘Seen in this way, becoming-woman is an active minoritarian ethics’; distinct from the dominant norm, but also, like queer theory, *different* from the sort of ‘identity politics’ which fixes subjectivities in place (Flieger, 2000: 46).

I would argue, that the concept of gendered performativity - so central to the Butlerian critique of heteronormativity - is also addressed by Deleuze;

In the theatre of repetition, we experience pure forces, dynamic lines in space which act without intermediary upon the spirit, and link it directly with nature and history, with a language which speaks before words, with gestures which develop before organized bodies, with masks before faces, with spectres and phantoms before characters. (Deleuze, 1994a: 10, in Dewsbury, 2000: 473).

Deleuze's reference to the 'theatre of repetition' connotes a view of the social world as a self-perpetuating performance, which is always already at work in our histories, discourses and subjectivities. Social norms thus act as 'pure forces' upon us in ways that, like specters and phantoms, are not necessarily *apparent*, but are nonetheless spatially present, as Jackson describes, they are 'woven into the fabric of social life' (2006: 108). In other words, the theatre of repetition represents heteronormativity, and 'pure forces' function to sustain the gendered performativities which preserve the heterosexual matrix.

Theoretically, the links between Deleuze and Butler are made apparent in the shared desire for breaking through and unmasking the performative nature of transcendental thought. 'Queer', is not just concerned with resisting compulsory heterosexuality (through identity politics), because political forms of 'resistance', although potentially empowering, ultimately leave intact the subtle discursive, symbolic and hierarchical modes through which the sex-gender-desire order is constitutively *performed* (Jackson, 2006). Queer is about a deeper, more subversive rupture in the performativity inherent to heteronormativity (Muñoz, 1999). The process of 'disidentification' is offered by Butler as one strategy in which gendered identities might be more actively and subversively resisted. As Medina explains, disidentification involves a performative 'resignification' of the norms:

A repetition that fails to repeat loyally, a reciting of the signifier that must commit a disloyalty against identity ... For Butler, disidentification is the source of resistance to the sedimentation of signifiers; and as 'a site of rearticulations', it offers a 'discursive occasion for hope' (2003: 664-665).

Essentially, disidentification involves the active rejection of identity *through* the same performative processes inherent to the stability of the norms. For me, the concept of disidentification is potentially a very powerful and transformative one, and yet, as Dean (2008: 2) recognizes, the concept 'remains under-used and under-theorised' within queer theorising.

Disidentification is significant, because it is not just about subversive resistance, but about survival (Muñoz, 1999), finding a way *through* the over-whelming power of heteronormative performativity.

McDonald (2006) has already drawn attention to the importance of Muñoz's 'queer-of-colour' gaze in her critical discussion of *the whiteness of sports studies and queer scholarship*. She suggests that Muñoz's notion of disidentification 'offers a way to think *differently* about sporting *performances*' (2006: 42 *emphasis added*).

Counter to dominant proclivity that seeks to fix narrative coherence on bodies, disidentification offers a different strategy, a new way of viewing the world that does not reproduce singular, binary understandings but rather, values the 'recycling and rethinking' of 'encoded meanings'... It recognizes that this dominant process of fixing truth within bodies is always full of slippages and failures (McDonald, 2006: 41, quoting Muñoz, 1999).

In this sense, Muñoz offers up disidentification as a sort of 'counterperformativity' (Muñoz, 1999). Similarly, Renold and Ringrose (2008) in their research into teen and tween behavior, have suggested that in many ways, girls demonstrate a willingness to subvert and undermine hegemonic gender relations through short-lived and shifting 'moments of rupture', and a 're-inscription' rather than 'resistance' of gendered norms (2008: 315-6). They use Butler's notion of 'performative surprise' – whereby performative norms might be temporarily resignified – and discuss it theoretically alongside Deleuzian notions of *molecularity*, *becomings*, *lines of flight* and *deterritorialisations* (2008: 319).

Performative Surprise and Dis/identifying the Body without Organs

In advancing this theoretical line of flight further, I wish to introduce another aspect of Deleuzian philosophy; the body without organs (BwO). Much has been written on the body without organs and, for feminists in particular, it is a concept which is troubling for many of the same reasons as becoming-woman, because the BwO infers the disappearance of sexual difference. What is essential to the understanding of the body without organs however, is that it not be viewed as "a body" at all. A body without organs is not an imagined body emptied of organs, it is a process, a project, a practice: 'already accomplished the moment you undertake

it, unaccomplished as long as you don't... You never reach the Body without Organs, you can't reach it, you are forever attaining it, it is a limit' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 149-150). In this sense, the BwO is always an immanent becoming.

My interpretation of Deleuze's writing on the BwO is necessarily brief, and thus relatively simplified – for a more detailed reading of the Body without Organs in a sport and exercise context, I encourage readers to refer to Markula (2006b). Deleuze and Guattari themselves dedicate a full chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus* to the question: *How do you make yourself a Body without Organs?* They encourage us to undertake this venture, but also offer a note of caution with regards to how this might be done. Importantly, they emphasise that the BwO is not an organless, empty body, but rather 'what remains when you take everything away' (1987: 151). There are important differences between the two. What Deleuze and Guattari oppose is not the organs themselves but how they are 'stratified', that is, 'the organization of the organs into an organism' (1987: 158). They frame the organism as one of the three great 'strata' which organize and bind us. The others they identify as significance and subjectification. These strata might otherwise be described as the structural, all-pervasive and normalising processes through which we are organised, classified, constructed and socialised as sexed, gendered, classed, raced beings, to name a few. They describe this in the following way:

You will be organized, you will be an organism, you will articulate your body—otherwise you're just depraved. You will be signifier and signified, interpreter and interpreted—otherwise you're just a deviant. You will be a subject, nailed down as one, a subject of the enunciation recoiled into a subject of the statement—otherwise you're just a tramp (1987: 159).

I suggest that this social pressure to 'be' or 'become' (organism, signified, subject) might also be compared to Butler's idea of the 'heterosexual matrix' and the related notion of 'performativity'. The project of the BwO – to disidentify and deconstruct the organism – is arguably, a somewhat queer one. In particular, what strikes me about Deleuze and Guattari's writing on how to 'make yourself a body without organs' is the similarities it shares with the notion of disidentification as I have interpreted it above. For instance, they emphasise that 'you don't do it with a sledgehammer, you use a very fine file' (1987: 160). The BwO is approached subtly, through what Renold and Ringrose (2008) describe as short-lived and

shifting ‘moments of rupture’. Furthermore, Deleuze and Guattari encourage us to ‘turn [significance and subjectivity] against their own systems... Mimic the strata’ (1987: 160). Such a strategy would, like disidentification, involve ‘a repetition that fails to repeat loyally, a reciting of the signifier... a disloyalty against identity’ (Medina, 2003: 664-665). Deleuze and Guattari continue;

Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers... find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them... try out continuums of intensities... It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape (1987: 161).

Here, emphasis is placed on the small, sometimes ‘imperceptible’ actions, strategies or spaces which force a potentially productive meeting between modes of regulation and resistance. Being willing to engage with disidentifications, becomings and the BwO is about ‘inhabiting the norms’ of the heterosexual matrix ‘in order to mobilise the rules *differently*’ (Butler, 2006, in Ringrose and Renold, 2008:333 emphasis added). Taking these ideas into account, I’d now like to focus on surfing as a sporting space where such “moments of rupture” might coalesce into a more sustained *line of flight* away from the white, masculine, heteronormativity of surf culture. Advancing beyond the findings of Renold and Ringrose, my interest lies in thinking more specifically about how women ‘do’ surfing, gender and sexuality, and also in considering how we might think *differently* about how women occupy surfing spaces; in ways that allow for what Braidotti (1994) termed an ‘alternative figuration’ of subjectivity (in Renold and Ringrose, 2008: 320). In doing so, I draw on the work of Probyn (1993, 2000, 2003) and Ahmed (2004).

3.3 Theorising with Deleuze: Bodies, Affects and Emotions

As Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 260) write, the body is not defined by ‘substance or subject nor by the organs it possesses or the functions it fulfils’, it is created instead in an immanent rhizomatic becoming (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 260). Deleuze’s BwO shifts the ontological focus from bodies as things which are, to bodies as things that *do*;

We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can and cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body... either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 71).

Deleuze referred to this as an ethological approach to the body. Whilst representational logic hinges on a 'classificatory system of being' ethology understands bodies via their 'affective capacities' (Coleman, 2011: 154). Thinking about the body through Deleuze encourages us to look past the notion of the body as purely image, object or discourse. Instead, we might think about the body in terms of how it feels, moves, connects and becomes. As I alluded to in the previous chapter, this is where affect comes in:

AFFECT/AFFECTION. Neither word denotes a personal feeling... L'affect (Spinoza's affectus) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act. (Massumi, in Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: xvi)

Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) reference to affect implies that it not be thought of as a personal or individual feeling, but a felt intensity which is beyond cognition. In this sense, affects are seen to exist as part of a 'supra-individual or transhuman affective field' (Conradson, 2005: 105). In other words, they are spacialised. 'Affect leaps from one body to another' (Gibbs, 2001: 1).

Feminist theories of affect work to expose, and potentially interrupt, the ways in which power is constituted through 'persisting affective repertoires' which comprise dominant norms and values (Wetherell, 2012: 138). This means paying attention to how they move, take shape, impress on and 'stick to' bodies. Interrogating emotions allows for the theoretical tracing of how affective movements are interpreted, expressed and lived through bodies. As I argue throughout this thesis, connecting with feelings, sensations, affects and emotions is a central part of understanding the relations between subjectivities, bodies and spaces in the surf.

Emotions and affects are mobile. While both have a place for ‘patterns’... such as long-standing geographies of fear, for example... basically they are interested in movements and circulations: in flows between people, and other things. They share, then, a relational ontology that privileges the fluid over the fixed (Pile 2010, 10).

My engagement with the emotive and affective aspects of surf space has come about in part through an interest in this shared relation to fluidity, movement and mobility. Emotions and affects are, like ‘the surf’, always moving. They move through us, around us and between us; in the words of Thrift ‘emotion [is] motion both literally and figurally’ (2004: 60). As concepts, emotion, affect and feeling have been conceptualised in different ways (Thrift, 2004), however, the terms are usually recognised as existing in relation to one another, and within this thesis I conceptualise them as intricately connected.

Sedgwick emphasises that affects ‘can be, and are, attached to things, people, ideas, sensations, relations, activities, ambitions, institutions, and any number of other things, including other affects’ (2003: 19). Ahmed argues that it is these “things” (people, ideas, sensations etc.) *as they move* and circulate, ‘saturated with affect’ through spaces, which constitute sites of personal, social, and emotional tension (Ahmed, 2004: 11). Feminist theories of affect work to expose, and potentially interrupt, the ways in which power is constituted through ‘persisting affective repertoires’ which, like gender performativity and the theatre of repetition, comprise dominant norms and values (Wetherell, 2012: 138). I take a similar approach; like Ahmed (2004), I view the distinction between emotion and affect to be of less importance than theorising what they *do*. This means paying attention to how they move, take shape, impress on and ‘stick to’ bodies. As I argue, in chapter six, only by taking emotions seriously might we begin to engage with what bodies *do* in surfing spaces.

3.4 Theorising with Deleuze: Space and Subjectivity

The heteronormative nature of social and sporting space has been widely recognised by feminist writers. Probyn (2003) has paid particular attention to the ways in which subjectivities become re/configured through space and place. She suggests that ‘women have been only recently allowed to incorporate public space into their sense of self’ (2003: 296). That is, to literally ‘feel part of’ public spaces such as civil society, consumer culture and

leisure (Probyn, 2003; McRobbie, 2008). I would argue however, that this sense of belonging is not experienced by all women, and that for women of colour, disabled women and lesbian and queer women, the experience of the public 'spatial' self is often partial, and/or conflicted.

Public space is coded according to social norms, as van Ingen emphasizes, 'spaces are inexorably linked to the social construction of dominant ideologies and to the politics of identity' (2003: 210). For those who inhabit normativity, public space, according to Ahmed, is experienced in much the same way as sitting in a comfortable chair. The chair is comfortable because it is impressed with the shape of your body, and thus, allows you to 'sink in' with ease. For those who do not feel at home in normativity however, public space is experienced very *differently*, as Ahmed points out, it is a feeling of discomfort, 'one's body feels out of place, awkward, unsettled' (2004: 148). Unlike being comfortable, discomfort makes itself felt, as Probyn describes:

Being at odds with culture is experienced like a visceral schism. In this case, chances are that your subjectivity will be keenly experienced as different from others... [this] is crucial to the production of another subjectivity, one that may be in the "spaces-off" of mainstream culture (2003: 294).

This visceral awareness of social spaces is something which is apparent not only to queer individuals, but to all those who experience themselves as *different*. Indeed, difference itself is part of the 'process and production' of (particularly normalised) space and place (Probyn, 1993, 2003). 'To feel uncomfortable is precisely to be affected by that which persists in the shaping of bodies and lives' (Ahmed, 2004: 155). What is politically useful about this idea is the way in which Probyn refers to the intuitive experience of 'otherness' as a productive process, wherein 'another subjectivity' comes into being, or to utilise a Deleuzian term, emerges through '*becoming-other*' (Deleuze, 1990, in Probyn, 1993: 112). This 'othering' may in many ways be conceptualised as a marginalisation, or ostracising from social normativity. However, if we conceptualise 'othering' through the politics of disidentification, the notion of becoming-other in this context becomes part of an 'active minoritarian ethic'. As Muñoz describes, 'instead of buckling under the pressures of dominant ideology (identification, assimilation) or attempting to break free of its inescapable sphere (counteridentification, utopianism)', disidentification is 'a strategy that tries to transform a cultural logic from within' (1999: 11-12). Essentially, the disruption of public space is 'not

about assimilation or resistance' or escaping heteronormativity, but about '*inhabiting norms differently*' (Ahmed, 2004: 155). Indeed, it represents a move away from an identity politics of challenge, resistance and transformation in a traditional sense. Rather than reading Probyn's notion of becoming in the 'spaces-off' of mainstream culture as a spatial escape, through Deleuze it can be read as a call for the rhizomatic *creation* of space, a rupture, deterritorialisation, or *line of flight*.

The Fold

There exists in Probyn's work an important connection to Deleuze's thoughts on subjectification and 'the self'. This connection is not straightforward, but arrives via Deleuze's reading of Foucault, particularly his re-conceptualised notion of the 'fold'. The fold refers to the metaphor of 'le pli' which Foucault used to describe 'the pliable nature of the self' in the management of subjectification and objectification (Probyn, 1993: 128). The idea of folding, or perhaps more accurately, 'pleating', allows the self to be conceptualised, not as a unified subject (as signified in the notion of identity) but as a dynamic subjectivity, a form produced in the process of negotiation between the 'inside' (self) and the 'outside' (social). Through our interactions with ourselves and with others we stretch the self, bending the line of the outside until, like a barreling wave, it folds back on itself, drawing the outside in and incorporating it as part of an ever-changing subjectification – a *becoming*. 'In fact, the concept of folding the self scrambles any dichotomy of interior self and exterior social' in the same way that feminism complicates the distinction between the personal and political (Probyn, 1993: 130).

The fold serves as another example of rhizomatic multiplicity and immanence, whereby the self is constantly stretching, folding and reforming, so that it is always an 'individuated construction' which refuses to 'coalesce into a fixed subject' (ibid.: 130). In other words, it 'carries with it a double movement, it expresses 'a matter of "becoming" as well as a matter of "being"' (Deleuze, 1990, in Probyn, 1993: 167).

What we take from the concept of the fold is a view of the 'outside' or 'exterior' as constitutive of the 'interior' or 'inside' self. Not only does this serve to collapse the dichotomies of the self/social and personal/political, but it also points to the indistinguishable – or immanent – relation between subjectivity, space and place. The notion of the fold allows us to conceptualise the folding of the inside and outside in such a way that not only is the 'outside' absorbed into the self but also allows the self to 'intervene' more effectively with the outside.

The spaces and places we inhabit, and the connections that take place between self and selves as they interact in these spaces are ‘material’ manifestations of the rhizome. As Deleuze puts it; ‘we belong to apparatuses, and we act within them’ (1990, in Probyn, 1993: 112).

Nomadic Spaces and Places

Spaces and places, *and our senses of them* (and such related things as our degrees of mobility) are gendered through and through (Massey, 2000: 129 my emphasis).

Research into surfing demands a theoretical approach which is responsive to its inherently dynamic, shifting and fluid nature (Anderson, 2012b). As a sport, surfing is somewhat unique in terms of the ways in which participants occupy space, even when compared to other ‘lifestyle’ sports such as skating or climbing. More so than most sports, the surf space is inherently changeable, mobile, fluid. It takes place in what Ingold (2011: 131) describes as a ‘weather world’, a ‘place’ created in the meeting of wind, waves and land formations, ‘a world in movement, in flux and becoming’. How social relations are experienced in this fluid space are affected by such becomings *in situ*.

It is interesting to note that Deleuze himself has expressed an interest in ‘new’ sporting contexts:

The kind of movements you find in sports and habits are changing... All the new sports – surfing, windsurfing, hang gliding – take the form of entering into an existing wave. There's no longer an origin as starting point... The key thing is how to get taken up in the motion of a big wave, column of rising air, to "get into something" instead of being the origin of an effort... Yet in philosophy we're going back to eternal values (Deleuze, 1995: 121).

He makes the point that ‘new’ sports represent a fundamental departure from established sporting forms in the sense that they embrace ways of moving which are already ‘in motion’. Unlike institutionalized sports involving starter guns, targets, obstacles, boundaries and final whistles, surfing can only ever exist *in between*; between earth, sea and sky, and the constant movements of the ocean. As Lewis notes, Deleuze contrasts new sports like surfing with ‘the atavism of institutionalized knowledge’ and structural power relations (2003: 60);

Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions.... Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement... a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle (Deleuze on the *Rhizome*, 1987: 25).

Deleuze's reference to surfing may have only been a passing remark, but put into this theoretical context, it becomes a significant observation. A rhizomatic philosophy is, like surfing, always and only *the middle*; 'between things', and this inherent connection of surfing to motion and mobility makes it distinctly different from more traditional sporting cultures, in a way that allows for the creation and activation of what Deleuze termed ruptures, or deterritorialisations. This has been recognized by, not only Lewis (2003), but also (in the context of 'skysurfing') by Sydnor (2003), and more recently, by Laviolette (2010).

Because of this, I would argue that Deleuzian conceptualizations are particularly suited to theorizing around surfing. For example, in *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 381) conjure up the figure of the nomad as an example of 'the Deterritorialized par excellence' (and thus a challenge to heteronormativity). Unlike the 'molecular' and 'minoritarian', the nomad has no conceptual opposite, and like 'queer', it cannot be pinned-down, stabilized or defined. Definitively, 'The life of the nomad is the intermezzo': it is always and only, mobility – 'between things' (1987: 380).

There is no reterritorialization *afterward* as with the migrant, or upon *something else* as with the sedentary.... With the nomad, on the contrary, it is deterritorialisation that constitutes the relation to the earth (1987: 381).

For me, the nomad is symbolized in the surfer. Unlike participants in most sports, who will usually come together at a regular time and place, those who take part in surfing do not have the same relationship to time and place. Indeed, for the very best surfers, time and place lose their meaning as life becomes oriented around weather, swell, seasons and tides, all of which are in a constant state of flux. Essentially, surfers are nomadic, and this has often been recognized in mainstream discourses (Booth, 1994; Ormrod, 2007; Waitt, 2008; Wheaton and

Beal, 2003). To take on such a nomadic existence represents a high level of commitment to the surfing lifestyle which is characteristic of what have been labeled ‘core’ participants. However, because ‘the surf’ is always changing, surfing itself dictates a certain nomadic approach, a willingness to adapt in terms of time and place, according to when and where the best conditions will be found. It is this distinct characteristic of surfing which makes it such a unique and, as I suggest here, potentially disruptive sporting space for women.

3.5 Taking Deleuze Surfing: Implications for (Feminist) Research

The epistemological differences that exist between Deleuze and certain forms of feminism may well be, as Ahmed (1998) emphasizes ‘Differences that matter’. However, it is not necessarily the case that these differences should preclude a possible ‘coming together’ of Deleuzian philosophy and feminist theory. It might well be the case that ‘if Deleuze and Guattari’s cosmic empiricism can contribute to feminist pragmatics, then it will have to show itself within the context of that pragmatics or not show itself at all’ (Olkowski, 1999: 34).

I am not advocating an approach which might be defined as ‘a Deleuzian feminism’. I agree with Ahmed in the sense that ‘such a conjoining of terms suggests that feminism can be successfully incorporated into another critical discourse without destabilising or displacing its terms’ (1998: 70). I don’t claim to be a feminist Deleuzian, and many of the key feminist and queer theorists I draw from would not claim any relationship to the work of Deleuze/and Guattari. What I argue for, is the importance of allowing, where possible, for Deleuzian philosophy and feminist theories to meet, enmesh and disrupt, and that ‘what matters’ is ‘keep[ing] open the process of becoming’ as an active politics (Braidotti, 2003: 55). Particularly within the constantly changing context of women’s surfing. In fact, as I recognised in the previous chapter, it would appear that engagements with Deleuze, and feminism have already begun to appear as theoretical ripples within the current surfing literature.

Finding Deleuze in Surf Research

From within the small body of literature on gender and surfing, particular ways of theorising women’s surfing have begun to emerge which utilise a Deleuzian approach. For instance, Knijnik, Horton and Cruz (2010) make use of Markula’s (2006b) discussions of Deleuze’s

rhizome metaphor and apply it as a conceptual tool for thinking about surfing bodies. In their work, Knijnik, Horton and Cruz (2010) consider how surfing females challenge, explore and diversify embodied femininities by ‘living in and through their changing bodies that are no longer dichotomized but ‘rhizomatized’ ones’ (2010: 1181). Rhizomatized bodies, therefore, are ones which resist gender norms and instead seek out ways in which gender might be differently lived. According to these researchers, competitive female surfers in Brazil are ‘simultaneously reproducing and assaulting entrenched gender attitudes and practices’ through their gendered embodiments and they are ‘opening up new possibilities for all Brazilian girls and women’ (ibid.).

Similarly, Waitt (2008), this time drawing on the work of Probyn, maintains that surfing spaces and subjectivities are mutually constituted. Despite the ways ‘the heteronormative qualities of surf space reconfirm [surf] breaks as a seemingly natural heteromale domain’ (2008: 92), he suggests that some women disrupt this domain because they move between normative and alternative gendered discourses and embodiments. Relying on interview research findings with women surfers in Australia, he argues that their shifting gendered locations invite us ‘to rethink gender practices and gendered meanings of surf space’ (ibid.). His analysis supports a kind of rhizomatic agency in that he demonstrates the ways these women break with dominant discourses and present alternative ‘fictions’ of, and ‘points of connection’ with, gender (ibid.).

Other scholars influenced by Probyn’s work, namely Clifton Evers, have also made links with the work of Deleuze. Evers (2009) references Deleuzian theory via the work of Grosz (1994) and Probyn (2003). In particular, he explores the ways in which surfing bodies might be viewed as affective assemblages. For instance, he demonstrates how (specifically male) surfing bodies come into being during the connections they form with other bodies, nature, equipment and affects. In a point which, for me, conjures up the notion of the body without organs, he suggests that surfing bodies can, at times, escape significations of gender, even sex. He offers the example of a surfer falling into a wave; water, board and limbs blur into a ‘falling body’ and momentarily ‘[g]endered discourses actually have to catch up to work out if it is a ‘male’ or ‘female’ body, and ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ experience’ (Evers, 2009: 897).

Although few in number, these discussions of gender in surfing serve to highlight that the connections between Deleuzian theory, and feminist thinking about bodies, spaces, gender and subjectivities is something worth exploring further. That the same sort of theoretical

configurations have begun to appear in feminist research into another alternative sport – roller derby – is also encouraging in this sense (Pavlidis, 2012; Pavlidis and Fullagar, 2012). However, I suggest that there is something inherently organic about the coming together of feminism, Deleuzian theory, surfing, as alluded to in the words of Deleuze and Guattari themselves:

The old energy producing activities are giving way to exercises that, on the contrary, insert themselves on existing energetic networks, this is not just a change in type but yet other dynamic features that enter a thought that "slides" with new substances of being, with wave or snow and turn the thinker into a sort of surfer as conceptual persona: we renounce then the energetic value of the sporting type in order to pick out the pure dynamic difference expressed in a new conceptual persona (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, quoted by Evers, 2005: 1).

'Sliding' into Research

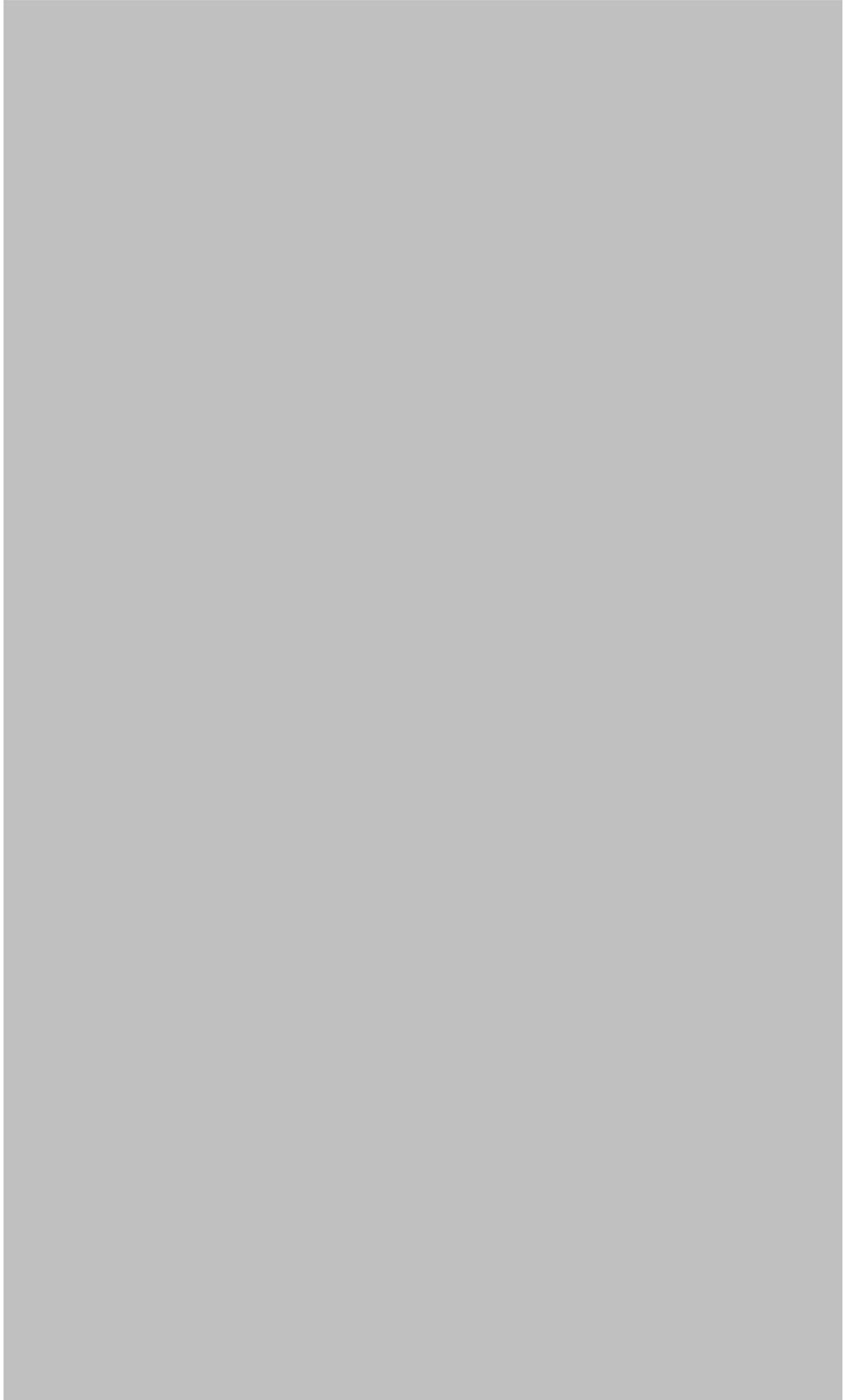
In this chapter I have introduced some of the key theoretical terms with which I engage throughout my thesis. I have aimed to outline the various ways in which my theoretical influences – namely, Deleuze/and Guattari, and postmodern feminisms – have, and might, become entangled when thinking about gender, subjectivities, bodies and spaces. This is a complicated project, but as I have evidenced, it is something that other scholars have already begun to explore.

Although engagements with Deleuzian philosophy in surfing contexts are still relatively tentative, it is a ripple which appears to have been gaining momentum over the last ten years, with references to Deleuzian philosophy also appearing in research related to surfing and spaces (Anderson, 2012a, 2012b) and surfing and national politics (Ishiwata, 2002). Taking these subtle flows as a point of departure, my aim is to develop a more marked and more sustained *lines of flight* through research. By employing both Deleuzian, feminist and, at times, queer concepts within my ontological, epistemological and methodological approach, I hope to activate these alternative lines of enquiry within the rhizomatic becomings of surfing spaces. In the next chapter I consider the significance of these theoretical influences to my methodological approach.

Notes

¹ Like Queer, there is no established definition of 'heteronormativity', and I prefer to use it to refer to the interlocking axes of normative identity, related to sexuality, race, class, and the body.

Line of Flight



Chapter Four

Exploring Female Surf Space: A critically feminist Methodology

Three interconnected, generic activities define the qualitative research process. They go by a variety of different labels, including *theory*, *analysis*, *ontology*, *epistemology*, and *methodology*. Behind these terms stands the personal biography of the researcher, who speaks from a particular class, gender, racial, cultural and ethnic community perspective. The gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in specific ways (methodology, analysis). (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008: 28)

In *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, Denzin and Lincoln (2008: 28) organise the ‘generic activities’ of research into five ‘phases’. They refer to these as: the researcher and the researched as multicultural subjects, major paradigms and interpretive perspectives, research strategies, methods of collecting and analyzing empirical materials, and the art of interpretation. In terms of outlining my own approach to research, I find these phases to be a useful point of departure. In this chapter, I organize my discussion around broadly similar themes. I do not, however, necessarily cover each in turn, nor do I wish to imply that they have emerged as part of a linear research ‘process’.

The chapter is organised into five sections. The first section reflects on the issues connected to approaching research, in terms of epistemological and theoretical influences. The second section explores ethnography as a means of ‘data’ collection and how it has impacted the field of sports studies. In the third section I discuss the issues and procedures relating to entering the ‘field’; I begin with a brief researcher biography, before discussing "sampling" and access. In the fourth section I enter into a discussion around research relations from both a theoretical and practical perspective. In the final section I outline the approach I take to interpretation and analysis. Throughout this chapter, I pay attention to ethics both explicitly, and implicitly; in my discussions.

4.1 Approaching Research: Epistemological, Theoretical Influences

The researcher's epistemological position will impact every aspect of the research process, including topic selection, question formulation, method selection, theoretical backdrop, and methodology (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006:13).

The key epistemological and theoretical influences informing this research are post-structural feminist perspectives, the post-modern philosophical ideas of Deleuze /and Guattari, and some aspects of queer theory. As I explain in chapter three, this entanglement of influences makes for a unique epistemological and ontological grounding from which to approach this research into surfing. With regards to establishing a methodology, it is also a challenging one, in terms of how postmodern, and queer, influences might be incorporated within the research process. Here, I reflect on how these epistemological concerns have impacted my own methodological choices.

Informing the Social Research Process: What makes feminist research feminist?

'It seems to be widely accepted by feminists themselves that there is a distinctively feminist mode of enquiry, although there is by no means agreement on what this might mean or involve' (Maynard, 1994:10).

Maynard cites Harding as making a useful distinction between method (research techniques), methodology (theory and analysis of the research process), and epistemology (Maynard, 1994), suggesting that using these terms synonymously can result in misplaced criticism. Put simply, 'epistemology is concerned with whether or how we can have knowledge of reality' (Sumner, 2006: 92), and forms the basis of the 'mode of enquiry' to which Maynard refers. The notion of 'feminist epistemology' then, would suggest a specifically feminist view of, or regarding, reality. It connotes a particular way of 'knowing', a particular way of seeing, accessing or constructing 'reality'. This does not define feminist epistemology as such, it instead raises further questions concerning what constitutes this particular 'feminist view', and furthermore, what makes feminist research feminist?

According to Kitzinger (2007) the early 'second-wave' goal of feminist research was straightforward, 'to address women's lives in their own terms, to create theory grounded in the actual experience and language of women' (Du Bois, 1983, in Kitzinger,

2007:114). Part of the aim was to allow women's 'voices' to be heard. For this reason, qualitative methods, particularly semi-structured, in-depth interviewing, have long been a popular method of choice in feminist research. Related to this aim, Kitzinger (2007) poses a key question: when we listen to women's voices ('data'), how (as 'feminists' and as 'data analysts') should we hear them? Or put another way, how might interview data be gathered and interpreted? And what conclusions might be drawn? Since we accept as feminists that neutral value-free (objective) social science is unattainable, as researchers we are faced with a number of choices regarding the collections and management of 'data'. For instance, when the researcher is placed in the position of 'the knowing subject' who has 'the power and the right' to speak on the behalf of those they research there exists an inherent power imbalance; of the researcher as 'expert' (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002: 34). Subsequently, this raises certain ethical and methodological concerns.

The solution offered by Sandra Harding (1991) was to contrast the idea of 'objectivity' with what she called 'strong objectivity'. She claimed this could be achieved by factoring in, rather than filtering out, the 'interplay of the researcher and participant' within the research process (Olesen, 2003: 345). This process, which she called 'strong reflexivity', involves making visible the researcher's own experience, identity and positioning within the culture under study. 'Strong reflexivity' disrupts the subject-object dichotomy by positioning both the subject and object of knowledge as existing 'on the same plane' of analysis (Harding, 2004). However, whilst the importance of reflexivity, and the break-down of power imbalances, is widely accepted, 'not all feminist researchers have argued for objectivity in social science' (Sampson, Bloor and Fincham, 2008: 921). Rather, many feminist theorists urged a move away 'from 'the reactive' stance of the feminist critiques of social science and into the realms of exploring what 'feminist knowledge' could look like' (Stanley and Wise, 1990, quoted in Olesen, 2008: 315).

It is certainly beyond the realms of this chapter to outline in full detail the 'complexity and controversy' which characterises qualitative feminist research (Olesen, 2008: 315). Suffice it to say that since the 1980s, feminist methodologies have been engaged in conversation with numerous theoretical works highlighting the various modes of power through which women's lives intersect. Such approaches include post-colonialism (Mohanty, 1991, 2003; Spivak, 1988), Globalisation (Young, 2001), Standpoint Theory (Harding, 1987, 1991; Haraway, 1991, 1997; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002) and Postmodernism (Haraway, 1991, 1997). Furthermore, work by 'Women of Colour' (Yuval-Davis, 1989; Anzaldúa, 1987, 1990; hooks, 1990), Lesbian and Queer theorists (Anzaldúa, 1990; Butler, 1990, 1993) and Disabled women (Asch and

Fine, 1992) has also continued to question the nature of feminist research and related methodologies.

Feminist researchers 'take up their place in relation to these debates, depending on their entry into academia and their disciplinary location' (Skeggs, 2001: 429). Poststructural feminists in particular have highlighted how such diversity amongst feminists contradicts the 'epistemic unity' implied in the idea of a 'feminist methodology' (Sampson, Bloor and Fincham, 2008: 921). Indeed, Skeggs (2001: 429) contends that 'very few feminists have ever believed in a feminist methodology'.

Rather feminists have tactically crafted ethical and political stances out of feminism more generally and applied these to the research process. It is how these political/ethical proscriptions are applied that makes the research identifiably feminist (ibid.)

In other words, many feminists have agreed that whilst methods themselves are neither gendered nor feminist/ nonfeminist, the ways in which methodologies intertwine theory with method are (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, Yaiser, 2004: Huisman, 2008). Subsequently, as McNamara contends, feminist research must be defined by the centrality of feminism to all research processes 'from developing the research question(s) to exploring implications of the findings. It must, without doubt, be embedded in any advocacy for change based on those research findings' (McNamara, 2009: 165).

Feminist Research and Postmodern Thinking

It is important to point out that many of the methodological issues which have arisen out of postmodern theorising have already emerged previously as topics of debate amongst feminists (Skeggs, 2001). In particular, such debates have revolved around the suitability of particular methods for feminist politics, the importance of reflexivity within research, and issues of power and ethics in research relations (Olesen, 2008; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; Skeggs, 2001).

In terms of epistemology, one of the key challenges which postmodern thinking presents for researchers is the questioning of the connections between human knowledge, rationality and an underlying reality (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). In other words, postmodernism problematises the notion that qualitative researchers can capture lived experience, because research is always socially constructed, and thus cannot be legitimated as offering any 'valid' claims to truth (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). This is what Denzin and

Lincoln refer to as the 'crisis of representation' (2005: 3). The problem presented to researchers influenced by postmodernism, is how to accept the advantages offered by postmodern thinkers, 'whilst appraising their limitations in making connections between ideas, experience and the realities of people's lives' (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002:97).

The particular postmodern ideas which influence my approach to research are those of Deleuze/ and Guattari. One way in which I make this evident is in my re-conceptualisation of the connections between the 'theoretical framework' and research 'process' as a dynamic interweaving. I view all aspects of the research 'process' as flowing through one another; they are connected not linearly, but rhizomatically. This is my interpretation of the challenge presented by postmodernism. For me, doing research is a becoming. I argue that we are always caught up in a *becoming-research*. The multiplicity of our dynamic researcher subjectivities cannot be experientially nor conceptually separated from the research itself (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2008). As the discussions in this chapter demonstrate; from access and sampling, to the collection of 'data', to analysis and presentations of findings, I bear in mind this 'becoming'.

Queer theory: Asking Questions

In my methodology I also aim to pay attention to some of the questions raised by queer theory in the context of social research. The notion of 'queer' represents a fundamental challenge to 'norms', and actively resists any structural forces that might serve to locate, ground or define it. As a consequence, the idea of 'queer' research will always be a matter of interpretation, creativity and challenge. This is not however, reason enough for precluding an approach to research which might be queer-influenced.

Where queer is taken to destabilise particular understandings of the nature of the human subject and subjectivities, power relations, the nature of knowledge and the manner of its production, a 'queering' of methods themselves might pose particular difficulties as well as possibilities for traditional data collection methods (Gamson 2003, Green 2007, Plummer 2005, in Browne and Nash, 2010:12).

As Browne and Nash suggest, 'most authors use queer to *do* particular things, to *create* specific spaces and to *open up* particular lines of enquiry' (2010: 9, my emphasis). It is in this sense, that I find the concept useful here. Like my approach to Deleuze/ and Guattari, my engagement with queer theory is part of an epistemological stance which advocates an

open-ness to theoretical lines of flight and possible creative forms of collaboration. As part of mapping out my methodology then, I delve into a critical discussion around how to approach ethnography in such a way that it enables an opening up of methodological spaces, through which theoretical lines of flight might extend. As a feminist, I remain reflexive about the interplay of subjectivities with, not only research spaces, but also theory, methodology, representation and writing. My motivation for queering (questioning) ethnography is driven in part by an awareness of how my experiences of social and sporting spaces have always been inflected by, and negotiated via my intersectionality (the web of specific power relations which comprise subjectivity). This is an issue I explore further in the third and fourth sections of this chapter.

4.2 Ethnography as a Strategy for (Sports) Research

Ethnography is a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on ethnographers' own experiences. It does not claim to produce an objective or truthful account of reality, but should aim to offer versions of ethnographers' experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced. (Pink, 2007, in Pink 2009: 8).

Ethnography does not just refer to a form of data collection, but 'a style of research', defined by its objectives, and its approach (Brewer, 2000: 59). The objective in ethnographic research is to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular social setting, culture or group of people (Holt and Sparkes, 2001). The approach taken to fulfil this objective usually requires a level of close involvement in the 'field' over a period of time (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994; Brewer, 2000). As Skeggs summarises:

[Fieldwork] will be conducted over a *prolonged period of time*; utilizing different research techniques; conducted *within the setting* of the participants, with an understanding of how the context informs the action; *involving the researcher in participation* and observation; involving an account of the development of relationships between the researcher and the researched (Skeggs, 2001: 426).

In the context of sport, ethnography has emerged as a valuable approach for the study of sporting cultures (Sands, 2002). In the UK context, one of the key influences was the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies where ethnography developed from the 1970s onwards primarily to study white, working class, male youth cultures (Hargreaves and McDonald, 2000; Atkinson and Young, 2008) Although, important feminist contributions were made by McRobbie and Garber (1976), and Hebdige (1979) led the way in paying attention to the multi-culturalism of style cultures (although this too, focused predominantly on male culture).

Early studies in the realm of sport include Donnelly's (1980) study of climbers, Nash's (1977) work in running, and Pearson's (1979) research into surfing culture. Deviance, particularly within footballing culture, emerged as a fruitful area amongst male sport sociologists (cf. Dunning, Murphy and Williams, 1984; Guilianotti, 1995; Sugden & Tomlinson, 1994; 1998).

Aside from the growing work on deviance, ethnography quickly emerged as an important means through which to explore so called 'alternative' and 'resistant' sporting cultures.

With direct links to CCCS-inspired research and risk research, considerable sociological work has been conducted on youth subcultures in sport as resistance-orientated. Over the course of the past two decades, surfers, BASE jumpers, kite surfers... skateboarders, BMX riders, rock climbers, windsurfers... have all been studied as subcultures with unambiguously resistant orientations (Atkinson and Young, 2008: 33).

In the 1990s, these 'resistant' sporting subcultures became an increasingly popular area of research, and ethnography became the favoured mode of exploration (Young and Atkinson, 2008). Beal's (1996) work into skateboarding culture in the USA is exemplary of such work. Ethnography also emerged as an important means through which to 'give voice' to marginalised "others" within mainstream sporting contexts (Silk, 2004). In the UK context, some notable examples of ethnographies conducted away from the "mainstream" include Wheaton's study of British windsurf culture (2000, 2002), Caudwell's (1999, 2003) feminist research with lesbian footballers, and Carrington's (1999) research into black masculinities in cricket.

Theoretically, the notion of resistance in sporting subcultures has since been widely questioned. In the last 15 years, a body of work, which has come to be recognised as post-CCCS, has diversified the theorisations around youth subcultures and styles (cf. Bennett,

1999; Muggleton, 2000). Ethnographic work into what have variously been termed 'lifestyle' (Wheaton, 2004), extreme, whizz, alternative or new sports has reflected this theoretical diversification (cf. Kay & Laberge, 2004; Laurendeau, 2004; Thorpe, 2005; Wheaton, 2004).

Methodological developments within sport studies have been influenced by the same theoretical debates which have concerned qualitative researchers in the social sciences more widely. Although ethnographic work in sport is by no means as varied and widespread as it is in the 'parent disciplines' (Rinehart, 2010), it certainly continues to diversify. Since 2000, more and more sport scholars have begun to participate in key debates around qualitative research, and ethnography in particular, as well as engage with the more emergent approaches to ethnography brought about by postmodern researchers (Rinehart, 2010; Sparkes, 2002). In this chapter, I aim to engage with these debates, by working through some of the challenges and nuances presented by my own theoretical influences.

Ethnography and Interviewing in the Collection of 'Data'

Particular methods, and level of 'closeness', employed in ethnography, varies with each project (Skeggs, 2001). However, ethnographic research is broadly characterised by the use of multiple methods, most usually participant observation and interviews. Besides field notes, and recorded interviews, other ways of recording data include photography, video and diaries, and other forms of data include cultural media discourses. In fact, ethnographers might collect 'whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research' (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994: 1).

For my ethnographic research, the key methods of data collection were participant observation, semi-structured interviews and fieldwork diary notes. In addition, I paid attention to surf related media discourses, participated in internet social networking sites, and took part in informal conversations in the course of day to day fieldwork. Fieldwork took place in four British locations, over sustained periods of time; from 3 months in Newcastle, and South Wales to 7 months in Newquay. Research in Brighton was both more prolonged and intermittent, because of its proximity to my university 'base'. In total, I conducted 32 semi-structured interviews, not all of which I utilised in my findings, and also made use of noted quotes from more informal conversations, which fed into my analysis.

As a method in itself, interviewing has become one of the most popular forms of qualitative enquiry (Warren, 2001). The intention of qualitative interviewing is to carefully

listen ‘so as to *hear the meaning*’ of what participants are conveying (Warren, 2001: 85). Importantly for feminists, in-depth interviewing allows participants to convey meanings in their own terms (Kitzinger, 2007). Interviews are often described as taking three forms; structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. Structured interviewing is more suited to positivist, or at least realist, approaches, whilst less structured interviewing lends itself to a more relativist-constructionist perspective.

The former aims at capturing precise data of a codable nature so as to explain behaviour within pre-established categories, whereas the latter attempts to understand the complex behaviours of members of society without imposing any *a priori* categorization that may limit the field of inquiry (Fontana and Frey, 2005: 706).

The strengths and limits of interviewing depend on the researchers’ aims, but increasingly qualitative researchers are acknowledging that neutrality in the interview process is always unachievable given the necessary and negotiated interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Fontana and Frey, 2005). In terms of feminist research, a preoccupation with validity is often undesirable, because it results in the interviewer adopting a perceived position of power over the interviewee. This is also one of the key ethical concerns of the interview technique; at best, it raises inherent concerns about researching people for opportunistic reasons. At worst, an imbalance of power means individuals might feel pressured to conform to the interviewer's wishes, by – for instance – answering questions they are uncomfortable with (Fontana and Frey, 2005).

Instead, feminists advocate a less structured approach which makes for a more balanced power dynamic and allows the interviewee to introduce topics which are relevant to them. Chase asserts that researchers often expect participants to answer what Sacks (1989, cited in Chase, 2005) calls “sociological questions” which, rather than reflect the richness of interviewees experiences, instead encourage interviewees to ‘speak generally and abstractly’ (Czarniawska, 1997 quoted by Chase, 2005: 661). Instead, by encouraging interviewees to narrate their own stories, empirical material is constituted largely by those in the field and thus reveals more of what is meaningful to them within the research context.

