'Once a local surfer, always a local surfer': local surfing careers in a South West English village.

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Abstract

This article reports on findings from an ethnographic study (2008/2009) conducted in a village with a significant population of local surfers in Cornwall (South West England). Stimulated by Goffman's (1961) interpretation of the concept of career, and elaborated by the work of Stebbins (1970) on "subjective career", Stebbins' (1982) framework of "serious leisure" and "serious leisure career" (Stebbins 2005) we identify moments from local surfer careers lived in this community setting. We suggest that similar to findings from other sub-cultural studies on sports careers the local surfing career in this context contains shared experiential stages: the nurtured stage, the possible competitive stage, the serious leisure traveller stage, the responsible stage and the legends stage. We conclude that the shared experiences and pathways of a local surfing career can play a positive cultural role, not just for individuals but also for the construction and maintenance of local community life.

Keywords: local surfer; serious leisure career; subculture; community; identity; Cornwall

Word Count: 8,655

Introduction

The number of sociocultural studies exploring surfing culture around the world is steadily growing[1]. While there is a concentration of studies on the culturally significant locations of Australia, and the United States, (see for example Booth 1996, 2001a, 2001b, 2004, Butts 2001, Flynn 1989, George 1991, Law 2001, Beal and Smith 2010, Stranger 2011), there is also a growing body of literature that explores various facets of surfing culture at other locations where surfing is becoming socioculturally and economically significant through surf tourism, including: New Zealand (Pearson 1979, 1982): South Africa (Thompson 2001, Preston-Whyte 2002, Ishiwata 2002): The Indo-Pacific islands (Buckley 2002a, 2002b, Pointing *et al,* 2005, Margules, 2011, Pointing and McDonald, 2013, O'Brien and Pointing, 2013): Thailand: (Martin, 2012): Brazil (Knijnika, Horton and Cruz 2010): Costa Rica: (Tantamjarik, 2004): Portugal (Dionísio, Leal and Moutinho 2008): and Norway (Langseth 2012). Surprisingly, there are few published studies focusing on surfing culture in the British Isles (notable exceptions include, Wheaton 2007 and Ormrod 2007).

Surfing participation in the British Isles continues to increase. The Surfers Against Sewage (2012) estimate there to be around 500,000 surfers in Britain. Surfing has a particularly high cultural and economic visibility in the South West of England (Mercer 2003). The South West of England region is considered to be the primary surfing location in the British Isles and boasts a significant surf tourism industry. The economic impact of surfing in the two focal areas of this region (Cornwall and North Devon) is estimated conservatively at £64/£52m respectively and sustains over 3000 jobs in total in these rural economies (Trisurf 2008). One reason for caution in the study findings was that it was 'not able to ascertain the relative proportions of local to non-local surfers' (Trisurf 2008, p. 37).

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[1] We acknowledge our focus is linguistically anglocentric here.

Following Stranger (2010, p. 1117), we interpret the significance of this local surfing population, as illustrating 'an alternative model to Marx's modern (economic) base and (social) superstructure', in which the (economic structures) are seen as surface or superstructures and (the social or sociocultural) represents the base or substructure. Such an inverted view prompts us to valorise and focus primarily upon the sociocultural substructure which is built around the lives, identities and specific community cultures of *local* surfers.

In this paper, we explore the cultural significance of local surfers through the concept of "career". We draw on data gathered in an ethnographic study that focused upon a core group of local surfers within one particular village context in Cornwall that has its "own" beach break. In what follows, first we establish the "local surfer" as a Weberian "ideal type" construct. Second, we outline the concept of "career", as developed from Goffman (1961) and elaborated by the work of Stebbins (1970) on "subjective career", Stebbins' (1982) framework of "serious leisure" and more recently, "serious leisure career" (Stebbins 2005). Following an overview of the methodological strategy utilised for this study, we then present a number of experiential stages emerging from analysing these local Surfers careers. The article concludes by reflecting on the implications of this work for our understanding of how surfing careers function to build and bind communities through shared experience over time. It also reflects on how the idea of the Local surfer career might provide a means to better understand commonalities between local surfers from a variety of cultural contexts.

The local surfer as an ideal typical socio-spatial identity formation

> 'You've got the "grommets", the "old bullets", the "badass" locals and then the "inbetweeners", the normal guys who don't slot into a specific category'. The term 'grommet' refers to beginners of all ages while 'old bullets' includes the older generation of surfers. The 'badass' locals command respect by virtue of the time and dedication that they invest in surfing their local break. They are highly protective of their surfing space and may resort to violence to retain possession.

> (participant comment in Preston-Whyte, 2002, p. 319-320)

The "local surfer" is a frequent descriptor within both popular and academic surfing lexicon of a seemingly ubiquitous group of surfers. This stands in contrast to other terms which are much more culturally specific (e.g. 'groms, inbetweeners'). The category of local surfer, while often alluded to in research studies and the media, is seldom developed beyond the notion of geographical proximity to a specified surfing location. Moreover, literature focusing on local surfer behaviour mostly does so to explore (often insightfully) specific themes such as localism (Olivier 2010), or the construction of masculinity (Waitt and Warren 2008, Evers 2009). Following Andrews and Ritzer (2007) the local surfer, can also be seen as a "glocalised" surfer due to the simultaneously localised *and* deterritorialised meanings and practices all of which have been interpenetrated by global cultural flows. When viewed in these ways, the term local surfer takes on a phantasmagoric quality due to the paradoxical juxtaposition between the "tangible" local surfer in a given setting, and the imaginary of a myriad local surfers across the globe, potentially sharing little in common except their surf practice and a generic sociospatial relationship with a given surf break. Such usage aligns strongly with Weber's "ideal type" (1904/1949, p. 90) which is formed:

> By the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasised viewpoints into a unified analytical construct.

