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Beyond the Youth Culture: Understanding Middle-Aged Skateboarders Through Temporal Capital.

**Paul O'Connor
(Draft Version)**

Introduction

The influence of middle-aged skateboarders was spectacularly demonstrated in October of 2016 when the original Bones Brigade (Tony Hawk, Steve Caballero, Lance Mountain, and Mike McGill), now in their early fifties and late forties, recreated a spectacular photograph taken in 1986 (Figure 1 & 2). The photo highlights that skateboarding is not purely a youth pursuit and that middle-aged practitioners are able to command respect and acceptance as serious skateboarders.

Figure 1: The Bones Brigade 1986 (Photo copyright J. Grant Brittain).

Figure 2: The Bones Brigade 2016 (Photo copyright J. Grant Brittain).

In this research I respond to the work of Wheaton (2013: 60-64; 2016) who has identified the issue of ageing in lifestyle sports as a pending area of enquiry. The aims of the research have been to further understand the cultural politics of skateboarding through a qualitative methodology of open ended biographical interviews and participant observation with middle-aged skateboarders. This research contrasts with Wheaton's (2016) work on older surfers and Thorpe's (2010) on snowboarders and masculinity that identify a number of central issues such as the dominance of masculinity in both sports, the 'culture of commitment' and issues of age, status, and identity. It also contributes to existing discussions on social and cultural capital in the skateboarding field (Atencio et al., 2009; Jenson et al., 2012; Dupont, 2014; Weller, 2007).

Academic interest in skateboarding over the last decade has grown in concert with its increased mainstream popularity and sporting legitimacy. Skateboarding will be

included for the first time in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic games, a development that signals both the popular appeal of skateboarding and acknowledgment of the athleticism that the sport involves. Rather than being peripheral in skateboard culture (Donnelly, 2006), middle-aged skateboarders occupy notable positions within the skateboard industry and within local skateboard scenes and communities. The findings of this research indicate that middle-aged skateboarders disregard notions that they are ‘too old’ to skate or that they are having a midlife crisis. They pursue the activity not as a fitness regime or competitive activity, but for fun, friendship and freedom. More powerfully, most of the respondents understand skateboarding as a key feature of their identity, one that has, despite physical change in ability over time, not been eroded by the caprices of everyday adult life, growing responsibilities, and ageing. In understanding why there is a growth in representation and recognition of middle-age skateboarders, it is apparent that many never gave up skateboarding in their youth, and while others stopped they didn’t cease to identify with skateboarding and the subculture.

Framing Middle-Aged Skateboarders

Middle-age which I identify as beginning around the age of 40 and extending to 65 (Levinson, 1978; Perryman, 2000), has for some become a time of renewal and exploration, typified in the phrase ‘life begins at 40’. A variety of research has identified the ways older people are engaging with positive and active ageing and constructing new identities and narratives later in life (Phoenix and Sparkes, 2009; Vares, 2009). Wheaton frames her discussion on older surfers with reference to the paradigm of active ageing, highlighting how toned and supple older bodies resist the

notion that ageing is problematic and unsightly (2016). The active ageing agenda is suggested to be, in part, a neoliberal exercise in the self-management of old age (Segal, 2014: 215; Pike, 2011), but it is also a reflection of the greying global population and changes in lifestyle trajectories. One result of these changes is the growth in participation of middle-aged and senior-aged individuals in various competitive sports (Tulle, 2008) and increasingly lifestyle sports. In pursuit of recreation, older athletes negotiate the challenges of their own physical changes and personal anxieties in tandem with the broader concerns of society about appropriate ageing and risk.

Skateboarders have tended to be represented in research, if not as adolescents, as young adults (Woolley and Johns, 2010; Willard, 1998; New York Times, 1893; Macdonald et al., 2006; Lombard, 2010; Backstrom, 2013; Atencio et al., 2009; Pomerantz et al., 2004; Kelly et al., 2006; Weller, 2007). A focussed discussion on middle-aged and ageing skateboarders in academic work has yet to emerge (Wheaton, 2013: 60-64). This is despite the fact that in the niche publications of the skateboarding world, there are a series of biographies, articles, and blogs that reflect on the experiences of middle-aged skateboarders (Thornton, 2016; Weyland, 2002; Hocking et al., 2004; Mullen and Mortimer, 2004; Pappalardo and Wisenthal, 2015; Jepsen, 2012; Eisenhauer, 2015; Ackbar, 2016). I connect my research to the broader discussion of ageing in lifestyle sports, seeking to understand what it means to be an 'older' skateboarder and how the experience of skateboarding in later life can be differentiated.