Ethnographic researchers often combine ethnographic (e.g. observational) findings with interview findings as a way of ‘illuminating both the culture and the biographical particulars of members’ worlds’ (Warren, 2001: 85). Sherman Heyl notes that the Latin meaning of conversation is ‘wandering together with’ (2001: 371, citing Kvale, 1996);

The route may be planned ahead of time, but will lead to unexpected twists and turns as interviewer-travelers follow their particular interests and adjust their paths according to what those met along the way choose to share... new knowledge and experiences [are] influenced by just how much one manages to connect to the people one meets along the way and how long one stays to talk, learn and build a relationship with them. Both the traveler and those met are changed by those relationships involving meaningful dialogue. (Sherman Heyl, *ibid.*)

The interview approach taken during my ethnography is similar to this notion of wandering together. In other words, I aimed to establish a comfortable rapport with participants, I was genuinely interested in hearing their stories, and recognised the significance of interviewees as ‘co-producers’ of my research (Fontana and Frey, 2005, Sherman Heyl, 2001). This approach is part of not only interview technique, but of a prescriptive feminist ethics, where ‘reciprocity, honesty, accountability, responsibility, equality’ are made a central aspect of the research approach ‘in order to treat participants of ethnography with respect’ (Skeggs, 2001: 433).

The multiple methods approach is both the strength and challenge of ethnography. A key strength is that it enables ‘triangulation’ throughout the research process. This involves the ‘opportunistic combination of methods and sources’ in order to make sense of ‘the multiplicity and simultaneity of cultural frames of reference’ which constitute social spaces (Atkinson and Delamont, 2008: 300). As a consequence however, this approach to research demands much from the ethnographer, both in terms of research skills and personal abilities (Brewer, 2000; Walsh, 2012).

Essentially, the key instrument of data collection in ethnography is the ethnographer herself (Walsh, 2012), which means that the researcher becomes a very real part of the research, and the way in which the field is understood (Fortune and Mair, 2011). In the context of sports studies, Silk explains that critical ethnographers:

[make] no effort to adhere to the positivistic canons of “science” that call for distance between the researcher and those being studied (objectivity). Rather, the researcher recognises that he or she is playing an important part in the production and interpretation of data and thus acknowledges this role in the written account of the research (Silk, 2005 :73).

This means that norms, behaviours and cultures can be understood from the perspective of the participants, as opposed to an observer (Sparkes and Holt, 2001), and allows for a closer engagement with the specific and dynamic intersections of gender/race/class as they occur "in situ". In many ways, these characteristics of ethnography make it an appealing 'style of research' for feminists; not only because it focuses on experience, participation and meanings, but because context is made central to understanding and meaning (Skeggs, 2001). The integral involvement of the researcher, and the *impact* and *influence* of this involvement on the 'field', the participants and the findings is of particular concern to feminist social researchers (Huisman, 2008). These concerns are both methodological and ethical in nature and many of them are relevant to both feminists and non-feminists alike (Huisman, 2008; Sands, 2008; Walsh, 2012).

For me, the multi-sited nature of my research served to both enrich the versatility and variety offered by ethnographic work, whilst at the same time compounding the challenges it presents. One of the first key challenges I faced was the problem of access and 'sampling'¹, or in other words, the task of finding the female surfer.

4.3 Entering into Research: Positionality, 'Finding the Field', Sampling and Access

Positionality [is a] perpetual source of questioning and self-revelation... Although initially we may see ourselves primarily as researcher, other roles, past experiences, and our own personal subjectivities significantly define how we conduct our research (Marshall, 2002: 176).

A Short Biography

When I enrolled to study for a PhD at the University of Brighton I was 27 and had lived most of my life in the North of England. My upbringing was relatively middle class. My parents were both white, and were brought up near to where we lived, in Carlisle. As a child I had spent a lot of time swimming. From the ages of 8-15 I had been a member of the Synchronised Swimming Club which my mother, a swimming teacher, had set up voluntarily. At 16 I became a lifeguard and up until I was 18 I spent much of my time in, or at, the swimming pool. I continue to find the smell of chlorine pleasantly familiar.

¹ I put 'sampling' in quotation marks in order to recognise that, whilst it is a widely used term within methodological literature it is a term I am not fully comfortable with because of its impersonal connotations

At the comprehensive secondary school I attended, I played hockey, and tennis, and was quite good at both. Despite this, I was not physically athletic, and was bullied by male students for playing 'like a man', and for being 'fat' and 'ugly'. As an adult, these early experiences continue to feed into my anxieties about my body, and my determination to maintain an athletic figure.

As an undergraduate I attended Durham University at a campus near Middlesborough. At the Freshers Fair, I signed up to the hockey team and immediately developed a crush on the lesbian-identified captain. That year, she became the first person I spoke to about my sexuality, and in the months which followed I 'came out' to my friends and family as lesbian. Throughout my time at university, my participation in sport – specifically hockey, football and rugby – shaped my friendship networks, my social life and my subjectivity. The majority of my closest friends were team mates, and lesbian.

I developed an interest in surfing whilst travelling in Australia in 2004. I had signed up to go on a 5-day "Surfari" along the East Coast. I was a complete beginner and knew nothing about the sport, or its culture. I found the trip exciting, interesting and extremely frustrating. Learning to surf was incredibly hard, but very addictive. As a swimmer, I enjoyed being in the water, and embraced the non-competitive challenge which surfing presented. Most of all, I found the purely visceral, embodied nature of surfing intoxicating.

I was interested in continuing to learn, but having grown up in the North West of England I was unaware of the existence of surfing in the UK. At the time, my connections with surfing culture had only been through mediated depictions of California, Australia and Hawaii. It was only after talking to my friends in the North East, and searching the internet, that I discovered that surfing in the UK was relatively widespread. In 2006, after a bit of research, I purchased my first surfboard via www.secondhandboards.com.

My early experiences of surfing in Britain were entirely self-motivated ones. Although I had friends who enjoyed the water, I didn't know anyone else who surfed. This meant that I often paddled out alone. I remained enthusiastic about the prospect of learning, but due to my lack of knowledge, I was unable to read surf forecasts correctly, and because of my location in the North West of England, the surf was at least a 2 and a half hour drive away. For 3 years, surf sessions remained few and far between, and progress was slow. Before starting my PhD, I travelled to France and spent 5 weeks by the coast, surfing. Alone, and in an unfamiliar place, I recall feeling distinctly aware of my lack of ability and female subjectivity amongst other surfers. The experience did however, help me improve, if only a little.

When I returned to England, I was still only a progressing beginner in terms of ability, and was not local to, or familiar with, any surfing communities in Britain.

Furthermore, of the four locations which were to become fieldwork sites, it was only Newcastle that I had any familiarity of at all. I had not so much as visited South Wales, or Newquay, and had only ever spent brief amounts of time in Brighton. Aside from the fact that I was physically capable, and slowly progressing, in terms of my familiarity with surfing culture, I was still very much an "outsider".

Catching Waves and 'The Female Surfer'

After you've tried to catch a zillion waves, you'll get a sense of where you need to be positioned.

*You'll say, "I want to position myself to catch waves of *that* type", and based on your experience, you'll paddle to the best spot to catch those waves. You'll probably miss all the waves of other types, because you'll be out of position for them, but that's the choice you'll make.*

Maybe you'll switch mid-session, and paddle somewhere else to catch waves of a different sort, or maybe the changing tide or rising swell will cause you to adjust your position to continue catching the same type of waves.

Topic: Positioning to catch a wave

www.surfingsandiego.com/forum Posted: 30 November 2010 at 4:15pm

Meeting female surfers with whom to do research was always going to be a challenging task, and demanded a certain amount of 'paddling around'. Some opportunities have been explored by positioning myself to catch a certain 'type' of surfer (i.e. by attending a lesbian surf camp), whilst others have arisen unexpectedly and I have adjusted my position accordingly (by travelling to meet contacts discovered through networking).

These opportunities have helped shape the multi-sitedness of my ethnography. The strategy of 'ethnographic visiting' is equivalent to paddling away from one spot in the hope that there will be other waves to ride in a different spot, and always carries a certain risk that the new spot will have unfavourable conditions once you get there, "but that's the choice you'll make". Through exploring these early opportunities, the spots which emerged as being potentially fruitful areas of research were located in Brighton, Newquay, South Wales, and Newcastle. Over a period of 18 months, I conducted sustained residential

fieldwork in these locations, I spoke with more than 50 women who surf in Britain, and conducted 32 interviews; I have caught a lot of waves. In this section I explore the methodological processes which enabled this.

"Paddling around": Issues of 'Sampling' and Access

'Sampling' was largely opportunistic in nature, opportunities for sampling and access often presented themselves through interpersonal networking; through friendship networks, with other surfers, as well as through conferences. Sometimes 'snowball' or 'network' sampling was used (Ali and Kelly, 2012). This meant that I met some surfers via the recommendations or introductions made by other participants or contacts. Snowball or network sampling is often used when populations are specific, hard to reach or sensitive (Browne, 2005). In my case, female surfers were hard to reach because of my initial lack of links with surfing culture.

The use of snowball sampling has been criticised on the grounds that it produces a 'biased' sample which is non-representative and risks limiting research to one network (Ali and Kelly, 2012; Browne, 2005). However, my theoretical and epistemological grounding in postmodernism means that my aim is not to generalise my findings. My concern instead relates to the richness and depth of lived, embodied experiences. At the same time, I also recognise the complexity of how intersectionality impacts on leisure lives (Watson and Scraton, 2013). Subsequently, I was also motivated to include, where possible, a variety of participants in terms of age, race, sexuality, ability and background.

The women I interviewed varied in terms of their surfing ability, age, social class, and sexual identity. It is important to note however that almost all of the women, myself included, were white and able-bodied. One woman identified her ethnicity as "half English, half Arabic" and one as mixed Anglo-Indian. One woman also had a visual impairment. The ages of the participants ranged from 12-65 years. Broadly speaking, the majority of the women were middle class, although some might identify with a more working class background. The multi-sited nature of my ethnography was designed in part to access a varied demographic. The locations chosen reflect the variety of geographically different surfing spaces in the Britain, as well as different regional characteristics, demographics and identities.

It is important to point out that around a third of the women I interviewed were non-heterosexual women. This constitutes a considerable percentage of the sample and is particularly significant because non-normative sexualities in surfing culture have, up until now, been almost entirely absent within the 'alternative' sports literature (Roy and

Caudwell, forthcoming). This was not the result of 'theoretical' sampling, whereby specific populations are targeted in order to facilitate developing theory (Ali and Kelly, 2012), although attending a lesbian 'surf camp' did provide me with a number of contacts. Rather, making links with non-heterosexual women who surf was facilitated somewhat organically, as consequence of my own usually-lesbian-identified subjectivity.

Because my social and sporting life has been shaped by my relations with lesbian women, I often find it easier to build rapport with lesbians, and am comfortable in so-called 'lesbian-friendly' spaces. Browne (2005) highlights that network and snowball sampling is often used in research into sexualities because of its nature as a 'personal' or 'sensitive' matter. Bell (1997) has also commented that 'probably the singular most difficult aspect of researching sexual geographies is that of access' (in Browne, 2005: 48). In my case however, the participation of a significant number of non-heterosexual women was an unintended consequence of the way in which relationship networks developed in the field. In chapter five I provide a more detailed description of these relations.

Surfing the Internet

Opportunities to meet female surfers often presented themselves through surfing the internet; by searching social network sites, and contacting surfers through surf related group pages on Facebook. In fact, the internet provided one of the key ways in which communication was facilitated, and rapport was established with participants. The usefulness of the internet in and for ethnographic research has been recognised increasingly widely in the research methods literature (cf. Hine, 2013; Walsh, 2012).

For a social scientist wanting to find people who share a particular interest or fit the concerns of a specific research question, or to access a dispersed population within the confines of limited time and travel budgets, computer-mediated communication of some form has become an almost obvious choice (Hine, 2013: 9).

The importance of the internet in locating female surfers was not just a matter of convenience. Researchers of 'alternative' sports cultures have emphasised the importance of recognising the ways in which '(sub)cultural experiences online and offline are continuous and interrelated' and subsequently, that it 'make[s] sense to be methodologically sensitive to this overlap' (Wilson, 2008: 148).

The internet is a central aspect of the 'global flows [which] are having an increasingly profound and complex impact' on the meaning and nature of surfing culture (Wheaton, 2007: 292). Blogs, e-magazines, photo sharing, forum pages and internet based communities have become popular means through which to participate in surfing culture. Furthermore, research conducted since the 1990s has alluded to the significance of the internet as a space where meaningful connections can be forged (Hine, 2013).

For me, social networking sites provided a useful means of "breaking the ice" before meeting people in person. I made use of Facebook in various ways; by searching for and joining surf related group pages, by posting comments or messages on these pages, or by using the messaging function (similar to e-mail) as a means through which to introduce myself to people on an individual basis. This was helpful in terms of making a positive 'first impression' (Walsh, 2012). For instance, at a very basic level, making contact with people on Facebook meant that they were able to see my 'Profile' picture, and gain access to a certain amount of personal information about me, such as where I was based and where I was studying. This gave initial communications via this medium a more personal and open feel than 'cold emailing', and helped to verify the authenticity of my intentions.

Ethically, the use of the internet *as* and *for* ethnographic work, has become the topic of much debate in recent years (Markham, 2008; Ali and Kelly, 2012). A key concern regards the notion of privacy, and the related issue of informed consent. For instance, where information is posted on a public forum, there are contrasting views in terms of how that information might be utilised by researchers with, or without the knowledge of the original author (Ali and Kelly, 2012). In terms of access, and communication, my ethical approach to making contacts via Facebook was to use what Sands (2008) refers to as an 'ethics of good intentions'. When communicating with new contacts I used discretion with regards to accessing personal information via Facebook profiles. On the occasions I made use of the individual messaging function, I did so only once a person had been recommended by a mutual contact, or when contact had already been made with the individual themselves. The tone I adopted for messages regarding my research was friendly, relatively informal, but polite. I was overt about the topic area and modes of data collection, and made it clear that there were no obligations to take part. Utilising Facebook was not initially a conscious methodological strategy for access. Rather, as Hine (2013) comments, it was an obvious place to start. In recent times, communicating via Facebook has - for the majority of Britons under the age of 50 - become an 'unremarked part of the fabric of our everyday experience' (Hine, 2013: 1). Thus, I contend that to ignore its usefulness to my research would amount to imprudence.

Interview Procedure and Ethical Protocols

The interviews conducted were semi-structured or unstructured in nature, and involved a 'general interview guide' (Amis, 2005). Both semi and unstructured interviewing encourages the interviewee to give lengthy and detailed answers, both make use of probing and follow up questions. The key difference between the two is the degree of control the interviewer tries to maintain over the topics covered (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). Guided interviews (those where an interview of conversation guide is used to cover particular topics) are particularly popular in sports studies research (Amis, 2005).

Using an interview guide means that general themes or questions for an interview are planned in advance, often with follow up questions, in order to make sure that desired topics are discussed (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). In some of my initial interviews I made use of an interview guide, but I soon found that having it present detracted from the flow or the "natural" conversational nature of the interview. Subsequently, for most of my interviews I guided them from memory. Although this occasionally meant that some topics escaped my memory, I felt that maintaining an informal rapport and sense of ease was more important. As Rubin and Rubin assert; 'it is far more important to listen to what the interviewee wants to say' (2012: 125). Indeed, in some interviews, my interview guide became irrelevant because the interviewee was so forth-coming and dominated conversation. Often, this approach improved the richness of findings.

The interviews varied in length from 45 minutes to two hours. Almost all of them were individual interviews, with the exception of – in the interests of ethical responsibility – the interviews carried out with under 18s. The interview with Esther was carried out in the presence of her parents, whilst I interviewed Roz and Indi at the same time so that they felt at ease. The parents of both girls also remained close by at the time of the interview. The locations for the interviews were decided largely by the participants, so that it was as convenient and comfortable as possible (Amis, 2005). Often, they took place at either their home, or mine, or otherwise in a nearby café.

In total, 32 interviews were recorded. Of these 26 were transcribed, verbatim, in full. Because interpretation and analysis were an ongoing and interwoven part of the research process, I felt that these 26 interviews provided sufficient depth and variety for my developing analysis. The remaining interviews were listened to and partially transcribed in accordance with the emergent themes and topics of analysis. I argue that my in-depth engagement with the interview recordings, and with the participants with whom I did interviews, allowed me to handle the remaining 'data' in this way without 'taking away' from my analysis.

Given the largely non-sensitive subject matter of my research, and the fact that many of the women volunteered to participate, consent with all adult participants was obtained verbally. As Kent (2000) confirms, verbal consent is often sufficient for non-invasive procedures. Before each interview, informed consent was gained by explaining the purpose and intentions of the research and enquiring whether the participants would be interested in taking part. In addition to explaining the intentions of the research, participants were asked if they were willing to be recorded and assured that the interviews would be confidential. They were assured of the right to withdraw and also given the opportunity at the beginning and the end of the interview to ask me any questions. In the case of the participants who were under 18, a consent form was used, and signed by both the participants and their parent or guardian (see Appendix).

The central tenets of most professional codes of ethical practice include informed consent, avoiding deception, the right to withdraw, de-briefing and confidentiality (King and Horrocks, 2010: 108). As I demonstrate throughout this chapter, my approach to research ethics is driven by a feminist ethic of care, respect, and often friendship (Tillmann-Healy, 2003). As such, rather than take the checklist style approach which prioritises institutional codes and discourses, I instead maintain a reflexive approach to ethical concerns throughout the research process. Ali and Kelly (2012: 73) also make an important point, in the sense that;

At the end of the day, ethical practice depends upon the integrity of the researcher... sticking rigidly to advice or guidelines cannot ensure that research is ethical: decisions still need to be made throughout the course of the research that demonstrate sensitivity to the local context of a project, for which the researcher takes ultimate responsibility.

My concern over ethics was put into practice in a number of ways. For instance, where content emerged in interviews which the interviewee was willing to discuss, but had implied that they had not expected, or was private or personal, I was careful not to include this content as 'data'. Many participants also expressed that they would be happy for me to identify them by name. However, because analysis necessarily involves the interpretation of the researcher, pseudonyms were used as a matter of course in order to minimise any potential for harm of which the participants might be unaware.

The place names used however are all kept the same. This is because I feel it would take away from the analysis to use pseudonyms (Amis, 2005). However, as part of my analysis I have used discretion with regards to when and how I identify specific beaches or

surf breaks. For instance, where I feel identifying a specific break might jeopardise the confidentiality of a particular participant, I have avoided doing so.

In terms of confidentiality and internet content, the approach I took to my participation on Facebook pages was one of discretion. The only content used as 'data' was content that was accessible publicly, and the authors of the posts were always given pseudonyms. Where content was not available publicly, permission was gained from the original author.

4.4 Thinking through Fieldwork: Queering Research Relations

It is safe to say that the notion of 'objective' distance on the part of the researcher has been widely discarded within qualitative research, particularly feminist qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). However, the critical approach to the notion of researcher objectivity is not evident in all key texts on ethnography. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 89) for instance, discuss research field relations in a much more 'distanced' fashion. They contend that a researcher should try, where possible:

to maintain a more or less marginal position, thereby providing access to participant perspectives but at the same time minimizing the dangers of over-rapport... the ethnographer needs to be intellectually poised between familiarity and strangeness, and, in overt participant observation...[socially] poised between stranger and friend.

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), over-rapport can present dangers to data collection in a number of ways. In terms of the analysis, over-rapport can have implications for a researcher's ability to be critical of the context, attitudes and behaviours with which participants align themselves. Other key texts on the practice of ethnography also advocate this 'poise' of 'marginality', whereby 'the researcher can be understood as a marginal native' (Walsh, 2012: 254). Managing marginality requires the researcher to adopt a position of moderated discomfort whilst in the 'field'. To be too comfortable within the field represents the danger known (problematically) as 'going native', whereby a researcher comes to identify themselves so much as a participant that they begin to abandon the researcher role (Sands, 2002; Walsh, 2012). To remain uncomfortable on the other hand involves a sort of disorientation, which makes it difficult to identify with, and form understandings with, those inhabiting the 'field'.

I wish to query for a moment the assumptions connected with this idea of managing marginality. Certainly, the ‘dangers’ of over-rapport are important concerns for the practicalities of conducting ethnography. However, it is also important to highlight that for those who do not feel welcomed in the realms of the ‘norm’, marginality is often not a position of choice. To adopt marginality in the context field research then, reveals itself as a privilege afforded to those who feel at home inhabiting the norms. Or, in Ahmed’s (2004: 147) words, those who are ‘comfortable’.

‘Queering’ the Field

As Ahmed points out, ‘normativity is comfortable for those who inhabit it... and comfort is very hard to notice when one experiences it’ (2004: 147). The idea that a researcher might select a marginal position relies on the presupposition that the boundaries of the research ‘field’, and the participant relations enmeshed within it, are something that the researcher is acutely *aware of*, *comfortable with* and has a certain amount of *control over*. Queering this approach reveals the need to remain aware of the patriarchal and colonial imbalances of power which can influence methodological perspectives, and the presumptions connected to the ‘positionality’ of the researcher. For instance, Silk describes how ethnography provides opportunities for not only;

The expression of “other” cultures... [but also] those from the margins of our own cultures. As Barker (2000) suggests, ethnography can be the route by which our own culture can be made strange to us, allowing new descriptions of the world to be generated. (Silk, 2005: 68)

Although critical of a positivistic approach, Silk’s reference to ‘our own cultures’ still maintains an implicit assumption that marginality is something that can be entered into; that it is a means by which normativity might be ‘made strange’. Further, it aligns the researcher with the norm and ‘those from the margins’ as “others”. Rooke (2010: 29), has queered this conventional view of ethnographic fieldwork, as part of what she calls the ‘fiction and normativity of traditional ethnography’. Rooke uses the example of her research within an LGBT centre; for a researcher who is at home in heteronormativity, the ‘field’ of an LGBT centre might be experienced as an uncomfortable, ‘strange’ space because they are out of place and do not ‘sink in’ (Ahmed, 2004). For them, the boundary of that field will be distinctively apparent as ‘marginal’. In contrast, for Rooke (a lesbian who had already spent time there) the centre will be experienced quite differently; it is both

physically and ontologically ‘close to home’, meaning that the bounded space of fieldwork are blurred and much less apparent.

I would argue, that this is not simply a matter of role-reversal. For those who experience themselves to be non-normative, these spaces of comfort are usually fleeting, or at least ephemeral, so unlike the comfort which goes unnoticed by those at home in heteronormativity, the comfort a lesbian might experience within a lesbian-friendly space is *felt*. As my reflection demonstrates, it is a ‘sinking in’ which does not go unnoticed:

I feel like I occupy a conflicted position... as a surfer I have been welcomed by all the women... and I am glad that my identity as a researcher is overt ... I get on well with these women... I would consider some of them my friends... but then a question like “so what have you found out this weekend then?” will bring my researcher identity to the fore and make me feel like an outsider... But then, In some ways, I am comfortable in my outsider position, my lack of belonging allows me to drift in and out of social groups with relative ease. I am acutely aware however, that this is only possible because in some very important ways I DO feel a sense of belonging... I feel it most strongly when I know the space is identified as lesbian... both at the house party where I met the Newquay surfers, and on this trip with the women from Wales.
(‘Pilot’ Fieldwork notes, Trip to Newquay, November 2010)

These fieldnotes were taken during a ‘pilot’ field visit to Newquay (prior to the commencement of ‘immersed’ fieldwork). What they reveal is a process of reflection wherein I, as an inexperienced ethnographer, begin to question some of the methodological assumptions which I had brought with me into the field. The fieldnotes demonstrate that I am, to a certain extent at least, under the impression that I am expected to, and able to, manage my ‘positioning’ amongst participants during fieldwork. I reflect on being ‘comfortable’ with *my* ‘outsider position’ which allows *me* to ‘drift’ in and out, however on the other hand, it is clear that I am aware of how this sense of ‘comfort’, or belonging, must be contextualised in terms of how this field space has *come to be* identified; as lesbian.

This is an important point to bear in mind, because it highlights the necessity for researchers to remain reflexive about their positionalities and subjectivities in relation to the research. Unlike most (white, heteronormative, male) researchers, who are ‘comfortable’ inhabiting the norms (Ahmed, 2004), for me, normative public spaces are

often where my subjectivity is experienced ‘as different from others’ (Probyn, 2003: 294). As a consequence, how I feel in the research space cannot be measured in the same way against the ‘norm’ which, it is presumed, represents a point of spatial neutrality for the majority of ethnographers. This serves as a reflection of ‘how subjectivities and space are relationally constituted’ and forces us to re-think how ethnographers have traditionally conceptualised the relationship between the researcher and the research ‘field’ (Gorman-Murray, Johnston and Waitt, 2010: 100).

Inside/Out: ‘Researcher’ and ‘Researched’

Many texts on ethnography continue to perpetuate the idea that researchers should be able to establish ‘a version of himself or herself’ which they choose to present within the field (Walsh, 2012: 254). As Rooke (2010: 35) describes, there is a dominant notion that researchers maintain ‘a public persona [which] is controllable and flexible’ whilst their ‘inner identity’ remains untouched. This idea has been widely criticised by feminist researchers, who have raised ethical concerns about the inherent manipulation and secrecy which is implied in the concept of a managed persona. The central concern is that ‘the interpersonal, engaged nature of ethnographic work can lead to even more exploitation than traditional positivist methods’ (Huisman, 2008: 372).

In contrast, several feminists have advocated a ‘blurring or queering’ of the line between the subject/object, insider/outsider dichotomy (Manning, 2009: 3). Manning emphasises that ‘we are all multiple’ in terms of our relations with participants and context, meaning that through our participation in the research context, our subjectivities become entangled in various ways with those of the participants (2009:3, quoting Fine, 1998). These aspects of the researcher-self cannot and I would argue, should not, be experientially nor conceptually separated.

Rice has argued that ‘because subjectivities are neither disembodied nor detached, researchers’ personal histories, physicalities and positionalities necessarily inform the theoretical stories they tell’ (2009: 246). My subjectivity is always already interwoven in the research I do and thus it is important to remain open about how I view my ‘positionality’ within it. With this in mind, I recognise that my subjectivity is, broadly speaking, a normative one. I am white and middle class and at the time of the research I was in my 20s, blonde, slender and physically fit. This meant that my experiences of ‘entering’ UK surf spaces have in many ways been relatively uncomplicated, because I do not disrupt the dominant norms of the female ‘surfing body’. However, as I have recognised, surfing culture in Britain is not only overwhelmingly white, but distinctly

heteronormative, and strongly tied to masculine norms. Subsequently, the experience of being female, and lesbian in surf space is always felt, conflicted, and/or negotiated through relations of identity, sameness and difference.

Feelings about and connections to others are crucial to reflexive practices, even within a climate of individualization. Reflexive commitment to projects fundamentally involves how we relate to others. (Holmes, 2010: 143)

Following the work of Harding (1991) and other feminists, self-reflexivity has become a valued part of ethical and rigorous research practice (Rice, 2009). It encourages researchers to ‘acknowledge how their perceptions and background influence the research... [and] analyz[e] how subjectivity shapes the research process’ (Fortune and Mair, 2011: 457). An important part of approaching research from a feminist perspective involves making visible the spatial and embodied connection of the researcher within the research. In so doing, I propose a return to Deleuze’s theoretical use of ‘the fold’, which I introduced in Chapter three.

Folding, Friendship and Fieldwork

The notion of the fold refers to ‘the pliable nature of the self’ (Probyn, 1993: 128), whereby the ‘outside’ or ‘exterior’ is constitutive of the ‘interior’ or ‘inside’ self. Not only does the fold serve to collapse the dichotomies of the self/social, personal/political and home/field, but it also points to the indistinguishable – or immanent – relation between subjectivity, space and place. Here, I advance on the notion of ‘the fold’ through conceptualising the research space as interwoven, mesh-like and momentary. As Pink (2009: 33) describes in *Sensory Ethnography*; research places are ‘events’ which ‘occur’ through the ‘intersections and proximities of pathways as they are entangled...[and] constituted neither internally nor externally but as varying intensities in what Ingold (2008) calls a ‘meshwork’’. In such a conceptualisation, the ‘field’ comes to represent a mesh-like ‘moment’, where the life paths of researcher and participants become folded together in such a way that each one necessarily intervenes in the lives of the other. This invokes the inevitable question of how ‘researchers themselves are entangled in, participate in the production of, and are co-present in the ethnographic places they share with research participants, their materialities and power relations’ (Pink, 2009: 33-34).

During certain periods of fieldwork, I spent a considerable amount of time living, surfing, socialising, and occasionally working with female surfers, some of whom

volunteered to participate in my research. They were aware of my role as an active and observant researcher, and I also became good friends with many of them, building up some emotionally meaningful relationships. My so-called ‘positioning’ as a researcher in Cornwall in particular, and with some participants in Wales, was not something that I “managed” by myself. The overt nature of my research meant that my positioning within the ‘field’, and the multiplicity of my subjectivity; as both researcher and friend, is something which was negotiated on a daily basis by both myself and the participants (Ellis, 2007; Tillmann-Healy, 2003). Furthermore, this ‘folded’ research dynamic was not something that I consciously entered into, or feel I will withdraw from. In essence, I never left the ‘field’ (Ellis, 2007).

Some feminists have emphasised the value of allowing friendships to flourish in the field, and further, to shape the development of the research process (Browne, 2005). In particular, Tillmann-Healy (2003) has proposed that friendship might be utilised to comprise a method of research in itself.

Calling for inquiry that is open, multivoiced, and emotionally rich, friendship as method involves the practices, the pace, the contexts, and the ethics of friendship. Researching with the practices of friendship means that although we employ traditional forms of data gathering... our primary procedures are those we use to build and sustain friendship: conversation, everyday involvement, compassion, giving, and vulnerability. (Tillmann-Healy, 2003: 734)

In "friendship as method" there exists an investment in fieldwork relations which 'puts fieldwork relationships on par with the project' (Tillmann-Healy, 2003: 735). Ellis (2007) emphasises that this approach is not suited to every researcher, nor every project. Similarly, I do not view "friendship as method" to be an appropriate way in which to describe my overall approach. However, there were ways in which certain field relations in some locations – such as Cornwall – did become defined by this type of method.

A central tenet of friendship as method is that it demands a move from 'studying them to studying us' (Tillmann-Healy, 2003: 735). Subsequently, it 'requires that the researcher turn the same scrutiny on herself as on others' (Ellis, 2007: 13). Through my involvement with the research space, and the various women and girls I have met along the way, I have come to embrace a view of the field as unbounded and shifting. Far from being a matter of ‘management’, fieldwork is a matter of co-operation. Where friendships were

formed, and otherwise, this ethic of co-operation characterises my approach to ethnography.

4.5 The 'Art' of Interpretation and Analysis

Poststructuralism... points to the continual cocreation of the self and social science; they are known through each other. Knowing the self and knowing about the subject are intertwined, partial, historical local knowledges. Poststructuralism, then, permits – even invites or incites – us to reflect on our method and to explore new ways of knowing. (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2008: 477)

As I work through these methodological discussions, the intricacies of researching surfing lives are made more apparent. As a feminist researcher, I am aware of the responsibilities bound up with research relationships. As I attempt to represent the lives and experiences of research participants, this responsibility makes itself felt as an almost habitual inclination; towards making myself visible within those representations.

Emerson, Fretz and Shaw explain that where the researcher is made invisible through third person writing, there is a risk of ignoring 'the highly contingent interpretations required to reconcile and/or prioritize competing versions of the event' (1995: 59). Cotteril and Letherby (1993: 67) also assert that 'all academic research and subsequent writing involves...the weaving of the biographies of all participants'. As they explain, this weaving necessarily involves, whether acknowledged or not, the biography of the researcher themselves.

We can hear our own voice and that of the other... there are places where our ideas are woven together so completely... Through weaving together aspects of ourselves, our relationship and our research experiences, we... [offer] a view of us as people. (Cotteril and Letherby, 1993: 78, emphasis added)

By recognising the rhizomatic way in which my own subjectivity and the experiences of other surfing females interweave, I hope to work towards a richer, more nuanced and more collaborative conceptualisation of the field (Thien, 2005: 453). Self-reflexivity encourages researchers to 'acknowledge how their perceptions and background influence the research... [and] analyz[e] how subjectivity shapes the research process' (Fortune and

Mair, 2011: 457). Furthermore, making the subjectivity of the researcher visible is an integral part of conducting feminist research, because it places researcher and researched on the same analytical plane. By interweaving my own subjectivity and experiences with those of other surfing females, I hope to work towards a richer, more nuanced and more collaborative conceptualisation of how females experience subjectivity and space (Thien, 2005: 453). I would argue that this approach constitutes a distinctly feminist approach to surf ethnography. It also evidences the significance of autoethnography as a way of exploring, interpreting and expressing the lived world of surfing; a mode through which to delve into what is assumed, folded, or hidden.

The use of an autoethnographic approach represents a recognition that the world can be experienced, embodied, 'known' and interpreted in a multiplicity of ways (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011). I make use of autoethnographic stories alongside participant observation and interviews as a way of unraveling, opening out and unpicking the folded meshwork of fieldwork relations which constitute the research space. Not only does it enrich ethnography to convey the embodied experience of the research context, but it is also important to recognise as part of the research, the lived emotional experiences of the researcher whilst conducting 'fieldwork'. Reflexivity is necessarily 'an emotional, embodied and cognitive process' (Holmes, 2010: 140, emphasis in original). Bondi (2005: 243) for instance, recalls the emotional 'work' she experienced during her own PhD research, and argues for the 'relevance of researchers' emotions as analytical resources';

reflecting on the rich and diverse qualities of researchers' emotional responses to fieldwork experiences may be important to our continuing capacity to conduct fieldwork, to interact sensitively with research participants, and to develop rich understandings of what it is we do (Bondi, 2005: 243).

Markula too, has reflected at length on the intertwining of emotion and embodiment within the research and writing processes (cf. Markula, 2001a, 2006c; Markula and Denison, 2000). On the subject of emotive reflective writing she acknowledges that although writing a 'narrative of the self' is often a difficult endeavour, it is nevertheless an important one (Markula, 2001a: 25). 'I continue... because I believe in the power of evocative writing to acknowledge the context of the writer's experience as well as the context of the audience's reading' (Markula, 2001a: 28).

Similarly, my methodological approach to gathering 'evidence' does, as a matter of course, involve engaging with the 'field' emotionally. When I write fieldnotes, I make myself 'present' in them by reflecting on how I feel, observe, and connect with people,

space and place. My approach reflects an inclination towards emotional open-ness which, I suggest, has been largely absent in existing surf research, and with some exceptions (cf. Sparkes, 2000, 2002; Markula, 2001a), sport more widely.

Thinking and Writing

Richardson's (2000) work on *Writing: a method of inquiry* (1994) has been particularly influential in terms of the development of alternative modes of doing research which coincide with poststructural, postmodern and feminist approaches. She argues that 'no textual staging is ever innocent' and that 'social scientific writing, like all other forms of writing, is a sociohistorical construction, and, therefore, mutable' (2000: 5). Inherent to this argument is the idea that no form of interpretation and representation can claim to be the most 'truthful' way of analysing data. Furthermore, postmodern researchers have begun to question, not just the ways in which meanings are drawn from data, but also the ways in which meanings themselves are subject to change (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Grbich, 2013; Richardson and St. Pierre, 2008). This has led Richardson and St Pierre (2008: 487) to pose the question 'what else might writing do except mean?'

I determined early in the study to use writing as a method of inquiry in at least these two senses: (1) I would think of writing as a *method of data collection* along with, for example, interviewing and observation and (2) I would think of writing as a *method of data analysis* along with, for example, the traditional – and what I think of as structural (and positivist) – activities of analytic induction; constant comparison; coding, sorting, and categorizing data: and so forth. (St. Pierre, in St. Pierre and Richardson, 2008: 489)

Approaching research from a postmodern perspective, it did not "sit right" with me to utilise the more structured inductive methods of thematic analysis and coding, such as those implemented in Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In particular, I rejected the use of computer programming software, because, as Grbich points out

any framing structure [has the] potential to gain a reified status, creating in the researcher a preference to confine and order, rather than to allow for constant transformation and change... enclosure also serves to separate out the data from both the researcher and the context. (Grbich, 2013: 280)

Not only am I opposed to the use of a 'confine and order' strategy, but the multi-sited nature of my ethnography also highlights the importance of maintaining an awareness of the significance of how context and lived realities shape both individual and community based experience. It is therefore important to acknowledge the complexity and significance of the interplay of subjectivities, contexts and experiences.

I do not wish to claim that I reject thematic analysis altogether. I accept that a form of thematic analysis did certainly take place. However, rather than treat the interview findings as simply 'data', I *acknowledged* them as individual 'stories', and strove to understand and interpret them in the context of the broader cultural, ethnographic and theoretical context. Boyatzis (1998) has described thematic analysis as 'a way of seeing'. He writes that 'often, what one sees through thematic analysis does not appear to others, even if they are observing the same information, events, or situations'. It is 'intuitive' (1998: 1). In the same way, the broad themes I established for my discussion developed through connecting my fieldwork experiences, interview findings and theoretical writing. However, where I depart from the notion of thematic analysis is at the point where themes are 'established' and interrogated as 'codes'. Boyatzis (1998: 4) writes:

If sensing a pattern or "occurrence" can be called *seeing*, then the encoding of it can be called *seeing as*. That is, you first make the observation that something important or notable is occurring, and then you classify or describe it.... *seeing as* provides us with a link between a new or emergent pattern and any and all patterns that we have observed and considered previously.

Whilst I acknowledge that 'sensing' patterns or shared 'occurrences' is certainly part of the way in which I organise my findings, I suggest that we must remain reflexive about the process of '*seeing as*'. I argue that searching for 'a link between a new or emergent pattern and any and all patterns that we have observed and considered previously' might potentially limit the uncovering of new ways of thinking, writing and doing. Particularly if we attempt to 'classify' that which we find, because such an approach would lie in direct opposition to the rhizomatic philosophy I undertake by *taking Deleuze surfing*.

Denzin writes that 'seeing is not understanding... understanding is visceral' (1997: 46, quoted by Markula and Denison, 2000: 418). I contend that the same might also be said of how we engage with and interpret our research findings. As well as 'sensing a pattern' as Boyatzis (1998:4) describes, we ought to trust this 'sense' in the processes of interpretation, thinking, writing and understanding too. What I mean by this is that writing research should not be about simply 'classifying' or 'describing', but going 'beyond conscious

reasoning [to] bring us inside experience and in touch with feelings' (Markula and Denison, 2000: 418). Subsequently, although I establish broad themes for my analysis, the interpretation which takes place within those themes is shaped, largely, by an *open* and *inventive* process of writing; 'using writing to think'. As St. Pierre describes:

I wrote my way into particular spaces...This was rhizomatic work... I did not limit data analysis to conventional practices of coding data and then sorting it into categories...that organized and governed my writing... [rather] *thought happened in the writing*. (St. Pierre, in St. Pierre and Richardson, 2008: 488, emphasis in original)

This strategy complements my Deleuzian-influenced approach, because, as St. Pierre describes here, it allows for data analysis to "grow" rhizomatically; "branching off" like the root, or meandering like the nomad, along various theoretical 'lines of flight'. For me, what is important to this approach, is that it is grounded in an embodied familiarity of the research context. This embodied knowledge served to nurture this analytical rhizomatic growth, and make connections with the lived experiences of female surfing subjectivities. Out of this process emerged the key themes which organise the analysis section of this thesis, namely: *Emotionally Negotiating Becoming-Surfer in Gendered Surf Space*, *The Surfing Body; without Organs, Territorialisation and Nomadology in Place*, and *Surfing the Networks and 'Female-only' Surf Space*.

This rhizomatic approach to analysis is also reflected in the way in which I present 'data'. In many instances, participant quotes are separated from the main body of discussion. However, occasionally I weave extracts from interviews within the discussion. The participants' words are recognised in italics, and are included this way as part of my emphasis on recognising the 'co-produced' nature of research and experience. Where I have removed words from original transcriptions, I recognise this with [...].

Into the 'Field': Going Surfing

Many ethnographers go to the field with the illusion that their identity, like their body, is discrete and impenetrable, that although their public persona is controllable and flexible, they have an inner identity, a kind of holy ground like a silent pool of water that nothing will touch. (Willson, 1995, quoted by Rooke, 2010: 35)

In this chapter, I have outlined an approach which is defined by a desire to ‘queery’ what has been taken-for-granted in the existing literature on (sporting) ethnography. Queering ethnography not only involves questioning the idea that the researcher/participant positionality can be ‘managed’, but also breaks away from the more traditional practices and fundamental dichotomies associated with the traditional notion of fieldwork, such as emotional involvement, sensual/visual, participation/observation, home/field, inside/outside and self/social. In breaking down these dichotomies, the ‘power dynamics’ of the researcher/participant relationship is defused and dispersed. Far from negatively impacting on the utility of ethnography, I would argue that queering ethnography recognises, and in the process makes visible, the power of the researcher/participant relation in the sense of it being plural, co-operative and productive.

Using techniques such as embodied autoethnography effectively dissolves the normative spatial boundaries of the ‘field’ because embodied experiences of subjectivities come to *constitute* the ‘field’; making visible its dynamic, unstable nature. The importance of feeling your way through research is, I argue, also integral to the process of analysing and representing data. In the next chapter, I advance this assertion by providing a reflective account of my multi-sited research journey, as an introduction to the surfers, spaces and places which constitute the ‘field’.

Line of Flight

A Run (through the mind) with a Research Student

It is a cold, crisp evening. Nearing dusk. I'm running. There's hardly any surf, I've been working all day, and I need to get out. So I'm running. I set out along the beach and gaze over the water. It's so calm. Almost flat.

"You don't get many days like this, not in Newquay"

There's surfers out. Hopeful. The waves are breaking practically on the shore. Small ones. Barely rideable. But they're beautiful. Small lines roll in. Rolling, rolling, rolling... peeling over like billowing blankets of molten glass. Beautiful.

"I love the ocean, cos one day it can be really really big, and then the next day it'll be flat!"

It's a nice place to run. I'm glad I came out.

They said they'd miss me in Brighton... That's nice. I think I'm settling in here now. They seem to like me, and I care about that... I've been open about my research.... I've never been to this end of the headland before. This would be gorgeous on a nice day... It's beautiful anyway, but it's cold.

The cold wind makes my scalp bristle. My legs tingle and my ears start to throb. I stop to take a photo. I want to capture this evening. But I can't, not really. So I carry on running.

I hope my surfing improves whilst I'm here.

"You'll be rippin' all over my ass by the summer dude!"

I said to Bethan she should come down in her van. I've only met her once, but she was cool about my research. Everyone has been really cool about it. And I'm so glad.

"Whatever you need bud, no worries!"

And I feel like I've changed so much. Being so friendly with people even when I barely know them. I'm shy, it's not like me. I wonder if it's cos I'm constantly on the move. I have no grounding, no "home", no "group of friends", so I just make bonds wherever I go. I wonder if it's a surfer thing, because surfers move around so much. We never become grounded; "Territorialised". It's maybe like Laura said...

"Most of the people I know have come here from other places. They've travelled here, to surf or whatever, and they're really laid-back and friendly. It's not cliquy at all. Like, so many places it's so cliquy. Like at home, I have my own group of friends, and that's that"

It's almost like molecules moving around. If they stay dynamic, stay moving, then they make random bonds and break away again. But if they stop moving, they become fixed into one set of bonds. I don't want to become fixed. I like moving around. But it can be hard, emotionally... What a scientific analogy Gina!

Ergh, uphill. Come on legs.... Where am I?? Oh yes, in town. Back down to Fistral and round. Should be about 3 or 4 miles.

I love being by the sea so so much. It's amazing that I can surf almost every day. Am I enjoying it too much? Is my PhD actually a joke, like my friends keep telling me?? NO GINA. It is a feminist project, and it has significance. You know that.

I jog past a bar on my right. It is empty. I bet that's a lovely spot in summer. On an evening just like this one, only warmer. I can almost feel the presence of people on the balcony, hear them, like phantoms of last summer, and the summer yet to come.

"It's like a ghost town in winter"

I reach the beach and look out at over the sea again. It is flat. Almost completely. And yet there is one solitary surfer still out., looking to the horizon. The wind has dropped and I am struck by the stillness of the scene. I wonder what's going on in their mind...

I turn down the beach, and pick up the pace.

I best do some more work.

Chapter Five

Feeling the Field: A Multi-sited Research Journey

Atkinson and Delamont (2008: 293) write that ‘most ethnographic reportage seems oddly lacking in physical location’. Here, I introduce some of the ethnographic places I have experienced, and the participants I have met along the way. My aim is to make evident the various ways in which the paths of the participants (including myself) have become intertwined, and to provide the reader with a ‘sense’ of how I have perceived these spaces, in the context of my own emotional and embodied research journey.

5.1 South East England: Brighton/Shoreham, East Sussex

As the UK's wealthiest and most urbanised coastline it's not surprising that the waves can be crowded - and not everyone out there has bothered to learn the basics of surf etiquette, so drop-ins and frayed tempers can be a feature of south coast surfing. On the whole, however, the vibe is way more enthusiastic than aggressive and you can't help but admire such enthusiasm in the face of often adverse surf conditions.

Surf UK (Anderson, 2008: 111)

Brighton lies 22 miles west of Eastbourne, where I was based for over a year between Sept 2009 - Feb 2011 and Oct 2011 - Feb 2012. Brighton is widely known as “London by the sea”, and is also considered to be the “gay capital” of the UK. The city is brimming with creativity and colour and is a hive of cultural activity. It boasts an overwhelming array of bars, shops and eateries. Buildings are painted every colour, and people style themselves with equal variety. More so than the rest of the seaside locations on the South Coast, Brighton has a relatively diverse population in terms of genders, sexualities, class, race, age and ethnicity (Grillo, 2005).

Brighton has a well-established surfing community, which has been active since surfing spread over the south coast in the 1960s. Commercially, the presence of surfing culture in Brighton is reflected in the variety of surf shops. All the major surf brands can be found on

the high street and there are a number of shops which sell or rent equipment for surfing, kite-surfing, windsurfing and stand up paddle boarding.