Cantelon and Ingham (2002) discuss sociological studies of sport that explicitly use ideal types. Notable illustrations include, Dunning and Sheard's (1979) work contrasting folk games with modern sports and Guttmann's (1978) characteristics of modern sport. In surfing research, Pearson (1982) constructed ideal types around the accentuation of Surf Life Savers and Surf Board Riders. More recently, Booth (2004) used ideal types to identify six "primary" styles adopted by surfers according to the Zeitgeist of the time/context.

In this article, we continue this analytical practice to explore the local surfer as an "ideal typical socio-spatial position" occupied by participants in relation to a particular surfing place and space. This does not imply these local surfers had the same experiences. Rather, the ideal type allows us to focus on a group of people sharing certain specific socio-spatial qualities and through this

explore what it means to be a local surfer in a particular community context. These shared qualities are tacitly encapsulated within, transmitted by and given value through a significant amalgam of shared experiences that we refer to as the local surfing career.

Career

Barley (1996) notes that since its inception in the Chicago School of Sociology, the sociological utility of the term career, 'was not thought to be limited to describing a sequence of roles enacted within the bounds of a formal organization' (p. 47). From this perspective career is not meant in the sense of a linear outcomes oriented progression through a line of work (although it can be used this way, for example in this context a professional surfing career). Rather, career is defined in a broader sense by Goffman (1961, p. 119) as; 'any social strand of any person's course through life'. Donnelly (2000, p. 83) illustrates this interpretation pointing out that 'a competitive swimmer who began at age six, retired at age fourteen and never earned any money, could now be considered to have had a '"career" in swimming'. Similarly, career does not imply engagement at a particular age. Using the example just given, a competitive swimmer's career can begin at any age. Furthermore, Stebbins (1970, p. 37) postulated that 'men [sic] have many careers in the course of their lives, some of which are progressing simultaneously'. Hastings et al (1989) agree suggesting that over their lifetime people have educational, occupational, familial and leisure/sport careers. However, Hastings et al (1989) qualify that while people are involved in many careers, they tend to emphasise some more than others, indicated by the commitment of resources and the justification of costs and rewards associated with each career.

We resist the temptation to reduce the notion of career to the idea of identity career, because as Goffman (1961, p. 119) suggests, the concept of career is particularly useful due to its two sided nature: the first side referring to 'internal matters held dearly and closely, such as image of self and felt identity.' This is developed by Stebbins (1970) who has promoted the significance of "subjective career", arguing 'the most efficient way to illustrate the nature of the subjective career is to consider it as a predisposition,' (Stebbins 1970, p. 35) .The second side, concerning the 'official position, jural

relations, and style of life... part of a publicly accessible institutional complex' (Goffman 1961, p. 119). Stebbins (1970, p. 33) considers this as the "objective stance" 'which can be found in definitions of career patterns and career line.' Using the concept of career in this way allows the researcher to 'move back and forth between the personal and the public, between the self and its significant society, without having to rely overly for data upon what the person says he thinks he imagines himself [sic] to be' (Goffman 1961, p. 119). Therefore, the broader sociological concept of career as articulated by both Goffman and Stebbins has an affinity for studying social processes impacting upon individuals and groups in a reflexive manner. As Goffman (1961, p. 119) clarifies, 'the perspective of natural history is taken: unique outcomes are neglected in favour of such changes over time as are basic and common to the members of a social category, although occurring independently to each of them.'

Career has been used to describe a range of social processes impacting upon individuals. Goffman (1961) invoked the concept of career to understand the process by which psychiatric patients became labelled insane. Becker (1963) used career to make sense of a process of how individuals became regular marijuana users. Roth (1963) used career to understand the process of hospitalisation and recovery of tubercular patients and Davies (1984) focused on deviant and gender careers to explain processes of socialisation into and out of schools. Sociological studies of sport drew initially on Cohen's (1955) work on *deviant* careers, before also embracing the idea of non-deviant careers, and career as process in sport subcultures. A body of literature now exists on subcultural sports careers including work relating to: Wrestling (Stone 1972), horseracing (Scott 1968), pool hustlers (Polsky 1969), hockey players (Faulkner 1974), sport fan "communities" (Crawford 2004, 2006; Marsh 1978, Jones 2000); unlicensed boxing (Jones 1997); athletic careers of elite mothers (Pedersen 2001); Hobbyist sports (Stebbins 2005); gym careers (Crossely 2006) and skateboarding (Snyder 2012). The idea of career *stages* appears as a common organising principle in many of these studies. However, from a perspective of career posited above, (combining the externally referenced idea of career pattern/line with the subjective career), stages become strongly connected to, and complicated by, the sociological nature of the activity engaged. To make sense of such differences and their

implications for local surfing careers we draw on Stebbins' work on serious leisure (in particular, Stebbins 1982, 2005) to underpin our analysis. Stebbins sociological work on leisure provides a much more nuanced account of leisure practice than tradition dichotomous work/leisure perspectives. Stebbins draws on Jenkins and Sherman (1979 cited in Stebbins 1982, p. 253) who comment, 'leisure is not only rest or hedonistic enjoyment. Leisure activities can be constructive and rewarding for both the person and society in general'. In raising the value of leisure in society Stebbins (1982) articulates that forms of leisure are distinctive with some being "serious" and some being "casual". Stebbins highlights three subcategories of serious forms of leisure engagement: Amateur, hobbyist and volunteer, which, he argues 'serve as analytic and sensitizing concepts (Blumer, 1969, p. 147-149; Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 38-39)' (Stebbins 1982, p. 256). There is not space here to unpack the rationalisations for each category here, instead we delimit ourselves to highlighting the category of serious leisure where Stebbins (1982, p. 263) has argued activities like local surfing primarily belong: the hobbyist, and a further sub category of this, the activity participant:

> The third kind of hobbyist is the activity participant. Such people steadfastly pursue a form of leisure for the development and expression of skills and knowledge and for the personal enrichment it offers. Often the activity poses a challenge to be met, albeit a non-competitive one. When carried out continually and purposely for these reasons, the following are among the things activity participants do: bodybuilding, backpacking, hang- gliding, cross-country skiing, surfing, bird watching, tourism, fishing and hunting, and serious reading of a genre of literature (such as science, belles lettres, history).

A caveat here is that there is a degree of overlap between these Stebbins' serious leisure categories both conceptually and in terms of lived experience. We shall return to this point later in our analysis where this issue arises, rather than repeat them here. Stebbins, further argues that, 'another quality of serious leisure separating it from other types of leisure is the tendency for amateurs, hobbyists, and volunteers to have careers in their endeavors' (Stebbins 1982, p. 257). Stebbins (2005, p. 67) later revisits this connection more specifically and develops the idea of "serious leisure careers", using qualitative data collected on to a range of "nature challenge" sports (mountain climbing, kayaking and snowboarding):

A leisure career is the typical course, or passage, of a type of amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer that carries the person into and through a leisure role, and possibly, into and through a work role. The essence of any career, whether in work, leisure or another area of life, lies in the temporal continuity of activities associated with it.

Lastly, Stebbins also considers that the temporal continuity of activities can be further sub-divided into *stages or phases*. These are units of time made distinctive by a particular focus of engagement in a given activity. Stebbins (2005, p. 69) elaborates;

Serious leisure participants who stick with their activities eventually pass through four, possibly five career stages: beginning, development, establishment, maintenance, and decline. But the boundaries separating these stages may be imprecise in some fields, for as the condition of continuity suggests, participants in them pass almost imperceptibly from one to the next.

Notions of stages have been interpreted differently in the literature on sports careers. For example, Hastings et al (1989) comment that coaching and classes in a sport mark the beginning of a youthful competitive career that usually ends with a withdrawal (or decline stage) from the structured commitment to the sport. Re-entering the sport at an older age is the initiation of what Hastings et al (1989) term a mature adult stage (therefore possibly constituting another beginning or a development stage). They suggest that sport careers (and their stages) typically comprise age-related cultural norms representing 'consensually held presumptions of what people of various ages can or should do in particular competitive settings' (p. 279). However, like a number of these studies, Hastings et al's (1989) application of career focuses on an *institutionalised* sporting career, where there is a structured institution supporting and promoting a youthful competitive environment and therefore, consensual career progression lines. This is clearly quite different from other activities such as the serious leisure career of the hobbyist activity participant surfer.

While surfing has organised institutional dimensions (principally servicing amateur and professional sporting and commercial interests), the majority of surfing culture is better understood as a lifestyle practice (and that which forms of the focus of this article) containing by informal, sub-cultural practices interactions, stories and technical knowledge and values that are experienced in a

surfing career. Therefore, we prefer the more fluid concept of shared experiential stages containing the idea of non-sequential fluctuating engagement over the life-course, in place of the idea of relatively fixed, externally referenced stages as may appear dominant in a more externally structured institutionalised sporting career. This interpretation is supported by Stebbins' (1970, p. 43) who argues that a tacit, felt, *subjective* career is *nonconcensual* in nature yet may nevertheless be shared;

> The career pattern is consensually shared in the sense that most members of the career group are aware that the others recognize the same elements of the pattern that they do. In the case of the subjective career there may be sharing because others in the group have the same feelings toward certain parts of the career pattern or some other aspect of that career, but they do not realize that they share these feelings-sharing here is nonconsensual.

Therefore, if we understand local surfing to be the serious leisure of active participant hobbyists who share (consensually and nonconcensually) ideas of what a (good) local surfing career is both in terms of external patterns and subjective feelings towards those patterns, we might better understand what /if any, value and practical function local surfing has, not just for the individual but also for a local community.

Methods

The data collection used in this article took place between 2008 and 2009 and formed part of an broader ethnographic study which focused on better understanding the role surfing played in community life and the meanings attached to surfing practice in a small village in East Cornwall with a local beach break and a prominent surfing population (in what follows, all proper nouns are replaced with pseudonyms). We sampled the setting (Lofland *et al,* 2004) by considering Mason's (1996) idea of the most productive place, time and space for data collection. Firstly, place: (Author 1) already had access to gatekeepers (Hammersely and Atkinson 2007) in a small village in Cornwall (Hessiock). Hessiock had its "own" beach break and a visible group of surfers who surfed it regularly: Secondly, time: we decided to collect data over approximately one calendar year in order to observe seasonally based local surf lifestyle practices "naturalistically." In this way, key community events, such as the

Winter Cold Water Classic (pseudonym, a local community surf competition hereafter CWC), the local community raft race (which was co-organised with the local surfing association) and informal surf sessions throughout the season were focused upon. Third, space: the various local beach surf breaks, the community pub and the Hessiock Working Men's Club emerged as focal areas for observation of community/surf related behaviours. Assuming the role of ethnographer, in Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007, p. 1) sense of 'researcher as instrument,' (Author 1) immersed herself in the task of;