Beyond the sociology of sport, a body of work on ageing members of subcultures provides some useful insights. These are relevant because skateboarding, although globally popular and part of mainstream culture, has subcultural and anti-authority

origins (Yochim, 2010; Borden, 2001). Of further relevance is the way that skateboarders have had an ambivalent relationship with the idea of skateboarding as a sport (Beal, 1995), this was again reproduced in the testimonies of my participants, many preferring to equate skateboarding with a lifestyle or art form (Wheaton, 2013; Mullen and Mortimer, 2004; Wilsey, 2014). Hodgkinson (2011) studies middle-aged goths and observes how they tone down their dress and curtail social activities to manage the responsibilities of adulthood. Interestingly they continue to find deep value in the sense of community that comes with goth culture. In ethnographic work with middle-aged punks Bennett (2006) notes that his participants regard themselves as forefathers of the scene and derive status from both their commitment to punk and first-hand knowledge of the history. In these works the importance of age is contrasted with a temporal element. We can observe the relevance of time in two ways, older goths manage their time with growing responsibilities such as family and career, and older punks have a recognised legitimacy through the time they have spent learning within, and committing to, the scene.

Temporal Capital

In analysing the data from this research it was apparent that middle-aged skateboarders reproduced many of the values and identities representative of younger skateboarders (Beal and Weidman, 2003; Jenson et al., 2012; Borden, 2001). At the same time the issue of age was reportedly not an issue of exclusion but regularly reported as a quality that provided them with both status and legitimacy as a skateboarder. In this sense drawing on the work of Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu, 1990) I understand skateboarding, as do Atencio and Beal

(2009), as a subculture/activity/sport with its own amorphous social field. Thorpe (2010: 181) notes that the field refers to the 'structured system of social positions occupied by either individuals or institutions engaged in the same activity.' Central to the idea of field is the habitus of participants that communicates the values and social structures of the field. There is a tied relationship between habitus and field, 'the field instantiates us as subjects and reproduces social distinctions via the enactment of habitus' (Adams, 2006: 514). The habitus is described by Bourdieu to be a 'community of dispositions' (1977: 35) in which the meaning of their behaviour becomes important because it is not consciously known (1977: 79). I understand habitus to be the embodied representation of the social structure that are recognised but largely unconscious. Time is central in habitus as Bourdieu states that habitus is both a product of history and produces history in the schemes it represents (1977: 82). For Bourdieu, capital can be economic, social, or cultural and thus symbolic and gendered. Capital can be convertible and provides status and hierarchy in a social field, or access to it. While some have argued that the issue of time has been overlooked by Bourdieu (Hills, 2010), it is inherent in his understanding of capital. He states that 'the social world is accumulated history' and that capital 'takes time to accumulate' (Bourdieu, 1986: 241). Accordingly, I argue that the social capital of middle-aged skateboarders is tied to time, either in the cultivation of physical skill, social networks, subcultural knowledge, and commitment through use of time.

This research proposes that temporal capital (Wang, 2013; Silverstone, 1999) is part of the social field of skateboarding and it can help us understand the social world of middle-aged skateboarders, and why they gain access and status to an activity so widely associated with youth. Wang (2013) describes temporal capital as a concept that responds to the way we understand and imagine time as a resource in everyday

life. We talk about wasting time, saving time, making time, along with quality time, leisure time, and time well spent. I stick more closely to Bourdieu's discussion of forms of capital and understand temporal capital to be a way to understand dynamics at play in both social and cultural capital.

Time is acknowledged by Wheaton as an important issue for older surfers in the way they manage their participation. Commitment to surfing is respected within the field of surfing, but her informants also indicate that time spent surfing detracts from other activities and relationships. For some, the individualised and pleasurable activity is selfish because of the time commitment it involves (Wheaton, 2016: 104-105). In Thorpe's work, older snowboarders find that over time their commitment to snowboarding is challenged by family demands and finances (2010: 192). In other examples both older surfers and snowboarders are recognised as seasoned mentors to younger participants, novices, and partners. In the following research skateboarders are shown to be articulating temporal capital in various ways.

Time is regarded as a resource that they must utilise and preserve. I found older skateboarders to be mindful that they would one day not be able to skateboard. Finite time gives them a sense of what Segal (2014) refers to as 'temporal vertigo.' Time is also a commodity to manage and these adults, often in committed relationships, with careers and sometimes children, schedule their time to 'fit in' skateboarding. Choices about when to skate form 'timescapes', (Adam, 2000; Groves et al., 2011) where one reads and understands the environment in terms of its rhythm and schedule. This is of particular relevance to skateparks where older skateboarders appraise their best times to skate, balancing their own free time, organising social interactions, or avoiding busy and crowded times (Carr, 2007). Additionally, like the punks in Bennett's (2006) study, skateboarders are shown to derive status from their time spent within the

skateboarding field. In some cases this manifests in physical skill and prowess, and in other cases it can be valued in terms of subcultural knowledge, or simply commitment to skateboarding. Their primary identity as a skateboarder appears to trump other subject positions such as age. These insights ultimately provide further context to the typologies of lifestyles sports that Wheaton (2013: 28-30) identifies. Specifically, the issue of 'commitment in resources, such as time and/or money, and a style of life...and a particular social *identity*.