The hub of the community itself tends to coagulate in a car park by Carat's Cafe on the industrial docks of Shoreham Harbour. The spot is hidden away from the main coast road and the presence of surfing here is revealed predominantly through word-of-mouth, a passing visit, or by booking a surf lesson with one of the two men who run surf schools from the back of their VW Transporters. In my case, I found it by asking for advice on the *Brighton Board Girls* Facebook page.

First Surf at Shoreham, Sunday 15th Nov 2009

Having driven around to find Shoreham beach once before, and failing, I was a little disheartened. Because of Brighton's location on the English channel, it gets very little ground swell. Consequently, any surf is usually wind generated and depends very much on the geography of each surf spot. Unlike the south west coast of France, you can't just drive towards the coast and expect to find half decent surf. You need to know where to look and when to go, and when you're new to an area this is difficult.

After a bit of searching for British surf groups on Facebook I had come across Brighton Board Girls (BBGs); a group which was established in 2008. I introduced myself on the page, and asked for some advice:

G: I wanna get out on Saturday, but with the strong wind I'm not sure on the best place. I'm in Eastbourne, any advice on where to head to? and park?!

BBGs: Need shelter bad! Georgina if ya coming from Eastbourne try New Beach at Carats cafe lots of parking just follow the crowds... Don't know much about waves your way....

The BBGs also posted a November newsletter with advice about when was the best time to go in relation to the tide. Saturday was too stormy so I decided to make the trip on Sunday.

Driving into Brighton, I tried to control the nervousness that was building. I felt out of place driving through a city centre with surfboards in my car. It is a big contrast from France, and even Saltburn and Tynemouth in the North East. There, the breaks I surfed were long sandy beach breaks. Those beaches were large open spaces, the majority of people visiting them were there to enjoy a range of outdoor leisure activities such as walking, Frisbee, ball sports, and watersports. The beach was a space of leisure.

Shoreham beach, to the west of Brighton, is quite different. Driving through Brighton, the traffic is slow. It is a busy Sunday. The pier is a hive of activity. Many people walk along the sea front but very few are down on the beach itself. I turn off the main road running out of Brighton along the seafront, down a road which is not signposted, towards Shoreham port, an area largely used for cargo handling and distribution. I turn a corner and drive down a long straight road flanked by concrete flood banks on the left and warehouses on my right. I pass two abandoned lorries. I eventually pass a sign on my left which reads 'Welcome to Carat's café', I look ahead to see 'No unauthorized access beyond this point'. It is a dead end. There is nowhere to go but in.

The car park is narrow and almost full with cars and vans, there are surfboards lying on the banks and wetsuits hanging from several vehicles, there is a lot of activity in the car park with people waxing surfboards and getting changed into and out of wetsuits. A man in a beanie hat watches me as I drive in. I immediately feel out of place, as if I have just entered a meeting which I wasn't invited to. Maneuvering is tight, I pray for a space so that I don't have to reverse and draw attention to myself. There is one space left, thankfully.

I get out of my car to check the surf. The weather is cloudy and windy, no rain. I can smell the sea. The smell is distinct. Not just salty, but kind of dirty. The water is brownish grey. Besides the café, the place feels quite unwelcoming. Hemmed in by industrial warehouses and tarmac, it feels cramped. It doesn't have the picturesque wide open space of the Longsands at Tynemouth, or the relaxed feel. The atmosphere here is more purposeful. In November, the majority of people here do not come to take in the scenery, they come here to surf.

I look over at the area known as the 'hot pipe'. There are a few surfers in and a few decent waves, but I have heard that the hot pipe can get a little

competitive. I walk around the corner instead, past the café which looks relatively full and past a timber depot which smells strongly of pine. The beach by the harbour wall is more spacious, but less consistent. A few surfers are already out, mostly longboarders and minimal¹ from what I can see. A few surfers head past me as I stand and watch, a man and a woman and a handful of men. The surfers are having a hard time catching the mediocre waves. I try to decide whether it is worthwhile, but know that I have already committed myself. I am not leaving without going in. Standing fully clothed with my hood over my head, I do not find the prospect inviting. But I know once I am in I will enjoy it. And I also know that if I go in today, regardless of the waves I get, next time I come I will not feel like such an imposter.

South coast surfing throws up many contradictions. 'Some of the keenest surfers anywhere in the UK, housed on a stretch of coast that's one of the least consistent... Brighton surf is something of a waiting game' (Nelson and Taylor, 2008: 82). Keen would certainly describe the majority of surfers I met in Brighton. The female surfers I met here would go surfing in any conditions, regardless of the weather, or the time of year; as long as there was a wave. I got to know the BBGs first by attending the meetings in a pub in Brighton, and also by attending a weekend trip to Cornwall. Many of the BBGs were in their 30s and 40s. Perhaps ironically, given Brighton's reputation, only one of the female surfers I met here was lesbian. All of the women I interviewed were heterosexual, and 3 of them were married with children. All except one were white; Kelly's father was from India. All of them were British, and middle class.

The Brighton Participants

I did not meet up with the surfers in Brighton on a regular basis (largely due to the fickle surf) but I remained actively engaged with the online page for the duration of my research. I also became personal 'Friends' with a number of the women on Facebook. Much of the rapport which I built up with these women developed online, but this did translate to a familiar and relaxed friendship when I saw them in person.

¹ A minimal (mini-mal) is a short longboard. Typically between 7-8ft in length and popular with beginner surfers

The women with whom I became most friendly were the women with whom I conducted interviews. These women represented some of the most active participants in the Brighton surfing community. Ellen and Sandy had both started surfing, separately, around the same time a few years earlier. Like most of the women, they had met each other through the BBGs. Both were in their early-mid 40s and worked in education. Physically, they were both of an average size and neither of them were interested in any other sporting leisure pursuits. Although, both of them regularly cycled as a form of transport.

Lynn and Andrea were also friends with Ellen and Sandy and the four of them often surfed together. They too had started surfing individually. Lynn and Andrea were both in their mid to late 30s and worked in the public sector and care services. Both were small and slim. Like Ellen and Sandy, Lynn wasn't interested in any other sporting activities, and had surfed for a similar amount of time. All these women were committed to surfing and went as often as they could. Although limited by the inconsistency of the surf in Brighton, all of the women had steadily progressed to intermediate level. Andrea, however, was a significantly more skilled surfer. She had spent two years living and surfing in Cornwall and was a competent shortboard surfer. She was also regularly active and swam often.

I also interviewed two other women; Kelly and Janine. These women had started surfing together, around the same time as Ellen, Sandy and Lynn. Kelly often gave Janine a lift as she did not have access to a car. Janine worked in education, and Kelly was self employed. These women were both relatively slim and both enjoyed running. Both of them appeared to be less committed to surfing than the other women, although they valued the community support of the BBGs. They went surfing as often as it was convenient to do so.

5.2 South West England: Newquay, Cornwall

Newquay is Britain's self-styled surf capital... There are surf shops on every corner and shapers galore... It has good surfing beaches and crowds to match. It's also a real party town, not for the shy and retiring – summer nights are a throng of stag nights, hen parties and a rainbow spectrum of football shirts.

Footprint Guide to Surfing Britain and Ireland (Nelson and Taylor, 2008: p. 56)

Newquay is the so-called birthplace of British surfing (Mansfield, 2009). It is the location

where stand-up surfing began to become 'popular' in the 1960s; as Britons took the lead from visiting Australian lifeguards (Mansfield, 2009). In the years which followed, local surfers began molding a surfer lifestyle, shaping boards and setting up competitions.

Newquay [is] the 'imaginary' home of British surfing. This misconceived notion is constructed from history, media representations and tourist discourses and these representations provide a symbolic dimension of the South West... The commodification of surfing lifestyles developed from the mid 1960s with the growth of the infrastructure in the Southwest. Surf shops sprang up in Cornwall from the mid-1960s (Ormrod, 2007: 129-130).

Once established in Cornwall, surfing quickly spread to Devon, South Wales and the South Coast. Eventually, it made its way further north, often via visitors who had tried surfing whilst on holiday in Newquay (Ormrod, 2007).

Today, Newquay continues to brand itself as 'the UK capital of water sports and surfing', and its reputation is wholly characterised by surfing and partying (Weidenfeld, Butler and Williams, 2010: 6). Newquay itself boasts 5 surf beaches within easy walking distance, and several more within a 5 mile radius. Surfing defines the place and the majority of residents at any one time have come there either to surf, or to enjoy the lifestyle which accompanies it; most, are not from Cornwall.

It is a particularly popular destination for groups of young people. In the summer, Newquay town centre echoes until the early hours with the noise of drunken tourists, and locals. In the daytime, the streets and beaches become busy with people of all ages and backgrounds. Families, couples and groups mill around the town's main strip, and claim their space on Newquay's various beaches. On sunny days, the beach spaces are occupied by sun and sea bathers; small clusters of people building walls with windbreakers, children marking out football pitches, families playing cricket, and groups of people (predominantly men) spreading out to play rugby, nerf, Frisbee, or football. Older people are scarce, although the bowling green which overlooks the town beaches is an established space of activity for those over 55.

Newquay is undeniably a predominantly heterosexual, white-British space. It is evident in all of its most visible guises - as a holiday space for families, a party space for stag and hen groups, a commercial space for businesses, and as a surfing space. In many respects it

epitomizes the traditions of English seaside holiday towns, although its reputation as a tourist destination does contribute to the diversification of its demographics. Many of the voices heard both on the streets, and in the surf can be identified as having travelled from various parts of the UK or from overseas, and although residents and visitors from ethnic minorities are vastly under-represented, they are more visible in Newquay than in many other parts of Cornwall.

The area now attracts around 750,000 people a year, about 30% of all tourist visitors to Cornwall (www.duchyofcornwall.org, 2012; Weidenfeld, Butler and Williams, 2010: 6). In line with the exponential growth in surfing, the commercial development of Newquay has been considerable and rapid. In the past 20 years, new apartment blocks have been built, new parking charges and regulations brought in, and the beach front at Fistral beach - the most famous of Newquay's beaches - now boasts a small retail, eating and drinking complex.

The growing popularity of surfing in Britain can be evidenced by walking the length of Newquay's Fistral beach in summer. Observing Fistral beach, and the numerous surf schools operating there, it is evident that surfing is creating opportunities for women to become active participants in the space. However, what can also be gauged from regularly surfing at Fistral is that the numbers of males and females sitting 'out back' (behind the breaking waves that push the learning surfers back towards the beach) is much less evenly weighted than it is in the surf lessons. To estimate, women make up around 10%, 20% at most.

I have a quick scan for women. Out back at North Fistral there was maybe one woman to every 20 men. I see a small woman with long dark hair riding a shortboard. I make eye contact with her. She turns to the male surfer she is surfing with, puts her index finger in the air and then points towards me with her thumb. It appears, like me, she has noticed how many other women are out in the surf.

(Fieldnotes - June 2011)

Because of Newquay's reputation as the home and hub of British surfing, I decided to spend 7 months there. Within that time, I rarely travelled out of the town. It was as though the consistency and quality of the surfing there acted as a constant magnetic force upon me. As Ormrod (2007) acknowledges, this magnetism is something that has been acknowledged by other surfers too. Newquay itself, however, provided more than enough to spark my ethnographic interest, and the sheer numbers of surfers there also meant that I did not have to

look far for participants.

The Newquay Participants

The women with whom I did research in Newquay, I met through interpersonal networking. Having presented a paper at a Leisure Studies Association conference I was approached by a lesbian academic who was interested in my research and offered to put me in touch with an ex-partner who surfed in Cornwall and knew several other women. Having met with this contact, I was invited along to a house party in Newquay, where I met several other lesbian women, including Laura, Jen, Bella, Sarah. After chatting to Laura for some of the evening we arranged to go surfing together the next day. This initial meeting was an important one because it provided me with some valuable contacts in terms of 'settling in' to Newquay when I commenced fieldwork.

As with several other participants, in Newcastle and Wales, many of the women I met in Newquay were lesbian or non-heterosexual. All of them were white, British and normatively gendered. For all of the women I spoke to, surfing was a regular part of their lifestyle and during my time there all of them surfed relatively often. None of them surfed competitively and most of them enjoyed surfing boards of various sizes.

Laura was small and well built. She was in her late 30s and had moved to Newquay from Northern England. She was a keen climber and a competent surfer and co-owned a small adventure sport business with her friend Jen. Jen was in her early 30s with an athletic build. She had also moved to Newquay, independently, from Northern England. She was a good surfer and in my first few months in Newquay, she surfed with me often, and gave me tips on how to improve. Laura and Jen had lived in Newquay for several years and were well known. In fact, their names also came up twice in conversations with surfers in the other field sites too. Through them I met Rachel, Sarah, Bella, Nadine and Kath.

Rachel was in her early 20s, athletic, and a progressing beginner. Surfing for her was, like Laura, usually a social activity. She had moved to Newquay to be with her partner and during my time there she worked several temporary and part-time jobs. Sarah worked full-time in hospitality and also worked on a casual basis for Laura and Jen. She was in her mid 20s, was of an average build and surfed occasionally, usually with friends. She had moved to Newquay after finishing her university degree because she had friends in the area and enjoyed the lifestyle. Bella lived in the same house as Sarah. She was in her early 20s, average build

and a very keen, competent and skilled surfer. She moved to Newquay to surf and worked at a local Supermarket. Nadine was in her late 20s and knew the other "girls" through Laura. She was small and slim and enjoyed surfing and windsurfing and participated in surfing more socially than seriously. She worked full-time in the travel industry and was originally from Cornwall. Kath was also a good friend of Laura and Jen's and had met Jen several years earlier when she had first moved to Newquay from the south of England. They had progressed in ability together and Kath was a good surfer. She was in her mid 30s and identified as heterosexual. She was slim, athletic, and enjoyed other sports. She worked full-time in retail and owned a house in Newquay.

A number of the women with whom I socialised in Newquay owned vans, which they lived in for much of the year. They were large vans which had been converted into living spaces. Laura and Jen had designed and converted their vans themselves. They had constructed a bed, kitchen area, toilet and shower, and had hooked up all the electric and plumbing themselves. This allowed them to avoid paying rent whilst living by the sea. For 6 weeks in summer I did the same in my campervan. Although it was much smaller and less well-equipped, it was a valuable experience, both in terms of my ethnography, and in terms of the meaningful bonds I established with these women, and the Newquay space itself. It meant that I spent most days and evenings overlooking the beach. When I wasn't in the surf, I was gazing at it, observing the comings and goings of people on Fistral beach. As a member of the van 'community' I saw a number of the women on a daily basis and our lives intertwined in increasingly meaningful ways.

In addition to the women with whom I socialised and surfed regularly, I also interviewed a number of other women. Glenda, I contacted via email. She was in her 60s and was well known as a surfer who had been surfing in Newquay since her 20s. Naomi, I contacted via a mutual friend. She was in her late 20s, slim, and heterosexual. She was a good surfer, freelance instructor and writer, and passionate about environmental issues. She had moved to Newquay for the surf and travelled often. Nina and Hannah, I also got to know through mutual friends. Nina was slim, in her early 20s and passionate about surfing. She was a student from Scotland and worked part-time in retail. Hannah lived in the same house as Nina; she was in her mid 20s, slim and worked in a cafe. She had travelled to Newquay from Wales.

5.3 North East England: Newcastle/Tynemouth, Tyne and Wear

This stretch of coastline... was for decades the most underrated in Britain. But in recent years the excellent beach and reef breaks to be found here have gained their rightful place in the spotlight (Anderson, 2008: 157).

The surf around Newcastle is about quality not quantity. Whilst the ground swells in the North East are certainly less frequent than those in the South West, they do, nonetheless produce excellent waves at an impressive variety of breaks. The opportunities to surf here are certainly much better than the majority of spots on the South Coast. And yet, surf culture here is hardly visible in comparison.

Despite the boom in popularity, many of the line-ups here are still quite tight-knit. While Scarborough and Saltburn has seen numbers grow... some of the lesser known waves need respectful surfing. (Nelson and Taylor, 2008: 91).

I was drawn to the North East in part because it had been the setting for some of my earliest surfing experiences. I had done my undergraduate degree in the North East and had friends who still lived in the area, one of whom I lived with, in Newcastle, for the duration of my fieldwork. I also wanted to conduct research in the region because it provides an interesting contrast to areas of the country where surfing culture is more visible.

The water in the North East is the coldest in the UK, with winter temperatures dropping as low as 4 degrees, and reaching only 15 degrees in summer (Anderson, 2008). Surfing here requires hardiness, but this is a quality with which 'Northerners' are comfortable. The North-East has a strong work hard- play hard ethic, and yet, living there I was struck by the warmth of the people. The working classness in the North East is palpable. The centre of Newcastle has a buzz about it, it has a lively student culture, nightlife and heritage, and it is also ethnically diverse. However, there is a clear contrast between more and less affluent areas of the surrounding boroughs. A good example of this contrast is the borough of Tynemouth, which provides the focal point of the Newcastle surf scene; Longsands beach.

The North East for me feels urban, concentrated. I feel distracted, out of place, and confined. I long for wide open spaces. Simplicity. Escape perhaps. Some of the things one of the Newquay surfers had said in her interview, about freedom and nature, resounded in my mind. The significance of this feeling is something that had not struck me before. I realise that there is a certain amount of privilege presumed in having these thoughts, but I also believe that, had I come to the North East first, I would not have felt its impact in quite the same way. I am beginning to realise just how much my time spent in Newquay has affected me. I have been in some way profoundly changed by my time there; surfing there, day after day.

In Newquay, I spent my time with people for whom “9-5, Monday-Friday” meant nothing, because their livelihoods revolved around tourism; hospitality, retail and outdoor adventure. Having spent nearly 2 months living in Newcastle, surrounded by housing estates, dual carriageways, cars, shops, sport centres, parks, supermarkets, what most people would refer to as “real life”, I am beginning to feel stifled. I feel it affecting my character. It feels as though I am struggling with the effects of an inner battle, as my priorities and passions feel the pressure to re-shuffle, re-align in order to sit more appropriately with the lives of those around me. My friends for instance, for whom “Monday to Friday” is the norm. For them, the working week is routine. They dread Mondays and countdown to Fridays. Weekends consist of nights out and lie-ins. Leisure time is filled with sporting activities or walks in the country, family time, shopping, gardening, restaurants, and bars.

I continue trying to order my life around the surf, depending on the wind and tide. Weekdays, weekends; they blur into one as I work around them and through them. The problem with researching the surf space here however, is that for most people, the “working week” is their reality. As Jody reckons, most people around here “do other stuff”. Whilst there might be a lot more people in the water on the weekend, a weekday surf - in any other season besides summer - will only be enjoyed by those who have the flexibility to participate; 10 or so, maybe. And those people may well be tradesmen, plumbers, plasterers, electricians. Men with vans.

Like them, I travel 10 miles to the coast in my van to surf. Tynemouth is a fairly expensive place to live, and the likelihood is that most people who surf Longsands travel here too, from 'town', wherever that may be.

I feel these affects infusing into my surfing experiences here. I enter the water with a nervous tension, an attitude of focused distraction. The surf feels foreign, and at times unwelcoming. I do not feel the magnetic pull of the surf that I experienced in Cornwall, or the calming and uplifting sensation I would often get from paddling out into the clean Cornish waves. The "at-one-ness" with nature is not as apparent here. The townscape at Tynemouth lines the coast, car parking is plentiful and there is a steady stream of traffic coming and going along the road which runs parallel to the beach. Longsands lives up to its name. It is a long, open, picturesque beach. But it is not peaceful. The humming busy-ness of the day-to-day remains. Cars come and go. People with a purpose. Dog walkers and joggers, mostly. The routine of work and leisure time is subtle but incessant.

Tynemouth itself is a pretty town. An old priory sits atop the cliff at the south end of the bay known by surfers as Eddie's. The centre of town is close-by, dotted with quaint coffee shops, pubs, bars and a selection of shops. Families, couples and older people mill around, enjoying a coffee, ice cream or fish and chips over-looking the sea. The impression I get of Tynemouth itself is one of understated middle class exclusivity. The buildings have character and the homes by the seafront are large, multi-storey townhouses with new cars parked outside. It is an expensive to live.

Tynemouth Surf Co. stands alone as the only established surf shop, surf hire and surf school permanently located at the beach. It sits above the beach next to Tynemouth Surf Cafe, and a curry house. Offering a minimal selection of wetsuits, boards and other bits and bobs, the shop itself is revealing of the low demand for surf apparel here. In Newcastle, internet based Sid's Surf Shack is the only dedicated retailer of surf clothing and equipment. Indeed, surf shops in the North East don't begin to appear until you reach Scarborough, which has a much more established surf scene. Besides Tynemouth Surf Co., and Saltburn Surf School further south, surf lessons in the North East are offered by only a handful of mobile man-and-a-van operations such as Longsands Surf School.

The surfing communities in the North East are smaller and more spread out than in other locations, but I chose to focus my attention predominantly on the breaks near Newcastle;

particularly Tynemouth. The reason for this was largely due to restricted sampling opportunities. Not only are there a much smaller number of surfers in the North East, but communities tended to be tight-knit, and with less consistent swells, I was surfing less frequently. Despite making enquiries and travelling as far south as Saltburn, getting in touch with female surfers proved difficult.

Given the much greater quality of the waves here when compared to Brighton, it is surprising that the surf community is so much smaller. Brighton has Sharkbait, a dedicated forecast and community website. Tynemouth doesn't have any such equivalent. It seems to have no groups or events or scene of any sort, just the guys who surf there. The lack of surf 'scene' in Tynemouth is perhaps revealing of the link between surfing and local cultural ideals. Despite the global growth and visibility of surfing brands and culture, the seductive power of commercial "surf-cool" has not yet crept over the far North of England. And yet, in the past 5 years, Tynemouth has provided the setting for the Tynemouth Surf Film Festival, the *Xperience* extreme sport festival, and the UK Professional Surfing Association (UKPSA) event; the North East Open.

The female presence in the surf here is minimal, if not negligible. Between March and June I surfed at Tynemouth as often as I was able and rarely came across another female in the surf. I often surfed on weekdays. During work hours there were usually only 5 – 10 surfers out. On an evening, 20, and on a Saturday, around 30. Even on the busiest days, the greatest number of women I noticed was 3 or 4. This made it exceptionally difficult to meet women with whom to surf, and/or interview.

The tight-knit nature of the surf community is evidenced in the fact that once I did establish some female surfer contacts in the area they tell me that they have spoken to some people at Longsands who seemed to have heard that there was a women looking to make contact with female surfers.

The Newcastle Participants

After 6 weeks I was still struggling to make any contacts with female surfers in the area. I searched for surf-related clubs, surf schools and internet groups and found very little information on female surfers who surfed in the area. There appeared to be no local clubs or competitions through which to meet women who surfed. I emailed a few surf schools to ask for guidance and received no reply. Newcastle University seemed to have a 'Surf Club' with a

few female members, but as Fiona, a German student at the University confirmed, they seemed to be more interested in attending socials than going surfing.

It was only through social networking that I was able to make contact with women who surfed in Newcastle. As was often the case, this networking was through other sporting lesbians. One of my close friends, who lived in Newcastle, used social media site Twitter to ask whether anyone knew any female surfers. One woman messaged back to say that she played football with a woman who went surfing and my number was passed on to Amber. Amber worked in the public sector and was in her early 30s. She lived near the centre of Newcastle. She was athletic and confident, and liked to remain active. She was a member of two sports teams and went surfing occasionally with her friends; Bea, Jane and Lana, as well as a couple of others. She asked them if they would be willing to participate in my research and then passed on their numbers.

Bea, Jane and Lana were all white, and broadly middle-class. Bea was in her late 30s and worked in academia and social services. Petite and energetic, she was involved in a variety of activities in Newcastle. She was enthusiastic about surfing, climbing, biking and windsurfing and surfed as often as she could. Although still an early intermediate, she had a gung-ho attitude. Bea was Amber's ex-partner and had encouraged Amber to give surfing a go because she wanted friends to go with. It was also through a shared interest in surfing that Bea had met her partner, Jane, who was a skilled windsurfer who worked in outdoor education. Like Amber, and Lana too, Jane was also in her early 30s, slim and athletic. Although she usually put windsurfing before any other activity, she was a competent surfer and also regular participated in climbing and biking. Both women had met Lana through another surfing friend. Lana identified herself as heterosexual and was a mature student. She had become good friends with all of the women, and surfed with them as often as she could, although she lived further inland. Lana was visually impaired and had to wear goggles in the surf to protect her eyes from the salt water. Despite this, she was confident being in the water and was of a similar ability to Bea.

I also interview Yiesha, who I got in touch with via email after her contact details had been passed on through a friend. Yiesha was also middle class and British, and her father was Arabic. She referred to herself as mixed Arabic; half English, half Arabic. She was in her early 20s, tall and slim, and surfed occasionally. She had a fear of the water and had learned to swim and trained as a lifeguard as part of her determination to feel comfortable in the surf.

5.4 South Wales: Porthcawl-Port Talbot-Gower, South and West Glamorgan

Next to the West Country, South Wales is one of Britain's most consistent areas for surfing. The area of coast between Porthcawl and Swansea is south west facing, and therefore - like Llangennith on the Gower - picks up the majority of the swell which reaches Wales.

This area is the centre of Welsh surfing and although relatively neglected by the media when compared with Cornwall, the standard of surfing here is every bit as high. There's an enormous variety of waves in the area... [the] coastline is an eclectic mix of wild, untrammelled beauty, cheap 'n' cheerful beach resorts and heavily industrialised bleakness (Anderson, 2008: 255).

This stretch of coastline also lies less than 5 miles from the M4 motorway, which means that it is easily accessible to those travelling west from Cardiff, Bristol, and other parts of Britain. The impact of this accessibility is felt most strongly at Rest Bay in Porthcawl.

The town itself is unassuming. It has a modest mix of shops, bars and restaurants, as well as a holiday park and fair ground at the East end, by Coney Beach. Coney is a south facing beach cordoned off by a harbour wall which protects it from westerly winds, and provides surfers with an alternative option when Rest Bay is 'blown out'. Rest Bay lies to the West of the town. The promenade which runs along from Coney is relatively featureless. Although the holiday park and seafront get busy with locals in the summer, the popularity of Porthcawl as a seaside holiday destination has dwindled in recent years. Conversely, the popularity of Rest Bay itself has flourished in line with the growth of British surfing. Rest Bay is a Blue Flag beach; it is picturesque and patrolled by lifeguards. There is a large car park overlooking the beach, a cafe and toilet facilities. It also has a webcam which features on the popular surf forecasting site www.magicseweed.com. These geographical features, and the proximity of Porthcawl to the M4, make Rest Bay a popular choice for visiting surfers, and an ideal base for the four local surf schools which operate in the area. It also means that the surf at Rest Bay is often busy, particularly in good surf or weather, and more so on weekends. At mid to low tide, the beach is expansive, and can accommodate the increasing numbers. To avoid the crowds, the more 'local' surfers will walk as far as necessary to find a quieter peak. However, as the tide pushes in, the waves improve in quality and surfers are funneled into a

single bay. This increase in density adds a certain intensity to the power relations in the water, as surfers jostle for position.

The Welsh Coast Surf Club, which is based in Porthcawl, was founded in 1969 as CREST, and is Wales's oldest and biggest boardriders association. It comprises a various mix of members in terms of age, ability, gender and socio-economic class background. Almost all, however, are white, and most are from Wales. There are numerous female members, many of whom travel from Cardiff to surf Rest Bay. It was via the club email that I was put in touch with Amy, who agreed to meet me for an interview. Amy was a competent and confident shortboard surfer, slim and athletic. She had entered local competitions in the past and had also been a surf instructor for a number of years, before entering a career in broadcasting. She was local to the area and had been private school educated. She invited me to go along to one of the meetings where I chatted with several other women, ranging in age from their late 20s to mid 40s. All the women were employed and had access to transport. Some of them were mothers and almost all appeared to be normatively hetero-gendered.

Having researched the South Wales area, I chose Mumbles, near Swansea, as my base. This was largely due to the fact that it lies half way between Porthcawl and the most consistent beach on the Gower peninsula; Llangennith. Although South Wales benefits from the same swell patterns as Cornwall and Devon further south, the surf scene in Wales is distinctly different from my experience of Newquay. Surf communities in Devon and Cornwall seem to be concentrated; relatively small villages packed with surfers, shapers² and surf shops. South Wales however was more spread out. In many ways there is evidence of tight knit community bonds, localism and regional pride, but this is juxtaposed with a simultaneous dilution of place-based community ties caused by the influx of surfers from nearby cities and the increasing willingness of 'local' surfers to surf a variety of breaks. Similarly, whilst there are also a number of shapers and surf shops in South Wales, they are fewer and farther between. Because of this, I focused my attention on a much broader geographical area; from Porthcawl, to Llangennith.

Between the two, there was also Aberavon, a beach break located near to the Port Talbot steelworks. Aberavon can produce quality waves and was the local break of Linda Sharp, the most competitively successful female surfer Britain has produced so far. Like Rest Bay it is easily accessible and growing in popularity, but it is nowhere near as popular. This is

² Shapers refer to surfboard shapers and stores dedicated to selling local surfboards

partly due to its industrial backdrop, the run-down nature of the seafront and the reputation for having poor water quality.

The beachfront itself feels uncared for. Once a popular seafront resort for those in the South Wales Valleys, the area had been in decline since the 1970s. Since 2000 the seafront area has undergone a certain amount of regeneration, with limited success. New housing and apartment buildings were built, and a complex named Hollywood Park was constructed, but never fully completed. Although re-development is due to begin as of 2013, the site retains an air of dereliction.

Despite its reputation and appearance however, Aberavon is becoming increasingly popular place to surf. It is home to an enthusiastic and relatively tight-knit local surf community who are happy to maintain the negative perceptions of the surf there. During my time in Mumbles, I often drove round to surf Aberavon. Although I did not warm to the location (the water was brown and often smelt to me like diesel) I had a number of good surfs there, and felt welcome because I was friends with a 'local'.

I could see the industrial chimneys of Port Talbot from across Swansea bay in Mumbles. Like many residential villages on the Gower, Mumbles is a relatively affluent area. Located just five miles west of Swansea it is a popular place to visit for both locals and visiting tourists. It is a picturesque and busy village, with a long promenade and a collection of surrounding beaches. It was also close-by one of the most notoriously 'local' spots on the south coast; Langland. On a big swell, the spot attracted some of the best surfers in the area. Here, I saw very few women surfing and did not feel welcomed when I paddled out there. Instead, I preferred to travel to the end of the Gower to surf Llangennith.

The roads from Swansea to Llangennith are dotted with a handful of small surf shops. Two of them are owned by 'local legends' Pete "PJ" Jones at Llangennith and Chris "Guts" Griffiths just outside Mumbles. Guts is also one of a handful of 'local' shapers in South Wales, along with Gower based John "JP" Purton, Crab Island Surfboards, Roger Cooper in Port Talbot and Odd surfboards in Porthcawl.

Llangennith beach lies at the tip of the peninsula and forms part of Rhossili Bay; a 3 mile stretch of sand recently voted Europe's 3rd best beach (BBC NEWS, 2013). It is the most popular surf spot on the Gower. Despite the time it takes to get there along the narrow roads, it often draws surfers from Swansea and beyond. A large campsite charges daily parking, and provides toilet and shower facilities, a shop and a cafe. In the summer, it is particularly

popular with tourists and is usually full with holidaying families, couples and groups who come purely to enjoy the picturesque beach and the long stretch of surf.

The South Wales Participants

It was to Hillend campsite that I made my first fieldwork visit to Wales, for the *WomenZone* surf camp; a women-only and predominantly lesbian camping weekend. Here, I met Tammy, who introduced me to Bethan, Callie, Kayley, and a number of other lesbian women who surf. These women too, were all white and employed, with access to their own transport. They were less normative in terms of gender than most of the other women I interviewed. Bethan, Callie and Kayley in particular openly identified as lesbian.

Bethan worked in the public sector. She was in her early 30s, slim, and athletic. A confident surfer, she had competed in a number of Welsh-based competitions and was one of the better female surfers on the South West coast. She was confident riding both a longboard or a shortboard, but usually favoured the latter. She was highly committed and surfed daily whenever possible. She was well known at her local break.

Callie and Bethan knew each other well. Callie began surfing around the same time that she had met Bethan, and Bethan had encouraged her as she improved. Although Callie lived in Porthcawl, where she also worked in the public sector, she preferred to surf elsewhere because it was too crowded. She was in her mid 20s and a competent intermediate surfer with a well built stature. She was an enthusiastic surfer but also committed her time to playing team sport.

Kayley knew Bethan and Callie through mutual friends. Kayley was in her early 40s, based in Cardiff and was a self-employed professional. She had also set up a gay events and networking site called *Scene Nomad*. Kayley was enthusiastic about surfing and surfing lifestyle but did not surf on a regular basis, instead, she and her partner tended to participate during weekends or trips away. She was a progressing beginner surfer but was not as committed or physically fit as Bethan, or Callie.

The rest of the interviewees in Wales I contacted via Facebook, and particularly through a page called Surf Senioritas; co-founded by Nessa. Nessa was an intermediate surfer in her late 20s who surfed relatively regularly and seemed to be particularly enthusiastic about the lifestyle of surfing. She had an average build, and liked surf fashion and imagery. She lived in a village in the South Wales Valleys and worked as a freelance teacher. She had

access to her own transport and usually made the hour long trip to Llangennith in order to go surfing. Despite being closer to Porthcawl, she preferred the Llangennith because it was less busy.

Nessa had recently met Liz through Surf Senioritas. Liz was self-employed part-time and lived in Swansea with her male partner and child. She was in her early 30s and was average in build. She had grown up in the Gower surf scene and had surfed more often before she had become a mother. Since that time she had lacked a certain amount of confidence getting back into it, particularly on her own.

Through Surf Senioritas I also made contact with Ann, whom I emailed after recognising her as a surfer I had noticed whilst based in Tynemouth. Ann was based near Cardiff but often travelled to go surfing. She was in her mid 20s and had spent the last few years working temporary jobs in order to save up enough money to go abroad to surf for months at a time. She was a skilled and confident shortboard rider, who had competed in Welsh-based competitions. Physically, she was slim and distinctly hetero-feminine.

Ann recommended that I contact Esther, who was a friend of hers, and one of the best Under 18 surfers in Wales. Esther was a competitive shortboard surfer on the UK stage and had begun to compete in Europe. She was slim, and although she showed little interest in surf fashion, she 'fitted' the popular image of the 'surfer girl'. Her parents were very supportive of her surfing and were willing and able to travel with her, from the Cardiff area, to attend training and competitions. They also went abroad to surf destinations annually.

Another young surfer, Roz, I contacted again via the Surf Senioritas page, where she had posted images of her surfing. She, and her friend Indi, were also competing in the UK and Europe. They were both enthusiastic about the surf lifestyle and followed female professional surfers through magazines and the internet. Both girls were shortboard riders, but Roz had a smaller, more powerful build, whilst Indi was tall and thin. Their surfing styles reflected these physical differences. Both Roz and Indi also had supportive parents, and were based near Cardiff. However, unlike Esther's family, they were not able to travel as extensively, or to holiday abroad.

Feeling (my way) through Research

In this chapter I have offered a partially autoethnographic view of the research 'field' and its participants. I contend that this is significant in order to get a 'feel for' the people and places

with whom I participated in this research, and the kinds of relations I shared with them. Of course, this chapter provides only a partial overview of my (our) journey. However, in moving forward into a theoretical discussion of my 'findings' I hope that some of the interpersonal traces of this journey carry through. This is particularly poignant given the focus of my opening discussion chapter; namely, the ways in which women and girls emotionally negotiate the (gendered) surf space of Britain.

Line of Flight

This is why...

These are not days of sunshine. These are the days we wait for. The offshores, clean swell lines groomed by south easterlies on a crisp autumn morning. These are the days that linger in our minds, the faded light and neoprene armour a million miles away from the bikinis and crowds and showmanship of summer. Laying a rail into a glassy face and feeling the acceleration, the lines we draw and the subtle movements of our bodies. This is where the internal becomes external.

This is where we surf, with the same faces with a hello and a nod. Not always the best or with the flashiest moves but all with the same desire to keep returning. These are people with jobs, children, mortgages. Saving up for the next board or week in the sun.

Sometimes I like the onshore days. I like the fight. Big stormy lumps of water undecided in whether to break or not. Getting the right one and making the best of it. The almost constant paddle through grey chop working out inner frustrations and forgetting everything outside that moment. Just focused on the physical. The stoke of finding a good wave amongst the madness and getting out on a high. Negotiating dirty puddles on drains barefoot and avoiding the glass whilst people huddle past under umbrellas and raincoats fighting the wind. Tea and biscuits and quiet satisfaction in the warm and dry.

This is why I surf, for it is the moment in the madness of life where you can just be in it, alone or with friends, where you can vent or have fun or push yourself harder. Or where you can gather yourself and retreat and find a few answers. There are no bills, no banks, no day job, no questions. The sea asks nothing of you.

Written by Bella, 2012

Chapter Six

Paddling Out: Becoming-Surfer and Emotionally Negotiating Gendered Surf Space

*'Laying a rail into a glassy face and
feeling the acceleration,
the lines we draw and the subtle movements of our bodies.
this is where the internal becomes external'
(Extract from a poem written by Bella, 2012)*

B – Why do you surf??

G – because I love it.

B – what about it do you love?

*G – er... that is a difficult question. I think it's just... you can't put your
finger on it, it's called the stoke isn't it, that's what they call it... there is no
other word... the one thing that actually makes you feel... like, on a good
day, there's literally... nothing else better, in life.*

(Conversation between myself and Bella, 2011)

The surf is a space filled with 'all-enveloping' sensation, affect and emotion (Ingold, 2011: 135). Affective feelings intertwine with embodied subjectivities in various, complicated and intense ways. As part of my research, I have asked many participants to explain to me why they surf, and what they enjoy about it. At the time, this seemed to be a fairly straightforward question. However, when asked by one of the participants to explain why I surf, I struggled to translate into spoken words the intricacies of surfing, for me, as an altogether emotional, embodied and spatial experience. For me, surfing invokes intense feelings of comfort, pleasure and joy. At the same time, I often feel fear, anger or frustration. These words represent just a small fraction of what I have felt whilst surfing. Gendered subjectivities interweave with these embodied emotions in various ways. In this chapter, I suggest that there is something particularly important about how females are feeling (gendered) surf space.

Doing surf ethnography means I am analytically "aware of" gender in the surf. When I surf, I maintain an awareness of gendered relations between surfers. I consider how I feel – gendered – surf space, and how space is occupied by myself and others. However, there have been times during fieldwork when I have "lost" my (gendered) self in the surf. I

have felt so emotionally enmeshed in a surfing experience that I have become almost unaware of my own gender/researcher/subjectivity. It is as though, as Bella writes, I am caught in a moment of immanent un/folding, where the “internal becomes external”, and vice versa. To utilise a Deleuzian (1987) notion, I have been caught up in a *becoming-surfer* (Evers, 2005).

It is important not to let the feminist implications of such spatial becomings go unnoticed. As I have demonstrated, surfing has strong links to masculine norms, and a long history of heterosexist male domination (Booth 2001, 2001a; Henderson 2001; Stedman 1997). Females in surf culture have been subjected to various strategies of containment, such as sexism, sexual objectification and trivialisation as part of maintaining what Kusz describes as ‘a racially and gender exclusive place...where (white) men can unapologetically perform an ideal masculinity...’ (2004: 205). At the same time, Waitt suggests that ‘surfing spaces are neither intrinsically oppressive nor liberatory, but offer variable pressures and possibilities for gendered embodiment’ (2008: 77). Given the distinctly gendered discourses connected to surfing, how surfers *feel* in surf space is both academically relevant, and politically important. As Harding and Pribram, (2002) contend, emotional experiences are always intertwined with the ‘the power relations that constitute them’ (quoted by van Ingen, 2011b: 174), and this is undeniably a topic of feminist concern.

To paraphrase Rooke, any attempt to convey, explore and make some sense of embodied experience necessarily involves taking emotions seriously (2010: 31). Here, I argue that taking emotions seriously is important for understanding the ‘variable pressures and possibilities for gendered embodiment’ in surfing space (Waitt, 2008: 77). I begin the chapter with a discussion of how feeling, emotion and affect are conceptually defined, before outlining their positioning within the context of sports studies and surf research. I then move on to explore the various ways in which women are feeling their way through surf space. In particular, I consider the appearance and impact of fear, pleasure, freedom and anger, and how these are negotiated within and through gender relations, bodies and surfing spaces. Finally, I suggest that some of these emotional experiences have the potential to produce moments of gender disruption which can be seen and felt as feminist.

Thinking about Feeling; Affect and Emotion

In this section I consider the relation between emotions, feelings and affects. As conceptual terms they have been theorised in different ways (Thrift, 2004), and the related theoretical discussions are many and varied (cf. Thrift, 2004; Wetherell, 2012). Although it is beyond

the bounds of this chapter to discuss them in depth, it is important to offer some working definitions of emotion, affect and feeling in terms of how I approach them in the context of my discussion.

One important distinction which is often made involves the way in which these concepts are discursively constructed. As Wetherell has described, emotion involves a process of 'embodied meaning-making' (2012: 4), or in other words, a sort of personal and discursive "making sense" of feeling. Affects however, are viewed quite differently; as sensations which occur prior to their acknowledgement as feelings. As Masters (2000) explains:

Affect is an innately structured, non-cognitive evaluative sensation that may or may not register in consciousness; feeling is affect made conscious, possessing an evaluative capacity...; and emotion is psychologically constructed, dramatized feeling (quoted by Munt, 2008: 5).

Because of its positioning as 'non-cognitive', the notion of affect is closely aligned with non-representational theory (Pile, 2010; Thrift, 2004). This approach refers to a body of work which seeks 'to cope with our self-evidently more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds' (Lorimer, 2005: 83). In other words, affects are 'non-representational' because they refer to inexpressible sensations which cannot be discursively 'captured' in thought, or conveyed in talk (Massumi, 2002). For Massumi, this is what distinguishes affects from emotions, which for him involve 'the capture and closure of affect' (2002: 35). He explains that, whilst affect is autonomous and open intensity, 'emotion is qualified intensity... into semantically and semiotically formed progressions... into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognised' (Massumi 2002: 28).

Theorising further, Conradson (2005) suggests that another key distinction between emotion, affect and feeling is their relation with embodiment. 'In comparison to individualised formulations of emotion, affect is... more attentive to both the embodied and intersubjective dimensions of human feeling' (Conradson, 2005: 105). According to this non-representational conception, whilst emotions are individual, or personal, affects are 'more-than-human' (Lorimer, 2005: 83). That is, they are intensities which can be 'mutual between bodies, or between bodies and things' (Paterson 2005: 164). Essentially, affect represents the *capacity* of the body for relations with the world. This is the sense in which Deleuze used the term:

L'affect...is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: xvi, as translated by Massumi).

In terms of thinking about emotion, gender and space, this positioning of affect as 'prepersonal' or 'more-than-human' has been a cause for concern amongst some feminist researchers (Thien, 2005). For instance, Thien has argued that one of the consequences of the 'turn to affect' has been a 'jettisoning' of emotion in favour of affect, characterised by a dismissal of the feminised 'personal' (2005: 450). She contends that it is 'a familiar pattern of distancing emotion from 'reasonable' scholarship', and works to re-build the distinction between personal and political (ibid.). However, feminists such as Ahmed (2004), Grosz (1994), Probyn (2000, 2003) and Sedgwick (2003) have demonstrated that although the notion of affect might, as it is conceptualised, be universal (rather than individual), the way affects *move* are not. This is because, as I emphasised in chapter three, emotions and affects flow through and between bodies. They mobilise, attract, take shape, impress on and stick to bodies (Ahmed, 2004). Subsequently, what matters is not the conceptual distinctions between emotion, affect and feeling - although they are useful in providing theoretical context to this discussion - what matters is thinking about emotions, affect and feelings in terms of what they *do* through and between bodies (Ahmed, 2004).

Research into gender, space and sporting bodies necessarily brings this point to the fore because, as Davidson and Milligan have argued, 'the body [is] the site of emotional experience and expression *par excellence*... there is little we do with our bodies that we can think apart from feeling' (2004: 523). Thus, even when affects are theorised as distinct from emotions, they remain nonetheless connected through their shared embodiedness.

The focus on emotions in this chapter has come about through, not only my own emotional engagement with the research context, but also through the ways in which the women and girls spoke about surfing in the interviews I conducted. Surfing is a richly visceral, embodied activity; affective intensities manifest themselves both within and between bodies (Evers, 2005, 2009). Through my own surfing body I have experienced these flows, and similarly, the women and girls in my research often made sense of their surfing experiences by expressing how it made them feel; emotionally.

In chapter three, I argued that interrogating emotions allows for the theoretical tracing of how feelings are interpreted, expressed and lived through bodies. Furthermore, because of its embeddedness in social relations 'research on the body must ensure that emotional experiences are included in the analysis of researcher's fieldwork and are made

sense of in politically meaningful ways (van Ingen, 2011a: 174). I contend that the felt, affective and emotive aspects of experience are integral elements of feminist surf research. ‘Placing emotion in the context of our always intersubjective relations offers more promise for politically relevant, emphatically human, [research]’ (Thein, 2005: 450). This forms the basis of argument for ‘taking emotions seriously’ in the context of surfing, as well as sport more widely.

Exploring Emotion, Affect and Gender in Surfing Spaces

As researchers of sport and the moving body, sports studies scholars have, as Rinehart (2010) points out, a greater opportunity than most to explore the affective and emotional ways of knowing, understanding and representing how we feel our way through social spaces. It is arguably the case that ‘scholars studying sport and its related areas should be leading the discussions of affect’ (Rinehart 2010: 187) and how it shapes bodies, space and cultural relations. Whilst there have been some important contributions made (predominantly) in the last ten years, (c.f. Davidson, 2006; Hockey and Allen Collinson, 2007; Markula, 2001a; Owen, 2006; Throsby, 2013a; van Ingen, 2011a, 2011b) there is still surprisingly little research which explores affect, emotion, and evocatively “moving” experiences in sport (Rinehart, 2010; Sparkes, 2002).