> Participating, overtly or covertly, in people's lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions—in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the, focus of the research

The ethnography augmented participant observation with documentary data and formal interviews as soon as key community members had been identified. Interview participants were selected via what Marshall (1996, p.523) describes as 'critical case sampling' in that they needed to reflect the social heterogeneity of the group studied, the objectives of study and the resources available (Angrosino, 2007). Therefore, the primary criteria invoked was that the interviews engaged with people of different ages and people who have been local surfers for varying amounts of time. There were a total of 29 participants involved in this study. Of this 29, 19 participants were directly observed during participant observation. Subsequently, sixteen participants were interviewed in either individual or group formats and a selection of these are included in this paper. Respondent ages (at the time of data collection) are provided in brackets after their first mention in the text. Interview duration ranged from 20 minutes to 58 minutes. A total of 10 further participants were mentioned during interviews but neither directly observed nor contacted.

Our data analysis strategy was to examine the content of the various forms of data collected. Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278) describe content analysis as 'the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns.' This analytical process moved the stages of transcription, preliminary coding, formal coding, thematic organization, interpretation and writing up. Upon their collection, interview data
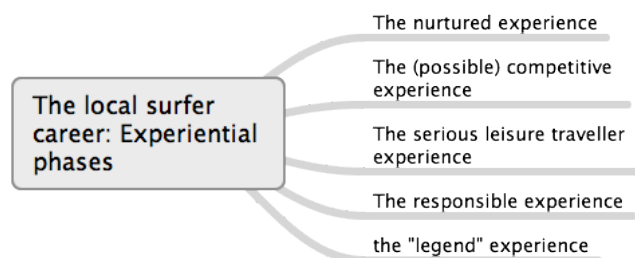
were transcribed as faithfully as possible and all data were then subjected to emic and etic coding and analysis (see Headland *et al,* 1990). It was from this dual analytical process that patterns regarding 'experiential stages' emerged from data and the concept of career was then drawn on to provide an interpretation.

While acknowledging our role in fashioning these data and their interpretations, we present these findings in the form of a realist tale, agreeing with Sparkes (2002, p. 55) that 'well constructed, data-rich realist tales can provide compelling, detailed, and complex depictions of the social world'. Following, Sparkes (2002) we hope the criteria for judging this work will focus on the authenticity of the data presented and the internal coherence of the relationships between the data and the concept of serious leisure career.

A local surfing career in Hessiock

In agreement with Evetts (1992) we remain conscious of the problem of reification of the concept of career by participants and researchers alike. Nevertheless, these data suggest that participants considered theirs and others' involvement in surfing as moving through and engaging with experiential stages that incorporated but did not mirror Stebbins' (2005, p. 69) configuration of 'five career stages: beginning, development, establishment, maintenance, and decline'. Moreover, we interpreted that because these stages were intimated rather than named explicitly by participants, they indicated a sharing of experience that was in Stebbins (1970) terms part consensual and non-consensual, therefore in attempting to highlight what was shared, we selected names that evoke an idea of the experiences participants described as defining these parts of their surfing careers. In what follows, we first list these below (see figure 1) and then illustrate each stage in a typically, although not universally experienced sequence.

Fig 1. Stages in a local surfing Career

The local surfer career: Experiential phases
- The nurtured experience
- The (possible) competitive experience
- The serious leisure traveller experience
- The responsible experience
- the "legend" experience

The "nurtured" active participant stage

Crawford (2004) considers that becoming a sports fan often happens at such a young age that older fans often find the reasons and motivating factors behind their introduction unclear and 'in many cases this process may seem almost predestined' (p. 43). Crawford revealed that induction into a sports fan career is often the traditional route of family and peers. This interpretation connects strongly with Stebbins' (1970, p. 35) idea that the subjective dimension of careers are "predispositions", that once instilled 'are enduring and…remain dormant until "activated" by situational stimuli.' (Stebbins 1970, p.36). The majority of our participants' serious leisure careers as local surfers also began in their childhood years and with the support of (predominantly) male family members and/or with other established local male surfers. The participant experience captured in the term "nurtured" is deliberately intended to convey the idea of "looked after," "cared for," "brought along," "encouraged" by other local surfers. Wes (29) illustrates this, recalling that his first surfing experience involved him wearing;

> Rubber gloves, like rugby socks with plastic bags over me and then like diving fins on
> stuff like that trying to body board...loads of people were coming up to them [his mum

and dad] and saying that you can't let the kids go out there cause they're too young, it's too dangerous. (Wes 2.11.2009).

Wes also remembers being noticed by Phil (51) (an experienced local surfer) during this incident in what Stebbins (1970, p. 36) identifies as a 'career contingency or turning point' in which subjective 'awareness of career is generated' (Ibid, p. 37). Subsequently, Phil offered Wes proper surfing equipment for future use, thus beginning his nurturing stage by an older local surfer. Michael (25) also spoke of how the experienced local surfers in the community nurtured him once he had started, 'they were just welcoming to me really cause obviously I was in it if you know what I mean, I wasn't an outsider, it was more of an egging me on' (Michael 26.10.2009). Another experienced local surfer, Robert explained that his son Billy would 'stand up on my long board and stuff when…[he was] a toddler' (Robert 28.11.2009) and on being asked who the most influential person was in getting him into surfing, Billy (15) simply stated 'My Dad' (Billy 28.11.2009). Similarly, Michael acknowledges his father's influence in his surfing participation from a young age, commenting: 'My dad umm, started sealed wetsuits so that's how I got into [it] really so I've been surfing since I was tiny' (Michael 26.10.2009). Fieldnotes further supported the practices suggested above with Wes and Jacob (32) regularly taking their own young children surfing.