Research into surfing, and other 'alternative' sports has begun to emerge as a potentially fruitful sporting context for such research (c.f. Anderson, 2006; Anderson, 2012a, 2012b; Booth, 2009; Evers, 2005, 2006, 2009; Pavlidis and Fullagar, 2012; Saville, 2008; Throsby, 2013a; Waitt, 2008). The literature on emotion and gendered surfing spaces specifically is largely limited to the works of Evers (2006, 2009), Waitt (2008), Waitt and Warren (2008) and Waitt and Clifton (2013). Waitt (2008) provides one of the only spatial works on the female experience of surfing, and how gender relations are experienced through space. He asserts that whilst repetitive gendered performances can result in the continuation and maintenance of certain dominant gender values, such gendering is always dynamic and subject to change. Relying on interview and narrative data from male surfers (Waitt and Warren, 2008) and a small number of female surfers (Waitt, 2008), both papers suggest that men and women, in various ways, experience surfing spaces as gendered. Recognising the significance of emotions, Waitt and Warren state that:

Embodied experiences of space and self are necessarily inflected by emotions... circumstances, desires, acts and experiences are all essential to

understanding how space inhabits the bodies of surfers and surfers inhabit space. (2008: 356)

Evers (2005, 2006b, 2009) addresses more specifically the role of emotion and affect in the context of male dominated surf space. His work focuses on embodied emotions, feelings and sensations in the construction of surfing masculinities. He argues that ‘inter-affective’ experiences are an integral part of how boys and men learn to do embodied surfing masculinity.

Men in this local crew... are bonded by the fear, joy, pride, and so on that their bodies go through together. Our experiences develop felt connections between our bodies... Feelings pass easily through gnarled hands to recall past experiences we have shared. Even with eye contact stoke [joy] can fly through the air. Masculinity is built on intimacy—a sensual life (2009: 901).

Both Evers (2006a, 2006b, 2009) and Waitt (2008) draw attention to the significance of the affective experience of surfing for surfers, and the role emotions play in actively shaping bodies, space and subjectivities. Booth (2009) too, has also engaged with affect in the context of surfing, in his analysis of how *Tracks* magazine invokes affect through visual and textual discourses. I recognise their research here as part of my contention that emotions matter in surfing. I also draw influence from Evers’ methodological engagement with affect.

My analysis differs from these existing works primarily because I focus on the felt experiences of women and girls; thereby offering an as yet unexplored perspective on gendered surfing spaces. There exists very little literature which advances the current understanding of how emotion and affect intertwine with women’s experiences of alternative sporting spaces. A notable exception is recent research by Pavlidis and Fullagar (2012), which explores the affective and emotional negotiation of media networks by roller derby ‘grrrls’. They assert that women involved in roller derby are ‘always becoming-derby grrrl as they produce affects’ (ibid.: 6). In my analysis, I too privilege the idea of becoming-surfer as an affectual, emotional, on-going experience. Like myself, these authors are also strongly influenced by the work of Ahmed (2004), Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Probyn (1996), and draw on this literature in order to mobilise ideas about;

how the derby body is put into motion, and what affects it generates in relation to other bodies, we offer another way of thinking through the movement of gendered subjectivity as it is imagined, felt and reinvented (2012: 6).

As I discussed in chapter four, my approach to exploring the emotive aspects of surfing spaces involves a combination of my own first-hand reflections and those of other female surfers. I recognise that, in exploring what is felt, participant narratives have their limits, because emotions are always ‘ways of expressing something going on that talk cannot grasp’ (Katz 1999, quoted by Thrift 2004: 60). However, I also heed the feminist concerns discussed earlier, regarding the distancing of the ‘personal’ involved when affects are ‘universalised’, presumed or non-representational. Rather than universalise my own affective experience of surf space, my approach to research involves fostering meaningful relations, and findings, which are ‘open, multivoiced, and emotionally rich’ (Tillmann-Healy 2003: 734).

As Anderson recognises, surfing experiences involve the coming together ‘non-humans, humans, and practice, but also... emotional responses; it comes to be codefined by ‘how it makes us feel’’ (2012a: 1). When feelings intertwine with those of others they become shared, spatial and politically relevant. Although this is a project which Evers (2005, 2006b) has certainly set in motion (through his fictocritical engagement with ‘the boys’), my emphasis here is on how female surfers emotionally interpret surf space *in their own words*. By interweaving my own experiences with those of other surfing females, I hope to work towards a more positive, more collaborative conceptualisation of how females experience subjectivity and space (Thien 2005: 453). I would argue that this approach constitutes a distinctly feminist approach to surf ethnography.

The ‘Line up’: Feeling Fear and Gendered Space

The “line-up”, “out-back”, or “out-the-back” is where competent surfers wait for approaching unbroken waves. Beginners will remain in the “white-water” (broken waves) until they have learned to stand up on a moving board. In order to progress, new surfers must at some point “paddle out” past the white water. For most of my learning-to-surf sessions I paddled out alone, and my early surfing experiences were very self-conscious ones. I focused hard on the embodied experience of surfing, of movement, balance and sensation. I was also particularly aware of myself *in relation to* the presence of others around me, of distance, proximity, gaze and identity. Often, this awareness made itself felt

through an embodied discomfort, an affective experience of my body feeling ‘out of place, awkward, unsettled’ (Ahmed, 2004: 148).

I feel really uncomfortable in the ‘line up’ [...] I am aware of the gaze of the surfers as they come close to take off... This gaze adds an entirely different dimension to surfing... It becomes a testing ground. It adds too much pressure to perform. And to get out of the way when someone catches one near you! It is a scary and daunting thing paddling out on your own [...] I doubt I would have paddled out into the line-up today, had there not been a handful of women doing the same.

(Diary of a surf trip, July, 2009)

Through leisure experiences, ‘individuals work things out temporarily and contingently, [in terms] of practices, moments and emotions’ (Crouch, 2012: 63). When women paddle out, the gendered surf space is not something they “enter into” but something that they “join with”. What occurs is a co-mingling of feelings, emotions, bodies, movements, power relations, and many things besides. In the extract above, I “join with” a surfing space with which I am unfamiliar. My fear stems in part from the unknown, but also emerges as gendered, in the way I am comforted by the presence of other women. In this section, I explore this gender-fear relation in terms of how it is spatialised in the surf.

The gendering of social and sporting space is central to how subjectivities become re/configured in those spaces. In the UK, surfing remains distinctly male dominated (Barkham 2006), despite the rapid growth of women taking part. I contend that the ways in which female surfers emotionally interpret a mostly male line-up are always inflected by a gendered, emotional, ‘embodied and somewhat automatic ‘knowledge’ of male dominated social spaces (Taussig, 1992, quoted by Crouch 2012: 64). A number of the surfers I interviewed described feeling uncomfortable in surfing spaces. These surfers refer to feeling intimidated, and scared, and often contextualise this feeling in terms of the gendered nature of surfing.

Especially because it’s so male dominated... I feel like,... almost like you don’t have the same right,... it’s all psychological, I think ... you kind of feel like there’s a pecking order, and, like, say it’s a really good day... you’ll go down there and look and there’ll be 20 blokes in there, and there’s just no way I’d just go and sit in the line up with them (Lynn)

I don't like that kind of like, what I would call male attitude, of you know, you've gotta be really good, and I didn't want to take it very seriously, I just wanted to enjoy it...it was mainly men actually, I found, it was all terribly serious and I stopped, I just got scared basically (Sandy)

In his research into Parkour, Saville emphasises that 'whether specific fears are well founded or not... they have a very real materiality of their own' (2008: 895). In other words, whilst fear may be elusive and pervasive, it is nevertheless intensely felt. It can make you feel 'fragile all over', and this affects our embodied relation to space (Saville, 2008: 894). As Lynn and Sandy convey, fear functions to 'align bodily and social space' (Ahmed, 2004: 70). It is in this way that fear can help to maintain hierarchical relations of power and inequality in the surf; by 'restricting mobility' through space (Saville, 2008: 891).

Spaces extend the mobility of some bodies; their freedom to move shapes the surface of spaces... It is the regulation of bodies in space through the uneven distribution of fear which allows spaces to become territories, claimed as rights by some bodies and not others (Ahmed, 2004: 70)

The emotional interpretation of surf space as male territory is evident in Lynn's description of feeling like she didn't have the same 'right' to be out in the line-up. The fear of paddling out into the line-up hinges, at least in part, on a 'complex interplay of knowledge and feeling' (Crouch 2012: 68) about how spaces are gendered. In some ways, fear functions to sustain a sort of negative performativity of gender whereby some women and girls repeatedly "stay away from" male dominated surf space (cf. Evers, 2005). For many of the women, when they did paddle out, spatial gendering and fear was closely connected to the notion of "being in the way";

Sometimes I feel, you know, if they're really good, I do, I do wanna, I do keep out of their way. And one of the blokes said, "you girls, you're never up in the line up, you always, you know, hold back a bit" and I think we're all conscious that we don't drop in on people, get in other people's ways, or cause any aggro so...(Kelly)

Yeah, it's like, if you drop in on them, they like shout and that, not shout at you and nasty but, be like, you know, well, like because they're like so focused on

their surfing, like, it really annoys them if you like drop in on accident, or get in the way of their wave or something, so... (Indi)

I didn't get one wave, so I just sat there like, I paddled around to look like I was doing something, but I'd always be too scared ... I wait for everyone to get one, and then go, so that I know that I'm not in anyone's way (Rachel)

Sometimes I think people get pissed off with you because they're better, I feel like I'm in the way sometimes... I think that's just my lack of confidence, because I don't think people actually think that, I think it's me, worrying that people think that.. even today... the lads around us that were on the small boards and... I kind of think that they must be thinking "oh god she's gonna get in my way" and that worries me and it definitely holds me back, so I don't, I don't like feeling like that (Natalie)

Young (2005) has theorised that 'for many women as they move in sport, a space surrounds us in imagination that we are not free to move beyond; the space available to our movement is a constricted space' (quoted by Throsby, 2013a: 17). The fear of "being in the way" is demonstrative of how fear functions to restrict certain bodies in surfing space. It is a feeling with which the 'bloke' in Kelly's example fails to identify. This serves as an example of how women are often 'made to feel [their] gender subjectivity, whereas men may be able to forget that their subjectivities are also constructed through the interpellation of gender' (Probyn, 2003: 294).

What is particularly significant is the anxiety connected to the possibility of 'causing' aggressive behaviour, or 'aggro'. The fear of 'aggro' is experienced by some female surfers as a form of spatial violence 'which shrinks bodies in a state of afraidness' (Ahmed, 2004: 70). It is as though these women read their presence in the line-up as a sort of trespassing into prohibited territory. In this sense, the perceived threat of 'aggro' 'often function[s] to preserve inequities in gender relations' (van Ingen, 2011b: 69).

For many women, the solution to this gendered fear has been to seek out what one interviewee (Ellen) referred to as "safety in numbers". As Naomi puts it;

Until those [gendered and spatial] undercurrents change then I think there needs to be, er, the exclusivity of, like, female-only surfing holidays, just so we can get some, some kind of... back up really, and kind of catch up. (Naomi, a free-lance surf coach)

You need that kind of motivation and encouragement I think. And support.
(Lynn)

Many of the women in my research described how the fear of the gendered line up had moved them in various ways to seek out other women to surf with, and that surfing with other women gave them a sense of ‘security’ (Rachel). This is something I explore in more fully in chapter nine.

Shared Feelings and Showing Emotion

In both my ethnographic and interview findings, shared affects and emotions emerged as significant to the connections female surfers establish with one another. In his research with male surfers, Evers (2005, 2006b, 2009) acknowledges that shared affects are an important part of bonding experiences. For the majority of women and girls in my research, the shared *expression of emotions* emerged as an important means through which meaningful connections were established. For instance, I became expressly aware of this during a Brighton Board Girls surf trip to Cornwall, when a number of women gathered together before the first surf session and began to share experiences of feeling fear, nervousness and embarrassment in the surf. It was clear that sharing emotional experiences helped to mobilise a sense of community amongst the women, many of whom were unfamiliar with one another previously (cf. van Ingen, 2011a).

This shared expression of emotions is important to acknowledge, because it draws attention to the distinctly gendered dynamics of emotion in surf space. For instance, as Evers (2006, 2009) observes, male surfers ‘do not like fear near them’ (2006: 235) because the expression of fear often provokes shame in male surf culture (Evers, 2005, 2006). Indeed, some of the female surfers in my research had themselves observed emotional differences when surfing with men:

I definitely resonate with the whole, girls learning to surf, and wanting to teach girls to surf [...] because I’ve been through it myself and because I understand it [...] I remember how frustrating it was, I remember how annoying it was having like my boyfriend try to teach me how to surf, he just didn’t understand [...] he just expected me not to be scared and all those things, I kind of still remember very clearly [...] he made me cry (Naomi)

G - do you think guys have to prove themselves as much, or?

N – mm, probably, but on a different angle, they've gotta prove that they, they're not scared and stuff, guys have got to prove that they're macho, whereas girls have just got to prove that they can do it (Nina)

Several female surfers recognised that the open acknowledgement of fear was not accepted as part of the gendered performativities of male surfers. In fact, Naomi's description suggests that this rejection of fear amongst males is so imbedded in the 'acting out' of gender norms that, like the male surfer in Kelly's example, "being scared" is something with which Naomi's boyfriend failed to identify. In contrast, my research demonstrates that women and girls who surf often recognise and reflect on the experiences of being scared. Fear represents a significant aspect of the felt experience of surfing for many women and girls, and they openly expressed this in interviews:

[It was big] yeah, I had to surf in that, I was with Emily, Penny and Flora, and I had to surf in that, in the finals of the under 14, and I was so scared, I was just really really scared (Indi)

Because I just didn't have the confidence, and I was scared to go out on my own, but there was a couple of times, I put the board in the back of my car and drove up and down Northumberland, looking for like quieter beaches (Bea)

What I don't like, erm... is anything scary, like, I don't always want it to be easier, like if it's a challenge, but it's kind of, I don't like feeling like, a little bit scared (Nadine)

I've always had this lifelong fear of deep water so... That's my fear barrier. Well you know we all have a fear barrier in surfing that stops you from progressing? Erm, I've sort of come to that conclusion from watching the people around you, and whatever that sort of fear is, whether it's a fear of big waves, or deep water, or, whatever it is holds you back from your progress in a way, and mine is definitely, even now, I still really have to (takes a deep breath in) have to get, get out back, especially on a big day (Ellen)

Here, Ellen's words demonstrates the significance of this open acknowledgement of fear. Sharing emotions with other surfers offers an important form of support whereby, as Anderson (2012a: 1) describes, the surf space comes to be codefined by 'how it makes us feel'. The shared acknowledgement of how others feel offers female surfers a valued source of support. This is something I evidence more directly in chapter nine.

In terms of how female bodies occupy surfing spaces, this negotiation of fear is an important issue for feminists because, as Ahmed (2004) suggests above, and as Saville also emphasises, 'emotional engagements with space chang[e] along with [our] mobility in it. To consider the richness and complexity of certain types of fear will inevitably involve a consideration of the mobility and movement of the [body]' (2008: 896). I suggest that this intricate relation to embodied spatial movement refers, not just to the experience of fear, but also to other – often intermixing – emotions, such as pleasure.

Becoming-surfer: Embodying Spaces and Feeling Freedom

As a sport, surfing is somewhat unique in terms of the ways in which participants occupy space, even when compared to other 'lifestyle' sports such as skating, climbing or windsurfing. More so than most sports, the surf space is inherently changeable. It takes place in what Ingold describes as a 'weather world', a space created in the meeting of wind, waves and land formations, 'a world in movement, in flux and becoming' (2011: 131). How bodies are experienced emotionally in this fluid space are affected by such becomings 'in situ' (Waitt and Warren 2008). As Anderson describes:

The surfed wave emerges through a *meeting* of surfer, sea and swell, which itself cannot be separated from the *movement* of its constituent parts... The surfed wave is *now*... it is only through the act of surfing that the surfed wave exists yet this coming together produces meanings, (re)presentations, and emotional affects that outlive its existence (2012b: 576).

Doel (2000) uses the Deleuzian-inspired notion of 'spacing' in order to capture this dynamic coming together of 'an action, an event, and a way of being' (Doel, 2000: 125). Spacing involves the immanent *becoming* of emotion, subjectivity and space 'in place' (Doel, 2000). It is a constantly constituted process; an immanent folding and unfolding of bodies in space. Within the surf space, gendered bodies co-mingle with the meanings, representations and emotional affects which outlive each and every surfed wave. How women feel in this space is constitutive of their presence within those spaces, constitutive

of gendered spacing. Anderson refers to this dynamic as 'relational sensibility' (2009: 121). Relational sensibility draws attention to the importance of how ability, skill and nature intertwine within surf space. In this section I explore the significance of these intertwinings, as women enter into a *becoming-surfer*.

I am the only woman out today. There are maybe 10 men dotted about. It is windy, and the waves are big, maybe 6ft or more... but its lumpy, they're like big rolling mounds rather than peeling, heavy walls... I feel like I've been out in bigger surf, or am I just a better surfer now? I don't know, but I don't feel scared. In fact, I feel quite calm... A big set rolls in, a guy on a shortboard turns to paddle, but I am placed perfectly and I have right of way, so I paddle too. I feel the wave lift me and as I pop up, he pulls off the back. A pang of adrenalin. I glide down the short face, and let out a "woo!", before cranking my left foot down to project the board upwards, up, up, up... Weightlessness. Flying. My body flushes with endorphins as I dive back into the sea behind the crashing wave. I re-surface, laughing.

(A Surfed Wave, South Wales, 2012)

The reflection above was written after more than 2 years of consistent surfing. I do not feel scared, despite the male-dominated nature of the space, and the size of the surf. I interpret my changed relation to fear as being intertwined with my ability as a surfer, and my sense of comfort in the surf. My confidence is reflected in the way I utilise my position in the line-up. I am 'calm', comfortable with the movement of the space and assured by my 'right of way'. I do not hide the pleasure I get from the surfed wave.

It is important to emphasise the particularity of this surfing moment, and the sense of belonging I temporarily experienced as part of it. This is because the surf, and the surfed wave in particular, is always an "in between" space, an assemblage of space and time, speed and slowness; movement, surfer, wave. As Anderson emphasises, the surfed wave is *now*, and the surfing space is equally as momentary. I label this moment a *becoming-surfed-wave*. It is constituted in a particular coming together of people, sea and swell, and any number of things besides (Evers, 2005). How I feel in *this* particular surfing moment is dependent on how these constituent parts come together, or rather, how they are – momentarily – 'becoming'.

Like all highly practiced skills, the act of catching and riding waves is something that you come to know through your body. The more you surf (particularly, the more you

surf the same ‘places’), the more embodied the experience becomes; it is less about thinking (in the cognitive sense) and more about feeling. Eventually, you come to feel your body as part of the wave; when this happens surfing is experienced as a sort of ‘moving assemblage’ of swell, ocean, surfboard and surfer, a *becoming-surfer* (Evers, 2005). This is something I explore further in chapter seven.

For those who are relatively new to surfing however, the affective surfaces of bodies in space are experienced very differently to the ‘moving assemblage’ described above. *Becoming-surfer* is experienced as foreign, uncomfortable, and often scary.

I just felt really, yeah, just unconfident... making an idiot of myself in front of some really good surfers, and you just feel like a bit of a twat, for the first couple of years... it took me ages to be confident in the water, a long time.
(Kath)

It's just, it's like not knowing where rips are, and not knowing quite how far I am from shore and, maybe, I'll get out, I'll bust my arse to get out[back]. And then I'll wimp it and come back in on like the first wave [...] I think it's just learning more about it, isn't it (Lana)

The proper learning bit, you know when you're just learning to get to your feet and stuff, I can't really remember that, but I remember being really frustrated when you're not getting anywhere, like when you start catching the green water, and just falling off or whatever, I remember screaming underwater like, I was so annoyed (Nina)

I think I thought I was gonna die generally (chuckles) just like, scared of waves, scared of, looking like an idiot, erm, that I wasn't doing it right (Naomi)

At some point in the process of becoming-surfer, the surfing space begins to feel familiar, comfortable. Eventually, a surfer might feel ‘so at ease with [their] environment’ that, like Ahmed’s description of comfort, ‘it is hard to distinguish where one’s body ends and the world begins’ (Ahmed, 2004: 148). For the women I interviewed, feeling comfortable in the surfing space was closely related to their perceived ability as a surfer. *Becoming-surfer* instigated an embodied experience of “joining with” the surf space which was experienced as a spatial *belonging*.

I'm just so like thankful that I kind of put myself through that, now I can just, have that confidence [...] once you get through those stages of people kind of, holding your hand a little bit you can just go out there on your own and have that sense of freedom and not have to, yeah, worry about anyone, or anything.
(Naomi)

My first experience of surfing was going out with boys [...] I used to go out in quite big surf, at fistral, and...being, absolutely scared. Feeling sick, I was so scared. [...Now], it just doesn't bother me... and duckdiving, mastering duckdiving. My fear's gone now. I know I can get out of pretty much any situation now (Jen)

What Naomi and Jen describe is the affectual 'spacing' of *becoming-surfer*. When you feel you belong, 'the surfaces of bodies disappear from view... bodies extend into spaces, and spaces extend into bodies' (Ahmed, 2004: 148). Although this becoming is continuously fleeting and inconsistent, as the surfers below convey, this sense of comfort is nevertheless significant.

I'm comfortable up until... head high... I like fatter waves... when they curl... they can be nasty, so I like about head high, and little bit mellow, not too curly, and you can go a little bit overhead if they're fatter, yeah... that's my sort of size (Hannah)

I am comfortable up to head high, erm, anything overhead, I'll start "it'll be alright" I just like a fun surf... rather than it just being incessant, you know, like, big strong, coming through, where it's just hectic the whole time and alright you'll get some of the best waves you'll never forget on those days but... I don't surf to be scared, I've got no ambition to be like out in well overhead, you know... Yeah, head high's fine, yeah, that's my comfort zone I think (Kath)

Well it's a buzz isn't it, it's like going fast, on a roller coaster, it's like you're scared but it's such, why would you pay money to do that? It's adrenaline, it's a buzz, and afterwards you feel amazing, and when you're out there you feel alive! (Jen)

*I think a bit of healthy fear is good for you, it keeps you on your toes doesn't it
(Bethan)*

I would argue that this aspect of surfing offers women an empowering and potentially disruptive way of experiencing their bodies and space. It is a relational sensibility (Anderson, 2012a) which allows surfers to 'explore, refine and even enjoy fearful emotions' (Saville, 2008: 903). This sort of 'playing with fear' (Saville, 2008: 891), both individually, and through its open acknowledgment, enables women and girls to experience differently their gendered, embodied connections to space. The experiences of belonging, comfort, the 'buzz', and feeling 'alive' all allow female surfers to experience surf space as pleasurable. Moments of comfort and pleasure are important because they signify that women are experiencing an embodied sense of joining with the moving assemblage of the surf.

Moments when we feel wide-eyed, wide open, in love with the world... the waves, the salt-smell spray in my face... moments of feeling "this is right" ... that might best be described as a sense of belonging (Game, 2001, quoted by Crouch 2012: 72).

These moments of spatial belonging - of *becoming-surfer* - when "the internal becomes external" and vice versa, enable women to negotiate, through their embodied relations with space, the emotional, often scary, experiences connected with surfing. Sometimes, moments of *becoming-surfer* might be so affectual that subjectivities are forgotten and words are lost. The 'surfer temporarily loses perception of all external boundaries' (Scheibel, 1995, in Anderson, 2012b: 580). In her long distance swimming research, Throsby describes the feeling as a 'whole-body engagement and belonging' which was experienced as 'an incredible freedom' (2013a: 17). The surfers in my research also described a feeling of freedom:

The feeling of catching a wave is amazing... I can't really describe how it makes me feel erm... [It's] just like your board and you, and it's just like raw, it's just, I love it... it feels like you're free in a way. (Nadine)

It means quite a lot really. Cos its freedom, and peace, and switch off, escapism, and erm... The act of surfing is amazing. It's just... I dunno. It's

impossible to describe.... Like only a surfer knows the feeling. It's like... in that one moment, nothing else matters. (Amy)

The freedom and pleasure that Nadine and Amy find through surfing is experienced as unlike anything else they are emotionally aware of. It is “raw”. Elemental. Surfers have labeled this deeply-affectual satisfaction ‘the stoke’, a feeling which Evers (2006) describes as an ‘intense elation that ensnares a board rider... a fully embodied feeling of satisfaction, joy and pride’ (2006: 229-230).

Ahmed writes that there is ‘an important spatial relation between pleasure and power’ (Ahmed 2004, 165). The capacity for experiencing pleasure in a social space ‘functions as a form of entitlement and belonging’ (ibid.). In this sense, the presence of ‘stoked’ women in male-dominated surfing spaces might carry with it significant feminist potential. This is because stoke saturates surfing spaces. It is uniquely affectual, spatial and embodied. Subsequently, when female surfers are ‘stoked’ the exhilaration ‘can be understood not only as a moment of personal pleasure, valued for its own sake, but also as a politically significant... experience’ (Throsby, 2013a). The flood of endorphins that ensnares the body during ‘stoke’ brings with it a ‘feeling of power and entitlement to space’ (Throsby, 2013a). In this sense the pleasure of *becoming-surfer* works *on* and *through* surf space via the spatial pleasure of feeling – female – belonging. The significance of such experiences lies in the ways in which surfers negotiate *for themselves* an embodied ‘comfort zone’ in the surf space. It is this affectual belonging which disrupts the normalising of male-dominated surf space and the fears connected to it. It is not however, as I discuss in the next section, a process which goes uncontested.

Dropping in: Spatial Tensions and Feeling Anger

Henderson (2001: 329) has described surfing as ‘a territorial form of pleasure, dreams and nostalgia... a fantasised last frontier for sometimes anxious men and youths’. The pleasure-power relation connected to stoke (discussed earlier) means that claiming and guarding it has been a significant part of the gender struggles which characterise surfing’s history, and is evidenced through the ways in which some male surfers dominate space. *The macho sorta... “every wave’s got to be mine”... paddling around constantly...[with an] air of aggression (Bella)*. A good example of such behaviour is the act of dropping in. A drop in is when a surfer ‘takes off’ on a wave in front of another surfer who is already riding it, often ending their ride. It is also widely considered to be a cardinal sin, in terms of surf etiquette. Yet, several of the participants, including myself, have experienced male surfers

purposely dropping in on us, and have all *felt* this to be a lack of respect based on gendered assumptions:

G – have you ever experienced any sort of sexism at all?

A – erm.....a little, in the sense that, erm, when you paddle out somewhere where no one knows you, then, erm, you'll paddle for a wave and guys will go and drop in on you because they don't expect you to make it... as soon as you start making waves, and shouting them off waves, then they'd be like "oh right" and then they'd give you space... I mean, there'd be an assumption – "oh right, she can't surf, she's a girl" and you'd see it in their faces, and then you'd surf and then they'd be like "oh right, fair enough" (Amy)

Normally, once they see me surfing, then I'm like, "oh right" but yeah, there can be this assumption that girls aren't gonna get as many waves, so the blokes are just ready to get it you know, then it can be intimidating (Andrea)

Waitt describes intentional drop ins as a form of 'aggressive posturing' designed to 'exert authority' over territory (2008: 80). These spatialised and territorial power relations are what Naomi referred to as an 'undercurrent' of sexism in surfing. As I discuss in chapter one, the literature on surfing widely recognises the existence in 'male' surf culture of what Henderson (2001: 325) refers to as 'containment devices for women'. The symbolic violence exacted against women by dropping in works as a form of spatial containment in the surf. Whilst this domination of space invokes fear in some surfers, in others (often the ones who will paddle out anyway) it stirs up a feeling of anger, frustration or annoyance.

It is busy in the water tonight, the vibe feels more competitive, impatient. Because of this, I am more aware than usual of being a female amongst so many men.

A nice wave rolls in. I paddle... At this point surfers on the inside usually paddle out of the way, but one surfer doesn't move. It is too late to change course, as I feel the energy of the wave under my board. But the surfer doesn't even attempt to move. I try to re-align, losing speed... the wave passes under me. No one else catches it. My body fizzes violently with frustration, I turn around and look at the surfer. He glances at me and then looks at another male surfer, smiling with what I

take to be satisfaction. “What exactly did he gain from staying in my way there?” I wonder. I want to say something but don’t, and I’m determined to take a wave from under his nose. I even consider dropping in, and I hate that I have been forced to feel so competitive and angry... “come on Gina, let it go”.

(Field notes, Newquay, 2011)

The extract above effectively conveys the ambivalence of gendered anger in the surf space. The spatial injustice I perceive in this extract is embodied affectively, and makes me angry. Yet, how I feel about this anger is uncomfortable, and eventually, my response is to ‘let it go’ and paddle away. Van Ingen writes that ‘anger is a dominant emotional response to injustice. Yet, anger is often dismissed or interpreted as bitterness when expressed by women... or by other marginalized groups’ (2011a: 174). This gendering of anger is something that was made evident in both my ethnographic and interview findings, and was intricately connected to the domination of space. Although justified, (as with my own example) the experience of anger was often described as an unwelcome emotion.

If I go out with my boyfriend, he sometimes drops in on me and stuff. So I get really mad at him, so then I like, have to try and like get competitive when he’s there otherwise I just won’t get a wave, and I’ll get really mad, and once you get angry your surfing just goes down the hill... I’m not very good at like battling for waves and stuff. (Pippa)

I think it’s more important for, if you are a girl to kind of go out there and prove that you can catch a couple of waves ...which is annoying because you are not there to surf for other people. (Naomi)

As both Pippa and Naomi recognise, responding to such gendered spatial tensions necessarily involves a process of emotional negotiation. For instance, becoming annoyed, or getting angry might be dealt with by “letting it go”, or paddling away (as I did) or it might be channelled into a more ‘aggressive’ style of surfing (*battling*). This often involves jostling for position, ‘making waves’ and ‘shouting people off waves’. Rarely though, will anger itself be openly and explicitly expressed by women¹. Unlike fear, the expression of anger is not socially ‘permitted or encouraged’ amongst women (van Ingen,

¹ This is not however, always the case, and it is a point I return to again in chapter eight

2011a: 175). Meanwhile, the expression of anger amongst men in the surf is not uncommon (Evers, 2005), and this can sometimes spill over into aggression and violence:

I've heard about guys getting aggro from guys, I've seen a guy hit a guy in Porthcawl, a few times I've seen punch-ups in Porthcawl [...] dropping in and stuff (Nessa)

Both in surfing, and in sport more widely, aggression is a relatively normalised part of masculine performativities (Evers, 2005; van Ingen, 2011b). Indeed, 'sanctioned aggression and violence are still considered the hallmarks of masculinity and male-dominated sporting landscapes' (van Ingen, 2011b: 69). Claims to the normativity of anger, aggression and male physicality directly impact on how gendered power relations are performed, asserted and normalised. In sporting spaces in particular, this process is characterised by a distinct 'double standard' in terms of male and female aggression (van Ingen, 2011b: 69).

In the surf, Waitt suggests that some young women are paradoxically 'assuming masculinities and femininities at the same time', and he utilises an 'aggressive' attitude to surfing as one of the ways this is made evident (2008: 92). However, as he recognises, this potentially subversive behaviour can often rely on 'versions of normative surfing masculinities' (2008: 90). For instance, as I discussed in chapter one, certain styles of surfing - such as 'aggressive' shortboarding and big wave surfing - have become culturally aligned with, and valued as, dominant forms of surfing masculinities. Subsequently, whilst the adoption of an 'aggressive' attitude by female surfers might resist the dominant codes of gender, it is also problematic in terms of its feminist implications. The following extract from Lynn demonstrates this;

Penny is very very good, and very confident and she can surf quite aggressively, so, yeah... she'll shout you off waves and she drops in quite a lot, and her surfing is quite aggressive so yeah, like me and Ellen, if Penny's been there we've been like "oo, lets avoid Penny". (Lynn)

Holmes describes how the expression of anger amongst women complicates the 'ideal of sisterhood' connected with feminist politics and exposes 'the ambivalence of anger and its operation within particular power relations' (Holmes, 2004: 209). For instance, throughout surfing's short history, women have felt under pressure to conform to this 'aggressive' style. According to Layne Beachley, seven-times winner of the ASP world tour (1998 - 2006), surfing 'like a man' was the only way for female shortboarders to gain respect

(Beachley, 2009 Surfermag.com). In some ways, as my findings demonstrate, this is still the case. For many women who surf, surfing 'like a man' is an important, and often necessary part of establishing their 'right' to space in the line-up. However, this (re)establishment of aggression as the valued norm 'often function[s] to preserve inequities in gender relations' (van Ingen 2011b: 72).

Whether adopted by men or women, 'aggro' remains intimidating, and, as Lynn describes, it can lead to other female bodies (ones which don't emulate 'the guys') feeling 'out of place, awkward, unsettled' (Ahmed 2004: 148). And yet, van Ingen has argued that aggression in sporting spaces can be 'a source of excitement, pleasure, and satisfaction' (2011b: 69), and that as such, it is important to question its normative alignment with men and masculinity, as well as its taboo status in the lives of women. Clearly, this aspect of *becoming-surfer* demonstrates the complexity, for feminists and surfers alike, of thinking and feeling their way through the mix-gendered space of surfing.

There are, however, also signs that some women are adopting *different* ways of challenging gendered domination of space. Like those women who adopt aggressive behaviour, such challenges are also instigated by anger, but an anger which is *felt* as feminist. We might theorise feminist anger as one which involves a particular reading of the world. It instigates an affective movement from anger 'into an interpretation of that which one is against, whereby associations or connections are made between the object of anger and broader patterns or structures' (Ahmed, 2004: 176). When this happens, feminist anger might instigate moments of gendered creativity in the surf.

If they [drop in, purposely] once... I'll let them off, if they do it twice, I start getting really annoyed. If they do it 3 times, then I give them a mouthful, yeah, but I'm really polite... I don't like shout and swear... there was one guy once, he nearly killed me with his board, he was sitting with his mates. I paddled back out to him, and I went full on school ma'am on him, and all his mates were just like sniggering, and he just went bright red... and hopefully he'll never do it again.... Yeah, I haven't found being a woman a negative thing. I've found it more of a positive thing. (Amy)

I think I'm more likely to respond with something like "sorry", knowing that it would make them feel bad for rolling their eyes at me... If someone was really horrible to me I would be really apologetic probably, knowing that they'd feel guilty and actually end up apologising to me (Nadine)

E - I'll ask them politely not to drop in on me anymore but they'll keep doing it, and I'll say, please don't, again, and they think I'm just trying to make an argument and just have an argument with me (Esther)

G – does it ever make you angry?

E – yeah, it does but, there's no need to kick off at someone, just having a quiet word sorts things out better than if you have an argument with someone

Ahmed writes that 'we must persist in explaining why our anger is reasonable, even in the face of others who use this anger as evidence of poor reason' (Ahmed 2004: 177). The women in these extracts negotiate anger in different ways. Whilst Esther expresses herself calmly and clearly, Amy and Nadine utilise a slightly more creative approach to anger. These examples instigate moments of what Butler (1990) termed 'performative surprise'. Surprise is visceral, it makes itself felt, meaning it causes a rupture in the comfortable, normative, gendered coding of subjectivities and space. For instance, whereas aggressive retaliation is normalised in surfing, Amy's authoritative, yet feminine reaction is surprising and uncomfortable for the male surfers and makes itself felt through embodied shame and flushed cheeks. Nadine's strategy too, also 'plays' with anger by attempting to invoke shame. Viewed from a feminist perspective, this kind of disruption to gendered emotional performativities might be viewed as a form of political 'disidentification'. As I discussed in chapter three, disidentification involves a scrambling and recoding of dominant cultural meanings (Muñoz, 1999). Here, it allows for a mutation of anger which functions to expose 'exclusionary machinations', and 'recircuits its workings' by doing things *otherwise* (Muñoz, 1999: 31). This sort of feminist anger is significant because it not only represents a refusal to be contained by fear, but also a desire to avoid 'buckling under the pressures of dominant ideology (identification, assimilation)' (Muñoz, 1999: 11-12). In van Ingen's words, 'anger can strengthen the resolve to endure' (2011a: 175), and this is demonstrated in Amy's implication that, far from being a *negative thing*, there are means through which being an (angry) woman can be '*more of a positive thing*'. We might conceptualise this as a possible *becoming-feminist* through surf space.

Feeling Feminist?: Concluding thoughts

It must be tough for the girls with the line-ups clogged with blokes who... think the girls get in the way. Blokes tend to "drop in" on women surfers, because they think that women do not surf as well as men... it is a form of insult. (Evers 2006: 240)

Emotions are intricately connected to the affectual and embodied experience of *becoming-surfer*. My research demonstrates that women who surf are contending with the emotional ‘demands’ of surfing spaces in various ways. Gender has emerged as central to, and always in conversation with, how surfers are feeling a sense of belonging in surfing spaces. Spatial belonging represents a powerful aspect of *becoming-surfer*, and surfing ability is closely related to this. However, as I have argued perceptions of ability and belonging are always already gendered and, like the sand banks of a beach break, continuously shifting. Furthermore, what I have been unable to expand on here, is the various ways in which gendered and emotional ‘spacing’ is also bound up with place-based power relations, such as localism. This is something I expand on in chapter eight.

The domination of space by men in the surf, whether through populous or action, often instigates moments of fear and anger amongst women. These emotions permeate surfing power relations in ways which often function to maintain the normativity of dominant masculinity via conformity or containment. As this chapter demonstrates, it is a complex gendered dynamic; evidenced in the ways some women adopt so-called ‘masculine’ (Waite, 2008) ways of dominating space. In particular, the dominance of (masculine) territorial ‘aggression’ in the surf highlights the need to develop a more nuanced inquiry into the normalising of the male-masculine-aggressive relation in sport (van Ingen, 2011b). Furthermore, it is important to explore how this relation is emotionally felt by all surfing bodies, not just female ones. Although my research focuses solely on females, it may also be the case that some male surfers experience surf space as distinctly ‘male-dominated’ or ‘macho’, even whilst others remain unaware, or ‘untouched’ by gender in the surf (Evers, 2005).

Conversely, there are also ways in which surfing instigates feelings of freedom for women and girls who surf. Moments of ‘stoke’ are potentially disruptive in the way that they ‘stand apart, obtrude, reach out and touch us... they disrupt habituated perception’ (Paterson 2005: 16). Deleuze has referred to such moments as ‘new space-times’; a folding of the internal and external, through which gendered subjectivities become momentarily lost (Deleuze 1995: 176). This is an important point which I take with me to the next chapter. What has been revealed in this chapter, are the various ways in which women and girls are feeling female, feeling fear, and feeling freedom in the surf. Whilst gendered spatial struggles in the surf make some women and girls angry, this anger is revealing, and important in terms of how it moves women to respond.

Indeed, all emotional negotiations are important in this sense. 'Taking seriously individuals expressed emotions is an ethical imperative and an acknowledgment of

participants' extraordinary capacity for self-understanding and self-analysis' (van Ingen, 2011a: 175). I would argue that the ways in which the female surfers in my research acknowledge, share, speak about and negotiate their emotions is evidence of this. The complex milieu of affects, feelings and emotions in the surf is always gendered, and I suggest that the negotiation of these is causing some female bodies to feel-feminist. In the context of a sporting culture which is still defined largely by masculine norms and values, this, *I feel*, is something worth taking seriously².

² At the same time, I am cautious not to over-emphasise the importance of this politically, because as a cultural space, surfing in this country remains vastly normative, white, and privileged. The role of privilege in how surf spaces are felt remains a topic which we must also take seriously.

Line of Flight

Newquay, 7th April 2011

Jen calls me in the afternoon.

"You going in?" She asks.

"What, now? Is it not a bit big?"

"Its not too big for me..."

"Is that a challenge?" I joke.

"Well...it might be too big for YOU..."

"If you go, I'll go". I'm so easily swayed.

We jump in off the rocks. It is big. Overhead but thankfully crumbling.

"I'm not really sure what I'm doing out here to be honest" I say, nervously... It's true. It's a bit too big for me. I probably won't even try to catch one.

A set rolls in and we get caught by a wave. It throws my body around. Hard. I am disorientated. I avoid panic, go limp and let it take me. *"I'll come up eventually"*. I find my way to the surface and start paddling, Jen is looking back for me. *"Where d'you go? It must have pushed you right back"*. She keeps looking back... *"paddle this way, away from the rocks..."*

We get out back and sit. The sun is low on the horizon and clouds loom creating colours of gold, brown and grey. The vibe is very different in the water today. Perhaps it's me, but it seems less relaxed. More serious. More intense. There's normally a bit of chat between surfers, but there was none today. All eyes were on the horizon. Concentrating... Watching. It is all men and more are coming in from the rocks....

I sit and watch. Jen paddles for one, catches it, bottom turn and jumps off... I sit in place for a while, debating whether or not to try. I am scared. I am an independent surfer, I like to think I know my ability, and push myself within those limits, matching them to the conditions I will surf...But I am unsure about today. I did not consider it in the same way. I wouldn't have gotten in if I hadn't wanted to impress Jen. I'm not sure why... but two things I know. Firstly, she is a competent, confident surfer, better than me.... Secondly, I am very attracted to her. Either of these things, or both, might be part of the reason why...

A wave comes, I am placed perfectly for it. Might as well go for it! I paddle, I feel people watching, Go! I urge myself. I catch it. Pop-up, I see Jen see me. I fall off. But i'm glad I went for it. As I paddle back out, Jen shouts smiling "*did you get that one bird?*" – I like it when she smiles at me...

"*Nearly*" I say. I am glad she said that. It's almost as if the word "bird" strikes a line through the masculinity of the space... Or it does for me anyway.

I paddle back out to her. "*It's busy isn't it?*" She says. "*If we sit together, we might be able to get a peak to ourselves*"...

Chapter Seven

Women in Wetsuits: The Affective Surfing Body; without Organs

I hop into my van, change into my bikini and pull on my wetsuit. It is my spring suit – I'm so pleased it is now warm enough to wear it. I love the ease with which I pull it on – a stark contrast to my winter suit, and so much easier to move in. It's a little worn and stretched from use, which I like. I grab my board and start jogging down the lane. I love the feeling of freedom; just me, wetsuit and board. I'm really starting to feel like a surfer.

The tarmac makes a sort of slapping noise under my bare feet as I jog, it feels hard, but smooth and warm... I open the gate to the field which heads down to the beach. I get the first glimpse of waves and feel a rush of endorphins fill my body. The track is uneven now, and stoney in places. I try to move quickly but carefully, watching my dusty feet as I go. My gaze wanders up my wetsuit clad legs; they look ok. Then to the little bulge that is my stomach – I don't like that – it's always there. Sometimes it gets flatter after I've been surfing for a few days, but it will never disappear, and I wish it would.... Still, I like wearing my wetsuit, it makes me feel fit for some reason, maybe it's the feeling of the neoprene hugging every muscle. It evokes a visceral awareness of my body. Of embodiment. I remember when I first bought it in Liverpool 4 years ago; it felt so alien, and how much I laughed when I first tried on my winter wetsuit. Now they both feel like a second skin.

(Surf trip to Newquay, July 2010)

In the British context, the issue of wearing a wetsuit is important to any analysis of the surfing body. Potts (2004: 19) describes the body as created 'through temporary assemblages that may involve connections between the organic and inorganic'. For contemporary surfers in Britain, where water temperatures drop to 5 degrees in winter and peak at 15-18 degrees in summer, a wetsuit is not just a piece of surfing equipment; it is a second skin, part of the assemblage that is the British surfing body.

In this extract from one of my earliest experiences of surfing in Newquay, my fieldnotes allude to the complexity of feelings which are bound up with the affective experience of my wetsuited body. I consciously surveil my body, judging it by how it looks. I convey a feeling of disappointment and shame at the ‘bulge’ that is my stomach, because it is not smooth or flat enough; it is less than ideal. At the same time, I refer to the positive affects evoked by my wetsuit. I refer to feeling ‘free’, ‘like a surfer’, ‘fit’ and ‘aware’ of my body. Through my research, it became evident that the ways in which other female surfers experienced their wetsuited bodies were similarly as complex. In this chapter I aim to explore some of these complexities through a consideration of how ‘women in wetsuits’ visually, sensually, experientially and affectively experience female surfing bodies.

In particular, I offer some important reflections in relation to one of my key research questions, concerning how female surfers in Britain interpret and negotiate the commercial and cultural imagery connected to women's surfing. In terms of gendered bodies, the discourses connected to surfing are complicated. The act of riding waves takes on many forms. As a physical practice, it offers women the opportunity to variously explore embodied power, competitiveness, grace, aggression, style, daring, playfulness; to challenge and be challenged. As I emphasise throughout this thesis, surfing is always becoming, in flux; changing with weather, tides and seasons, as well as cultures, trends and identities. It affects and is affected by various and multiple bodily relations, and yet, the popular discourses connected to surfing bodies do not reflect the same diversity and possibility. As conveyed earlier in this thesis, the popular image of the female surfer is heterosexy and white, tanned, toned and bikini-clad (Comer, 2004, 2010; Heywood, 2007, 2008; Knijnik et. al. 2008; Wheaton, 2013). In both popular culture, and the vast majority of surf-related media, “women in wetsuits” are much less visible. Furthermore, non-normative bodies in particular (too old, too strong, too big, too black, too lesbian) are overwhelmingly rendered invisible.

Given the contradictions inherent to gender, sexuality, embodiment and surf culture, I suggest that British surfing is a particularly interesting context in which to explore how “women in wetsuits” experience and negotiate bodies and embodiment. Taking the notion of in/visibility as a point of departure I aim to offer an alternative view of the surfing body, inspired by Deleuzian theory, and the Body without Organs (BwO). What I wish to explore, are some of the connections between the luminous surfer girl ideal, how she is ‘seen’ by female surfers, and how women and girls experience their own bodies in British surf space. In

doing so I consider both the impact of the surfer girl image as a discursive bodily ideal, and surfing as an affective embodied experience.

I begin the chapter by outlining my theoretical approach; drawing on elements of both Foucauldian and Deleuzian theory. I then consider in more detail, the significance of the bodily ideals connected to women's sport, and surfing in particular. In the three sections which follow, I explore some of the main ways in which surfing embodiment made itself felt - affectively - through my research; namely, through the shame of the internalised gaze, through the pride of the momentary BwO, and through the desire which emerges as part of its assemblage.

Theorising the British Surf Body

Up until recently, research dedicated to theorising the female sporting body has centred predominantly on how dominant discourses function to maintain a socially constructed, heterosexually attractive, overwhelmingly white, feminine 'norm' (e.g. Duncan, 1994; Markula, 2001b, 2006b; Thorpe, 2008). Foucauldian analysis has without a doubt dominated the majority of feminist theorising in this area (Helstein, 2007), and work on non-normative bodies has also been developed within a similar theoretical frame, by considering how the disruptive body, that is, how the masculine, risky, raced or muscled body might discursively resist and challenge heteronormativity (e.g. Caudwell, 1999; Holmlund, 1989; McDonald, 2002, 2008).

Whilst I connect with Foucauldian theory in some parts of this chapter, my approach to theorising the body is largely influenced by Deleuze, and thus emphasises the more affective aspects of exploring the body. I agree with Probyn in the sense that 'we need to re-emphasize the promiscuous nature of the body as a sociological object (Probyn, 2000: 14). Throsby's (2013a, 2013b) recent research into marathon swimming in Britain (drawn on in the previous chapter) offers an important contribution in this sense. Drawing on both (auto)ethnographic and interview data, she offers a sensory, sensuous reading of marathon swimming which is alive with affect:

Seasick from the boat ride over, the mingled odours of marathon swimming - boat diesel, sea salt, cream and grease - trigger another wave of nausea and disorientation... I know that I have to go, that for me, being *in* is always better

than being *on* the water... the momentum of the drop [drives] me well below the dark surface... the water stops my descent and I hang still for a few brief seconds, held by the dark, warm sea, and hearing and feeling the bubbles from my trickling exhalation roll up my face to the surface. My heart no longer pounding in my ears, or my skin crawling with fear (2013a: 6).

Much like Evers (2005, 2006, 2009) work in surfing, Throsby's sensory exploration of the pleasures of marathon swimming 'brings to light alternative and politically provocative ways of experiencing the gendered sporting body' (2013a: 5). In doing so, her analysis functions to open up a theoretical line of flight which is 'outside of dualistic habits of thought, providing a platform for thinking differently about embodiment' (ibid.: 8). In this chapter, I aim to make a similar contribution; that is, I utilise the notion of the BwO in order to explore how we might 'see', feel and think about the female surfing body 'differently'.

Taking a Deleuzian approach to the affective body means embracing and exploring 'the change, *becoming*, that occurs when bodies come into contact' (Ahonen, 2010: 114). It involves a shift in ontological focus from bodies as things which are, to bodies as things that *do*; things that connect and affect. As I recognised in chapter three;

We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can and cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body... either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 71).

Understanding bodies via their 'affective capacities' is what Deleuze referred to as an ethological approach (Coleman, 2011: 154). Evers (2005) has already utilised this notion of ethology in his research into surfing, masculinity and male bodies. He quotes Gatens (1996: 1) as a key influence in thinking about 'bodies not in terms of a sex/gender dualism - or what bodies are - but in terms of ethology - or what they can do' (in Evers, 2005: 44). In other words, thinking about the gendered body through Deleuze encourages us to look past the notion of bodies as image, object or discourse (as is often the case in a Foucauldian analysis). Instead, thinking through Deleuze involves a form of enquiry which sustains bodies as 'unsettled, active, and full of blood' (Evers, 2005: 70).

I propose that taking an ecological approach allows ‘the BwO [to reveal] itself for what it is: connection of desires, conjunction of flows, continuum of intensities’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 161). In my analysis, I emphasise the significance of these desires, flows and intensities. Desire comes to the fore, in particular, because as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) emphasise, desire is central to the BwO. Not only does desire continuously feed into the BwO (Thanem, 2004) but you cannot desire without entering into it (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 149). Other central affects which emerge are shame and pride. As I discuss later on, these affects have accompanied a number of Deleuzian influenced analyses of the sporting body. However, my discussion of them in this chapter does not reflect an intentional theoretical framing, rather, it serves as a recognition of their discursive and embodied emergence within my findings. Through my discussion I pay heed to these more provocative, or as Probyn puts it, ‘promiscuous’, desires, flows, and affective intensities as they are conjured up by the wetsuited surfing body. In doing so I explore how the surfing space might challenge bodies; trouble bodies, liberate bodies and potentially produce Bodies without Organs.

In/Visibilities: Seeing (through) the Ideal

Elsewhere in this thesis I discuss the significance of the dominant imagery of the female surfing body. As I explained previously, we might view the image of the female surfer as a ‘luminous’ presence (McRobbie, 2009). She is idealised in the popular cultural imagery of surfing as tanned, toned, and bikini clad, and this bodily ideal is coupled with a so-called ‘third wave’ discourse of female empowerment (Comer, 2004, 2010; Heywood, 2007, 2008; Wheaton, 2013). However, as I pointed out, luminosities, or visibilities, are always ‘created by the light itself’, meaning that they are made luminous only through popular cultural values (Deleuze, 2004: 45; McRobbie, 2009).

As numerous feminists have asserted, social and cultural discourses are replete with such normative discourses which encourage women to conform to gendered body ideals (cf. Bartky, 1988; Duncan, 1994; Heywood, 2007; Markula, 1995, 2001b). Utilising the work of Foucault, they have interrogated the impact of these ‘technologies of power’ (Foucault, 1977) in terms of how women internalise an imagined heteronormative gaze. This ‘powerful disciplinary collective gaze’ is mobilised through cultural ideals and ‘encourages individuals to be socially responsible in curbing their excesses of appetite (both sexual and corporeal) in order to gain control of their bodies’ (Jordan, 2007: 96). Through self-surveillance, individuals

become 'docile bodies' (Foucault, 1977); bodies which are under constant surveillance, monitoring and discipline (Duncan, 1994).

Within sports studies, feminists have critically discussed the role of sport and exercise in facilitating technologies of power, and encouraging self-surveillance (c.f. Cole, 1993; Duncan, 1994; Eskes, Duncan and Miller, 1998; Markula, 1995, 2001b, 2003). Markula (1995: 424) for instance described the western ideal of the athletic female body as 'firm but shapely, fit but sexy, strong but thin'. Over fifteen years later, this broadly accepted norm still persists, and this has been recognised by sport sociologists (Mansfield, 2011; Markula, 2011; Markula and Pringle, 2006) and surf researchers alike (Heywood, 2007, Knijnik, Horton and Cruz, 2010). For instance, Markula (2006b: 29) observes that 'although women seem to negotiate the contradictory requirements of masculine and feminine identities through physical activity, the feminine ideal remains the same' (2006b: 29). Furthermore, Knijnik et al. (2010: 1173-4) write that 'the image of a muscularly toned, slim and attractive body is projected as being synonymous with personal success' and this is problematic for competitive surfers whose bodies fall outside of this ideal. Similarly, Heywood acknowledges:

the *image* of the female athletic body is perhaps even more powerful than the *discourse* about success, health, and personal responsibility. And it is the image that arguably best represents the contradictory situation that characterises women's sport (Heywood, 2007: 113).

Despite the pervasiveness of the imagery, the widespread normativity of the surfer girl ideal does not necessarily dictate the ways in which female bodies negotiate and relate to it. Deleuze (2004) writes that part of Foucault's cultural critique was to open up the ways in which 'luminosities', or 'visibilities' functioned in the construction of knowledge. He asserts that it is important to question not only the 'states of things' but also to 'extract visibilities'; to ask 'how do these visibilities shimmer and gleam and under what light, and how does this light gather[?]' (ibid: 54).

Ceci and Purkis assert that the theorisation of visibilities is about 'not merely what is seen but what it is possible to see', not in terms of the light itself, 'but the specific distributions of its dispersal that make things visible, both as such and at all' (2010: 20). In other words, the theorisation of the luminous surfer girl is not just about critiquing the ways in which she is made luminous, but opening up the ways in which she comes to be 'seen', and by whom. As

Deleuze asks, 'who occupies and sees [visibilities]?' (2004: 54). Foucault's (1988) later work on the 'technologies of the self' recognises the ways in which individuals demonstrate agency, both in light of, and aside from, technologies of power. This later analysis examined how 'individuals react to and make sense of "moral" codes around them' (Thorpe, 2008: 209), and further, how they have 'a certain choice within such codes to make these rules their own' (Markula and Pringle, 2006: 143).

I wish to clarify that my use of Foucault in this chapter does not characterise my theoretical approach, but is nonetheless important for attesting to the significance of recognising the pervasive, discursive power relations which are always at work; impressing on bodies in various ways. Indeed, as an analysis of gendered sporting bodies, Deleuzian theory departs from Foucault in important ways, and these exemplify my reasons for turning to Deleuze. This point has also been made by Markula (2006b) in reference to the BwO. For instance, despite the post-structuralist nature of Foucauldian theorising, arborescent dualist logic still remains within much Foucauldian feminist critique. This can be seen in the 'dualistic understanding of feminine identity', the 'dualistic assumptions of a preexisting organic body versus a socially constructed body' and the oppositional division 'between the natural, material body and representational body' (Markula, 2006b: 32-34). In contrast, my consideration of ethology in this chapter represents an escape from such dualistic conceptions. By drawing on both Foucauldian and Deleuzian critique, I aim to explore not only the 'state of things', but also the possibilities of how things might be seen, felt, and done *differently*.

One of the key points Deleuze (2004) makes is that luminosities connect with different subjectivities in different ways. Thus, whilst some might become dazzled, enamoured or drawn towards 'forms of luminosity', others might be able to 'see' and interpret them as fleeting flashes dispersed by 'the light itself'. What emerged from my research interviews was that, largely, the female surfers in Britain are aware of the ways in which the female surfing body is made luminous. They 'see' this image, as a desirable norm which is perpetuated by the surf media, and in their eyes '*these women are not real*' (Ellen).

You know, it's all like slim brown girls with long hair and bikinis and that's what [the surf media], that's the image that they're trying to portray and obviously the reality of UK surfing isn't like that, you know, like you read magazines, and all the adverts for female stuff is, it's all, you know, people in bikinis, in, on warm sandy beaches. And I think that's partly why I don't like it,

because it's, for me, that's not what surfing is, erm, it doesn't like, the two things don't really match up [...] so I feel like they're [...] not really serving female surfers, you're selling female surfers like an ideal of what surfing should be like for women and its, in reality in this country, that isn't it (Lynn).

When you say you're a woman who surfs, erm, if [people] don't see you that is, or even if they see you, they always think of female surfers as being young, blonde, very fit, girly sort of surfers, as in like SurfGirl [magazine], that's what they think. So they don't, they don't really erm, they don't get the image of like a 47 year old woman in a big fat wetsuit, with boots and gloves, they don't see that, they see women surfing in Indonesia, and, with bikinis, I think people who think women surfers are that, I don't think they know of any (Sandy)

As a consequence of the cultural discourses and imagery connected to both surfing culture, and beach tourism, the tanned, toned, bikini-clad female body has come to 'assume an almost trophy-like, ornamental status' (Jordan, 2007: 95). As Urry and Larsen (2011: 68) contend 'the tourism industry has long made use of 'sex' in its marketing... Idealised and attractive female bodies are endlessly exhibited in brochures and on postcards'. This is also evident in the mainstream media. For example, recent pictures of sponsored Newquay surfer Corrine Evans running along a beach, surfboard under arm, in a bikini were used by the *Daily Star*, *Daily Express* and *Daily Mirror* to illustrate stories about the British summer heat wave. In *ZOO* (men's magazine), the same picture was used with the caption: 'QUICK! To the beaches! Britain is sweltering - and that means our beaches are heaving with hot women in bikinis. So no guesses where we've been these past few weeks...' (*ZOO*, 2013). The significance of such imagery was recognised by even the younger surfers I interviewed:

[Female surfers are] published quite like sexy, and like you see like the girls modelling bikinis and like... with men and they're, they get like, do you understand? Like they look at you, and think, like, stuff. (Roz, aged 15)

Along with the work by Henderson (2001) and Stedman (1997) (which I discussed in chapter one) Wheaton (2003) has commented on this sort of heteronormative display of women's bodies, in British windsurf magazines. Despite the differences in climate and water

temperature between Britain, and surf nations like the USA and Australia, Wheaton (2003: 215) confirms that 'the beach babe remains a potent image in popular mythology about the beach'. Her research recognises that the depiction, and consumption, of heterosexist imagery in windsurfing magazines (aimed at men) was shifting and complicated. However, she ascertains that, whether women were pictured as active or passive, the imagery used was 'unquestionably' heterosexual, and 'often open to sexualised readings, particularly as the bikini is the 'chosen' beach attire for some female windsurfers' (2003: 205). This was especially the case for professional female windsurfers, who were aware of the financial rewards connected to 'sell[ing] their sexuality as well as their athleticism' (ibid.: 207).

Under the influence of these 'technologies of power' female surf bodies are positioned as bodies of display (Ford and Brown, 2005; Henderson, 2001; Wheaton, 2003), they are 'to be seen', and this presumed masculine vision 'determines not only the relation of men to women, but the relation of women to themselves' (Abramovici, 2007: 108). In the previous extracts, Lynn and Sandy emphasise that for them, there exists a distinct schism between what they see as an imagined *ideal of what surfing should be like for women*; as offered by surfing media, and what they see as the reality of the British surfing body. For both women, the fissure is glaringly apparent; made evident, particularly, by the *invisibility* of female bodies with which they can relate; *there's no old girls in there! Is there? Who feel fat in their wetsuits (Ellen)*.

Regardless of age, the majority of the surfers I interviewed recognised the contradictions which exist between the bodily ideal of the female surfer - as Lynn and Sandy describe it - and the realities of British surfing. Whilst younger surfers were less critical of the normative and limiting nature of this ideal, they nevertheless recognised that it did not quite 'match up' to their embodied experiences of surfing in Britain;

G – Do you think there's an image connected with surfing? Like being a surfer girl

R – Skinny! (giggles)

I – I think of a surfer as having like, like, yeah, skinny, like, long hair,

R – yeah, boobs and bums and stuff

I – huh, yeah, and I think like, being really tanned and just like always in bikinis and that

R – Like you, like people see, ask, people ask you questions: ‘do you wear a bikini surfing then?’ – ‘no’
I – not in this country
(Interview with Roz, aged 15 and Indi, aged 12)

Heywood (2007: 114) writes that 'while it is clear that all audiences do not read images the same way, and that they are often read counter to their intended message... this does not mean that the images do not simultaneously communicate messages that normalize'. Sykes agrees, arguing that 'normative, anxious, and harmful discourses about [sporting] bodies are tenaciously flexible' (2009: 251). They are increasingly generated through neoliberal sporting discourses, of which women's surfing is exemplary (Comer, 2004; Heywood, 2008). Given that female surfers in Britain are aware of the contradictions between how female surf bodies are idealised, and how they are lived, I am interested in exploring how these contradictions *affect on* their embodied subjectivities. In the sections which follows I aim to explore these affects further.

Becoming In/visible: Embodied Shame and Feeling 'Fat'

G – Do you don't feel different when you put [your wetsuit] on?

E – No

G – Ok

E – Well I do, I feel fatter! (laughs) I feel really fat (laughs) Its true!

(Interview with Ellen)

A wetsuit must be tight, close to the skin, the tightness of the rubber is revealing in the lines it forms against bone, muscle and fat. This close-fittingness revealed itself in my research as what Jen termed an 'exposure', which elicited various affective responses. Markula and Pringle suggest that women learn to 'build self-confidence through the aesthetics of a thin and toned body [because] the attractive female body has come to signify a controlled mind and healthy self-confidence' (2006: 83). This connection between health, fitness and a thin(ner), (more) toned body has been noted in sporting, fitness and surfing contexts alike. In my interview with Ellen, a clear example of this process was provided when I asked her:

G – Do you think [surfing has] given you more confidence?

E – Yeah, definitely, definitely. It's made me fitter. I've lost loads of weight. Without even realising I'm doing it, because I don't really, I don't like doing exercise, it's hard work, but [...] it's kind of exercise without really thinking about it isn't it [...] there's changes in my body, which I like

ⁱThrosby has pointed out that ‘the reflexive self-disciplining of bodily boundaries and appetites are strongly associated with the production of contemporary sporting bodies, but are conventionally treated as antithetical to fatness’ (2013b: 1-2). Here, I discuss some of the ways in which the technologies of power connected to the ideal surfing body are felt and embodied by women in wetsuits. Focusing predominantly on the shame connected to feeling ‘fat’, I wish to explore some of the affective ways in which ‘women in wetsuits’ become aware of their wetsuited bodies, and how this awareness is connected to the dominant body ideals of the female surfer as sculpted, lean-muscled and feminine (Heywood, 2007).

In my interviews, shame became apparent when I tried to approach discourses of embodiment through a discussion of body confidence, self-consciousness, or the notion of the surf space as a place of ‘sexual possibility’ (Rojek, 1993, in Jordan, 2007: 94). Of all of these lines of enquiry, acknowledging the presence of a sexually desiring gaze in the surf space appeared to invoke the strongest reactions regarding wetsuited bodies.

Attractive-wise, you might not feel your most confident, with hair slapped to your head, and snot coming out of your nose, and you know, every bit of your body exposed in a wetsuit... (Jen)

I mean [wetsuits] are not really flattering are they? (Bella)

If I was like to meet some really hot guy in the water, I would literally just be like “oh my god, I must get away from him, I don't want him to see me looking like this” (Kath)

I fancy a lot of [male surfers], but they don't seem to fancy me, I mean, you know, a fat seal walking along. It's not very dainty (Sandy)

In the context of surfing, the notion of the gaze is a powerful one because, unlike most sports, surfing often takes place in 'open' spaces, participated in by a variety of users (Ford and Brown, 2005). Beach spaces for instance, are places of leisure, sport, tourism, and relaxation. Often, the beach space is a sensory, sensual space (Pritchard and Morgan, 2007), a place of 'sexualised embodiment and display' (Jordan, 2007: 94). In such public spaces 'people both gaze at and are gazed upon by others' (Urry and Larsen, 2011: 70).

In particular, spaces where surfers get changed can become 'deeply inscribed with performances that pass on hetero-normative and gendered discourses' (Evers, 2005: 143). Scott has described swimming changing areas as existing 'betwixt and between two social worlds' (2010: 154). For surfers, in the absence of beach side changing facilities, the act of changing itself constitutes a momentary embodied in-between space which is neither "day-to-day", nor "in-the-surf". In this space 'bodies are ambiguously placed between the naked and the clothed, the shameful and the civilized' (Scott, 2010: 159). Without the safety and sanctions of purpose-built changing areas, some women feel exposed, and open to the gaze of others.

I do feel a little bit self-conscious [...] when you put your wetsuit on, it feels sometimes people look at you, like if you're getting changed and stuff [...] so I just like, do it in my car (Yiesha)

As one of the participants in Mansfield's research into gym culture describes, 'it's a scary thing... to have your body visible... especially when [you feel] it doesn't really look good.' (Mansfield, 2011: 90). This is because, as Miller suggests, 'in shame we simply want to disappear' (1998: 34). Under the (imagined) gaze of others, the women in my research reveal their shame in the ways they hide and cover, as though wishing their bodies to disappear. For instance, in the various car park and road side "changing areas" I frequented over 18 months of fieldwork it was often the case that women would attempt to make their changing bodies 'invisible' by getting changed inside their car or van (e.g. Yiesha, Myself, Rachel, Laura, Jen, Kath, Callie), in beach huts (e.g. Ellen, Sandy, Lynn, Andrea) in public toilets, or by getting changed at home before driving or walking to the beach (e.g. Kelly, Sarah). Male changing bodies on the other hand, were much more visible, usually getting changed beside their cars or vans.

In his Australian based research, Evers also observes this; 'It's rare for women to change in such plain view in these car-parks and a lot of this has to do with... blokes controlling the gaze' (Evers, 2005: 143).

Men look at Women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women, but also the relation of women to themselves... she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight (Berger, 1972, quoted in Frost, 2001: 140).

Inspired by Goffman (1967, 1973), Mansfield contends that shame is 'important to the way human beings manage themselves in the face of others' (2011: 95). Through my fieldwork, this embodied shame with regards to wetsuited bodies was made most evident whilst using my camera in the surf. The lens of a camera instantly functions as an objectifying gaze, and whenever I held it up to take a picture, female surf bodies would react physically. Surfers would raise a hand to cover their "ten chins" (*Nadine*), sit up and pull their stomach in (*Myself, Sarah, Bella*), or move their surfboard to cover their "fat tummy" or "big bum" (*Jen, Laura*). These embodied, physical responses of women to the camera were particular to the surfing space, and were instigated by their awareness of their bodies as "exposed", "fat" wetsuited bodies. These embodied reactions, as Jen and Jane – (who work as instructors) describe, can sometimes be particularly evident when beginner surfers are faced with their wetsuited body for the first time:

When I'm giving out wetsuits, people are like freaking out, the girls are like 'oh my god, oh....' erm, but I remember being quite conscious [at first] (Jen)

You put people in wetsuits, the girls will come out, and [...] they'll wear a t-shirt over the top, to try and put something baggy over the top of their wetsuit so that no one can see exactly what, which bits are sticking out or anything like that [...] people aren't massively comfortable wearing something that's that tight (Jane)

Probyn writes that there is a certain purity in shame, perhaps to be found in the embodied-ness of its experience. Shame makes you intensely aware of being embodied (2004: 331). Your

cheeks may flush, you might squirm inside, look away, or hang your head. Munt (2008: 203) writes that in a movement of 'effacement and disguise', shame might mutate into 'more visibly expressed emotions like disgust'.

there's a couple of photographs that Steve took of me, from behind, last year, that you know, he put them on Facebook and I was like "oh my god, my arse looks huge" and I know it's not (Bea)

I never really thought about it, until you always look back at a photo of you in a wetsuit and you kind of go, "oh my god, I look humungous" and you kind of go "I look disgusting"! (Nessa)

In these extracts, both Bea and Nessa react with disgust when confronted with the image of their wetsuited bodies. There is a clear juxtaposition in both statements, between how their bodies feel and how they feel about how their bodies look. This juxtaposition draws attention 'to the visceral reminders of how we embody social contexts and cultural expectations' (Meagher, 2003: 34). Advancing on this idea, Bartky explains that;

Shame is the distressed apprehension of the self as inadequate or diminished; it requires if not an actual audience before whom my deficiencies are paraded, then an internalised audience with the capacity to judge me, hence internalised standards of judgement (1990: 86).

In this way 'shame, embarrassment and indeed disgust or repugnance characterise a driving affective-mechanism of social control' (Mansfield, 2011: 95). Many of the surfers in my research, myself included, hide their bodies as if covering up the evidence of a body which is undisciplined, unruly, abject. I suggest that this embodied shame is invoked, in part, by an internalised knowledge that our "exposed" wetsuited bodies cannot live up to the tanned, toned, thin and feminine ideal of the luminous surfer girl. This experience of disgust, the 'fear of fat' (McGannon, Johnson and Spence, 2011) serves to emphasise the contradictions regarding how the female surf body is idealised, and how it is lived. Frith, Raisborough and Klein (2012) refer to this conflicted process as 'misrecognition'.

"Did you see my wave?": Being Seen and the Body without Organs

So far in this chapter I have drawn attention to the various ways in which women in wetsuits internalise a gendered performativity which contributes to the invisibility of female bodies in surf space. In other words, I have shown how female bodies are shamed; hidden, covered up, disciplined and misrecognised within surf space. What I explore in this section are the moments in the surf when female surfers demonstrate a *desire* to 'be seen'. It represents a shift between 'body-shame' and 'body-pride' which Frith, Raisborough and Klein (2012) have highlighted in their discussion of the television show *How to Look Good Naked*. They describe the narrative of the show as a:

tale of transformation [which] begins with an unfolding of shame, of the to-be-hidden, then... towards an unveiling, a showing, a visualising, of pride. To be proud is to be socially recognised, and to be recognised as having or being something which is valued (2012: 8).

I do not wish to construct a similar narrative in this discussion. However, I do suggest that there exists a similar 'shame/pride nexus' (Waitt and Clifton, 2013) in the contrasting ways in which the female surfers in my research experienced their bodies in surfing spaces. In order to explore this, I begin by acknowledging the significance for women of 'being seen' riding waves:

it's really lovely obviously when you get a wave, and someone actually sees it isn't it, and you're like "yey" and then someone sees it, it's like "aw, no way, someone actually saw that for once!" (Kath, her emphasis)

Yeah, like, because, we surf because we love to surf, but, then at the same time it kind of means something more when people see you get a good wave (Myself)

It's really nice when there's other people that, you take off on a wave and someone's there to see it. And then, you're there to watch there's and like make noise at them and stuff (Hannah)

As the discussions in this chapter demonstrate, women often 'mis-recognise' their bodies through the (male) heteronormative gaze as devalued, unattractive, marginalised [and/or] unacceptable (Frith, Raisborough and Klein, 2012). Contrastingly, being seen in the moment of the ridden wave, creates a very different relation to being 'looked at'. It is an affective relation between two bodies, which Deleuze describes as a mutual *sensation*.

At one and the same time I *become* in the sensation and something *happens* through the sensations, one through the other, one in the other... being both subject and object, gives and receives the sensation. As a spectator, I experience the sensation... by reaching the unity of the sensing and sensed... sensation is in the body (Deleuze, 2005: 25–26)

Here, Deleuze describes 'the affective relation between a body and an image' (Coleman, 2011: 158). He refers to a becoming which occurs through the sensations experienced in the simultaneous realisation of subject and object; 'one through the other, one in the other'. As Waitt and Clifton describe in the surfing context, 'the instance of seeing that one is being seen and acknowledged by another offers opportunities to reassess one-self, and connections with others' (2013: 4). When a surfer is 'seen' riding a wave what becomes is an embodied affective transference, the 'materialisation' of the surfed wave within the spectator. As Booth (2008: 24) writes of surf photography, it a desiring, a yearning, 'an “embodied, free-floating affectivity”... which rekindles [stoke] among surfers who have experienced it first-hand' (quoting Gibbs, 2001). This viscerally felt *connection* is what distinguishes it from the internalised gaze described earlier.

It gives you a bit of a boost because other people see it and then you're not making it up that it was good. Not "making it up", but it's like erm, you think "oh, oh well that probably was..." like if you turn and people are like smiling, then like, oh, they must have thought it was good too (Rachel)

The chick who's [a sponsored] longboarder, she was paddling out and I caught, tucked into this wave and it covered me up¹, kinda like a little barrel, and she was like "nice wave!" and I was like that (looks impressed with herself) ha... buzzin... so, it's stupid cos that's just ego, but its, I guess it's just having people that are good... sorta cheering you on, or saying, that was good, is quite encouraging I guess (Jen)

As I discussed in the previous chapter, a ridden wave is an affective assemblage of surfer, wetsuit, board, wave, energy, oceanography, affects, emotions and many more things besides. A 'good' wave is not a (just) a wave that is well ridden, it is, as Evers (2006) and Booth (2008) recognise, a matter of rider and wave becoming so in tune with one another that the 'body extends to being part of the complexity of a wave' (Evers, 2006: 232). Evers (2005, 2009) has termed this assemblage of wave, surfer, and space the 'body that surfs' (Evers, 2005: 10). He argues that through surfing, the body that surfs becomes caught up in a 'surfing-gender relationship that escapes into heterogeneity rather than homogenising experience' (2005: 10).

Advancing this line of flight, I suggest here that what emerges out of this intensely affectual experience of surfing waves is what Deleuze referred to as the Body without Organs. That is, I suggest that in the moment of the surfed wave, when the 'surfer temporarily loses perception of all external boundaries' (Scheibel, 1995, in Anderson, 2012b: 580), the stratified, organised (identified) subject becomes dissolved (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). It immerses into a '*becoming-wave*' (Evers, 2005), a *Body without Organs*. This BwO is no longer idealised, normalised and gendered, it is instead defined by what it *does*. In its becoming; it is a *body-surfing*.

A decent size peak rolls in, and I turn to paddle for it. I am a little late and the wave jacks up. Without hesitating I 'pop' to my feet and sliiiiiiiide down the steep face. I am aware of the surfers around me. I notice the lip of the peak start to curl in front of me, then it crumbles. Water covers my head, blurring my sight to white and muffing sound. My vision starts to clear, but then I tumble, my longboard flying behind me, or above me, around me somewhere in the disorientation. I surface, find my board and paddle back out. I tingle with the brief thrill of the

¹ Getting 'covered up' or 'covered over' is what Jen describes as a 'little barrel'. It means that the wave peels over your head and covers your body. Although it usually means that the surfers head gets covered in whitewater, the 'cover over' is valued for the way it looks from the outside

wave. “Could that have been a little cover over”? I wonder. Just then a man on a minimal says to me “You got covered up just then!”. I’m stoked he says that. A second opinion. Unprompted!

“Just about!” I reply. Grinning.

(A surfed wave, Tynemouth, March 2012).

In stark contrast from the gendered, sexualised, and sometimes objectified female surfing body, the *body-surfing* is dynamic, assembled, momentary and freeing. Furthermore, the *body-surfing* can never be objectified, or indeed dichotomised, because it is always an assemblage of affecting and affected, desiring and desired, and in the act of looking – spectator, image *and* surfer. Through the *body-surfing*:

We are caught between our earthly, existing and sometimes unhealthy bodies and the bodies that we want to be: dynamic bodies, immortal bodies, bodies that flow, and bodies whose flow is unimpeded or uninterrupted...(unreal) bodies... "Bodies without Organs" (Neu, Everett and Rahaman, 2008: 322).

Importantly, because the surfed wave is always momentary; this affective 'flowing' *body-surfing* can never be 'real' as a lived subjectivity. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 160) remind us, 'you have to keep small rations of [lived] subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality'. Consequently, we cannot sustain the affective BwO which occurs in the moment of the surfed wave, we can only take parts of it with us, as affective, embodied traces, which we transfer to our reorganised lived bodies, our *bodies that surf*. Being seen on a wave helps us to recognise these affective traces and qualify them with meanings such as "I can surf".

It was awesome, the 2 rides [I got], er, I don't know, [my boyfriend] only caught about 5 and they were rubbish so, I was like “yes!” “did you see that? I can surf”
(Nina)

I do not, by any means, wish to claim that these experiences of the surfing gaze - and the emotions which accompany it - is particular to female surfers. Nor do I claim that it is always only genderedⁱⁱ. For example, in the similar sport of windsurfing, Wheaton (2000) has

described how “being looked at” or “watched” was ‘a reoccurring part of [male] windsurfers’ narratives’ (2000: 444). Whilst being “watched” was uncomfortable for some, usually the inexperienced windsurfers, for many it was a valued means of demonstrating sporting prowess, and thus, bolstering a masculine windsurfer identity (Wheaton, 2000). Similarly, Waitt and Warren (2008) observed of one of the male surfers in their research that ‘the pride derived from his mates witnessing his achievements’ was important because ‘the moment of pleasure and recognition transform[ed] his ability to ‘carve’ waves into a confirmation of his masculinity and belonging’ (ibid.: 361). Waitt and Clifton too argue that:

To avoid the shame of not being considered masculine enough within friendship circles, many of our participants spoke of the virtues of bodies that ‘charge’, ‘go bigger’, ‘push higher’ and go ‘harder’. The words of encouragement, faces and gestures of friends in the surf all help to communicate the pride in taking risks and reconfiguring the body to match the respected surfing masculinity (2013: 15).

However, the ‘shame/pride nexus’ alluded to by Waitt and Clifton (2013), Waitt and Warren (2008) and Wheaton (2000) is a dyadic one whereby pride is mobilised in such a way that it denies, or blankets ‘its own ostracized corollary, shame’ (Munt, 1998: 4). In their discussions, pride is coupled with masculinity, and shame (it is implied) is silently aligned with femininity. What I argue for here is a dislodging of the shame/pride relation from such dichotomised notions of gender. I contend that for the surfers in this chapter, being seen as a *body-surfing* is not about confirming any sort of gendered, or even surfer, identity. Instead, it is more about an embodied *recognition of their bodies* as surfing bodies. Because of this, the pride that appears in their words is not mobilised in order to deny shame, rather it emerges in such a way that it is *revealing* of the ever present existence of shame.

Like you know yourself, if you’re surfing on your own and you caught like a great wave, after a great wave, you would know that you’d had a really good surf, but if somebody else came up and said ‘that was mint’ you’d be like ‘yeah I know’ (chuckles) it just makes you feel better doesn’t it (Lana)

As Probyn suggests ‘shame mobilizes the very different registers of corporeal experience’ (Probyn, 2000: 23). It functions to forefront the fact that ‘what we call one’s self, one’s body

is in fact inhabited by several bodies moving at different speeds' (ibid.: 24). To re-emphasise Evers (2005) point, the *body that surfs* opens up a 'surfing-gender relationship that escapes into heterogeneity' rather than dichotomy (2005: 10). 'Being seen' as a *body-surfing* enables female surf bodies to be experienced differently - to be recognised and validated, as something more, something 'other', something that *does*. Through the 'mutual sensation' of being seen, women are able to *experience* themselves affectively; not as an image, judged by the standards of the luminous surfer girl, but as *bodies-that-surf* (Evers, 2005, 2009). In a sporting space where women frequently misrecognise their bodies, that is, fail to recognise their capacities and capabilities, 'being seen' as a *body-surfing* is a vital moment 'a disruptive moment' (Sedgwick, 2003: 36) in the normatively gendered power relations of the gaze.

Desiring the body-that-surfs: Feeling Wetsuited Bodies 'Differently'

I always have had big shoulders .. And surfing ain't making them any smaller. I used to hate my body for things like that... But now I know my body lets me do the things I love doing... So I shouldn't be so hard on it I guess [...] it's just not very feminine (Jen)

I began this chapter by recognising the limiting nature of the normative desirable ideal of the surfing body. In this final section I aim to explore the various ways in which the *body that surf* invokes desire for women in wetsuits. As Brown (2008: 196) has argued 'what a body can do' is equally as important to modes of desire as visual pleasures. In this sense, taking a Deleuzian approach to desire and the body allows us to escape from the dichotomy of gendered readings:

Desire does not comprise any lack; neither is it a natural given; it is but one with an assemblage of heterogeneous elements... it is process, in contrast with structure or genesis; it is affect, as opposed to feeling; it is "haecceity" (individuality of a day, a season, a life), as opposed to subjectivity; it is event, as opposed to thing or person (Deleuze, 1997: 189).

Deleuze sees desire as a productive process of 'affect and event' (Lim, 2007: 58). It is pure intensity. This approach to desire sits in contrast to the dominant Foucauldian and Lacanian

idea in western cultures, of desire as fundamentally tied to lack (Helstien, 2007). Instead, desire is viewed as rhizomatic (changing and multiple) and affective.

The desire which flows through the surfing BwO, is demonstrated in the ways in which female surfers desire to be seen and recognised as *bodies that surf*. Here I suggest that these flows of desire permeate bodies on various other ways, leaving affective embodied traces on the ways female surfers look and feel about their own and other wetsuited bodies. I begin this discussion with a personal reflection:

There is something uniquely attractive about Jen in a wetsuit. In skin tight neoprene, my eyes are invited to take her body in as a whole. The way she stands, with her back arched, her shoulders held square, confident. Her eyes; bright and engaging. The way her beautiful curls fall around her shoulders. The athletic lines of her body. Some curved, some angular. She tells me that she has to wear a man's wetsuit, because she doesn't have the so-called 'right' proportions for a woman's. Short legs, narrow hips, strong broad shoulders. She has a surfing body, and she surfs well. Watching her catch waves is a joy in itself.

(Newquay fieldnotes, July 2011)

Jen's body causes a certain amount of 'gender trouble' in the sense that it refuses to conform to the so-called feminine proportions of wetsuits made for women (Johnston and Longhurst, 2010). In Jen's words *girl's wetsuits don't fit girls with shoulders like mine*. For me, this is part of what captures my interest; what draws my gaze to Jen's surfing body is not that it fits with Markula's (1995) description of the 'fit' feminine ideal, but that it doesn't; it is strong, broad, confident, and beautiful. What it is vital to emphasise, is that this is not a dichotomised reading of resistance to the feminine norm (Markula, 2006b). What makes Jen's wetsuited body so desirable for me is not that it is a toned, normative feminine *surfer* body, but nor is it that it co-insides with a more idealised (as sporting) masculine body (Markula, 2006b). What is desirable for me is Jen's BwO; the assemblage of Jen as a confident, beautiful, *body-that-surfs*. The pleasure in this gaze is instigated, not through an objectifying, distant desire, but through a desiring, assembled *connection*; between my own passion for surfing, and with Jen *as a surfer*.

Assemblages are passionate, they are compositions of desire... The rationality, the efficiency, of an assemblage does not exist without the passions the assemblage brings into play, without the desires that constitute it as much as it constitutes them (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 1227).

Thinking about desire in this way serves to demonstrate its disruptive potential in exposing ‘the disparity between the way that many women feel about their bodies and the reality of how those bodies are perceived by others’ (Meagher, 2003: 34). Throughout this chapter, Jen has remarked that she ‘used to hate her body’, that her wetsuited surfing body is ‘exposed’ and a ‘state’. To me however, it is dynamic, powerful, playful and desirable. Conceptualising desire from a Deleuzian perspective, as assembling, ‘experimental and inventive [, with] no goal or direction’ allows us to open up the possibilities of the desirable body to be positive, productive and challenging (Potts, 2004: 20). In this sense, ‘desire has nothing to do with a natural or spontaneous determination’ such as heteronormative gender (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 1227). Instead, it points to how surfing bodies might be viewed; experienced; embodied, and *felt, differently*.

G - do you feel different when you're wearing your wetsuit, or?

S – ermm... I feel quite masculine [...] I dunno, I feel quite. I suppose because of the nature of what I'm gonna do, I feel, I feel quite protected, erm, and I feel sort of, er... erm, I don't know, I feel sort of strangely, even though I just said that I do feel sort of strangely attractive in it [...] I like taking my hood off after I've surfed, and going like that with my hair (shakes head) – and all of the grime and the poo just comes out of it!! (laughs) yeah... I feel very free actually [...] As soon as I put it on, I just feel very sort of free, and sort of, like I'm just about to do something really fun. And I like that, yeah, that's good.

L – ermm, I dunno, I walk differently in a wetsuit [...] It sounds quite strange. But surfing makes me feel quite strong. Like, physically strong [...] erm, so as soon as I put my wetsuit on, I do kind of like, I feel a bit more “roughly toughy” [...] like, my shoulders kind of go out a little bit, and [...] I just feel stronger, like all the clothes I [usually] wear are baggy, and I'm not really, I don't wear tight, like I don't really wear really girly clothes unless I'm going

out. [...] Because it's suddenly tight fitting then I'm like, yeah, but erm, I don't breathe in or anything, I just feel fitter, because I know I'm going to do something physical

In these examples, both Sandy and Lana seem to struggle to adequately explain how they feel in a wetsuit. Both of them touch on gendered meanings and descriptions of how the body is usually signified, subjectified, and understood. Both of them depart from these genderings, unsettled, and dissatisfied by the 'available scripts' (Ahmed, 2004: 155) for conveying how their wetsuited surfing bodies are lived. This is because, as Throsby's research suggests, their feelings 'are at odds with conventional female embodiment' (2013a: 17) and test the parameters of how female sporting bodies are normatively experienced (Young, 2005). In fact, Lana summed it up as feeling 'like a superhero'. This connotes a positivity, an intensity, which the surfers variously connect to words like protection, strength and power. Perhaps Sandy's summation that she feels 'very free' is most telling, or at least hopeful. Her ironic description of 'grime' and 'poo' flying out of her hair whilst at the same time feeling 'attractive' signifies 'the transgressive pleasures of counter-normative behaviours' (Throsby, 2013a: 18). Embodied feelings such as these;

can be understood not only as a moment of personal pleasure, valued for its own sake, but also as a politically significant - if highly individualised - sensory experience, a chance to experience gendered embodiment differently (Throsby, 2013a: 17).

It is apparent that sometimes, becoming a woman in a wetsuit offers a sense of freedom from the dominant meanings which subjectify the gendered body. This is brought about by a body which is experienced as both masculine *and* feminine, desirable *and* shameful; defined not by its 'organs', but by what it can do.

I kind of just feel excited [when I put on my wetsuit], I know it sounds a bit silly, but just like the feelings that I would get when I'm in the water, the feeling or excitement and fear and like sort of like the whole surfing feeling comes over when I've got my wetsuit on I think, and, yeah...(Yeisha)

I suggest that in these subtle ways the *body that surfs* is instigating positive and disruptive desire, not just via the gaze of others, but infused within and through surfing bodies themselves. I argue that this ‘connection of desires, conjunction of flows, continuum of intensities’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 161) points to the affective traces of the surfing Body without Organs. The excitement that Lana, Sandy and Yeisha describe is an assemblage of desire which is instigated through the intense and embodied desire *for surfing*, and an embodied connection to what it *feels like* to surf. It is a joy which is immanent, and freeing; ‘as though desire were filled by itself and its contemplations, a joy that implies no lack or impossibility’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 156).

Potentially, this allows for ‘a different kind of space [to be] opened up at such sites, a space involving quite distinctive intercorporeal relations’ (Barcan, 2001: 314). These distinctive relations involve the development of different intercorporeal meanings with regards to the body, which take into account the becoming of the surfing assemblage. In this ‘different kind of space’, as these women convey, the wetsuited body ‘isn’t about what you look like’, it’s about becoming a BwO; a *body-surfing*.

There’s a lot of people where I’ve said ‘do you wanna come surfing?’ and they’ve been like ‘what, me in a wetsuit?’ and I’m like ‘it’s not actually about what you look like, because nobody’s bothered’ it’s about going out and having a laugh
(Lana)

I need to wear it because it’s so cold, and that’s the end of it. It doesn’t bother me that much (Nessa)

I dunno, I just hate, the way I look in the water... that’s just my little, hang up, but yeah [...] if I’m having a good surf, I feel like I’m holding my own in the water, so I feel I’m pleased with the waves I’ve been catching then I feel confident (Kath)

Although these women express an awareness of an internal normalising gaze, the surf space does allow them in various ways to experience their bodies differently (Meagher, 2003: 34). If only momentarily, the surf space allows ‘judgements about the bodies of others and self-consciousness about one’s own body...[to] fall away’, opening up ‘space for the physicality of the body [to emerge] in all its variation’ (Obrador-Pons, 2007: 134). For female surfers who

frequently participate in making their bodies invisible, this embodied joy is undoubtedly important. Perhaps, it helps to remind us that, in many ways, 'we are *all* fluid, *luminous* beings' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 249 *emphasis added*).

Seeing and Feeling the Surfing Body: Concluding thoughts

Theorising around the swimming space, Scott writes:

[Swimmers] present themselves simply as bodies, with a mechanical function (Scott, 2009). The swimming costume desexualizes the naked body by defining it as an instrument of the will, to be utilized alongside goggles, flippers, floats and other impersonal objects... [which] also discursively constitute the swimmer's body as a tool of exercise... 'I am just a swimmer', they convey, 'no more and no less' (2010: 154).

In my analysis of surfing I have presented a very different view of the sporting body. Rather than view the wetsuited surfing body as 'desexualised', functional and impersonal; no more, no less, I suggest that the wetsuited body is *much* more than being *just* a surfer. Through my discussion I have recognised that the gaze is *felt* through surf space in a variety of ways. It is seen, internalised, connected with and felt, and this affectively impacts on how gendered bodies are made in/visible in the surf space.

Although I suggest that the luminous image of the female surfer contributes negatively to how 'women in wetsuits' see themselves, I also argue that surfing offers women and girls important ways of seeing, and feeling, their bodies *differently*. Making use of Deleuzian theory, and the BwO in particular, I argue that, just like the skin promises the 'prospect of nakedness' (Miller, 1998: 53), the wetsuited body offers the prospect of a *body that surfs*. For surfers, this is desirable, in its most immanent sense; whether it be in the form of a gaze, an affect or a shared excitement.

This desire is concerned about the fulfilment of our potential, our "will-to-power", a healthy becoming that affects or drives the active, corporeal body toward self-invention (Buchanan, 1997: 86), toward, that is, one's own re-invention (Neu, Everett and Rahaman, 2008: 322).