Becoming a local surfer therefore happens for many in childhood at what we term the *nurturing* stage of their local surfing career. Therefore, our analysis concurs with Crawford's (2004) in so far as identifying that careers often begin in childhood and involve the transmission of values. More specifically, we see *nurturing* relationships in childhood serving as channels for the transmission, in the form of (pre) dispositions, of values of local surfing as a serious leisure hobby in which being an *active participant* was of central significance. As such serious leisure local surfing careers are typically begun at this point in life in this community. It could also be suggested that what happens during the *nurturing* stage of their local surfing career compels them to continue through their career as they begin to nurture (as they were once nurtured) during their "responsible" stage. However, there are discrepant cases that actually help to reinforce the idea of the nurturing stage. The oldest generation of local surfers in this community did not have family influences as surfing was new

to the area making these men pioneers in this area but they are now very involved in nurturing others

(for example Michael's father and Phil). Second, while beginning surfing young is perhaps the norm

now, there remains the possibility of beginning a local surfing career at an older age, but nurturing

was still evident in this community setting. Jacob was initially involved in other leisure pursuits such

as going to the gym, and only began surfing in his twenties. He recalls;

> Probably the person who was most encouraging was Wes Deacon he was the one who
> sort of continually hassled me to buy his board, no just buy a board he helped me ... put
> me in contact with Simon Howard who I bought my first wetsuit off (Jacob 11.08.2009)

These discrepant cases do help reveal that while a local surfing career, like other serious leisure

careers are characterised by being 'a temporal continuity of activity' (Stebbins, 2005, p. 67) there is

no essential point at which stages or phases begin or end, moreover, this fluidity further reinforces the

positioning of local surfing careers (in this location) as a hobbyist active participant form of serious

leisure rather than an amateur competitive sport, with externally referenced stages.

The nurtured stage also contains important media influence. Crawford (2004 citing Taylor

1995) suggests that media and consumer saturated societies offer further opportunities to connect with

one's chosen sport or physical activity. While, the study data concur with Ormond's (2007, p. 88)

view that British surfers did not generally buy into the 'fantasy lifestyle of searching for the perfect

wave expressed in American surfing magazines and films', participants did, nevertheless, find

mediated surfing material motivational. For example, Wes stated that films were a big influence,

commenting, 'I had seen North Shore, have you seen that? Really surfy sort of film… I thought oh

wow that is amazing, brilliant' and 'Endless summer, Endless Summer One, Endless Summer

Two…we all watched those over and over and over again so you do learn' (Wes 2.11.2009).

Similarly, Jacob notes that some of his first observations were from the film Point Break and

continues to state that many of his observations of surfing at this time were 'through the media and

stuff like that' (Jacob 11.08.2009).

It is also worth suggesting that it is at this nurturing stage that the local surfer develops a

sense of 'belonging' particularly with reference to Enjolra's (2003, cited in Walseth, 2006)

'Expressivity' base for belonging which 'links the individual to a community by the feeling of identity confirmation that participation produces' (Walseth, 2006, p. 450).

The (possible) competitive player stage

In the contemporary scene, as local surfers become more proficient they encounter *possible* avenues into a competitive form of surfing. This is a (possible) competitive stage because the relationship with the activity, according to Stebbins (1982, p. 258) alters with the move towards structured, organised competition in which:

> The activity is transformed into an avocation in which the participant is motivated by seriousness and commitment, as these are expressed both in regimentation (such as practice or rehearsals) and in systematization (such as schedules or organization).

For example, Billy mentioned that competitions for him were a turning point, showing him a more competitive, professional orientation towards surfing. However, the participation and professional characteristics that Billy shows may not be evidence of him becoming a committed "amateur" or professional surfer (or even aspiring to this) but possibly a shift towards being a hobbyist *player* (players are related to each other by a set of rules structuring their actions while they are engaged in the contest (Stebbins 1982, p. 262)). Karl's son attended the same competition mentioned by Billy (CWC Meeting 11.11.2008) and Jacob indicated that many of the "Groms"[2] involved in the surf club now take part in the local CWC competition as a matter of course (Jacob 19.06.2009). Unsurprisingly, other older local surfers such as Wes and Michael did not mention an interest in competitive surfing and this does tend to underline the interpretation that this is a stage of career that has become apparent (and hence possible) only relatively recently. Indeed Stebbins (1982, p. 262) considered that 'some hobbyists fit more than one category'. Whether local surfers will come to see competitive surf contests as "something to be done" and thus be both *active participants and players* or not remains to be seen. Nevertheless (entering contests) certainly appears to loom larger on the horizon of possibilities for many younger surfers now than hitherto it has done and perhaps this

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[2] A common subcultural term for young surfers that also expresses a stage of surfing career in terms of age

stage is part of a general transformation of the local surfer career in this location.

The serious leisure surf traveller stage

The traveller stage of the local surfers serious leisure career highlights the normalised significance attributed to living to surf and surf traveling for these local surfers in this community. Moreover, the combination of the desire to surf, "finish" the surf body, bring about occupational alignment and travelling indicates Stebbins' (1982, p. 256) idea that, 'careers in serious leisure frequently rest on a third quality, namely, significant personal effort based on special knowledge, training, or skill, and sometimes all three.' The serious leisure traveller stage has parallels with Crawford's (2004, p. 47) enthusiastic and devoted stages of the sport fan's career in which their sporting interest (expressed through watching live games regularly) comes to occupy a 'comparatively important' or 'significant location in their everyday lives' respectively.