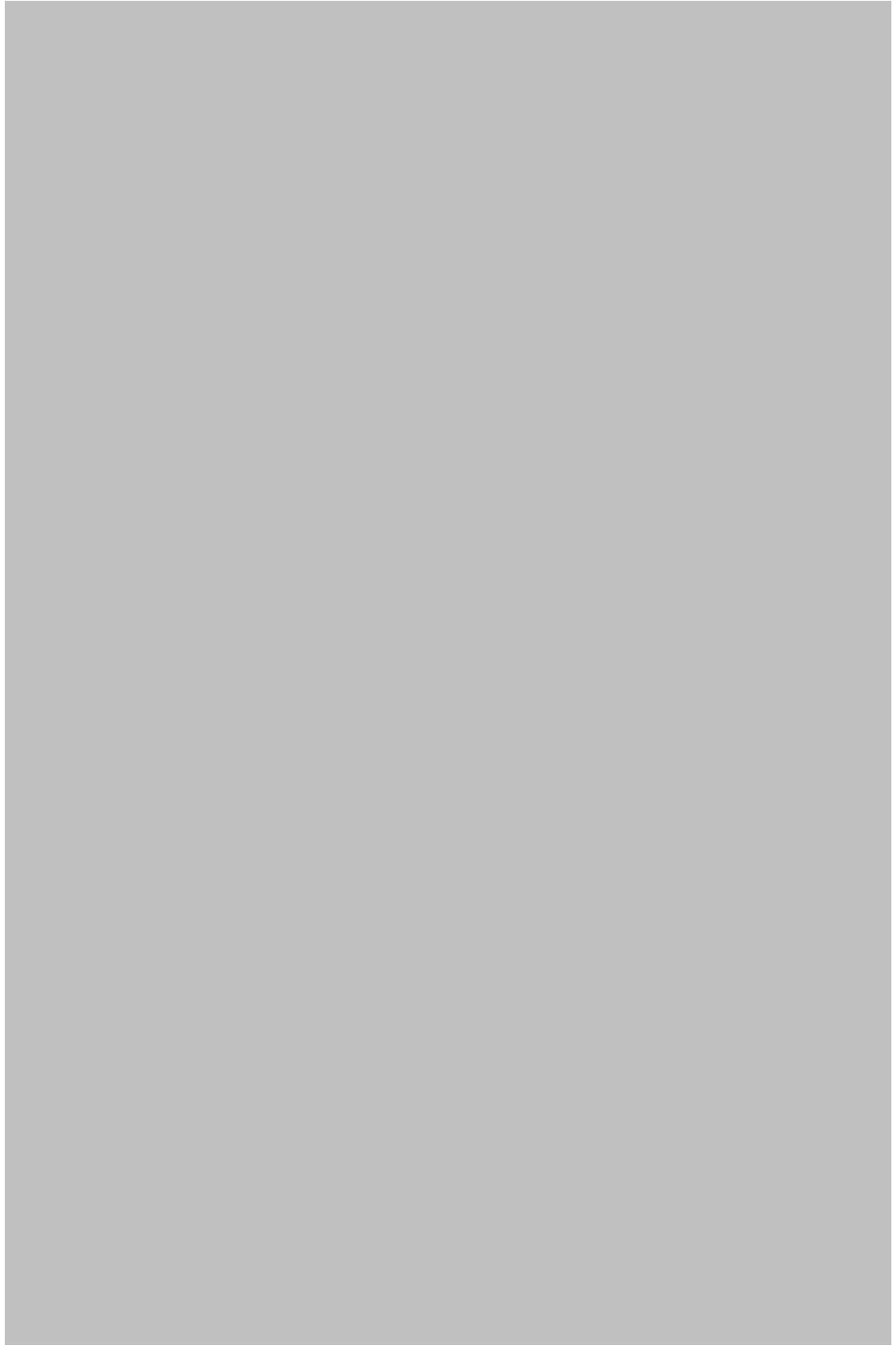
Clearly, the momentary nature of the surfing BwO means that there are limits to the potential for women in wetsuits to feel differently about their bodies. Furthermore, each surfing space intertwines differently with spatial power relations. However, the project of disidentification is a subtle one. In Deleuze's words 'you don't do it with a sledgehammer, you use a very fine file' (1987: 160). In this sense, it is important not to underestimate the potential of these 'new' spaces in edging women away from the 'normative, anxious, and harmful discourses' (Sykes, 2009: 251) which constrain bodies 'and towards something that feels—however provisionally—a little more like freedom' (Barcan, 2001: 315).

ⁱ It is important to point out at the beginning of this section that my discussions here refer only to the experience of 'feeling fat'. I do not, for instance, have the space here to delve critically into the social, political and cultural meanings connected with fatness itself. Nor do I qualify the term in terms of size or weight. However, it is important to point out that wetsuits for women usually range from UK women's clothing size 8-16, sometimes 18. The women in this chapter wore wetsuits throughout this size range.

ⁱⁱ As I acknowledge in both chapter six and chapter 8, race and ethnicity, as well as age, class and ability are also central (cf. Ford and Brown, 2005; Wheaton, 2013)

Line of Flight

Two Fingers: Being Seen, Differently



Chapter Eight

Jostling for Position: 'Territorialised' Surfers and Nomadology *in Place*

Research on sport and space cannot ignore the ways in which spaces are inexorably linked to the social construction of dominant ideologies and to the politics of identity... a key challenge facing those who study sport and space is to develop more nuanced inquiries into the intersections of gender, sexuality, and race *in place* (van Ingen, 2003: 210).

The aim of this chapter is to explore how female surfers are negotiating the intersections and connections between identity, space and place through surfing locations in Britain. In chapter six I considered the significance of how female surfers were emotionally experiencing the male or masculine domination of space. I discussed how some women in my research were experiencing a complex array of emotions and affects. They discussed feeling moments of fear and intimidation, and also discussed moments of pleasure and freedom. Anger emerged as an emotion which was closely connected to gendered experiences of spatial domination, and this was negotiated in various ways. Sometimes, 'masculine' spaces were avoided by 'paddling away', sometimes women and girls would surf 'like a guy', and sometimes female surfers would - I suggested - instigate moments of potentially feminist challenge in the surf. At the end of the chapter I pointed to the need for a more in-depth consideration of how gendered territorialisation in surfing intertwines with place-based power relations, such as localism. This is what I address here.

As van Ingen (2003) emphasises above, the power relations connected to identity are always spatial and occur 'in place'. In my discussion, I address this issue through a focus on how female surfers experience their gendered and sexualised¹ subjectivities as part of 'local' surfing spaces. The chapter is split into two broad sections. In the first section I focus on the idea of how spaces and subjectivities are 'territorialised' – both spatially and theoretically (cf. Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) – through the gendered politics of 'local' surf breaks. In the second section I turn my attention to the ways in which some surf spaces are experienced 'differently' through their connection to nomadic mobilities. Using Newquay as a specific example, I suggest that theorising 'from the sea' (Anderson, 2012b) might offer a useful way of thinking about the relational intermingling of power relations, space and place.

I suggest that the somewhat contrasting experiences of the female surfers in this chapter serve to emphasise the shifting nature of 'gender relations as located rather than universal, dynamic rather than fixed, and contested rather than agreed' (Ford and Brown 2006: 5). What I aim to demonstrate is the integral role that the politics of place plays in how gendered and sexualised subjectivities are experienced, negotiated and lived by female surfers *'in place'*. In light of this aim, I begin the chapter by considering the notion of place as a theoretical, geographical concept, and consider how it inter-/relates with the notion of space.

Theorising Surf Space and Place

The notion of 'place' has long been a topic of debate in the areas of philosophy and geography, and this is reflected in the work emerging within sport and leisure (cf. Crouch, 2000; Vertinsky and Bale, 2004). Here, I am particularly interested in the theorised distinctions between place and space, and in this section I offer a (necessarily brief) reflection on such theorising. The distinctions made between the two terms have often revolved around the notion of place as located, 'real' or 'grounded', whilst space has been posited as 'somehow abstract' (Massey, 2004: 7). Casey for instance, writes that 'to live is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know the place one is in' (1996: 18). There has also been an emphasis on the 'meaningfulness' of place and its role in the construction of a personal identity.

Personal and cultural identity is bound up with place; a topoanalysis is one exploring the creation of self-identity through place. Geographical experience begins in places, reaches out to others through spaces, and creates landscapes or regions for human existence. (Tilley, 1994, quoted by Massey, 2004: 7)

Several key theorists in geography have emphasised the significance of place in theorising around issues of class, gender, sexuality and race (cf. Harvey, 1973, 1993; hooks, 1992; Hubbard, 1998; Massey, 1994; Rose, 1993; Soja, 1989; Valentine, 1989, 1996). The literature related to these topics is now substantial, and there is not the capacity in this chapter to provide an overview of such a broad body of workⁱⁱ. What I wish to highlight here is the role of such key theorists in drawing attention to how places and identities are intimately connected (Massey, 2004).

Places themselves are defined by identity and difference in the sense that they are 'a particular or lived space... [they] must be located somewhere. Place is specific' (Agnew,

2011: 318). However, in a world which is ever-changed by the impact of globalisation, traditional notions of space and place have become troubled. A persistent challenge 'to both of the dominant meanings comes from the idea that the world itself is increasingly 'placeless'' (Agnew, 2011: 318). For some geographers the 'transcendence of place' (Coleman, 1993), or 'placelessness of place' (Relph, 1976) has been a topic of concern. Casey for instance, refers to 'an indifferent sameness-of-place on a global scale' (1997: xiii) exemplified by the proliferation of 'non-places' such as shopping centres, airports, stations, fast food restaurants. He argues that our increasingly common experiences of such places arouses an 'active desire for the particularity of place – for what is truly “local” or “regional”... identity, character, nuance, history' (ibid.).

Since the 1990s however, the influence of post-modern theorising such as Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) philosophy of the 'fold', has brought about a shift in focus from topographical to topological thinking (Jones, 2009). There has been a growing critique within the literature on space regarding the notion of place as more 'meaningful' to lived experience and identity. Sheller and Urry for instance have criticised the prevalence in the social sciences of a 'sedentary' approach to geography, anthropology and sociology (2006: 208). It is an approach which 'treats as normal stability, meaning, and place, and treats as abnormal distance, change, and placelessness' (ibid.). Amin (2004) too, has been critical of conceptualisations of bounded places as grounded and authentic, and the prioritisation of place in the lived realities of day-to-day life, human identity and experience. He argues that 'it is odd that the territorial/scalar imaginary of place has not budged' given the dramatic and continued changes brought about by globalisation (2004: 34).

Over the last two decades, such critiques have coalesced to form a body of work which has come to be known, broadly, as the 'relational' approach to place.

[The] relational reading of place... works with the ontology of flow, connectivity and multiple geographical expression, to imagine the geography of cities and regions through their plural spatial connections (Amin, 2004: 34).

Under this umbrella term, fall the works of key proponents such as Agnew, Amin, Harvey, Latour, Massey, Ingold and Thrift. Although these theorists do bear substantive differences, they are brought together by the shared contention that thinking space 'relationally' offers a more 'empowering perspective' for geographical analysis (Jones, 2009: 492). This is because thinking relationally positions space as neither abstract and empty, nor fixed in place. It is viewed instead as 'a product of practices, trajectories, interrelations'; made through interactions 'at all levels, from the (so-called) local to the (so-

called) global' (Massey, 2004: 5). This view of space has had an important impact on notions of 'placeness' and localisation. Viewed relationally, notions of place, 'the local' and 'the global' cannot be closed off (Callon and Law, 2004); they must remain 'essentially unboundable in any absolute sense, and inevitably historically changing' (Massey, 2004: 5).

In this chapter I draw from some of these key relational thinkers, as well as Deleuze/ and Guattari in order to weave a critical discussion around how surfing spaces in Britain are being constructed or perceived as local 'places'. I am interested in whether, and in what ways, female surfers are experiencing a 'sense of place' in surf space and how this is impacted by the intersections of gender and sexuality. This is an important area of analysis because, as Massey argues,

spaces and places, and our senses of them (and such related things as our degrees of mobility) are gendered through and through... And this gendering of space and place both reflects *and has effects back on* the ways in which gender is constructed and understood in the societies in which we live (2000: 129).

As I demonstrated in chapter five, the surfing spaces in Britain vary dramatically in terms of location, climate, and multiple physical and social geographical characteristics. I suggest that the interplay of space, place and subjectivities also varies accordingly. Here, I offer two contrasting readings of surfing spaces; firstly, I discuss how surfing 'places' become re/territorialised through localism, and secondly, how they are deterritorialised through 'nomadism'.

Theorising 'Localism': Place-based Politics and Territorialisation

Localism is a process of dominating a territory, and policing its cultural laws... it creates an us and them situation in which the them is never as good or as right as we are (Swoboda, 2001). Localism operates from a paranoia that surf-spots are under siege from outsiders and a key feature is hostility to those outsiders (Evers, 2007: 2).

The existence of localism in surfing has been well documented by researchers in the area (Anderson, 2013; Evers, 2007, Ford and Brown, 2005; McGloin, 2005, Olivier, 2010; Olive et al. 2012; Scott, 2003; Waitt, 2008; Wheaton, 2013). Evers for instance, is a local surfer from the Gold Coast of Australia. His research is closely influenced by his own

embodied experiences of surfing as a 'local' amongst 'locals'. Australia has often been recognised for its strongly masculine surf culture, and like many of the most popular surf destinations, localism is common, and has intensified as more and more surfers have taken to the waves (Anderson, 2013; Evers, 2007). In its more fervent forms, 'localism is characterized by a masculinized, xenophobic territorialism and a hostility to outsiders' (Scott, 2003: 6). This hostility can take a variety of forms, such as staring, verbal abuse, physical violence (in and out of the surf), and car or surfboard vandalism (Anderson, 2013). Furthermore, the specific criteria for the 'identification and categorization of locals and outsiders is complex, and often irrational' (Olivier, 2010: 1224). As Wheaton notes, 'while seemingly targeting geographically-defined 'outsiders' to that beach break, [localism] also extends to anyone who is *different*' (2013: 152). The result is that not only are all non-local surfers excluded - including other white males - but women, people of ethnic minorities, and 'kooks' (beginner surfers) are also usually positioned as outsiders (Wheaton, 2013). This is a troubling dynamic because, as Harvey (1993: 3-4) has observed:

territorial place-based identity, particularly when conflated with race, ethnic, gender, religious and class differentiation, is one of the most pervasive bases for... reactionary exclusionary politics.

An extreme example of this dynamic in contemporary surf culture is provided by the 'race riots' which occurred amongst 'Anglo-Celtic' Australian surfers and Lebanese Australian beach-goers in Cronulla, Australia in 2005 (cf. Barclay and West, 2006; Evers, 2007; Khamis, 2010; Waitt, 2008; Wheaton, 2013). Although class-based battles had historically plagued Cronulla, 'in December 2005 ethnic and cultural differences became the dominant markers of who the outsiders were' (Evers, 2007: 414). As part of this chapter I consider the complicatedness of this insider/outsider relation and its significance in the co-constitution of power relations at surf breaks in Britain.

Incidences of localism in Britain are nowhere near as prevalent, or violent as they have been known to be in places like California, Australia and Hawaii (cf. Evers, 2007, Ford and Brown, 2006; McGloin, 2005, Olivier, 2010; Waitt, 2008). As Anderson (2013) and Dugan (2010) have recognised however, British localism does still exist. An extract from Esther's interview provides a good example of how localism in Britain usually makes itself known;

He kept doing it to me [dropping in], again and again and again, and then I was like 'what are you doing?' and he was just shouting at me [...] he said 'show some respect to your elder locals' (Esther)

Many of the women I interviewed expressed having at some point sensed a similar sort of hostility in certain surfing spaces. Most commonly they described this behaviour as largely passive and unwelcoming, rather than openly hostile:

they just don't have the crack with you, whereas we, most of the time if we surf anywhere, people will just paddle up to you and start chatting away. Erm, but just not here (Lana)

they're really gossipy as well, some of them kind of gossip about you... it's really cliquey (Yiesha)

On the other hand, Jen recognised that in some places, localism was more overt:

You go down to St. Agnes, erm, where's the other one... Portreath, you know, you just don't go there, cos that's locals and you know they'll just, fuckin heckle you... there's quite a lotta, quite a reputation (Jen)

The prevalence of localism has, in the majority of accounts, been blamed on the growing popularity of surfing and the increased mobility of travelling surfers to (non-local) surfing destinations (Anderson, 2013; Evers, 2008; Olivier, 2010; Scott, 2003). Essentially, writes Olivier, localism in surfing is seen 'as a form of cultural preservation, as a way of maintaining or even recapturing a sense of order that is being threatened by the explosion in popularity of the sport' (2010: 1224). Surfing, like all other areas of life, has felt the continuing impact of globalisation, and the 'space-spanning connections and flows of information, things and people [which] undermine the rootedness of a wide range of processes anywhere in particular' (Agnew, 2011: 318). One of the key developments in surfing has been the growth and availability of easy to read surf forecasting websites, reports and webcams which allow surfers to check the surf in real-time. This allows surfers to check the surf from a distance and travel to a chosen surf spot when the surf is 'on'.

Ever since Magicseaweed [popular forecasting website] came out, people didn't used to surf in Aberavon, it was just locals... no outsiders came to

Aberavon. Its only probably in the last, I would say, 6 years, it's gone, chock-a-block... they surf right along now don't they, definitely, it's becoming more popular (Bethan)

This growth in mobility and access breeds 'increasing uncertainty about what we mean by a 'sense of place' and how we relate to the changing landscape of sporting and recreational life' (Vertinsky, 2004: 8). One of the consequences of the dissolution of spatial boundaries and the compression of space-time is the emergence of territorial resistances (Amin, 2004; Harvey, 1993), such as localism. These resistances work to establish an 'authentic' sense of 'community, landscape, and moral order... a strong sense of "belonging" to a place' (Agnew, 2005: 89; Harvey, 1993). Support for this sort of place politics is sought by appealing to a local, 'imagined', (sub) cultural heritage 'that needs to be recovered or protected from a threatening cultural 'outside'' (Amin, 2004: 37).

The locals don't like outsiders on the peak [...] and they do work to snake¹ them off as well, so they can't catch waves if they're sitting there (Bethan)

Yeah, my local's [beach name], and that's a lot of local, cos, if you're not local, you couldn't, erm, you're allowed to drop in on... like everybody says 'you can drop in on everybody, just not the locals' so that's quite funny [...] but you get that everywhere, so (Roz)

The surfing community is quite sort of protective over the waves and stuff like that, so that was a little bit intimidating when I first started like... it was kind of like a grumpy look kind of thing, erm, which did intimidate us a little bit (Yiesha)

As these quotes demonstrate, localism involves 'a strongly territorial imaginary of place and place politics' (Amin, 2004: 35). It is also reliant on an invested and embodied 'sense of place' as particular and valued (Agnew, 2011). Because surfing is such a visceral experience, surfers' connections to surfing spaces are strongly embodied. This connection is not only spatial, but emplaced, that is, it is intricately connected to the particularities of place.

¹ 'Snaking' involves paddling around a surfer who is waiting 'in line', just before 'take off'. It is effectively a form of queue jumping or 'hogging' waves

Surfers form a sensory relationship with the local weather patterns, sea-floors, jetties and rock walls. Surfers' bodies intermingle with the coastal morphology... Knowing how to ride 'with' a wave at a particular spot is a clear marker that you're a local and works as a way to signal ownership of a space in an increasingly crowded surfing world... We bond with the geographical turf, and we band together (Evers, 2007: 4).

As I recognised in both the previous chapters, riding 'with' a wave; joining with it, is a vital part of what allows female surfers to experience their surfing bodies *differently*. What also became evident through my research however is that these experiences are also importantly intertwined with the politics of space and place (cf. Anderson, 2013), and how these politics are gendered.

This gendering is dependent on 'a connection between bodies and space, which is built, repeated and contested over time', and develop 'in accordance with how both spaces and bodies are imagined' (Puwar, 2004: 8). The dynamics of localism work to territorialise space; to define and map out the parameters of insider and outsider, us and them, which bodies belong, and which ones do not. Local bodies have a 'fine-tuned know-how' which determines a certain physical and cultural habitus (to utilise a Bourdiean term), and signals 'ownership' (Evers, 2007: 3). These embodied cultural signifiers then dictate 'the complex rules of the territory', including who talks to whom, and how (ibid.). This sort of behaviour had been noted by the surfers in my research:

... you know sometimes you paddle past and you go 'alright', they just don't [say anything] (Roz)

Like, really ignorant, especially like, because they think like, 'aw, they were there first' and like, it's their beach and like, they think they own it like (Indi)

To apply the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the practice of localism might be viewed as a form of territorial 'segmentarity'; 'characterized by a polyvocal code... and an itinerant territoriality based on local, overlapping divisions. Codes and territories... [which] form a fabric of relatively supple segmentarity' (1987: 209). In other words, 'locals' construct for themselves a spatial 'strata', with a central majoritarian 'code' or ethic which is grounded in both divisive and complex place-based values.

My interest in the notion of territorialisation relates, not only to the physical domination of space (which I began to explore in chapter six), but also metaphorically and

theoretically to the ways in which Deleuze and Guattari (1987) have utilised the term with regards to identity and subjectivity. In Deleuzian philosophy, 'territorialisation' refers to various forms of social, political and theoretical grounding, which function to sustain dominant norms, values and identities. In a similar way, the dominant territorialised local surfer in Britain is characterised by a youthful or paternalistic masculinity which is overwhelmingly white and heterosexual.

The guys that are older than me, 40+, they've usually been quite friendly, yep. And solitary surfers... they're normally keen to interact, it's the small pockets, the small groups of the guys together erm... I'd say it's that kind of 20+ age range. (Bea)

I think it's just like the young ones are just trying to prove something. Either to themselves, or to somebody else, or to each other, that they kind of, that they belong there, or it's like a sense of belonging, or an identity, I dunno what it is (Yiesha)

However, what the observations of the female surfers above suggest is that, although the surfing 'local' is characterised by territorialised, and territorialising, identities, they are also necessarily characterised by the constant threat of 'deterritorialisation'. Like Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of the wolf pack:

The pack, even on its own turf, is constituted by a line of flight or of deterritorialization that is a component part of it... in a pack each member is alone even in the company of others... each takes care of himself at the same time as participating in the band... In the changing constellation of the pack...he will again and again find himself at its edge (1987: 33)

Thus, even though white, hetero-masculine, place-based identities proscribe what is normative, privileged and accepted amongst surfing locals (Evers, 2005, 2007), these territorialised values are hierarchical and policed precisely because they are never secure. In Deleuze and Guattari's words, 'there is a majoritarian "fact," but it is the analytic fact of Nobody' (1987: 105). Evers work also alludes to this when he describes how 'the rules feel 'natural' even though they're not, and appear to be the only way things can be done even though they aren't' (2007: 3).

The resulting territorial 'anxiety' amongst male surfers (Henderson, 2010) is something I reflected on briefly in chapter one, and has been acknowledged in relation to gender in other works (cf. Evers, 2005, 2006, 2009; Henderson, 2001; Waitt, 2008; Waitt and Warren, 2008). The reading I apply in this chapter however is a relational Deleuzian one which aims to highlight the various feminist *possibilities* which such ever-present deterritorialisations might hold for female surfers in surfing spaces. It is important to reiterate that overt 'localism' in British surf spaces is by no means prevalent, and where it does exist, it is rarely a 'serious' problem. However, there is enough evidence to suggest that female surfers in Britain are aware of the existence of a territorialisation ethic in British surf space. These 'jostling territorial configurations, of territorial attack and defence' are grounded in the 'local' and are intersected by distinctly gendered norms and values (Amin, 2004: 33). In the next section I consider more explicitly some of the 'ways in which space is used to mask, reproduce and regulate... hierarchies [such as] gender' (Wheaton, 2013: 57) at the breaks frequented by the women in my research.

En-gendering the 'Local': Experiencing Gender 'in place'

It is quite, it's quite sort of intimidatory isn't it, the car park at Shoreham actually is quite (makes a nervous face)... you kind of come in, and everyone is like "who's that?" immediately, yeah... and I've heard Ken and Mark, and I've been talking to them and he'll go, "Oh, who's that? Who's that?" when someone will come in, you know, I've heard them say "Who's coming in? What they doing?" (Ellen)

Ellen's 'local' surf spot is Shoreham, near Brighton. In the interview we discussed our shared feelings about visiting the surf spot for the first few times. It was a feeling of crossing an invisible boundary; a guarded boundary. For her, this was felt most when there was '*a lot of boys and men and there wasn't really any other women around*'. Ken and Mark are longstanding 'locals' in Brighton, who run small surf-related businesses in the local area. Mark almost always parks his van in the same spot, directly opposite the car park entrance. Although both men are friendly, they are also territorial and, as Ellen reported, they have been known to keep "an eye on" (monitor) anyone who is disrespectful to the locals:

I was talking to Mark about it [...] [that] this guy really shouted at me, and there was four of us at that spot, funnily enough, and I was the only woman at

that point and he shouted at me, but he didn't shout at the other guys, and I shouted back, so... but Mark said "oh, is it that guy, that bloody guy! With no leash!" you know, and you sort of do wonder, what goes on [...] because I've not seen him since! (chuckles)(Ellen)

In chapter six I considered the ways in which women negotiated anger in the surf. I argued that, largely, women do not often express anger because it is a less sanctioned emotion for women than men. In Ellen's interview however, it became clear that in certain circumstances she would openly express her anger; when she felt it to be feminist. In these instances, she would 'persist' (Ahmed, 2004) with anger when she felt it was reasonable, such as in the moment she describes above. However, what is also central to this is that Ellen's expression of anger is closely intertwined with her level of comfort in the local surf space, and her discussion with Mark demonstrates the complexity of surf territories as more-than-gendered.

Ellen now considers herself to be an accepted member of what she referred to as the relatively "tight knit" surfing community in Brighton. She had surfed there for 4 years (since she started), and this had led to her developing a certain feeling of comfort and belonging; a 'sense of place' within the Shoreham surf space. This was also the case for Andrea, Sandy and Lynn, who were also regular year-round surfers. For these surfers, surfing through the winter and regularly braving unpleasant surf conditions had gained them respect from the more 'established' Brighton surfers.

I got the impression that you earn your stripes (Ellen).

Brighton's fairly unique... I don't, I don't know if [its] the case in the west country so much... a lot of the women surf throughout the winter... because I think most surfers know it's gonna be best kind of from October til kind of February. So I think it's a bit more kind of, I think we're a bit more hardy in that respect perhaps...(Lynn)

I think, if people, if you're prepared to put the time and effort in, you get a lot of respect from people, surfers, like [Ken] and [Mark], and I think they really respect the fact that we go out in the middle of winter, you know, and they've really accepted us as part of their community, cos I think they get quite pissed off, with the amount of people that come down that they haven't seen (Sandy).

I know if I come here and there's waves, there's gonna be a couple of people I know anyway. Mainly I would probably recognise most of them, even if I don't know who they are. Erm, yeah, so I feel fairly at home now, around here.
(Andrea)

However, whilst 'earning their stripes' had contributed to a sense of belonging and friendliness for these surfers, it did not appear to be accompanied by a fully embodied sense of privilege within the surf space. As described in chapter six, Andrea, Ellen, Sandy and Lynn remained cautious about the territorialisation of space by male surfers in Brighton, regardless of the differences in ability between the women. Andrea, the most competent of the women, and the most regular surfer said:

I won't ever go like and sit right next to the pipe when there's loads of people there. It's a nightmare... sometimes they do tend to monopolise certain places, so, you know, I don't go there, but then I kind of think how ok is that? (Andrea)

My findings suggest that, although some women do experience feeling accepted within the territorial dynamics of their local surf space, there is also evidence to suggest that this acceptance hinged, sometimes precariously, on distinctly gendered norms and privileges.

In essence, women's access to imagined local 'rights' are always contested, largely because they are not the 'natural' norm (Puwar, 2004), or 'majoritarian' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). As Vertinsky argues, a woman's 'sense of place' will be very different from that of a man's in terms of 'the spaces in which she has been accustomed to move and her connections with others' (Vertinsky, 2004: 12). The ways in which gender intersected with a 'local' identity for the women in my research was evidently complex, and this has also been acknowledged by other female surf researchers (cf. Beamont, 2011; Corner, 2008; Olive et al., 2012; Olive and Thorpe, 2011). Olive et al. for instance, contend that for the female surfers in their Australian research 'feeling at home and at ease with a local surfbreak...contributed to feelings of belonging and connection that added to their experiences and comfort as a minority in the surf' (2012: 9). At the same time however, these women acknowledged feeling as though they were not respected as 'authentic' surfers and that their acceptance in the surf often felt 'condescending' and marginalising (ibid.). In this sense, it is as though;

Being both insiders and outsiders, they occupy a tenuous location. Not being the somatic norm, they don't have an undisputed right to occupy this space. Yet

they are still insiders. Their arrival brings into clear relief what has been able to pass as the invisible, unmarked and undeclared somatic norm (Puwar, 2004: 8).

This ‘tenuous location’ is evidenced, theoretically, in the ways in which women’s bodies are representative of territory which is being claimed or defended. Often, female surfers are accepted as ‘locals’ - or at least by the locals - if they are connected to male locals by family or partnership (Beaumont, 2011; Corner, 2008). However, much like the discourses connected to nationhood (cf. Puwar, 2004, Yuval-Davis, 1997), I suggest that other female ‘locals’ are also accepted via an imagined positioning as (pseudo)family (sisters, partners or mothers). Indeed, a maternal discourse was utilised by Ellen and Sandy in their interviews, and the significance of this connection is evidently an emotional one:

I feel like mother hen with all my ducklings, come closer, closer! (Ellen)

The surf community has become like my family really, because I don’t have a family anymore, I’ve got my sister but, its, erm, I’m sort of quite protective of it in a way (Sandy)

Alternatively, non-local women’s bodies might also be conceived of as ‘virgin territories’ (Puwar, 2004: 27) and thus are welcomed by male ‘locals’ in the surf space as potential sexual “conquests”. The realities of this notion have been recognised by other researchers (Fiske, 1989; Ford and Brown, 2005), and is demonstrated when Evers states that; ‘in my home turf we’ll claim rights to car parks, park benches and girls’ (2007: 3). In my research, this sort of dynamic was recognised in some of the comments made by women about ‘local’ surf spots, particularly with regards to bodies which conformed to the norms of idealised hetero-femininity. For instance, Jen said of local Cornish spots, that ‘*you might get away with it if you were a girl... but [otherwise] you just get, yeah, told where to go really*’. Likewise, a similar dynamic was conveyed in a Twitter conversation about a well-known ‘local’ surf spot in Wales:

***Male Surfer:** had a cracking [Stand Up Paddleboarding] session! Really nice, might even do peaks tonight see how many Langland boys call me a wanker*

***Female surfer:** Langland boys being abusive in the water? I don't believe it haha! #NoSurprise their nicer if your a girl #GrowSomeBoobs [sic]*

Often, this sort of hetero-gendered territorial access is accepted by female surfers because it's seen as a 'positive' thing.

They'll let you take waves, that they probably wouldn't have let a guy do ... they're a little bit more forgiving if you do drop in on them ... it's a little bit patronising, but erm ... quite handy (smiles) ... they seem to be quite encouraging of women in the water (Jen)

However, whilst this reveals a more 'positive' gendered relation to the dropping in and spatial domination described in chapter six, it nevertheless hinges on a hetero-gendered and 'patronising' imbalance of power, as Olive et al. (2012) recognise.

Furthermore, this statement by Jen reflects a sort of 'third-wave' view of female empowerment which, as I discussed in chapter two, is both individualistic, and problematic because it hinges on hetero-feminine norms. The experiences described by Bethan in her interview, provide an important example of this problematic. Bethan openly identifies as lesbian and her gender is coded as such. She prides herself on her 'local' positioning, and on surfing like 'one of the boys'. In the extract below, it is clear that her experiences of surfing are closely influenced by a normalised territorial view of (local) surf space:

B - I don't like it when people pinch my waves, I can get quite aggressive then... I like a good chops with someone if they've stole my wave... it depends who it is, if it's one of the [local] boys, I don't mind, but if it's not a local then, all the boys and me will have a chops then,

G – so what will be said?

B – I can't say it on tape [...] Sling yer hook... and especially not kooks... especially in [town name] if you're on the peak, kooks aren't allowed to surf on the peak, there's a clear pecking order on the peak in [town name]ⁱⁱⁱ

In chapter six I discussed the problems this sort of surf 'aggro' might pose for other female surfers. However, what also emerged from this interview was that for Bethan herself, surfing as *one of the boys* was closely connected to the notion of being a local, as opposed to being about gender alone. This is demonstrated in how she expresses anger *only* at her local break. Unlike Ellen, whose anger was felt as feminist, Bethan's expression of anger was felt in accordance with the exclusionary norms of localism. However, despite 'engendering' the 'local', Bethan revealed in her interview that her status as 'one of the

boys' was a particularly unstable one, due to her 'minoritarian' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) status as female:

G – have you ever had any issues with being the only girl in the water most of the time?

B – erm, no not really, I think they see me as one of the boys now... erm, I do get some like sly comments, I don't know if they're intended to be sly comments, or just, I've heard the boys saying like "oh, look at the girl catching the wave" or... I don't know if its derogatory, just like boys being boys amongst themselves, you know, trying to look cool.

Moments like these serve as a reminder of the pervasiveness of spatialised masculine (white, hetero-) normativity in surf space, and in particular, how subtle forms of 'territorialisation' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) function to preserve 'local' surf spaces as hetero-masculine. In the politics of localism, as in those of nationalism, 'it is men who normatively defend th[e] border in combat' (Puwar, 2004: 27). Subsequently, the access which is granted to 'local' female surfers is only ever that; access. It is achieved either by 'earning your stripes' or surfing like 'one of the boys', but it is only ever an assimilation of the norm. As Deleuze and Guattari state 'there is no becoming-majoritarian; majority is never becoming' (1987: 106), female bodies are thus often 'reterritorialised' into occupying a position which is appropriately and normatively gendered; as familial, heterosexy, or 'out of place' (Puwar, 2004: 8).

Such place-based politics are concerning because they represent a pervasive re-territorialisation of Deleuze's 'majoritarian' and perpetuate a culture which values an essentialised and exclusionary white heteronormativity (cf. Wheaton, 2013). On the other hand, I argue that the futility of 'becoming-majoritarian' is significant for female surfers precisely because of its potential to force a line of flight in an 'other' direction. Indeed, it is the becoming-minoritarian, not majoritarian, which holds the 'potential, creative and created becoming'; the potentially feminist deterritorialisation (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 106).

What matters to Deleuze is to keep open the process of becoming minoritarian and not to stop at the dialectical role-reversal that usually sees the former slaves in the position of new masters or the former mistresses in the position of dominatrix. The point is to go beyond the logic of reversibility (2003: 55).

In Braidotti's words, The 'centre is void, all the action is on the margins' (ibid.: 53). In the next section I consider the ways in which some British surfing spaces are functioning to encourage such becomings. In doing so I turn to the Deleuzian influenced notion of space as folded.

Exploring 'Other' Ways of Perceiving Place

Deleuze's work on the fold has been a key influence in the shift from topographical to topological thinking in the social sciences. Put simply, it is a shift which has allowed for theorisations of space to move from more fixed or bounded notions of scale and landscape, to conceptions of space as produced and productive, mobile, connected and fluid (Doel, 2000).

every inside-space is topologically in contact with the outside-space, independent of distance and on the limits of a 'living'... [this] topology... frees a sense of time that fits the past into the inside, brings about the future in the outside, and brings the two into confrontation at the limit of the living person'. (Deleuze, 2006: 97)

Deleuze's topological thinking allows us to conceptualise the lived experience of space-time compression, and the 'conversion of near and far' (Deleuze, 2006) not as dissolutions or compressions, but as foldings. As I explained in chapter three, this points to the indistinguishable – or immanent – relation between subjectivity, space and place.

The important distinction is that folding is more dynamic, active, changeable. Not only is the 'outside' absorbed into the self but it also allows the self to 'intervene' more effectively with the outside (Probyn, 2003). The spaces and places we inhabit, and the connections that take place with the self and selves as they interact in these spaces is a 'material' manifestation of the rhizome. This carries important implications for theorising about the intertwining of subjectivities in surfing space and place. Here, I explore the ways in which cultures of mobility and transience in surfing offer a counterpoint, and in some instances, a challenge, to the experience of surfing spaces and subjectivities as 'territorialised', hetero-masculine and local. In doing so I focus my attention on the surf space of Newquay, Cornwall.

Newquay served as a sort of flagship site in my ethnographic fieldwork because of its reputation as Britain's "surf capital". I spent 7 months living, working and surfing in Newquay and conducted 11 in-depth interviews with women who surfed there. Here, I

draw primarily from my interviews, and experiences, with 8 women who surf in Newquay. At the time of interviewing, all the women were also living in Newquay, and most of them, including myself, identify as lesbian. These women, including myself, regularly surfed and socialised together and through the time I spent with them I have made some close friends. They do not form a discernible group as such, rather the connections between them constantly shift and flow in ways that are similar to the waters they surf: emergent and unpredictable; sometimes fickle, sometimes powerful.

I use it as a case study for this discussion in order to explore in greater depth some of the nuances of 'thinking space relationally' in the context of place-based power relations, surfing and subjectivity (Massey, 2004: 5). I use the women's 'stories' in order to open up a discussion about challenging heteronormativity in surfing spaces, like Newquay. In doing so I bring together a relational view of space and place, with Deleuzian and feminist theorising in order to offer an alternative view of spatial subjectivities which Anderson (2012b) describes as theorising 'from the sea'.

Newquay 'Nomads': Deterritorialising the Local

In every surf location, there exists an intertwining of physical geography, with the social and cultural geography of the space (Waite, 2008; Evers, 2009). Newquay's surf beaches are unique in the sense that, not only does swell roll in consistently from the Atlantic Ocean, but the shape of the harbor and headland mean that there are more than 5 surf spots within walking distance of the town. Furthermore, the differing geographical characteristics of each means that, often, surfers can take their pick of wave size and shape. Furthermore, Newquay itself has come to be associated with certain defining characteristics. As I described in chapter five, these include partying, surfing and adventure sports.

Tourism is the life-blood of the town. In the summer, when the population increases from about 20,000 to 100,000 (www.duchyofcornwall.org). In the winter, Newquay goes into hibernation as the population dwindles. Bars and pubs become almost empty, half of the shops close, and the rest strip back their stock to a minimum. For those dependent on the tourist trade, "*there's not much money to be made ... and the winters are hard ...*" although the development of the town has meant that the contrast is not as considerable as it once was: "*It used to be a lot different in the winter here. It used to be like, desolate, like tumbleweed town really, all the shops boarded up, and it was just nothing ...*" (Jen).

The winter is definitely different, because it is purely local, you will know, so many more people out there, because the amount of crowds is so much smaller, and everybody (laughs) everybody's feeling so like, damaged by the cold water, that it's more of a community feel, everybody does talk in the water, it's not as competitive [...] in the summer its intense, there's just so many people [...]

I think all the locals all retract into work work work and then um, they come back out in September and October, the summer's just a weird time to be here, it feels like a bubble is over Newquay, and you feel like you're in a weird weird place, and you're just like a theme park (Hannah)

Evidently, Newquay has felt the impact of globalisation. The town serves as a pertinent example of how places are continually transformed by the transnational flows of people, communication and commerce. As Anderson (2012b: 574) describes, 'place is no longer reliable, consistent, or necessarily coherent; it is wholly provisional and unstable'. Likewise, the place of Newquay is emergent, momentary, and always 'becoming'.

This instability emerges from the accounts of surfers as they describe their 'sense of place'. In this above extract Hannah attaches her 'sense of place' to an imaginary notion of Newquay 'in the winter' when it is 'purely local'. Her reference to Newquay as a theme park clearly connotes a concern over the 'placelessness' of the town in summer. However, Newquay's reputation as a surf and party capital; what draws the crowds in summer, is the same thing that draws people like Hannah there. This inconsistency brings to the fore the non-fixity of Newquay as a locality, and the significance this has on how subjectivities are experienced *in relation to* the place;

The sort of people that live in Newquay, they're not born and bred here, I mean... [people] born in Newquay ... they're very thin on the ground, and they'll let you know about it if they are ... because you know, it's quite a unique thing, to be a local (Jen).

They've moved here to, surf basically, and, live here for that kind of, um, I dunno, the kind of lifestyle down here I suppose (Nadine)

Everyone's congregated here, there's not many people that are originally from Cornwall ... they've all sort of travelled there, visited, and end up staying (Laura).

Significantly, all the women I interviewed moved to Newquay, individually, from elsewhere. This meant that, as Jen recognises, none of them were 'born and bred' 'locals'. Even after living in Newquay for 10 years Jen said "*I wouldn't even class myself as a local really*". However, because of the transient, seasonal nature of the Newquay space, the accompanying space-time compression meant that, some surfers come to see themselves as 'local' after a relatively short time. Hannah's quote above exemplifies this, as does Jen's observation that *I'm more local than most of them*.

*Everyone goes, "oh, well have you got local rates?". Well, who are you?
You've been here one season, that's not a local (Jen)*

The initial draw for many of them was, as Nadine suggests, Newquay's reputation as a 'surf town'. Laura describes how many of the women had arrived there as visitors; nomads. Driven by a desire to escape or discover. As I outlined in chapter three, the notion of the nomad is, for Deleuze and Guattari an example of 'the Deterritorialised par excellence' (1987: 381). Definitively, 'The life of the nomad is the intermezzo': it is always and only, mobility – 'between things' (1987: 380).

Jen, Laura and Kath all expressed a strong connection to this sort of 'nomadic' and transient approach to life and all of them lived in vans for most of the year. "*I like the whole nomadic thing[...] being in that van is just like the epitome of freedom, it's just, you just park up somewhere beautiful, open the door, in the middle of nowhere[...] it just makes me smile*" (Kath). Jen, who has lived in Newquay since 2002 remembers arriving in her van with evident nostalgia:

At Fistral where the Blu [shopping] complex is and all that, that just used to be a sandy beach car park[...] there was like a burger van, and a little hut, and that was it. And, all the vans, all the hippies, and surfers, all just parked up there [...] I remember the first night [...] there was some guy stood on the rock playing the saxophone, there was a big fire, with a big pot on it, that this hippy woman was dishing out food to everyone. There was someone playing the guitar[...] it was just like a little festival, and I thought, 'oh, this is wicked' and the sun was setting and the surf [...] and I was like 'right, this is the best thing'...

However, as De Barros notes; 'as an outsider, the nomad functions as a sort of cultural Frankenstein; she embodies difference and resistance' (2004: 105). The increased

popularity and tourism in Newquay has meant a clampdown on people parking overnight, and in most places it is now policed; *'eventually it's just dispersed, all the vans'*. With fewer and fewer places to 'dwell' in vans, Jen's relational and emotional connection to Newquay has had to shift; mobilise. She described how the development in Newquay has meant that there is *nowhere left for that sort of way of life anymore*:

we lasted a season [at North Fistral], and then the bulldozers came down and we were all like, protesting "we shall not be moved" (laughs) [...] they just bullied us out basically, it was pretty grim...

it's a shame cos it's changed what Newquay symbolises, now it's a bit more, we're just a Blackpool kind of place, and literally, in sort of 10 years [...] it's just becoming a bit soulless, it's lost a lot of the hippy vibe in Newquay and it's a shame because that's, you know, that's, its lost a bit of the magic. (Jen)

As I discussed earlier, this nostalgic longing for what has been 'lost', or indeed, fear at what might be 'lost', often motivates the territoriality at 'local' surf breaks. However, for Jen, the development of Newquay as a tourist destination, and its reputation as one of the main 'places' to do adventure sports has also enabled her and another surfer; Laura, to set up a small female-owned adventure sport business in the town. *'We wanted to possibly make a bit more money and a bit more security down here'* (Jen). Through owning and running this business, Jen and Laura have become more connected within the local commercial and socio-cultural relations. Although both women had moved to Cornwall from the North of England, this investment in Newquay had given them a stronger 'sense of place'; *cos it's home, and yeah, I know half the people walking down the street to say hello to, and they know who I am (Jen). Yeah, I'd say that Newquay's my home now (Laura).*

As proponents of relational thinking have argued, the local and the global are mutually constituted (Massey, 2004). Not only have localised places been positioned as 'moments through which the global is constituted... [as] 'agents' in globalisation' (Massey, 2004: 11), but cultural globalism has also been positioned as an 'everyday filter through which regional attachment or sense of place is developed and expressed' (Amin, 2004: 37). Jen's story serves as a pertinent example of how subjectivities are folded into this dynamic becoming of globalised and localised space and place. Amin continues;

The result is not necessarily a weakened sense of place, but a heterotopic sense of place that is no longer reducible to regional moorings or to a territorially

confined public sphere, but is made up of influences that fold together the culturally plural and the geographically proximate and distant (ibid.).

Thinking relationally through a logic of the fold thus has important implications for feminist theorising about how subjectivities are mutually re-constituted through space (Probyn, 2003). As I have noted throughout this thesis, the work of feminists such as Braidotti (2003), Grosz (1999) and Probyn (2003) have been integral to developing Deleuzian influenced theories of gendered subjectivity. In this discussion I draw on nomadism, and the relational work of Ingold (2008), in order to advance a discussion about gender, subjectivity and the 'relational' Newquay surf space. In doing so I argue for the immanently feminist significance of a more fluid approach, an approach which constitutes what Anderson (2012b) terms theorising 'from the sea'.

'From the Sea': Motion, Mobility and Nomadic Surfing Subjectivities

Research into surfing demands a theoretical approach which is responsive to the dynamic, shifting and fluid nature of surf space (Anderson, 2012a; 2012b; 2013). Furthermore, the traditional geographical 'gaze' has been criticised by some feminists as distinctly masculine; characterised by a positioning of the land as feminine 'other' (Briginshaw, 2001) and, by aligning nature with a 'topography of passivity and stillness' (Rose, 1993: 96). I would argue that analyses of territorial surfing spaces, such as the one offered in the first half of this chapter, bring to the fore this gendered positioning of territory as landscape. It is demonstrated in the ways white male surfers are positioned as central majoritarian, whilst all 'others' inhabit the periphery (cf. Evers, 2005, 2006, 2009; Wheaton, 2013).

In chapter three I argued that the notion of the nomad is particularly suited to surfing because they share an immanent connection to motion and mobility. Unlike institutionalised sports involving starter guns, targets, obstacles, boundaries and final whistles, surfing can only ever exist *in between*; between earth, sea and sky, and the constant movements of the ocean. Importantly, surfing is not reducible to the act of 'riding waves'. It is not enclosed, controlled or defined; there are no goals.

I'll often sit there and just close my eyes (chuckles) and just feel the water on my hands, and just feel myself moving on the board, breathing in the sea air and, I just think it makes you feel very alive, to be in that place in nature, and the elements.... the ocean for me is just, just a sense of freedom (Kath)

I like the freedom of the sea... and the expectation of waves coming towards you, how big they will be and I just love the feel of the water really and the feel of the waves around you (Glenda)

The freedom described here is slightly different to the notions of freedom I discussed in the previous two chapters. There, I discussed the freedoms offered by the act of riding waves, here, the freedom Kath and Glenda express; the freedom 'of the sea' is one which points to a 'different' way of conceptualising surf spaces. It is an approach which Anderson (2012b) refers to as theorising 'from the sea', and offers an alternative to theories 'for the land', which focus on a terrestrial world which is understood as 'static, permanent, and durable' (Anderson, 2012b: 570). What Anderson (2012b) puts forward is a view of surfing as a relational place of 'convergence'. In chapters six and seven I explored this notion in the context of losing one's (gendered) self in the surf. Here, I follow this theoretical line of flight 'from the sea' to explore the ways in which female surfers are making feminist challenges to heteronormativity through the constitution of spaces by and for themselves, through their nomadic negotiation of Newquay surf space.

As I described in chapter five, Newquay is undeniably a predominantly heterosexual, white-British space. It is evident in all of its most visible guises - as a holiday space for families, a party space for stag and hen groups, a commercial space for businesses, and as a surfing space. The beach spaces too are distinctly hetero-gendered; reflected in the ways in which men and boys dominate the space. Furthermore, whilst it is evident that surfing is creating opportunities for women to become active participants in the space, women still only make up around 10% or 20% of the surfers "outback".