Motivations for this stage are partly informed by media via films like, The Endless Summer (1966) as mentioned above by Wes (Wes, 02.11.2009). As Booth (1996, p. 319) states, this film showed that surfing 'was no longer innocent adolescent fun' but had become 'the real thing' with surfers being able to just surf and travel. Our findings do suggest that to a certain extent, one basic "career" objective of a local surfing lifestyle is to 'develop and maintain a way of living which enables a high level of involvement in waveriding' (Author, date, p. 74) that is manifest by the pursuit of self or casual employment. At the time of the study it was mentioned that another local surfer, Joe, was traveling and surfing in Hawaii facilitated by his seasonal work surf coaching in Portugal (CWC Fieldnotes 03.01.2009). Local surfers, Phil, Andy (29), Michael and Wes were self-employed and had successfully constructed a way of life facilitating their own waveriding. As a photographer, Phil utilised his interest in surfing by taking photographs for magazines and books such as The Stormrider Guide (Fitzjones and Rainger, 1992). Andy is a surf filmmaker and has produced a number of successful surf films. Michael owns his own surf retail business as a supplier of surf clothing and equipment and uses his self-employed status to facilitate surf travelling to places such as Portugal and South Africa and a forthcoming trip to Indonesia.

Local surfers in the traveller stages of their careers are undoubtedly devoted to the pursuit of the surfing lifestyle and what one might also call surfing-for-self, something Stebbins (1982, p. 257) refers to as *durable benefits:* 'self actualization…feelings of accomplishment…belongingness.' This requires 'special knowledge, training, or skill' (Ibid, p. 256) in the pursuit of achieving and refining the "finished" surfing body during their surfing careers, and requires experience of a variety of types of waves, which cannot be found in local waters and therefore requires travel. This career disposition is indicated by Jacob who recalls a recent surf trip;

> Obviously the six months in New Zealand I progressed so much because I had the opportunity to surf high good quality waves whereas since I've come back in the five months I've been home I just haven't surfed hardly at all. I wouldn't say my surfing's progressed at all in the last five months… I do accept that it might mean a couple, the odd trip here and there to get the opportunity to develop a little bit more (Jacob 11.08.2009)

Jacob was going to accompany Michael on a trip to Indonesia reveals the reasoning behind his trips abroad;

> I'm only an average intermediate surfer I would say in my eyes, umm and so I'm certainly not an expert in anyway and so for me some like stuff, like when I go to Indo in November there'll be some stuff I just probably won't even bother with cause it's just, it will be well well beyond my ability range...I think…that as long as I can do a few trips abroad … to get the time and the quality and the perfection that you need really to progress [to]…that standard," that standard being in his words "a…really very very good intermediate surfer or just…edging into…the advanced category. (Jacob 11.08.2009)

This overt pursuit of skill refinement and waveriding experience fits Stebbins (1982, p. 257) frame for serious leisure careers illustrating that, 'such characteristics… differentiate amateurs and hobbyists from dabblers and the public.' Laslty, are also elements of nurturing that extend into the travelling stage. For example, Billy is beginning a process of transition between local surfing career stages. Although still reliant and nurtured by Joe (his father) and other experienced local surfers. Joe takes Billy surfing at Constantine and the significance attached to surf travel experiences is clearly

being passed on as he is already experienced to the reality of surf travel and expressed a desire for more surf travelling in the future (Fieldnotes 28.11.2009).

The responsible stage

The (varied) point at which local surfers begin their own family, educational or occupational careers (usually in combination), marks a significant epiphany in their local surfing career. This stage is identified as the responsible stage of the local surfer's career as it is point where responsibilities in other areas of their life that inevitably effect their ability to maintain frequent surfing and in particular the serious leisure traveller surfing lifestyle. Wes and Ruth (30+), note that surfing has changed significantly for them since becoming parents;

> Before that was something which we did all the time, surf together now it rarely happens, it happens more now ... we've got good parents and my sister's wicked…But I guess your priorities changes, before we go off and surf all weekend and two or three times in the week but now you don't want to do that because its time you wouldn't have with him [their son] (Wes 02.11. 2009)

Even though at the time of data collection he was yet to become a father, Jacob was aware of what entering this stage in his surfing career will mean;

> I [will] have more responsibility and pressure to make sure I earn as much money as possible well certainly to provide and so it won't be as easy to take the odd day off here and there where as I have done in the past (Jacob 11.08.2009)

These findings are similar to Heuser's (2005) study of women bowls players which showed the level of commitment to bowls during the second stage, playing bowls fluctuated or "waxed and waned" as players experienced competing physical and social demands. Earlier, Hastings et al (1989) described this situation as competing careers. Their work with swimmers highlighted how many adults reported competing careers mitigating their swimming career, jobs, home life and childcare responsibilities being most commonly stated. However, what is perhaps different and significant is the nature of surfing as a community binding/building activity. When these local surfers do get to surf they tend include their partners, children and friends. For example, Wes and Ruth's son often comes

along on surfing trips and according to Wes 'he loves the water and we take him in the water all the time' (Wes 02.11.2009). Looking ahead, Michael aspires to this kind of situation when he has a family;

> I don't think [my life] would change too much cause I kind of involve my family in the activity really, especially because I want to live round this kind of area umm, I would be beach orientated anyway so whether they surf or not is up to them but you know, I should imagine that they would be keen to get involved just living in and around the area. (Michael 26.11.2009)

The responsible stage appeared to have different consequences and implications for male and female local surfers. However, our data set did not include sufficient numbers of female local surfers to pursue these gender differences further; We return to this topic in our conclusions. For some, the responsible stage may be the longest stage of the local surfer's career as they continue to be responsible and nurture their children for up to eighteen years. This is seen in the way that Robert and Karl still take their sons to competitions and surfing trips despite them being in their late teens (CWC Meeting 11.11.2008). The responsible stage also illustrates a shift towards a surfing-for-others focus, with expressions of fulfilment through others practicing surfing together with one's family as well as other surfer friends and family and other local surfing children. Finally, there are a group of local surfers who are conspicuous in their absence in these data and they are those individuals whose competing careers (mainly occupational) have taken them away from the community. We shall also return to this question in our conclusions.

The "legends" stage

The final stage in the career of the local surfer is the "legends" stage, as noted by Rachel;

> The guys who have surfed…and are now in their forties and fifties…they're what I call the legends, you know they grew up surfing when surfing wasn't the most popular thing in the world, you know they did it cos they loved it, not cos it was cool. (Rachel 13.06.2009)

Rachel's final comment alludes to a point that the legends of today were probably the founding surfers of the past (in this community). However, it is possible that the idea of "legends" is also specific to this time period and in the near future "legends" may become merely "veteran" local surfers indicating a shift in the consensual career line in this community. Rachel also highlighted a significant shared understanding of the differing levels of participation at this career stage, commenting, 'some of them still surf, some of them, I've never seen in the water [and they are] just enjoying the lifestyle but not getting in the water as much themselves' (Rachel 13.06.2009). The socio-spatial position of the legends stage of the local surfer career is structurally similar to that of the graduate stage in the subculture of British football hooligans studied by Marsh (1978). As football hooligans progressed to this stage they were usually older than the hooligans in the stages before them and because of their experiential development through their career, a lot wiser. Marsh (1978) observed that this earned them respect from fellow supporters and the right to take a back seat role (physically) in acts of hooliganism, much like the legend often takes a back seat role in surfing, something Marsh (1978, p. 70) describes as 'rest[ing] on their laurels.'

Phil (51) is considered by some as a legend and remains an active surfer. Commenting on the participation of two other legend local surfers Phil states that 'they don't surf but they'll tell you they do' (Phil 26.08.2009), citing their reasons for not participating as a mixture of jobs, families, bad back, big waves and cold water. This highlights how for some surfers this stage is experienced as overlapping or even coterminous with other stages given their individual life course. This likely permanent suspension of participation by these "legend" local surfers, but passed off as temporary is comparable with Stebbins' (2005) "decline" stage. This was further confirmed at a CWC Competition meeting when Karl ironically stated that there should be a veteran competition. This was met with laughs especially from other legend surfers at the meeting. Karl expressed his view that such a competition would be for 'vain surfers that don't want to admit their age' (CWC Meeting 11.11.2008), implying that some legend surfers only continue surfing because of pride and self-importance and perhaps should consider retiring rather than competing. Age related participation views such as these are quite widely held and as Phoenix and Sparkes (2006) illustrate they serve to

cast a normative restrictive "panoptic gaze" over what surfers of an older age should be doing and what their bodies are supposed to be able to do. However, as Phil's local surfing career indicates this view is not held by everybody. Moreover, we agree with the view that increasingly there is 'little indication that many hardcore surfers are prepared to grow old gracefully' (Author p.) and these data suggest that legend stage local surfers' age and physical condition become increasingly socially visible in this stage and must either yield to or resist such traditional views of ageing. When asked about surfing at this point in their surfing career, many of the younger local surfers believed however that the often stated reasons for stopping wouldn't hold them back, for example, Jacob stated;

> I just want to carry on [surfing]... I don't ever want to stop, I you know there's a standard in my mind that I want to obtain umm, you know I don't have illusions that I'm ever gonna get to like a professional standard or anything like that but there's there's probably like a whole bunch of stuff that I'd like to be able to do that I can't do still. (Jacob,11.08.2009)

Wes went as far as stating that he'd 'surf forever' (Wes 02.11.2009), while Michael was the only younger surfer to acknowledge a possible reason for stopping surfing commenting 'my dad's still surfing now although not very well and he's fifty-five, so probably as long as I'm fit and able really' (Michael 26.11.2009).

Our findings suggest something else important also happens in relation to the community which concurs with Heuser (2005, p. 56) who concluded 'physical retirement from bowls did not signify social retirement from the club,' rather, the bowling club becomes a social venue rather than a place simply to play bowls. Similarly, many of the local surfers in the legend stage in this community, although less/in active in the water, remained actively involved in the local surf club, using it as a place to socialize and reminisce with other local surfers also in the legend stage. One conversation at a CWC Meeting between Martin, Robert and Karl exemplified this, with these men reminiscing about how surfing locations in Spain had changed over the twenty-five years they had all known it, each stressing the length of time they had been out there surfing as if competing over their wave-riding experiences with one another (CWC 11.11.2008). Additionally, although these legend local surfers may be 'resting on their laurels' in terms of their active surfing practice, their significant involvement

at organisational levels within the local surfing and wider community, signified the importance of this stage for individuals to stay engaged with their activity, the sense of tradition they symbolised and the experience they bring to the local surfing community. Stebbins (2005, p. 135) view is helpful here commenting:

> All serious leisure has links with the wider community…many serious leisure activities relate directly to the larger community through artistic performances by amateurs, interesting displays by hobbyists..., and needed services by volunteers.