As I recognised earlier, surfing is not as spatially and temporally located as most traditional structured sports. Subsequently, the power relations which infuse surfing spaces are less fixed, and in the postmodern sense, potentially more politically productive (Fiske, 1989; Lewis, 2003). Despite the fact that women still remain vastly outnumbered by men, the numbers of competent female surfers 'out there' has certainly grown, (although it would be difficult to establish how this translates in terms of a gendered ratio, given the growth in surfing generally). Furthermore, the dependence of Newquay on surf tourism and travelling means that *if you surf at Fistral you've gotta expect that it's busy (Jen)*. The mix of men and women in the surf varies according to the surf conditions, the size and power of the swell, the speed of the breaking wave, the weather. All these impact on who surfs on any given day, depending on the spot:

North and south Fistral for example, if you were talking about Fistral as quite different, north is very pros and they might get a bit pissed off if you were in their way, where as south is a little bit more forgiving and a little bit more chilled (Jen).

[In winter there's] far less girls in the water, you do notice, I suppose because the really heavy winter swells come in, and girls like, it's too much to take on sometimes [...] I still love going in but, it's mainly guys out there, and they're always like "whoa, what are you doing out here?" (Hannah)

The constantly changing features of surfing spaces in Newquay means that – despite the *apparent* heteronormativity of the *place* – its connection to surfing means that it is difficult for gendered and sexualised power relations to take root. Thus, whilst dominant configurations of gender and sexuality might emerge, in the surf at least, they are not often maintained. Power relations are instead rhizomatic; like the sea, they are in a constant state of change. I propose that perhaps, this might be allowing for differently gendered spaces to momentarily escape what Deleuze termed, the ‘theatre of repetition’.

Jen: ... it is good, having a girl, amongst the guys, it does diffuse, and they, you know, tend to relax a little bit more ... it's what men have said, it's good to have girls out there, it's less testosterone, and... little do they know that most girl surfers are gay... but (laugh)...(Jen)

According to Brown, Browne, and Lim (2010), feminist geographers, Podmore (2001) and Peace (2002) contend that queer geographers have tended to overlook the less visible and more subtle ways in which lesbian and queer women appropriate space. They propose that ‘geographies of lesbian space can only be advanced through an attention to women’s social networks’ (Brown, Browne, and Lim, 2010: 8). The significance of social networks in the lives of the Newquay surfers is something which emerged strongly in my findings:

I've never really experienced any homophobia wherever I've been... maybe one or two name calling... it's never really affected me in any way, cos I've always got all my friends around me who, who I adore, so... but, I guess, I wouldn't walk around Wakefield holding my girlfriend's hand... as I would do in

Newquay ... so I am aware that there's more homophobia in different places...

(Laura)

G: Do you think there are any lesbian spaces in Newquay?

Bella: On the spot I'd say no... Define lesbian space... is the space intentionally designed for lesbians? Is the 'space' a byproduct of lesbians using it? I think 'spaces' are made by the presence of people...five lesbians go for a surf, it's a lesbian space, but then that's like power in numbers.

Drawing on the work of Casey (1996), Ingold (2008) and Massey (2005), Pink (2009) explores the idea that 'place', rather than being a specifically located space, might alternatively be conceptualised as an 'event' (Casey, 1996; Massey, 2004). As events, places are not bounded, but open. Like the sea, they are fluid, and like a surfed wave they come about through a 'convergence' of elements. 'In this zone of entanglement - this meshwork of interwoven lines - there are no insides or outsides, only openings and ways through' (Ingold, 2008: 53).

The girls that I surf with, pretty much, are all gay ... (Nadine)

In Brighton as a gay person, you'd be on the scene [gay scene] and that culture ... fashion and music. Here it's [gay scene] ... having a surf ... fire on the beach (Jen)

The women surfers in Newquay do not have lesbian and or queer places through which to meet, and they recognise that Newquay *doesn't really have a scene scene, but then there are, it's just that sort of place you know, it's, you can go out, and, yeah, I guess there are quite a few lesbians here, so ... (Sarah)*. Rather than places being located for lesbians, spaces are created *by* lesbians and *through* lesbian bodies; activated by numbers, and through communities. Spaces are 'opened up' by the ways in which bodies occupy them, and surfing is enabling the activation of these social spaces as well as surf spaces; *five lesbians go for a surf, it's a lesbian space? (Bella)*

G: so ... by that definition, are there any lesbian spaces in Newquay?

Bella: I suppose so, they are transient. I don't like the idea of spaces, when one hopes for equality there shouldn't be spaces in a conventional sense ... What I would say, there is a community of lesbians as far I as I am aware, there are

no specific 'places' for lesbians to go, maybe because it is a small town there doesn't need to be ... Presence creates space, it's the community ... a lot of lesbians know each other and if enough of them go out at the same time it's a space.

What is crucial is that these spaces are not fixed places. Unlike the gay scene, or gay games, and even lesbian sports teams, which provide localized and/or bounded meeting places for lesbians, surfing spaces are more mobile, transient and nomadic. As Ingold (2008: 13) has suggested, it is not the case 'that living beings exist in places ... [rather] places occur along the life paths of beings ...'. These contexts provide instances where heteronormative surfing spaces might momentarily, transiently become re-configured as different spaces, potentially queer spaces.

Jen catches a few too, then spends some time with Sally in the shallows. I see them leaning on a board together. They look at each other and kiss. It is a comfortable and relaxed kiss. They don't look around to see who's watching, no signs of un-comfort. As if it is their space (Fieldnotes, 2011)

I am quite affectionate with Sally in the water, and on the beach, and when I get out of the surf and she's waiting for me, we'll have a kiss and stuff, and it doesn't bother me ... but it doesn't bother me in public either ... erm, it's funny, in Newquay it doesn't bother me, if I'm out of Newquay, I'm more aware of it. (Jen)

These moments of rupture might only be subtle ones, but they are nevertheless apparent, and this is important. 'They appear for a moment, and it's that moment that matters, it's the chance we must seize' (Deleuze, 1995: 176). These moments matter because of their potentially queer challenge to heteronormativity. The women in Newquay are clearly 'seizing' the chances that are available to them, and this I argue is revealing of a subtle, nomadic, but nevertheless inspiring feminist ethic. One which allows for an 'opening up' of surf space to *different* ways of doing gender and sexuality.

Opening up space?: Concluding Thoughts

When surfers surf, 'they are not channeling, manipulating or harnessing power, but rather negotiating the force of the waves and sliding, joining its orbits

momentarily in order to move in a slightly different direction' (Ishiwata, 2002: 266).

The ways in which the female surfers, in Newquay, occupy space is akin to the act of wave riding itself. For them, it is not a matter of blatant 'resistance', although resistance is certainly a necessary part of their social processes. Instead, it is subtle—slight at times—rather than obvious and obstructive. It is an approach to heteronormative power relations that can be described as a line of flight, a 'joining', which encourages movement in a 'slightly different direction'. This is what Ishiwata (2002) refers to as an "other" form of politics, 'one that does not simply react to a set of constraints but instead develops an "other" sensitivity to them', one which is 'subtle enough to convert them into opportunities' (Ishiwata, 2002: 265, quoting Massumi, 1992).

I suggest that the spatial openings evident in Newquay surf space represent potentially feminist deterritorialisations which work against the notion of place-based identity as fixed, grounded and authentic. Furthermore, the mobile, nomadic nature of these deterritorialisations mean that they resist re-territorialisation.

Nomadism... is not fluidity without borders, but rather an acute awareness of the nonfixity of boundaries. It is the intense desire to go on trespassing, transgressing. As a figuration of contemporary subjectivity... She cannot be reduced to a linear, teleological form of subjectivity, but rather the site of multiple connections. (Braidotti, 2011: 66)

Surfing, I argue, is integral to these processes. It offers the potential for transformative flows because, as Deleuze recognises, it is always 'in motion'. 'The wave is the text of bliss to the surfer... constantly shifting, needing retreading ... It contradicts, defines, momentarily the ideological subjectivity through which discourses exert their control' (Fiske, 1989, in Lewis, 2003: 65).

In this chapter, I have discussed the ways in which surfing spaces in Britain are experienced *in place*. I have presented some of the ways in which they are at times experienced as bounded and exclusive, and how this intertwines with a territorialised politics of identity. What I have demonstrated through the case study of Newquay is that there are also other ways of experiencing subjectivity in surfing spaces. Theorising 'from the sea' (Anderson, 2012b) has helped to reveal positive and important forms of 'growth and movement' within gendered surf culture in Britain (Ingold, 2008). In concluding this chapter it is important to acknowledge that this 'nomadic' approach to subjectivity and

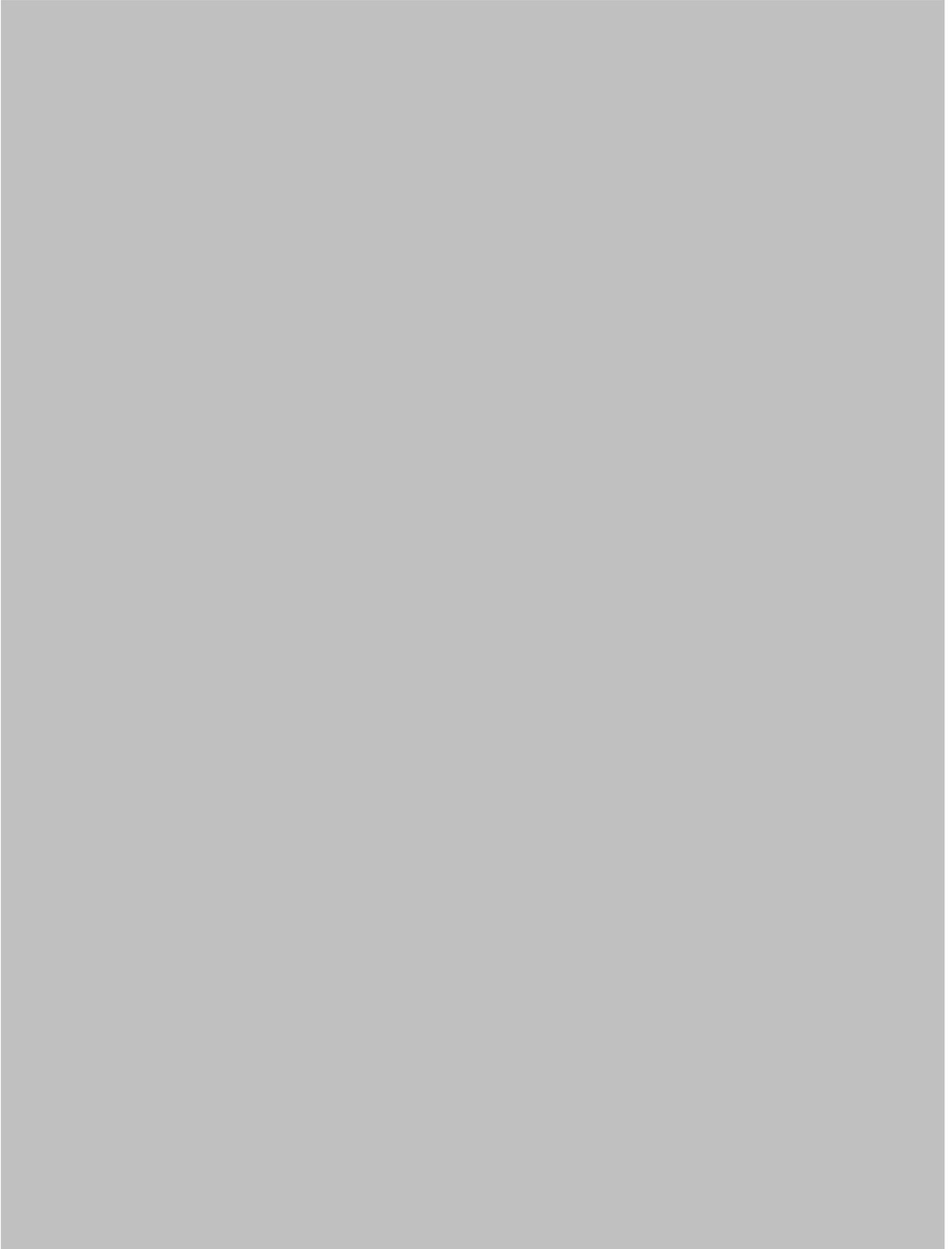
space is certainly not an approach which is open to all, and that mobility is always subject to relations of power and privilege (cf. Skeggs, 2004). However, I argue that what has emerged from this discussion is nevertheless promising in terms of the feminist readings of gender and sexuality *in place*.

ⁱ As part of my discussion, I also highlight the significance of whiteness and race relations, but I do not claim to analyse this in significant depth. See Wheaton (2013) for a dedicated discussion of race and ethnicity in the surf.

ⁱⁱ For a useful review see Cloke, P. & Johnston, R. (2005)

ⁱⁱⁱ Similar experiences of this particular local surf break have been reported by Anderson (2013)

Line of Flight



Chapter Nine

Riding Rhizomes: Surfing the Networks and ‘Female-only’ Community in Surf Space

I’ve seen it go from being “oh wow, there’s another girl in the water” to erm... “wow, there’s loads of girls in the water, and there’s a couple that are ripping” yeah, gradually over the years [...] the first change I saw, was after, kind of after Blue Crush came out, there was like this little wave of girls who, were like “oh I’ll give it a go”[...] and then gradually, [a few] years later a couple of their friends tried it, and then little networks have suddenly built up and it’s just suddenly gone boom... and there’s loads more now (Amy)

In chapter one I referred to the relatively recent growth in the popularity of female-only spaces in surfing. Commercially, the popularity of such spaces is evidenced in the growth of “female-only” or female-centred surf trips and surf lessons in the surf industry worldwide. In the UK, a number of companies now offer female-only tuition and travel options, whilst *Hibiscus surf school* and *Surf Sistas* are two examples of UK based companies dedicated specifically to providing female only lessons and travel. Industry giant, Ripcurl also runs an annual ‘girl’s tour’ in various locations around Britain, which allows women and girls to try a lesson for free. The marketing for many of these commercial women-only ventures is strongly characterised in a variety of ways by heteronormative feminine ideals. Surf lessons are often combined with yoga or pilates sessions, pampering days, or supported by beauty, fashion or jewellery companies.

The current proliferation of female-only enterprises has meant that the promotion of female-onlyness has become increasingly widespread. This is also evidenced in the growing number of female centred media productions such as the film *Blue Crush*, magazines; *SurfGirl*, *SG*, *Curl* and *Salted*, and television series; *Surfer Girls*, and *Alana: Surfer Girl*. Donnelly writes that ‘almost invariably, women onlyness has been normalized and naturalized to the point of being invisible’ (2012: 12). This invisibility is, to some extent, reflected in the literature on surfing. For instance, whilst a number of surf scholars have recognised the presence and popularity of female-onlyness in surfing (Comer, 2010), there has been very little critical attention paid to the significances and consequences of it.

One notable exception to this is the research conducted by Spowart, Burrows and Shaw (2010) which explores the experiences of surfers who were members of a Surfing Mums Incorporated group in New Zealand. Using a Foucauldian approach they focus

primarily on the discursive construction of motherhood. Although their research concerns are quite different from the aims of this chapter, their research is significant in terms of drawing attention to the importance of female-only surf spaces in 'supporting' and 'empowering' women. They also note that the Surfing Mums, through surfing as a group, had 'potentially problematized women's present position within the surfing culture' (p. 1194).

In my research, it quickly became evident that, whilst many of the women had not engaged with commercially-based women-only surf travel or lessons, most of them had, in various ways sought out other women to surf with. In an 'era of gender integration' it is important and timely to problematise, or at least question, the emergence of this sort of segregation (Donnelly, 2012: 19), particularly within a sporting culture which has not traditionally been structured or segregated by sex. Here, I aim to explore in more depth the modes and meanings connected to the creation of female-only spaces in surfing¹.

In the broader context of lifestyle sport, the subject of 'female-onlyness' has drawn the attention of a growing number of scholars, within a variety of sporting and adventure settings, such as windsurfing (Woodward, 1995), Canoeing (McDermott, 2004), Skateboarding (Atencio, Beal and Wilson, 2009; MacKay and Dallaire, 2012a, 2012b; Porter, 2003), Climbing (Dilley and Scraton, 2010), Wilderness exploration (Meyer, 2010), and Roller Derby (Beaver, 2012; Donnelly, 2012; Pavlidis and Fullagar, 2012). Studies by Atencio, Beal and Wilson (2009) and Porter (2003) for instance, have discussed the gendered constructions and feminist potential of female-only skateboarding spaces. Both studies suggest that the 'female-only' spaces in skateboarding - both mediated and material - reveal the simultaneous existence of both normative and disruptive femininities. They suggest that 'the increased presence of alternative femininities structured according to fluid configurations of race, ethnicity, social class and sexuality might serve to re-alter the street skateboarding landscape' (Atencio et al., 2009: 18). Furthermore, Pomerantz et al. suggest that if we pay attention to the everyday ways in which women participate in leisure, we might potentially find forms of feminism which 'can move as quickly and bravely as a girl on a skateboard' (2004: 555). With this chapter, I hope to contribute to these emerging discussions.

A common acknowledgement in all of these related studies is that female-only spaces are valued (in various ways) by the women who take part in them. This is significant because, aside from competitive surfing events themselves, surfing spaces (like those of other lifestyle sports) are not segregated by sex. Subsequently, these female-only spaces are, as Donnelly points out, forms of 'temporary, voluntary segregation' which are valued specifically for their female-onlyness (2012: 6).

As I discussed in the previous chapter, women are often subjected to subtle forms of gendered 'territorialisation' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) which function to sustain 'molar', sedentary norms of gender in surf space. I suggested that in some ways female surfers were entering nomadic becomings which offered possibilities for destabilising identities 'modelled on the molar/sedentary subject, to activate instead multiple becomings, away from identity' (Braidotti, 2003: 52-53). As an immanent disruption to dominant norms of femininity, nomadic becomings are certainly promising. However, whilst I contend that they carry feminist potential, I also acknowledge that this potential is not uncomplicated. In chapter three I critically discussed such becomings in terms of the Deleuzian notion of 'becoming-woman'. A key concern I addressed was with regards to the destabilising of molar woman. This was encapsulated in a question posed by Irigaray; 'don't we run the risk once more of taking back from women those as yet unterritorialized spaces where her desire might come into being?' (1985: 140-141). In other words, it is difficult to 'dispose nomadically of a subject position that you have never controlled to begin with' (Braidotti, 2003: 53). This is a point which was not lost on Deleuze and Guattari themselves:

It is, of course, indispensable for women to conduct a molar politics, with a view to winning back their own organism, their own history, their own subjectivity: "we as women .. ." makes its appearance as a subject of enunciation (1987: 276).

However, they continue, 'it is dangerous to confine oneself to such a subject' (ibid.) and this is a contention with which post-modern feminists would concur (cf. Butler, 1993). 'It is thus necessary to conceive of a molecular women's politics that slips into molar confrontations, and passes under or through them' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 276.). Consequently, part of my aim in this chapter, is to consider if and how the formation of surf spaces which *are* organised around (female) identity might simultaneously allow for disruptive feminist becomings.

The discussion is broadly organised into two sections. In the first half of the chapter I introduce some forms of 'female-only' *networking* which I have participated in through my ethnographic fieldwork. I focus predominantly on the cases of Brighton Board Girls, Surf Senioritas, and lesbian-centred groups in Newcastle and South Wales. I critically discuss the emergence and significance of such spaces for females who surf, whilst paying attention to the limitations connected to these spaces in terms of the power relations of gender, sexuality and space. As part of this, I consider some of the 'gendered, naturalized,

essentialized, stereotypical assumptions' which can sometimes emerge in connection to female-only-ness (Donnelly, 2012: 20).

In the second section I enter into a critical discussion around how we might think theoretically about the problematics and potential of 'female-only' *community* in surfing. As part of this, I critically consider the place of molar, molecular and minoritarian identities and put forward Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic thinking as a useful means through which to do so. Throughout both sections I reflect on whether, and in what ways, these spaces might allow for the emergence of feminist 'becomings'.

"Surfing" the (Inter)Net-works: Female-only and Normatively gendered?

In each of the field sites I visited, there was evidence of female surfers actively creating non-commercial female-centred spaces for surfing. The Brighton Board Girls, and Surf Senioritas (set up by surfers in South Wales), communicated predominantly via an internet-based social network 'group' page. In Newcastle, there was evidence of similar internet networking strategies to gather together women who surf. In Newquay and South Wales, there were also other less sustained forms of female-only networking.

In her work on 'surfer girls' and surf culture, Comer (2004, 2010) draws some parallels between surfing the sport, and the metaphorical notion of 'surfing' the internet. She draws attention to the way in which the growing cultural visibility of surfing, has been reflected in the increasingly popular usage of the term 'surfing' the internet. Comer contends that because surfing encapsulates movement, agency, and pleasure in mobility it has, since the 1990s, become closely tied to a 'rhetoric of optimism' (2010: 12) regarding the use and experiences of 'new world-transforming media' (2004: 238). Similarly, the internet is becoming an increasingly popular way in which female surfers are meeting one another. The statement below, for instance, is a description provided on a Facebook page set up by the team that produce SurfGirl magazine.

The reality for most girls is surfing alone with your bloke somewhere off in the distance. Which is ok if you're happy doing that. Sometimes though it's nice to go surfing with a like minded surf chick, someone who understands your level of surfing and isn't going to judge you. But it's not always easy to find other girls to hook up with.

So we've set up a community page on Facebook for you to get in contact with one another to set up lifts, trips, even holidays in your area. Give it a try, it's worth a punt - you've nothing to lose and you may make some good friends!

(SurfGirl Community Page, Facebook)

The SurfGirl community page appeared in 2010 and provides a forum for members to meet other surfers, as well as a means through which SurfGirl magazine can remain ‘in touch’ with its readers. This statement reflects an explicitly heterosexualised view of female surfers which positions them as surfer-girl-friends; women who have either gotten into surfing through their male partners, and/or are unable to ‘keep-up’ with them as surfers. It effectively positions heterosexuality as compulsory and renders invisible self-motivated women and girls who take part in surfing either individually or with friends. It also constructs a gendered opposition between male surfers as independent and unsupportive, and female surfers as like-minded, understanding and non-judgemental.

This gendered discourse is perhaps unsurprising given SurfGirl’s evident investment in a ‘post-feminist’ culture of commercial femininity, of the type described by Comer (2010: 8). The magazine describes itself as:

Britain’s number one surf and beach lifestyle magazine featuring surfing, fashion, health, beauty, travel, and entertainment... Our magazine is the surfing bible as well as a fashion guide. SurfGirl is published five times a year and is sold internationally across America as well as Australia

<http://www.surfgirlmag.com/home/about-surfgirl/> (accessed 1/12/12)

As a magazine *SurfGirl* represents a ‘third wave’ discourse which serves to construct the ‘new surfer girl’ as an active and able, yet reassuringly feminine figure (Heywood, 2008: 79). What is particularly troubling, however, is the presumed and generalised construction of a stereotypical gender order. *SurfGirl*’s statement on their ‘community page’ typifies the kind of ‘normative and naturalised’ problematic of female-onlyness to which Donnelly (2012) refers. It is an essentialised discourse which presumes a shared female experience which is subordinate, feminine and heterosexual. In Deleuze and Guattari’s words in ‘confines’ the female subject, ‘stopping [the] flow’ of potential change, transformation and becoming.

As part of my research I was interested in whether and how non-commercial networks negotiated the norms of female-onlyness. Surf Senioritas and Brighton Board Girls provide two of the most visible examples of female-centred surf-related internet networking sites in Britain. Here I consider some of the ways in which these community pages, set up voluntarily by female surfers, reflect, negotiate and/or disrupt the normatively

hetero-gendered notions of the female surfer, and the popular commercial discourses connected with surfing culture.

Surf Senioritas

Surf Senioritas (SSs) was set up by women who surf in South Wales in 2011 after 3 of them met through the SurfGirl community page: *I just happened to stumble across [it] [...] she said 'anyone from South Wales wanna surf? [...] and I was just like 'oh yeah great, I've never met another girl surfer' so to speak, so I was like 'yes, yes, wanna meet up?', and then Sally also commented, and said 'I'm from Swansea' (Nessa)*. Surf Senioritas is a 'closed group' (membership is gained through request or invite) and has over 200 members, all of them female. I joined the SS Facebook page in 2012, shortly before moving to South Wales to begin fieldwork there. Nessa had mentioned it on the SurfGirl community page and many of the more active members on the page are based in South Wales. Notably, the majority of members on the SSs page are aged between their teens and their mid-thirties.

SSs is, to many of its members, primarily a social networking site. Posts and discussions relating to surfing take place on a daily basis, regardless of the local surf conditions. In this sense, the page exemplifies the coming together of the agency and pleasure encapsulated by both surfing culture and by 'surfing' the internet. In the context of roller derby, Pavlidis and Fullagar (2012: 7) write of virtual communities; '[they] can influence debates in feminism... excite and become excited, participate in music and art, perform fashion and style, and so on'. Yet, there has been little interrogation into how these virtual spaces intertwine with lived sporting subjectivities, and function to 'produce the embodied meaning[s]' connected to alternative and female only sporting spaces' (Pavlidis and Fullagar, 2012: 6). Important recent exceptions include the contribution made by Pavlidis and Fullagar (2012), as well as MacKay and Dallaire's (2013) discourse analysis of female skater blogs. I aim to contribute to this literature by considering if, and in what ways similar spaces within surfing might have the potential to 'influence debates on feminism'.

As a group, SSs involves no structured or bounded times or places for meeting, nor does it assume the existence of any sort of tangible collective. Rather, the page is designed to facilitate individuals meeting up to go surfing, and provides a forum for the discussion of surf related topics. The description on the Surf Senioritas Facebook page reads:

This group is designed to help the sisters of the sea [...] a group just for girls to improve their surfing, meet new female surfers and organise trips [...] Here you will find like-minded souls who want to surf and go out and have a good time. Hopefully we'll have ourselves a network of girl surfers who will all be able to go out and enjoy each other's company and support in the sea [...] All abilities are welcome, we aim to help each other grow and develop into ace surfers [...] Feel free to share surfing spots, reports, photos, stories, art, ideas, anything and everything! [...] Look forward to meeting you all! [...] Peace x

Donnelly writes that there are often a number of common claims made about women-only activities which position women as non-competitive and mutually supportive;

women work with, rather than against, nature; when participating in outdoor programs, women develop a sense of community; women are or feel secure and safe in women-only settings; and women are empowered by their women-only outdoor experiences (2012: 44).

As I alluded to in chapter six, there is certainly evidence to suggest that many women who participate in female-only surf spaces are motivated to do so because they are seeking a more supportive and less competitive environment; *That week I'd maybe been for a couple of surfs on my own, and I was just like "Aw" [I was] like holding back so much in the water [and thought] "it would be so much nicer if there was some girls to surf with", it's just so much more fun (Liz, Surf Senioritas)*. However, my research also demonstrates that females who surf vary dramatically in terms of their approach to, and experiences of, surfing space. I contend that the reasons behind women's motivations are much more nuanced than taken-for-granted assumptions regarding the "way women are" (Donnelly, 2012). This is because leisure spaces are always infused with socially constructed norms and expectations regarding gender roles, divisions of labour, leisure time and activities (Dilley and Scraton, 2010; Raisborough, 2007; McDermott, 2004).

The description on the SSs webpage exemplifies a stereotypical notion of female-only surf space; it is supportive, community minded, and inclusive. Importantly though, the SSs description places a lot more emphasis on an active *desire* for female togetherness, and support; 'a desire for female companionship shared through a common physical activity experience' (McDermott, 2004: 290). As Nessa explained in her interview: *'cos I didn't know they existed, and they were like yeah I thought I was on my own [...] and I thought well this is so stupid, because there's probably loads of others like us, so I said 'right, well*

we need to make a group'. Nessa's words lie in contrast to the more defensive and distinctly hetero-gendered discourse utilised on the *SurfGirl* community page. The presence of the *desire* for togetherness is part of what highlights the feminist potential of these voluntary sites. I suggest that bound up with this desire for togetherness is 'the desire *for* change, for flows and shifts of multiple desires' (Braidotti, 2003: 53), and that the SSs and BBGs forums open up spaces where this might be expressed amongst women who surf.

In terms of gender norms however, these flows and shifts are not uncomplicated ones. Through participating in the discussions on the page, it became apparent that the majority of members were accepting of the hetero-feminine norms associated with the female surfer and displayed a certain investment in the lifestyle and/or image of the popular 'surfer girl' ideal. For instance, alongside more surf-specific posts regarding local surf reports, local and professional contests, surf coaching, gear for sale and beach cleans, the SSs page features posts advertising fitness sessions, yoga, pilates, and health retreats. There are also a small number of videos posted by SSs members who were entering industry-run modelling/lifestyle contests such as "*Roxy Set me Free*" and "*Roxy. Dare Yourself*" as well as videos made by young surfers in order to promote their own surfing ability.

In chapter two, I discussed how the 'surfer girl' serves as a 'luminous' example of the 'appropriate ways to embrace and manage' (Harris, 2004: 2) the democratic possibilities that globalization, neoliberalism, and free market capital supposedly extend to all who "work hard enough" (Heywood, 2008: 79). The self-promotion of a number of women and girls succinctly demonstrate the effectiveness of the surfer girl's 'luminosity' and their perceived neo-liberal 'freedom' in taking personal responsibility for achieving their goals.

My Dad took photos and I made a, just a video and then... a [surfboard] company asked me if they could sponsor me... you have to try and get sponsors, it doesn't just happen (Roz).

The SSs page comprises a complex discursive milieu. The surfer girl image which is evidently valued by the SSs members is in many ways 'complicit with neoliberalism' and an exclusive 'third-wave' feminist ethic (Heywood, 2008: 79). However, it also became clear that these women, as I suggested in chapter seven, were aware of the conditions under which the 'surfer girl' is made 'luminous' (ibid.). Amongst the discussion posts on the page were comments regarding whether professional female surfers were pressured to

conform to a certain image, and criticisms of the way in which female surfers are sexually objectified by men on surf forums like *Magicseaweed*. Furthermore, in her interview, Nessa reflects on a Roxy competition;

When I entered that erm, the Roxy competition. "Roxy set me free". Which Emma won. Erm, my video was deleted for some reason [...] I spent hours editing it and everything. But erm, when I looked at what the next finalists were, without a doubt, I'm not kidding you, every single one, was around an average size 8, and I thought. Is that a coincidence, and I thought, no, and I thought, I dunno, I didn't like it, it kind of put me off Roxy a bit for a while, that did. I thought 'wouldn't it be nice just to have a girl, who is like a size 16, who surfs or something. For a change. [...] But not one girl was above a size 10 I don't think. And I was like...so in a way, I was like 'was there any point in me entering' [...] and same with the O'Neill, they had the O'Neill model contest didn't they, and they're clever, because they don't put in the terms and conditions, anything, you know, they don't put you have to be a size this, this, because obviously that will offend people. But then, when they get it down to the final 100, not one again, is above a size 8 so, it's like, well what's the point of entering, so that does quite piss me off, actually (Nessa)

Indi too, said:

...being like pretty has a big thing of getting the [sponsors], like I think the prettier you are, the easier it is to get higher (Indi)ⁱⁱ

As a form of surf-related networking, Surf Senioritas provides a good example of the complicatedness of how females are participating in, managing and reflecting on, gendered surf culture. As a surf-related community, the members of the SSs appear to be as actively engaged in a popular and globally influenced surf culture, as they are in getting females together 'in the surf'. In line with MacKay and Dallaire (2013), and Pavlidis and Fullagar (2012), I propose that web pages like SSs 'mobilise' important, sometimes feminist, ideas about *becoming-surfer(girl)* and 'circulate [potentially] alternative discourses of femininity' (MacKay and Dallaire, 2013: 171). The emergence of these non-commercial, voluntary and female-only community webpages highlights the need to pay attention to the effect that internet networking generates in relation to how gendered surfing subjectivities

are 'imagined, felt and reinvented through virtual sport spaces' (Pavlidis and Fullagar, 2012: 6).

Brighton Board Girls

Brighton Board Girls (BBGs) has been running as an 'open group' on Facebook (anyone can access the page) since 2008 and has nearly 600 'likes'. Whilst they have many male 'fans', the vast majority of people who post and comment on the page are female. The majority of group based communication occurs via the Facebook page, but the BBGs do at times take on a more material existence as a collective. For instance, although the organisation of the group could not be described as regulated, when I became a member in 2009, there was a one-off fee for membership, monthly meetings, seasonal weekly surf sessions and occasional group surf trips to Devon, Wales or Cornwall. Significantly, the group comprises a recognised, if somewhat ephemeral, part of the Brighton surf scene. The average age of the members is older than that of the SSs, with the majority of members (who have attended meetings) ranging from late 20s to late 40s.

The original founder of the group (Linda) is no longer involved, but one of the reasons why she set up the group was because she was seeking supportive female company in the surf following the break-down of a relationship with a male surfer. At the time I joined, there was also a BBG website (accessed in September 2009) which told the story of 'how it all started':

I was just about learning to get to my feet on a very wobbly 8ft, bright pink soft board when my relationship with said surfer dude split and I was just starting to really feel confident out in the water and was falling in love with the waves [...] I never really saw many girls in the water down here in Brighton when I was surfing with my then boyfriend and suddenly when I was newly single and had to head down to our local break alone, I turned into a total girl and got all nervous, blah blah blah, you girls know exactly what I'm talking about! One sad but fateful day, me and my bright pink board headed down to my local break for some good waves, but the fear set in as soon as I got there, I felt oddly alone, the wind was howling a hoolie and I knew I couldn't carry my board down to New Beach alone so, me and the pink board didn't even get out of the car.....I came home, gutted and a few days later I created the Brighton Board Girls through Facebook (Linda, BBGs founder)

In some ways, Linda's story displays a similar (hetero)gendered rhetoric to that utilised on the SurfGirl community page. Whilst her experience bares similarities to some of the emotions expressed by many of the interviewees in chapter six, her description of turning "into a total girl" undermines the significance of how emotions are bound up with gendered spatial relations, through a naturalised association with the "way women are". Despite this, the motivation behind the group has, like SSs, involved an active desire for getting female surfers together. What is distinct about the BBGs is that, as a community, it is more tangible and more *located*; that is, it is designed to get more females surfing *in Brighton* specifically.

What emerged from my interviews was that (as I referred to in chapter six) for a number of the current 'members' of the BBGs, both fear of surfing alone and a desire to meet other females who surf had been key motivators for attending their first meeting. In some ways, they shared the same fears expressed by Linda:

When I arrived in the car park there was a lot of boys and men and there wasn't really any other women around [...] I think [my surf instructor] had phoned, had text me about something and erm, I'd sort of text back about "oh no, I went today and it was really intimidating, I just got in the car and drove away again" and erm, he said, "oh my friend is starting a women's surf thing, if I give you her phone number, give her a ring because she wants to meet at the pub at the end of next week" so [...] I think, it was her and [her friend], who also were beginners [...]but I think they'd done the same and thought oh "safety in numbers" so that's why they decided to do it. (Ellen)

Importantly however, a number of the surfers I interviewed also distanced themselves from the 'very girly' (as Lynn put it) and image-conscious attitude expressed by Linda. These surfers describe their early impressions of the group:

I went on Sharkbait (surf forum) and [...] it said "Brighton Board Girls, come and join a group of lady surfers or girl surfers, meet in the tin drum". And I went along, and erm, (giggles) and it was packed! I'd never seen so many women before, I thought "where have these women come from?!". Carol went, and she's been surfing here for 18 years and she said she'd never seen one of those people in the water, they were all very glammy looking [...] erm, I was just happy to find a bunch of people who surfed [...] and then I met Ellen

sitting in the corner [...] and we just got on really well, we got on REALLY well, straight away (Sandy)

In the beginning, I did go to the BBG meeting once, but [...] to be honest, there was literally like, loads of people who don't surf, it is only the people that you see here, I don't know who the other people are (Andrea)

It was kind of all like, almost as if you'd stepped into this like, surf club in Australia or something, like, I don't know, it just felt a bit funny, so I didn't, I kind of immediately gravitated towards people that seemed like they were a lot more interested in the actual surfing rather than all the trappings of it. So people like Ellen and Sandy (Lynn)

During one of the first meetings I attended, some of the members described how a lot of women had come to the meetings (in the pub) over the summer, but that with the colder weather, many of them had stopped coming. After the first few months the numbers attending the monthly meeting dwindled, and the founder of the group moved abroad. Following the departure of Linda (the original founder) Ellen, Lynn and Sandy have taken on the roles of 'administrators' of the Facebook page and continue to encourage members to meet them in the pub on a monthly basis.

With that initial group, er, I don't know if that was just by coincidence but you know, there's probably a hard core of probably about 10 women, who are probably, we're all probably about the same level, and we started off as beginners, and we've all moved on, similarly, and we, all get on (Ellen)

Braidotti writes that 'the subject of feminism... is motivated by the political consciousness of inequalities and therefore committed to asserting diversity and difference as a positive and alternative value' (2003: 43). Ellen's reference to 'a hard core' of women connotes the 'positive and alternative value' of a group which is different from the normative 'surfer girl', and committed to surfing. I suggest that the BBGs provides a space of 'dynamic marginality' (Braidotti, 2003: 49) which is infused with an active feminism and accepts that '*its not exactly glamorous is it?! (Ellen)*'.

The accounts from the women above, which describe the early meetings, suggest that many of the women who initially joined the BBGs were attracted by the popular (global) imagery connected with surfing, but had not become committed surfers. I suggest

that this is partly due to the inconsistencies inherent in popular surfing culture when compared to Brighton as a surf space. As Lynn believes, the surfer girl imagery represents *an ideal of what surfing should be like for women and its, in reality in this country, that isn't it.*

Our good waves are generally in the winter, I think people are a bit more hardy and, like a lot of the women surf throughout the winter, I mean most people I know, I don't know anyone really that won't surf in the winter because it's too cold (Lynn)

How the BBGs appear to contrast with the SSs is in their collective sense of the 'realities' of their local surfing lives, and the inequalities which exist within the wider surfing culture. In an attempt to 'merge theories of the Global Girl with those about the local/global dialectic', Comer puts forward the notion of "girl localism". Girl localism is distinct from the type of localism I discussed in the previous chapter. Comer describes it as a sort of locally based, yet globally aware 'feminist critical regionalism' (2010: 17-18). Although the use of the term 'girl' is certainly problematic – the notion of a critical feminist regionalism is perhaps useful as a way of acknowledging the impact of 'local realities' on how female surfers negotiate the broader cultural discourses of surfing. Female surfers remain constantly 'in conversation with' the global imagery and culture of surfing (Comer, 2010). How the global ideal is negotiated by surfers themselves is always intertwining with the dynamics of local space and place (Comer, 2010).

For instance, Ellen also alluded to the fact that *'there is [a widespread view that] "oh, you can't surf in Brighton, the waves are shit" maybe it's the facing the siege mentality a bit' (Ellen)*. Subsequently, unlike the SSs page, the posts by the BBGs primarily comprise information on the local surf conditions and BBG meetings. Advertising on the page is largely limited to information on local shapers, retailers and surf coaching, none of which are gender specific.

Brighton Board Girls appear to be the longest running non-commercial, female-centred group in the UK. When I arrived on the south coast the group had been going for about 18 months, and over 3 years later they continue to meet. I suggest that the longevity of the group can be put down, in part, to the bonds that have formed between the "hard core" members, and the simultaneous affective connections they have developed in the Brighton surf space (see chapter eight). This is significant because whilst the 'project' of feminism is at once 'virtual', sociological and material, it is also a project which 'occurs through the flesh' and within 'embodied locations' (Braidotti, 2003: 44). Unlike the

predominantly internet based negotiation of surfing/culture which occurs amongst the SSs, the critical negotiations evident on the BBGs page are more located, and grounded in embodied experiences of surfing as a physical activity. This is a point I return to in the latter part of this chapter.

Challenging Heteronormativity? Non-normative Networks

Aside from the more visible examples of internet networks like the BBGs and SSs, it became evident through my fieldwork that some women who surf were utilising internet networking in more subtle ways. This was particularly evident amongst the lesbian surfers I spoke to. For instance, a number of the women I met in Wales and Newcastle had met other women via internet networks or pages aimed specifically at lesbians and non-heterosexual women. Bea, for example, described how she met the women she regularly surfs with:

[...] through gaydargirls [...] I know people use it for a dating site, but I use it for a hobby site [...] So I'd put up what my hobbies were, and say that I was actively looking for people to do stuff with so, I met Hettie and Karen about 8 or 9 years ago, to climb with, and they stayed long term friends, erm, and then I met Jane and Aly through gaydaygirls, erm, to surf with, well, to surf and hang out with, erm, so yeah, it's it's, actually the gay dating sites are really good for setting up sports crews (chuckles) so... so yeah, we just, we just haven't met many other women, surfing up here

The internet is becoming an increasingly popular way in which lesbian/bisexual/queer women are meeting one another. Gaydargirls, which was launched in 2006, is a dating website with over 325,000 users (Strudwick, 2009). Bea describes how she met a number of women through the site - including her partner Jane - who were interested in getting together to go climbing, or surfing. For her, the site was not just a dating site, but a way of meeting other non-heterosexual women who shared similar interests. This example is interesting because it suggests that, for Bea, identifying as lesbian was a valued shared experience, and/or a means through which to find women who might be interested in surfing. She said, stereotypically: *I've really been aware of, I always knew that as gay girls we tend to be more sporty. You know, it's just a classic. You know, friends like Jules and Cat [...] if I've ever been out with them on a footy night out, or a cricket night out, its guaranteed there's over-representative of gay women.* Subsequently, when she decided she

wanted to get herself “*a crew up and running*”, she arranged to meet up with Aly through gaydargirls, and “*bullied*” her ex-girlfriend Jules (a football player) into giving it a go.

Although stereotypical, the connection which Bea makes between sport and lesbian communities is one which has also been interrogated to a certain extent in the sports studies literature. Feminist sports scholars (e.g. Broad, 2001; Caudwell, 2003, 2007, 2011; King, 2009; Ravel and Rail, 2006, 2007, 2008; McDonald, 2002, 2008; Travers, 2006) have drawn attention to the existence of ‘lesbian sub-cultures’ (Ravel and Rail, 2007: 404) in sport, and explored some of the ways in which team sports in particular—previously recognised as male terrain—have been claimed and transformed to provide ‘safe’ places for lesbian (and queer) involvement.

To date, however, the presence of women’s marginalised and/or non normative sexualities in ‘new’ (‘alternative’, ‘lifestyle’) forms of sport, like surfing, has not received deliberate academic scrutiny. My discussions in chapter eight began to make a contribution to this area, by drawing attention to some of the less visible and more subtle ways in which lesbian and queer women appropriate space in Newquay. In that chapter I highlighted some of the ways in which our understandings of lesbian leisure spaces can be advanced through an exploration of women’s social networks (Brown, Browne and Lim, 2010). In this discussion I propose that internet based networking forms an important part of how some of these networks and spaces are enabled.

Another example of an internet based group page which has facilitated lesbian networking is the *WomenZone Surf Camp* Facebook page. This page I came across through “surfing” the internet for surf based groups at the very beginning of my research. The page is related specifically to an annual ‘surf camp’ which occurs in South Wales. *WomenZone* is a Welsh lesbian network based in Swansea which organises events and has an online forum and newsletter. The ‘surf camp’ itself is attended almost entirely by lesbian women. This is where I met a number of my research participants when I attended it for the first time in 2009.

Whilst *WomenZone* comprises only of a single annual event, I also became aware of other ‘lesbian-centred’ internet-based groups have also begun to emerge which, unlike gaydar, are geared less towards dating and more towards the enjoyment of leisure and ‘lesbian-friendly’ space. Web-based group *Adventure Dykes* and a website called *Scene Nomad* are two such examples. These sites are not about *locating* lesbian spaces in which to meet, but about *creating* them, and using so-called adventure sports as one context in which to do so.

scenenomad.com aims to replicate the same feeling of solidarity felt in LGBT venues by facilitating the organisation of events in any environment. Expanding our social circle, our activities, the venues we attend; knowing we will be surrounded by like-minded people, celebrating our diversity with our friends, family and partners; promoting integration and exercising our legal rights to be open wherever we are. Let's be seen, be Scene Nomads.
(<https://www.facebook.com/#!/SceneNomad/info>)

These sites are driven by the mutual participation in, and construction of, female-only (*Adventure Dykes*) and/or lesbian friendly community. At the same time, as the name *Scene Nomad* suggests, they are, like Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) nomad, characterised in some ways by mobility and 'open'-ness. Whilst these sites are organised round a 'molar' subject, they are not defined by, or limited to, a fixed identity politics. As Dean (2010) describes they are 'communities without community' (quoted by Pavlidis and Fullagar, 2012: 8); constantly *becoming*(-molecular), simultaneously both imagined and material. Women participate in the groups via the internet, and can choose to participate in various activities as and when, and wherever, they happen. As 'lesbian-friendly' spaces they are nomadic and temporary, and offer a momentary form of disruption to heteronormativity by '*promoting integration and exercising our legal rights to be open wherever we are*'. This is made evident through openly showing affection in public spaces, and through welcoming the participation of heterosexual friends or family.

The Complexity and Community of 'Female-only'ness

In the latter half of this chapter I turn my attention towards thinking critically about gender and sexuality as organising principles of community within surfing as a sporting space. There are many concepts which have been used to apply to forms of community in sport. Sociologists have been studying sporting subcommunities and collectivities since the 1960s (Atkinson and Young, 2008) and from the 1990s onwards 'alternative' sports have become a growing area of academic interest. Conceptualised initially as resistant sporting subcultures, the mainstreaming of these so-called alternative sports, as well as the theorised shift from modernity to postmodernity (Bauman, 1999) have had a profound impact on leisure, culture and identities (Wheaton, 2004). 'Post-subcultural' critiques have emphasised the more fleeting and fluid aspects of these cultures. In particular, Bennett's (1999, 2000) utilisation of Maffesoli's concept 'neo-tribe' has proved useful in capturing the sense of 'fluidity and hybridity' within contemporary youth cultures (Muggleton and

Weinzierl, 2003: 6). Whilst engagement with these debates within sports studies was initially slow to emerge (Wheaton, 2007), research into what are now often referred to as 'whiz' (Midol, 1993), 'alternative' 'extreme', 'action' or 'lifestyle sports' (Wheaton, 2004) has exploded over the last decade (cf. Rinehart and Sydnor, 2003; Wheaton, 2004; Atkinson and Young, 2008).