Regardless of their participation levels the non-active legend local surfers still considered themselves (and were considered) local surfers suggesting that their engagement in surfing as serious leisure has not declined but their *particular* form of serious leisure engaged in has shifted more strongly towards them becoming volunteers. Therefore, transposition of meaning in the English proverb 'Once a thief, always a thief' to read Once a local surfer, always a local surfer is helpful for us to convey how legend local surfing careers helped foster community identity through collective identification of the past actions and experiences of respected others. For this reason, these men will likely all remain in the legend career stage for the rest of their lives.

Conclusions

The paper has to better understand local surfers by applying Goffman's interpretations of career, and Stebbins' development of subjective career alongside ideas of serious leisure career from findings principally gathered through observations and interviews with local surfers living in a "surfing" village in the South West of England. Our analysis suggests, that a local surfer career in this community is usefully viewed as a hobbyist, active participant form of serious leisure. Moreover, we identify a series of shared and valued experiential stages: 1) a nurtured stage, 2) a possible competitive player stage, 3) a serious leisure traveller stage, 4) a responsible stage, and 5) a legend stage.

Given Evetts (1992) arguments over the problem of reification with the career concept, caution needs exercising not to imply the local surfer career, its stage or the career-age/life stage

correlations identified 'has an objective existence' (Evetts 1992, p. 1). Rather, as Evett (1992, p. 2) suggests 'career structures are not permanent: they are constantly being changed and modified. They are not physical structures even though they have structural properties'. Accordingly we have come to view the local surfing career as, according to Stebbins' (1970), part *consensual* in the sense elements such as being nurtured and responsible are widely recognised and they are part *non-consensual* in that aspects such as being respected as a legend or feeling the need to travel or practice a given amount of time in order to develop experience and skill, or indeed attain a particular level of skill are more tacitly implied. While some local surfers might move from one local surfing stage to another as the life-course progresses, it should not be considered a fixed linear process either, but rather an embedded and on-going transitional process through enduring yet not immovable stages. Indeed, indicative of such a view is the emergence of a possible competitive stage for younger surfers. The willingness of many older surfers to organise local competitions and younger surfers to compete in them, means that some (younger) surfers do now see competitions as "something to be done". Additionally, the increasing juxtaposition and overlap of the serious leisure traveller, responsible and legend stages suggests a shift consistent with a more affluent, active leisure lifestyle, and, consistent also with the older age at which individuals are tending to have children, pursue and change careers etc.. Furthermore, the local surfer's career exhibits fluctuating levels of commitment during the responsible stage and there is also evidence of temporary or permanent suspension of active participation involvement during the legends stage for some individuals and a shift towards surfing becoming more of serious leisure via volunteering. Such findings indicate some congruence with Stebbins' (2005, p. 69) conclusion that 'the boundaries separating these stages may be imprecise in some fields, for as the condition of continuity suggests, participants in them pass almost imperceptibly from one to the next.' Despite this, those in the legend surfer stage appear never to lose the identity of local surfer, leading us to invoke the phrase, "Once a local surfer, always a local surfer" to convey how, in this context at least, one's local community status and one's surfing career are durably fused as a disposition and identity through a lifetime of practice in a community setting.

Our analysis also raised questions that remain unanswered. Firstly, following Waitt (2008) and Waitt and Warren (2008) the gendered dimension of the local surfing career needs additional work to tease out the finding that while females and males in this community may all experience the same stages, they do so differently. However, as (Author's) state surfing culture is changing to become more open to females at the levels of everyday participation and competition. Notwithstanding the constraints for females in things such as surf travel identified by Fendt and Wilson (2012) female surfers appear to be maintaining participation, especially in the responsible stage as indicated by Spowart, Burrows and Shaw (2010). Therefore, we might reasonably expect to see more female surfers becoming "legends" in this community in near future. Second, the significance and depth of understanding of the interconnections with other "careers" in people's lives identified by Hastings et al (1986) as educational, occupational, familial and also other forms of leisure/sport requires more focused observation and additional data collection. A key topic here is the experience of local surfers who have moved away from the locality to pursue other careers but continue their surfing careers and appear to remain part of the local surfing community, returning often. This partially de-territorialised local identity suggests they may be examples of the emergence of the "Glocal" surfer with far more fluid connections to local spaces and places. Lastly, while the idea of a local surfer career appears relatively coherent, stable and shared in this community, it might be explored in other surf settings in the UK and elsewhere, where community dynamics are different in order to develop the empirical status of the ideal type of local Surfer and the similarities and differences of their serious leisure active participant hobbyist careers.

We conclude with the observation that experiential stages of this local surfing career has echoes of Tönnies' (2001) notion of Gemeinschaft relations. In this case, how a physical cultural practice such as surfing through the life-course within a physical subculture and a community can help to bind individuals together through the sharing of common, and according to Evers (2006) embodied sensorial, aesthetic (and gendered) experiences. Something, that resonates strongly with Mellor and Shilling's (1997) notion of "sensual solidarities" with the connection being surfing practice in local shared waters. While activities like surfing are often seen as significant in terms of the economic

impact they can have on communities and regions and on individuals as a healthy individual physical pursuit, our findings reveal that in a local context such as Hessiock at least, surfing and the shared experience of surfing as a serious leisure career plays a positive sociocultural role, and as Stebbins (1982, p. 256) articulates, 'this positive view rests on the contribution the activity makes to the individual's well-being and to the life of the community". Therefore, we agree with Stranger (2010) that in this area at least, it is local surfing culture, its communities and local surfing careers, rather than economics that forms the substructure of this activity.

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