Although such debates are certainly relevant here, my research concerns a form of community which cannot be conceptualised in the same way as a (sub)culture or neotribe. For instance, roller derby is almost exclusively female and subsequently, this is a central part of what defines it as a sporting culture, or neotribe. Female-only surfing 'groups' on the other hand are formed within - and always intertwine with - the wider culture and sporting space of surfing; a mixed-gender activity. Yet, I contend that there is something of theoretical and feminist significance about these female-centred groups in surfing. In this section, I return to Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of the Rhizome in order to think through what I argue might be re-conceptualised as 'rhizomatic collectivities' of women in surfing.

Riding Rhizomes: Difference and Identities in Surf Communities

Community relations within sporting subcultures have often been analysed via notions of core, periphery, hierarchy, and authenticity (c.f. Donnelly, 2006; Wheaton, 2000; Wheaton and Beal, 2003). However, I avoid such terms in this analysis because I regard them to be at odds with a rhizomatic theoretical framework. I do not suggest that discourses and affects connected to hierarchy are not communicated or felt by females in surf culture; I believe that they are. However, my point is that this perception of status and hierarchy in surfing is only one of a multiplicity of ways in which surfers experience connection and belonging within surfing communities. To conceptualise belonging via 'core' and 'periphery', for instance, only serves to theoretically enclose or limit how we think about surf communities, and how subjectivities might be experienced within and through them. The notion of 'core' in particular serves to fix in place a desired and powerful (hegemonic) centre, much like Deleuze's molar majoritarian. Given that surfing bodies are never fixed, and hierarchy and status are always 'becoming', it a concept which is both problematic and limiting.

Rather than analyzing the world into discrete components, reducing their manyness to the One of identity, and ordering them by rank, [thinking rhizomatically] sums up a set of disparate circumstances in a shattering blow. It

synthesizes a multiplicity of elements without effacing their heterogeneity or hindering their potential for future rearranging (to the contrary).(Massumi, Foreword to *A Thousand Plateaus*, 1987: xiii)

Instead, I suggest that thinking rhizomatically about female-centred surf spaces might allow for more subtle, but nevertheless significant, forms of belonging to emerge. What has become apparent through researching female community networks is that the relationship between female togetherness and female belonging is a complex one. This complexity emerges through the simultaneous intersections of difference and identity, and how these simultaneously intersect with the affective experience of *becoming-surfer*. In this section I think through the complexities of surfing identities, and how they intersect, overlap, and co-exist, rhizomatically, with relations of gender and sexuality. In doing so, I organise my discussion via the first three principles of the Rhizome. These principles, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue, are what serve to distinguish it ontologically from 'tree-like' structural thought; those are *connection*, *heterogeneity* (difference) and *multiplicity* (principles 1, 2 and 3). Here, I think through these principles as they emerge through female-only surf 'community'. What emerges through my discussion is that, although I try to discuss each principle in turn, each one is rhizomatically connected to the others.

Connection: The Constitutive Power of Affect

In his work on risk-taking in sport, Lyng (2008: 104-105) describes alternative, or 'extreme' sports cultures as an 'expression of community' which is defined by:

the special significance of affect to the central enterprise of the collectivity... participants must contend with the demands of confronting and managing strong emotions – fear, exhilaration, feelings of omnipotence, anomic terror, and disorientation. Thus strong affect is one of the most important unifying experiences in extreme sports communities.

As I demonstrate in chapter six, how women experience emotions in surfing spaces are simultaneously shared and different. What has become clear from researching female-centred communities however is that, regardless of how surfing spaces are felt emotionally, affects and emotions are undoubtedly significant to the connections female surfers establish with one another. In chapter six I noted the difference between how the female surfers in my research acknowledged emotions, and what Evers (2005; 2006) has described

with regards to the bonding experiences of (male) surfers. Unlike the surfers in his research, the majority of female surfers with whom I researched were not bound by the masculine norms regarding what sort of emotions are shared and controlled. This, I argue, allows for more opportunities for 'meaningful' connection amongst women who surf. For instance, Lynn also described the importance of her shared experiences with Andrea, Ellen and Sandy in particular:

...[W]hen you've had really good waves, or you've had a shit time or whatever, kind of like, that morale boost that you get from surfing with friends [...] that whole winter thing where you're all like, you know, you get changed from having surfed and you go and have your hot chocolate [...] and moaning about how cold you are [...] it kind of bonds you as, as friends as well I think, because you go through this quite tough experience and its quite unusual isn't it (Lynn)

[It] brings people together. Like you've got the same, passion for it, because everyone does different jobs and different things, but that's one thing they've got in common. Erm... I've met people who I might not have come across [...] sometimes [I go to the meetings] [...] but then like I said it's like, the people I see surfing is literally, my friends, out of the girls, is my friends, and Carol, and Jackie and Kelly sometimes (Andrea)

As I suggested earlier, it is perhaps the case that the longevity of the BBGs can be put down, in part, to the bonds that have formed between the most regularly active members, and the simultaneous affective connections they have developed in the Brighton surf space. Since meeting each other at the first few BBG meetings, Sandy, Ellen, Lynn and Andrea regularly surf together, and have established a co-operative arrangement which involves shared transport and shared rental of a beach hut. Similarly, Jackie and Kelly had met some other surfers through the BBG meetings and they also regularly shared lifts.

Although simple, these co-operative arrangements amongst the BBGs maintain important affective connections between the women. They are important, I argue, because they keep open the affective intensities which inspire feminist becomings. As Baidotti argues in *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, 'the process of becoming is collectively driven, that is to say relational and external; it is also framed by affectivity or desire' (2000: 170). Furthermore, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the coming together of shared

desires enables Bodies without Organs to 'connect' and 'tie-in' to one another in order to create more powerful affective assemblages, capable of becoming.

These multiplicities with heterogeneous terms, cofunctioning by contagion, enter certain assemblages; it is there that human beings effect their becomings (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 242).

Another example of affective connection, I take from my fieldnotes, which were recorded whilst attending the WomenZone 'surf camp' in Wales. In my reflections of this lesbian-friendly space I refer to experiencing a sense of belonging, even whilst attended the camp for the first time:

...it was a women only space, and almost entirely lesbian. This created what my friend and I agreed was a very comfortable feeling. It was a feeling of belonging [...] The sense of belonging to something was particularly apparent at the bonfire in the dunes. When everybody gathered together to chill out, drink, mingle, chat, and be openly affectionate.

For most lesbian and non-normative women these spaces of comfort are usually fleeting, or at least temporary, so unlike the comfort which goes unnoticed by those at home in heteronormativity, the comfort a lesbian might experience within a lesbian-friendly space is *felt*. It is a 'sinking in' which does not go unnoticed. This affectual 'sinking in' emerged as an integral aspect of what women who surf valued about female-only surfing 'community'.

I suggest that the shared experiences of some – perhaps many – but certainly not all, female surfers are not a consequence of the "way women are", but a consequence of a more complex myriad of power relations and social expectations regarding how surf space and leisure time is gendered. In other words, as I aimed to demonstrate in chapters six and seven, it is the felt *affects* of power relations, as they are gendered, which create certain shared experiences amongst women. The regular and affectual experience of surfing, as well as the sharing of emotion amongst women, are an integral part of what connects or bonds women who surf, and helps to ignite the 'desire for transformative flows' which hold important feminist potential.

Heterogeneity: Revealing Connections through Difference

Intense affective relationships are played out through different, intersecting and, at times, conflicting... [sporting] identities (Pavlidis and Fullagar, 2012: 5-6)

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the community networks under discussion represent forms of 'temporary, voluntary segregation' which are valued, at least in part, for their female centred-ness (Donnelly, 2012: 6). Because they are voluntary forms of segregation, notions of essentialism, and the "way women are" are necessarily brought to the fore, and force us to 'recognise the diversity amongst women (and men), and the multiple realities they live' (McDermott, 2004: 287).

my friends that don't surf, they just can't understand what on earth makes people want to go out surfing when it's you know, 2 degrees... but it's that that kind of, it makes you feel a little bit invincible I think, a bit like different, a bit special, do you know what I mean? (Lynn)

Lynn's affectual experience of difference is part of her *becoming-surfer*, and for her, this is what sets her and her fellow BBGs apart from other BBG members who refuse to surf in the winter. A similar dynamic from within the specifically lesbian-centred context of 'surf camp' was also evident. As Callie as Bethan (who have attended for 4 or 5 years) explain:

Its grown in size, yeah. I will say it's grown in size but I wouldn't say it's grown in size out back[...] erm, there was only me and Bethan who could get out back. Which just shows the kind of level of most of the girls that was in the camp - white water riders, you know, seasonal, got a board but you know, never use it... and then when we seen you out back we were like 'holy shmoly there's a girl out here'... and that's how we met you (Callie)

[Its] the idea of surfing, and the surfer lifestyle, and looking like a surfer. It's like surf camp, how many of us actually surf at surf camp – three of us (Bethan)

Bethan and Callie suggest that the majority of attendees at surf camp were drawn to surf camp primarily because of its lesbian-onlyness. They also suggest that many were drawn to surfing by the 'idea' of the lifestyle, rather than the embodied passion for the activity. For them, this created an affectively significant experience of difference:

Everybody knows that we are the like two keenest beans when it comes to surfing because, to us, going to surf camp is about surfing... and we will get up early in the morning [...] we will limit our drink because we won't be able to go surfing in the morning, and we will be the last people coming out of the water (Callie).

For me, this has been made particularly apparent in the meaningful connections I have made with the women in my research. For example, despite having spent very little time with Bethan and Callie outside of surfing, we very quickly became good friends. Bethan also attended the Scene Nomad trips, and despite her being good friends with several of the other women on the trip, it was her and I who surfed together the most, because we put surfing before sleeping in, getting drunk or staying up late. This commitment often functions to set you apart from other women who surf, for whom surfing is less 'serious'. This difference was enough to complicate the notion of 'shared experience' underpinning the lesbian-only (or female only) context, as this discussion between Bethan, Callie, and Scene Nomad founder Kayley demonstrates:

K: Would you shut up! Just because I wasn't up at dawn's crack! I was far too busy snuggling in my van [with my girlfriend], to be surfing.

B: It was the best place to be honest with you...[because the surf wasn't very good]

C: Well... you know, you gotta get your priorities right sometimes. Very occasionally, women are more important than surfing.

(Bethan and Callie look at one another and say together)

Mmm... No.... (everyone laughs)

C: No!

B: Never!

K: Well. I think so, sometimes...

The strong commitment to a leisure pursuit has been conceptualised by Stebbins (1982, 1997) as 'serious leisure'. Serious leisure sets itself apart from the typical connection of leisure with notions of simplicity, pleasure, enjoyment and relaxation. Unlike more casual pursuits, commitment, frustration, boredom, and stress are characteristic of so-called serious leisure 'careers' (Dilley and Scraton, 2010; Raisborough, 2007). As Stebbins (2007: 5) describes, serious leisure involves,

the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that people find so substantial, interesting and fulfilling that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a (leisure) career centred on acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge and experience. (Stebbins, 2007: 5)

Wheaton (2003) has utilised the notion of 'serious leisure' in the context of windsurfing to distinguish between different levels of commitment amongst those who windsurf. In her research it is also apparent that, whilst for some surfing is a 'less serious' activity, akin to casual forms of leisure, for others it is part of their *becoming-surfer* a strongly valued aspect of their subjectivities. For the women in my research this passion, desire, and commitment were an important part of how they experienced a sense of community and togetherness through surfing. Although other aspects of identity such as gender and sexuality emerged as significant forms of 'common ground', it was the shared 'seriousness' of surfing in women's lives which served to affectively bond women who surf together.

Multiplicity: Intersecting, Connecting, Difference

Rather than analyzing the world into discrete components, reducing their manyness to the One of identity... [rhizomatic becoming] sums up a set of disparate circumstances in a shattering blow. It synthesizes a multiplicity of elements without effacing their heterogeneity or hindering their potential for future rearranging (to the contrary) (Massumi, in Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: ix).

What 'thinking rhizomatically' serves to draw attention to is the simultaneous existence of various forms of sameness and difference which shape how women who surf experience forms of community in surfing. What Deleuze's notion of multiplicity tells us about subjectivity is that it 'carries with it a double movement, it expresses 'a matter of "becoming" as well as a matter of "being"' (Deleuze, 1990, in Probyn, 1993: 167). Subsequently, whilst female surfers might in some ways experience their gendered, and/or sexual identities as matters of "being", such modes of togetherness are always complicated by their inherently intersected nature. Gender and sexuality are always multiplicitous, and in the context of surfing lives, *becoming-surfer* is one of the ways in which the complexity of this multiplicity is felt. Subsequently, female surfers are never just "being", they are

always "becoming". This realisation points to the potential for breaking with the molar subject of which Deleuze and Guattari (1987) are so critical. Indeed, evidence that women who surf are beginning to favour becoming molecular is something which began to emerge through interviews. For example, the extracts below from two separate interviews demonstrate the complicated and limiting effect that identity based community in surfing can have:

With the surfing, we just think that it's really ironic that we essentially got a little gay girls group up and running, and then there's poor Lana who just gets tarred with our brush (chuckles), she's like "everyone thinks I'm gay" and it's like "that's cos you're hanging out with us man, we're lezzer and you're not, but actually, you're way more butch than me anyway!" (Bea)

I think it bothers me when people keep saying 'are you gay?' [...] like, I'm comfortable enough – I know I'm not – so it's fine, but, I dunno... the jokes are wearing a bit thin now. Erm, it would be nice to get straight girls in with us, surfing (Lana)

Although Bea's intention was not to create a specifically lesbian group of women with whom to surf, her modes of networking were strongly influenced by her lesbian identity. However, Bea had met Lana through Aly (who she met on gaydargirls) and since then their lives have become intertwined through a shared passion for surfing, climbing and mountain biking. Their words serve as a good example of the ways in which surfing 'community' can simultaneously disrupt the significance of sameness whilst complicating difference. Thinking through the complexity of identity 'is a useful means of analysing leisure as a dynamic interplay of individual expression and the social relations within which leisure occurs' (Watson and Scraton, 2013: 36). By becoming aware of this 'dynamic interplay', or multiplicity, it is made evident that these surfers have come to reflect on the problematics of a singular molar identity;

[...] like Bea, Bea will ask me, she's said it a few times, like 'are you sure you're not one of us?' [and I say] 'What, a surfer?'. I know exactly what she means, but I just like winding her up. Erm, and er, like in my village it's just like 'are you going out with, you know, your bitches, your lesbians, your surfing lesbian group?' and it's like 'Yeah, I am' cos I'm just gonna sit in the pub otherwise. And it doesn't like, it doesn't bother me, so... (Lana)

I don't think I'd be tempted to go down to like an exclusively gay event or anything for surfing because automatically that's excluding Lana and actually why would I do that. I'm into celebration and diversity but not to the exclusion of others, so, like I wouldn't go to a women's festival that excluded trans [for instance], you know, it's not my thing at all, politically (Bea)

Rhizomatically Feminist? Concluding Thoughts

Releasing empowerment from conceptualisations of resistance... suggests that there are different textures and sources of empowerment, some of which are derived from different inter-dependent and intersubjective relations with significant others... and community (Raisborough and Bhatti, 2007: 473).

Overwhelmingly, my research revealed that there was a conscious shared appreciation for female togetherness, regardless of whether or not surfers preferred to surf in the company of other females. Even the most independent female surfers like Amy, Andrea, Bella, Bethan, Nina, and Naomi expressed this appreciation. The first time I met Bethan, for instance, she had said that generally she liked to surf on her own or with the men at her local surf spot because *most people don't have a clue about surfing, and go at the wrong time, it's easier to go on your own*. Yet, when I asked her how 'surf camp' had gotten so popular she had said:

It's just been word of mouth, I'm not sure what Womenzone is. Like, to start with, there wasn't that many, but it's just grown and grown [...] It's just nice to see so many women in the water (Bethan)

Bella too admitted that she didn't particularly like going surfing as a group very often because it sometimes felt crowded and *'a bit much'*. *I wanna get the best spot [...] I go out there to catch waves, it's not being anti-social. It's just...* However, when I asked her about the girls surf club which she had attended she said:

Yeah, it was nice seeing other girls that surf cos you would have thought... even in Newquay you know, such a town this size and stuff and, being the surfing capital, you'd think they'd have at least a lot more girls in the water and there's just not really

Watson and Scraton (2012: 45) describe leisure as an important social and cultural 'act' where people choose, 'within a context of scarcity (Rojek, 2010), to do or not do active or passive 'things', individually and collectively and where the complexity of social life is continually played out'. For female surfers, the importance of women and girls coming together in the surf (whether this be by intention or happenstance) is recognised as something which is important to the surf space as a 'context of scarcity'. For many, the motivation to meet other female surfers wasn't always, or necessarily, driven by an emotional need for 'safety in numbers', rather, it was an active desire for *just getting us all together* (Amy). Jackie for example, said of the BBGs that it had *been really good, erm, cos its quite nice to have a sort of sense of togetherness, you know*.

As I have shown, in many ways, the affective nature of surfing functions to both disrupt the significance of sameness whilst simultaneously complicating traditional notions of difference. It has become apparent that female networking and forms of community in surfing are immanently rhizomatic in nature. Although female togetherness is clearly appealing to many women who surf in Britain, this shared recognition that 'feeling female' matters in surfing spaces is not in itself enough to instigate a lasting and affective sense of community for women who surf. The connections made between women who surf are characterised simultaneously by similarity, difference, heterogeneity and multiplicity. As I have discussed, the shared experiences of surfing as a gendered space are always only one aspect of the 'complexity of social life' which is played out in the surf context.

In the interviews I gathered, other significant forms of 'common ground' (which I have been unable to develop further in this discussion) were age and motherhood, as well as surfing ability. Implicitly, whiteness was also a powerful and presumed marker of sameness (cf. Wheaton, 2013). As my discussion demonstrates however, although shared aspects of 'molar' identity, like gender and sexuality often provided a 'common ground' through which to bring female surfers togetherⁱⁱⁱ, they were not always central to the ways in which women who surf established lasting affective connections.

I contend that what bonds women who surf is a multiplicitous and simultaneous coming together of subjectivities and affects. What is vital to these rhizomatic collectivities is not just the coming together of identities, via their various intersections, but also the interweaving of connections. I suggest that it is the affects of surfing, as they are *shared* which causes these interweavings; these 'heterogeneous terms in symbiosis' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 249). What I have demonstrated in this chapter is the importance of looking past any 'luminous', or stereotypical notions regarding the "way women are", to unveil the

variety and richness of experiences, desires and passions, as well as broader political relations, which serve to shape women's participation in female-only surf networks.

becoming-woman does not aim at the emancipation of a homogenous collectivity (women), an aggregate of same-sex subjects with a shared 'identity'... it aims at tensile transformation and transgression of identity... becoming is a process, a line of flight between states which displaces and disorients subjects and identities. This 'betweenness' (entre-deux) is experienced, not attained (Flieger, 2000: 43).

The fact that women are actively participating in surf-related internet networks, attending 'meetings', events, and going on trips, serves as evidence of a shared recognition that gender in the surf *matters*. Furthermore, the multiplicity of ways in which women negotiate these spaces perhaps represents the potential of 'female-only' surf networks for what Deleuze and Guattari describe as 'a molecular women's politics that slips into molar confrontations, and passes under or through them' (1987: 276). In this sense, I argue, female-onlyness in surfing has the potential to be distinctly feminist.

ⁱ In this chapter, I use the term female-only to refer to forms of networking and community which are centred around female togetherness. It is important to note however that the female-ness of these spaces was not always policed or exclusive (the Brighton Board Girls, for instance, allowed men to attend their monthly meetings if they wanted to).

ⁱⁱ This is something which has been noted and discussed in Knijnik, Horton and Cruz (2010) and Wheaton and Beal (2003). In particular, in the research conducted by Knijnik et al. (2010) the topic of the media and sponsorship provoked 'a torrent of complaints' during interviews. 'In all discussions the body was at the core of the concern and linked to the availability and quality of sponsorships' (2010: 1179).

ⁱⁱⁱ As demonstrated by Spowart, Burrows and Shaw's work with 'surfing mums' (2010)

"Titchy Witts"



It was so cold and so small but we got in anyway! the day itself has gone down in our surf life legend and is often referred to as "Titchy Witts" as an example of the level we are ready to suffer for the need for surf..... (Ellen)

Conclusions

In many ways, this thesis reflects the characteristics of Deleuze's rhizome. It draws together the philosophical ideas of Deleuze /and Guattari, post-structural and post-modern feminisms, some aspects of queer theory, as well as works from the areas of sports studies, social and cultural geography and cultural studies. It also interweaves these influences through various stages of the research process. I have drawn attention to the significance of surfing discourses, culture, history, emotions, affects, bodies (with and 'without organs'), spaces, places, networks, community and subjectivity. In various chapters I have brought some of these concepts to the fore, but as I have demonstrated through my discussions, each is always entangled rhizomatically with the others. In an attempt to make clear these connections, in the context of my broader aims, I return to my initial research questions;

1. How do female surfers in Britain interpret and negotiate the commercial and cultural imagery connected to women's surfing?
2. How do female surfers appropriate and negotiate gendered and sexualised power relations as part of their surfing and personal subjectivities?
3. How are local surfing spaces actively experienced, and re/constituted, by the women who participate in and through them
4. Is there anything distinctly feminist about the subjectivities and spaces created by British female surfers?

In chapters one and two, I provided some important context for questions 1 and 2. I outlined the key features of the female 'boom' in surfing culture, and explored some key aspects of the cultural and historical context which has fed into this current cultural 'moment' for the female surfer. Particularly significant has been the popularisation of surfing culture, brought about by *Gidget*, the fragmentation of surfing style, and the the expression and mobilisation of masculinist sentiment via subcultural media (Henderson 2001; Stedman, 1997). I demonstrated that women's positioning as 'objects' and 'subjects' within surfing culture has remained unsettled and ambivalent, complicated always by the trajectories of modern rationality, postmodernity, and commodification. The modern history of surfing certainly provides evidence that female surfers have resisted sexism and misogyny, and they have struggled for more equal treatment competitively. However, there are also ways in which the promotion of women's surfing has helped to solidify the ideal of the female surfer as complicit with white heteronormative values.

The 1990s has emerged as a key turning point in terms of women and girls place in surfing culture, particularly within the USA, Australia and Britain. In the latter part of chapter one, and into chapter two, I discuss the ways in which the values of youthful femininity have emerged as important to the surfing industry. Whereas a number of the female surfers in the 1970s and 80s strived to compete with men on their own terms as ‘one of the guys’, in the 1990s it became increasingly important to conform to an emergent ideal of the ‘surfer girl’. Lisa Andersen, champion surfer and Roxy poster girl, epitomised this ideal and helped to cement the marketability of the blonde, tanned, toned bikini-clad image. From the 1990s onwards, women’s surfing has been closely tied to this heteronormative ideal, and an accompanying discourse of what I discuss in chapter two as ‘popular’ feminism; an empowerment ethic akin to the notion of ‘girl power’.

These ideals are evident in all of women’s surfing’s most visible semblances; in niche and popular media, in the promotion of events, in promotional imagery, in fashion and advertising. The popularity and visibility of this image has drawn the attention of so-called ‘third-wave’ feminists Comer (2003, 2004, 2010) and Heywood (2007, 2008) who have celebrated the female surfer as signifying a kind of post-second wave ‘independent sexuality’ (Heywood, 2008: 64). A key concern in chapter two was to problematise this idea. Firstly, I argued that ‘third-wave’ feminism offers nothing ‘new’ in terms of feminist theory, and secondly I argued that the notion of the female surfer’s ‘independent sexuality’ hinges on narrowly defined parameters of who may and may not access such freedoms. Theorising female surfers as ‘one of the guys’, or as girl-powered ‘surfer girls’, involves problematic configurations of gender. As I suggested, research into women’s surfing requires a more nuanced consideration of such genderings. This thesis makes that contribution.

As I demonstrate in chapters two and three, the literature on surfing, gender and subjectivity is a burgeoning area of research. Within this literature, the focus on the female surfer remains distinctly limited. What the existing literature does serve to highlight is the significance of doing research *with* female surfers and *within* surfing spaces. As Olive et al. emphasise ‘it is the everyday experiences and relationships of surfers in the waves that remain the most powerful in how women understand and experience surfing and surfing culture at an individual level’ (2012: 15). Furthermore, research into gender and surfing more broadly has drawn attention to the importance of ‘thinking about not only how the material, discursive and embodied dimensions of surfing spaces shape subjectivities but also how subjectivities shape surfing spaces’ (Waitt and Clifton, 2012: 4). Research carried out by Evers (2004, 2005 2006, 2009), Knijnik, Horton and Cruz (2010), Waitt (2008) and Waitt and Warren (2008) has proven useful in making this point. These authors pay

attention to feminist literature on space and subjectivity, as well as making use of Deleuzian concepts to think about surfing. It is through an engagement with this literature, and with the feminist literature more widely, that I have come to understand the potential of Deleuzian philosophy for thinking through how female bodies feel, experience and engage with the gendered re-constitution of surfing spaces.

Chapter three of the thesis focuses specifically on mapping out my approach to connecting with Deleuzian philosophy from a feminist perspective. In this chapter, I recognised some of the confluences and controversies which have emerged through the meeting of feminist and Deleuzian theorising. This chapter was important in making clear the ways I interpret the concepts I borrow. Many of the concepts I have utilised in this work have come from Deleuze's work with Guattari (1987) in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Whilst I acknowledge that this might amount to a somewhat limited reading of Deleuze's work, I emphasise that my engagement with Deleuzian philosophy is not about a becoming-Deleuzian, as it were. Rather, I describe my approach as one which strives to make Deleuze 'work' for feminism. In doing so, I engage closely with feminists who have effectively managed to do just this, such as Braidotti (1994, 2000, 2003, 2011), Markula (2006a, 2006b, 2011) and Probyn (1993, 2000, 2003).

In relation to question 4, the project of exploring feminism through surfing spaces, and surfing spaces through feminism is integral to every aspect of this thesis. It has also been integral to every aspect of the research process. As I explain in chapter four, how I do ethnography strays away from a number of the more traditional dictates of ethnographic research. This is because, as I argue, engaging with research from a self-reflexive feminist perspective necessarily involves an acknowledgement of how the researcher is always present; in the research space, in the research relations, in the 'data', and in the interpretation of findings. I recognise this through an inclusion of my own voice alongside the voices of those with whom I do research.

Turning to writings in the area of Queer methodologies, I question the idea that the researcher/participant positionality can be 'managed', and advocate a break away from the dichotomies associated with the traditional notion of fieldwork, such as emotional involvement, sensual/visual, participation/observation, home/field, inside/outside and self/social. In exploring this point, I emphasise the significance of my own research subjectivity as a white, middle class, able-bodied, usually lesbian identified, feminist surfer researcher. Chapter five also addressed this point, by offering a felt description of the places, spaces and people who have been part of my research journey.

In chapter six I began to explore question 2 by paying attention to emotions in surf spaces. I contextualised my approach through a critical discussion of how the felt aspects

of sports research (i.e. emotions, affects and sensation) are often marginalised within the academic culture of sports studies (Rinehart, 2010, Sparkes, 2002). In contrast, my analysis takes heed of, amongst others, feminist geography (Anderson and Smith, 2001; Davidson & Milligan, 2004; Thien, 2005), postmodern feminist theorising around emotion and affect (Ahmed, 2004; Probyn, 2000, 2003; Sedgwick, 2003), and emergent work on affect and alternative sport (Anderson, 2012a, 2012b; Evers, 2006, 2009; Pavlidis and Fullagar, 2012; Waitt, 2008) . Taking into consideration Ahmed's (2004) emphasis on what emotions *do*, I considered the ways in which female surfers come to understand surfing spaces through how they feel (gendered) in the surf, and further, how these feelings affect, mobilise and shape gender dynamics, bodies, and space.

I argue that the experience of learning to surf is highly affective, and that emotions constitute an important part of how female surfers make sense of their experience of surfing spaces. In contrast to Evers (2005, 2006, 2009) observations of male surfers; that they 'do not like fear near them', and actively work to control the emotional expression of being scared, my research demonstrates that women and girls who surf often recognise and reflect on the experiences of being scared. Fear represents a significant aspect of the felt experience of surfing for many women and girls, and this is also connected to the gendered nature of surf spaces. I argue that fear functions to restrict the movement of female bodies in the surf space (Ahmed, 2004) and this embodied affect contributes to the disproportionate 'gender balance' in surfing spaces. At the same time, sharing fearful emotions emerged as an important way in which female surfers connected with one another.

I also explored the interrelating importance of feeling comfort, belonging and pleasure for surfers. I argue that comfort and belonging share an important relation to the process of *becoming-surfer*. The emotional connections involved in *becoming-surfer* offers some female surfers an important means through which to feel a sense of belonging, if only temporarily. I also demonstrate that, in line with other research in surfing, the experience of 'stoke' is inherent to the enjoyment of surfing spaces. It is affective, visceral, pleasurable, and spatial. I suggest that, through the ways in which women and girls participate in the politics of stoke there is revealed complex and often contradictory relations of power. The negotiation of anger is a good example of this. Whilst some women and girls 'battle for waves' on the same terms as the men, others negotiate anger in the surf space in more subtle ways, which occasionally interrupt and disrupt the dominant surfing 'gender order' through 'performative surprise' (Butler, 1990). This I argue, mobilised moments of *feeling feminist* in the surf which, in the context of a sporting culture

which is defined largely by masculine norms and values, is something worth taking seriously.

I contend that the experience, and expression, of emotion comprises an important part of the connections which form between many women and girls who surf. The significance of emotion and affect within surfing spaces is something that makes itself felt throughout this thesis. For instance, in chapter seven, I explore how female surfers experience their bodies in surfing spaces, and maintain an interest in how surfing spaces are *felt* through a focus on the affective relations of surfing bodies. I argue that the way I think about surfing bodies has been influenced by the concerns raised by some postmodern feminists, Probyn in particular, that the body is becoming 'reified in theory' (2000: 14). I pay attention to this concern by mobilising an analysis based on Deleuze's concern over 'what a body can do'.

I organised my discussion in this chapter around a consideration of what the body does when it engages in the acts of seeing and looking, and how it responds to the gaze of others. Reflecting on the concerns of my first research question, I began by re-emphasising the existence of a narrowly defined feminine 'beach body' ideal. I demonstrate its prevalence, not only in surfing culture, but also within tourism and leisure discourses relating to the seaside. In light of such ideals, I discussed how women often experience their bodies as discursively constructed, monitored, contained, but also adaptable. In my discussion I explored the links between how female surfers "see" the (luminous) bodily ideal of the surfer girl, how they "see" their own (wetsuited) bodies, and how affects such as shame, disgust and desire intertwine with this relation. I acknowledge that affects such as shame, disgust and desire are, in various ways reactive, responsive, connected and productive (Gibbs, 2002; Evers, 2006, 2009; Sedgwick, 2003). Shame, for instance, is made evident in how women attempt to hide their bodies from being "seen" in surfing spaces, and in the disgust female surfers show towards the wetsuited body. Conversely, desire emerges in the ways in which female surfers want to be "seen". Specifically, female surfers expressed a desire to be seen riding waves. These moments, I argued, represent the emergence of Deleuze's Body without Organs. When surfers join with a wave, they momentarily become caught up in an immanent assemblage, through which, gender can potentially lose significance. At the very least, I contend that through these moments the subjections which occur in the mis/recognition of the female surfing body might be altered. When surfers are "seen" (instead) as *bodies-surfing*, and consequently recognise themselves as *bodies-that-surf*, their wetsuited bodies can incite feelings of safety, comfort, pleasure and occasionally desire.

In chapter eight, I turned my attention to my third research question. Throughout this chapter I maintain that, as feminist geographers have pointed out, the politics of place are always gendered (Massey, 2004) . I also suggest that the globalisation and mobility of surf culture has served to intensify performances of 'localism' in some surfing places, whilst dispersing them in others. Speaking to female surfers who consider themselves to be 'local' to a particular surf break, it emerged that, in some surf spaces in Britain, there are evidently ways in which surfing 'localism' serves to territorialise - in the Deleuzian sense of the term - a distinct 'local' identity. In other words, local power relations, which are exacted through surfing performances, function to 'nail down' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) and monitor which bodies belong and which do not. As the discussion in this chapter demonstrates, this often involves a locally based re/territorialisation of the dominant gender norms connected to the ideal surfing body. Within these power relations, I demonstrate that whilst some women might be accepted as (pseudo) mothers, daughters or love interests, or occasionally 'one of the boys', the ideal 'molar' 'local' identity remains distinctly masculine and heteronormative.

The case of Newquay however offered a contrasting narrative. Here, the processes of globalisation and mobility have become increasingly evident, and this is apparent in the ways in which the female surfers there relate to Newquay as a place. My discussion demonstrates that the experience of Newquay for the women who live there is often conflicted by the simultaneous experience of place and placelessness. The seasonal nature of Newquay means that bodies which gather there are often bodies in motion; visitors or *nomads*. This complicates local politics in important ways. For the women who surf there, the transience of the surf space, as well as their nomadic approach to it, allows for an 'opening up' of space. In this open space, as I argue, gendered and sexualised identities are not 'nailed down', but fluid. Thus, whilst dominant norms might congeal, they do not solidify, and this enables female surfers to resist, like Deleuze's Nomad, the fixed parameters of territorialisation.

In terms of my discussions on chapter nine, it is interesting to note that, whilst in Brighton, South Wales and Newcastle I found evidence of women actively seeking other female surfers through internet based networking, the Newquay surfers did not participate in this type of network formation. This, I suggest, reflects both the potential 'open-ness' of the Newquay space for women who surf, and the restricting and gendered nature of place-based local politics. In chapter nine I drew together a number of the key themes raised in the other chapters of this thesis. For instance, included in my discussion is a consideration of how the 'surfer girl' ideal is made evident in the internet based group pages of the

Brighton Board Girls and the Surf Senioritas, and the significance of emotions also reemerges, in terms of how women and girls share, connect and bond in these spaces.

Part of the significance of this final analysis chapter is that it serves to draw attention to the active and extensive networks which exist between women and girls who surf in Britain. Whilst internet based surf-related forums are nothing new, the voluntary creation of, and participation in, 'female-only' networks demonstrate that there is something distinctly important about how women and girls experience British surfing spaces, as gendered. Relating to my second and fourth research question, I navigate the various and complex ways in which these spaces, when explored from a feminist perspective, can be both productive and problematic. What emerged from the findings was that for many women and girls, female-only spaces provided a feeling of 'safety in numbers'; a forum through which to find other women to surf with, to ask questions and gather advice about surfing. Furthermore, the internet also emerged as a useful way in which lesbian surfers were able to meet other lesbians who surf. In considering the implications of this, I applied the notions of thinking rhizomatically in order to explore the ways in which female networking is complicated by the multiplicitous and shifting nature of surfing subjectivities. I demonstrate that although shared aspects of 'molar' identity, like gender and sexuality, often provided a 'common ground' through which to bring female surfers together, they are not always central to the ways in which women who surf establish lasting affective connections. I suggest, rather, that what bonds women who surf in these rhizomatic collectivities, is the interweaving of subjectivities and affects, both in and out of the waves. This interweaving, I argued, ignited the emergence of 'a molecular women's politics' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 276) with significant feminist potential.

Reflecting on Implications

I contend that my research makes a unique, or otherwise valuable, contribution to the surfing and sports studies literature in a number of ways. Firstly, unlike the vast majority of the literature on surfing, my focus is on the British context. Secondly, no research to date has offered such an extensive investigation into how female surfers experience surfing spaces from the perspective of their own embodied, felt and emplaced subjectivities. Thirdly, I argue that my methodological approach to researching this topic; doing multi-sited ethnography from a feminist, embodied, reflexive and emotionally considerate perspective, represents an important contribution to the study of sporting cultures. Lastly, I offer an analysis which theoretically, comprises a multi-disciplinary meshwork of influences. This, I contend, comprises a sort of thinking 'differently' about sporting spaces.

In the context of so-called 'new' or 'alternative' sporting spaces, it advances the Deleuzian influenced work of existing surf researchers (Anderson, 2012a, 2012b; Evers, 2005, 2006, 2009; Waitt, 2008).

I also recognise that, despite its in-depth nature, my research necessarily remains limited in some notable ways. In particular, I am mindful of the over-whelmingly white and largely middle class 'sample' of participants in my research. What has been made glaringly apparent to me through my fieldwork, is the over-whelming whiteness that characterises surfing, particularly in Britain. During 18 months of multi-sited research I could count on two hands the number of minority ethnic surfing bodies I have come across in the British waves. Having spent time surfing in both Europe and New Zealand, where the line-ups are more multi-ethnic, this disproportionate 'whitewash' in the British surf seems even more significant. Considering the multi-ethnic population in Britain I suggest that this raises some important questions for future surf research, not only in terms of exploring the experiences of minority ethnic surfers, but in terms of a more focused interrogation of whiteness in British surfing.

Further research is required into the socio-economic power relations connected with surfing. In terms of access and participation, I contend that, in comparison to a number of more 'traditional' sports, the costs of participating in surfing can be relatively small. However, I also acknowledge that this is complicated by the cost of living in many coastal areas. It is therefore important to look more deeply into issues of class within the British surf space. Indeed, the issues of race, ethnicity and class, and the various ways in which they intersect, demand more attention within surf research worldwide.

In concluding this thesis; summarising my findings, highlighting how I have engaged with my research questions, and re-emphasising the key points of each chapter, I find myself drawn into a state of reflection. This reflection is brought about by the slight unease which accompanies my 'summing up' of how 'female surfers' experience British surf space. With each assertion I make about my work, I am caught up in a casting back of time and space, a returning of my *becoming-surfer-researcher*. I find myself, again, sifting through who said what, about what, and how it connected with my own embodied experiences of surfing spaces. Names, faces, feelings, places, tumble through my mind and onto the page. In two-dimensions, black and white. For me, they are left wanting.

This is the reality of doing research. As researchers we cannot capture all the stories that might be told about a particular research space. We may offer only a partial view. Having entered into the dynamic and challenging processes of multi-sited surf ethnography, the significance of this partiality has made itself felt in various ways. For instance, I have become aware of how easily certain surf spaces are made accessible to me because I 'fit in'

with the norms of that particular space. In particular, my whiteness, and my embodied athletic ability have afforded me the privileges of normativity. At the same time, I have on many occasions, wrestled with the feeling that I do not belong, I am 'out of place', 'or in the way'. On these occasions, I am reminded of the reasons why I continue to ask questions about gender and surfing. The discussions I offer and the arguments I make are driven by this belief that the intersecting power relations of gender and sexuality are a significant and *felt* aspect of *becoming* a female surfer in Britain. As I have demonstrated, gender *matters* in surfing; not just to me, or indeed to the participants in my research, but to all surfers, regardless of gender.

Feeling my way through the research space has moved me to do research in certain ways, to embody spaces in certain ways, and to ask certain questions. The intersecting aspects of my subjectivity have shaped who I have met along the way, the conversations I have had, the connections that have been formed and the feelings that have been shared. Research experiences have unravelled both within and without me, and they have folded through me. This thesis reflects a making sense of these folds. It is my partial view; as a white, middle class, able-bodied, usually lesbian identified, feminist surfer researcher.

Concluding Remarks

The research questions I posed for this study reflect a number of concerns and interests I had before I started research with regards to the female participation in surfing culture. Driving these questions however was a broader concern with the notion of 'feminism in new sporting spaces'. The title of this thesis draws attention to centrality of feminism within my research. The overarching aim of this project involved both an investigation into, and application of, feminism within surfing. Utilising a Deleuzian-influenced feminist lens emerged as a challenging, inspiring and useful means through which to do so. In line with previous research into surfing spaces (e.g. Evers, 2004, 2005 2006, 2009; Knijnik, Horton and Cruz, 2010; Olive, McCuaig & Phillips, 2012; Waitt, 2008; Waitt and Warren, 2008), my findings show that gendered power relations in surfing remain contested, and that challenges to dominant power relations are often transient and subtle in nature. However, it is my contention that women and girls who surf in Britain are actively instigating ruptures in the gendered heteronormalising of spaces, and that 'paddling out' is emerging as a powerful and potentially feminist way of exploring, experiencing and embodying female subjectivities. As a *feminist-surfer-researcher* I argue that this holds exciting possibilities as the popularity of 'new sporting spaces' continues to rise.

Coda

I munch my toast and stare out the window; my tired brain compiles a mental 'to do' list of what I need to accomplish that day. I scroll through my Facebook feed. One of the BBGs has posted an article with the title 'All sexy, no surfing', along with the word 'Humff'.



Interested, I click on it. The article refers to the promotional 'teaser' for Roxy Pro in Biarritz. Janna Irons, the female editor of Surfer magazine writes;

Usually, I'm of the opinion that if a girl (surfer or otherwise) is comfortable with herself and wants to pose for a racy photo or video shoot, and people want to pay her money for it, more power to her. But this isn't a sexy editorial video or a promotion for a brand's clothing line, it's the vessel for sharing with the world what women's competitive surfing is all about. And yet not a single wave is ridden.

I watch the advert, and am astounded at the level of heterosexism which seems to underlie the video. Camera shots focus on naked body parts, the surfer is given no ownership of her own subjectivity because we do not see her face, and at no point does it feature any actual surfing. Despite the fact that I have been studying the gendered aspects of surfing culture for over three years now, I still find it difficult to believe. Even judged by the standards of fashion advertising, it would raise eyebrows. It is unlike any imagery I have come across in surf culture, since the 1980s advertising imagery of scantily clad women draped over male surfers. As a promotional video for a female surf contest, it is simply baffling.

Angered and dismayed, I think about all the female surfers I have met over the past three years. I wonder what they will think of this. I post it on my Facebook page with the words "Opinions please??", close my laptop, finish my toast, and go to get ready for Uni.

Throughout the day, I get several notifications that people have commented on my post. Most of them are female surfers. Several comments are summed up with the words "Just plain crap", "shit" and "outrageous". Others, make critical assessments on the broader implications of the trailer:

That could have been an ad for an underwear line, lifestyle docu but def not one of the most important contests in women's professional surfing!! Roxy should feel ashamed for fuelling the stereotype [...] and we wonder why womens surfing, regardless of the immense talent, is struggling to be taken as seriously as the mens??!! It has nothing to do with their skill, everything to do with their marketing. grrrr (Abby)

Whilst I'm logged in to Facebook, I notice that several posts from various surfing pages also relate to the 'teaser'. Worldwide, and amongst male and female surfers alike, the video has sparked widespread debate. Overwhelmingly, the response is critical, and the tone of the critique appears to be one of confusion and consternation. Furthermore, for every 'appreciative' comment from a male surfer who "can't see what the problem is", there is another male surfer who clearly can. I follow these comments with interest. If publicity is what Roxy was after, they've certainly got it.

Later in the day I notice that Nessa has posted the video on the Surf Senioritas page. *Be WARNED! You will get angry! Won't be promoting #Roxy on this group anymore until they wise the fudge up!!* It already has 24 comments, and I scroll through them. The anger in the responses is palpable.

The Surf Senioritas Facebook page is an active one. As I had been discussing in my thesis, they are generally broadly supportive of the commercial and marketing side of the female surf industry, as well as the lifestyle imagery connected with it. Furthermore, Nessa was a big fan of the Roxy brand. This teaser however, had clearly stepped over the mark, and had roused a voice which was unmistakably feminist.

It's just obvious how much power the men have in the surfing world. Needs to be equal! (Nessa)

Crippling girls self esteem and giving unhealthy body images to young girls, poisoning their minds and contradicting a sport that promotes mental and

physical well being. Roxy need to sort out their act. I feel a strongly worded letter coming on. Shall we write one and put all our signatures to it? (Suzy)

I'm boycotting the brand! (Elisa)

The women on the page clearly felt strongly. They weren't just making critical observations. They were feeling the necessity to act, and encouraging each other to do so...

....I'm writing to Roxy and letting them know my opinion!!! (Elisa)

So glad to see so many gals on here who have it darn right... (Debs)

We should make our own film about what going surfing is really like, waking up early doors looking like crap with a steaming hangover and mascara down the face, downing coffee, picking up your soggy wetsuit, your best surfing buddy calling in looking equally shit under loads of layers coz its -2c outside, scraping the ice off the car window, squeezing my wobbly bum into 6mm of neoprene, arriving at the beach for 2ft howling onshore just as its getting light, paddling out, first freezing duck dive, seeing your friend get their best wave ever, getting in the car with wetsuits still on after fumbling with the keys for ages, sitting by the fire back home drinking hot choc with a massive grin coz you still can't feel your toes! (Lucy)

I laugh out loud. This last comment paints a picture of surfing with which most surfers in Britain can relate, and making a film is an idea which a number of the commenters jump on.

Let's do a film as a protest letter! [...] Seriously, let's do it girls [...] There's enough of us on here to have a voice and be heard. We all have the passion and between us we've got the skills needed to make this a serious thing (Suzy)

Girls, you have a willing photographer and Filmmaker on your group and I'm willing to help make a more realistic video if you need a hand xx (Jill)

Over the evening, the idea appears to develop into a serious plan; as more and more comments of support mount up. I wonder whether the idea will ever reach fruition, but

then realise that, whether it does or not, it isn't the most important thing here. What matters, is that these women are calling for action. They might not be using the "f-word", but they are undoubtedly acknowledging that feminist issues matter in surfing, and they are opening up spaces where these issues can be discussed openly.

The thought crosses my mind that I should include this in my thesis discussion. It is already written, but I could probably make room. I decide against it. Not because it would be too much work on my part; I had plenty to say about it, and had the time to do so. I decide against it because I conclude that it doesn't require my interpretation or analysis. The words of these women speak for themselves. After spending over three years writing about the place of feminism in surfing, this string of what is now over 70 comments is not something I feel the need to contribute to. It is happening with or without me, and will continue to do so.

A smile creeps into my cheeks. I log off Facebook, close my laptop and go get ready for bed.

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