After introducing the methodology of the research I spend the rest of this article presenting the various ways time is relevant in the skateboarding field for middle-aged skateboarders. I specifically draw on examples of media, identity, gender, children, skill, scheduling, and friendships.

Methodology

This research involved 23 interviews with participants recruited through three Facebook groups that focussed on middle-aged skateboarders. These individuals represent an international sample (10 based in the UK, 9 in the USA, 1 in Indonesia, 1 in Canada, 1 in Australia, and 1 in New Zealand). Interviews were performed online via video chat either on Skype or Facebook. Four interviews were performed through text chat due to constraints in time scheduling and technology. The interviews took the approach of a skateboard biography allowing the participants to form and make sense of their time spent skateboarding. All skateboarders had a history in street and transition skateboarding though 2 had become long boarders. Of the participants 7 had never stopped skateboarding since they were children/teenagers, 13 had resumed skateboarding after breaks between 5 and 20 years, and 2 had started skateboarding

after their mid-thirties. Thus, this paper largely focusses on older skateboarders who have skateboarded in their youth. Only three of my participants were female, thus further highlighting the historic dominance of white males in skateboarding (Yochim, 2010; Atencio et al., 2009; Kelly et al., 2006). The ages of the participants ranged between 36 and 55, the average age being 44. All were white with the exception of one with Mexican heritage. Interviews were digitally audio-recorded for subsequent transcription, analysis and coding. All participants were informed of the nature of the research and have had their names changed to protect their identities.

While recruiting participants I also revealed myself as a member of the community I was approaching, a skateboarder over 40. Sparkes and Smith (2014) note that insider information in qualitative research on sports can be a powerful asset as it enables the researcher to fluidly understand technical and cultural terminology. Like Wheaton (2016: 101), I found that my insider knowledge was a benefit to the research. I was readily able to draw on shared subcultural reference points such as trick names, professional skateboarders, videos and locations. I also consulted colleagues for their feedback on the research to balance my close positioning to the data.

The majority of the interviews were between 90 and 120 minutes in length and touched upon personal biographies, philosophical reflections on the meaning of skateboarding, and the uses of social media. Due to constraints on space this paper focuses mostly on data derived from the biographical discussions. Twenty one of the participants shared additional materials with me without request. These included videos of themselves skateboarding, recommended blogs, photographs, favourite music, further contacts to talk to, and books.

Data derived from interviews was also supplemented by ethnographic observation at a local skatepark where I regularly skateboard with, and met, middle-aged

skateboarders. Here I had contact with 31 skateboarders aged between 30 and 50. Two thirds of this cohort were white males, while the remainder were a mix of East Asian and mixed race males. This group also included one Chinese female in her thirties. My status as a researcher was revealed to these skateboarders but no formal interviews were performed with them. Ethnographic work provided a context to reflect on themes raised during interviews and enabled me to consider critically my own position as a middle-aged skateboarder. The research was approved by my (anonymized information) University's ethics committee.

Media representations of middle-aged skateboarders

Media is an important part of skateboard culture (Atencio et al., 2009: 5) and contributes to what Yochim (2010: 4) has labelled a 'corresponding culture.' Skateboard media reflects the values and concerns of skateboarders and is a medium through which they communicate with each other. Skateboard media was a regular part of my interviews. Participants referred to videos and magazines to contextualise their skateboard biographies. For example, one might order their narrative with a phrase, 'that was when Plan B released the Questionable video'. Here I discuss representations of skateboarders in both mainstream media and niche skateboard media to highlight how middle-aged skateboarders are represented and in turn how this representation influences skateboarders as part of the corresponding culture.

What has become apparent in recent years is growing interest in the appearance of middle-aged skateboarders in streets and skateparks throughout the world. Implicit in the notion of middle-aged skateboarders is recognition of time in the register of age, and appropriate ageing. The Telegraph newspaper in the UK included two articles on

the question of being 'too old' to skate. The first criticised older skateboarders as an embarrassment, foolish childlike men who were unaware of how ridiculous they looked (Coan, 2014). The second article was a rebuttal of the first that struck at the fraternity and inclusiveness of skateboarding (Brooke, 2014). A New York Post article contrasted the growth in middle-aged skateboarders with a new articulation of the midlife crisis (Lewak, 2015). Men in their forties who are picking up skateboards for the first time are presented as individuals chasing their youth and pursuing young women. A more serious reflection is provided by Jimi Famurewa, aged 32, who talks of the desire to get back on his skateboard after 14 years but feeling simply too childish. In persevering with the desire Famurewa articulates a sense of joy absent in the rest of his life, 'Skating quickly became a reliable antidote to the residual stresses of city life (more varied than going for a run, not as logistically tricky as five-a-side football)' (Famurewa, 2016). Similar themes are discussed in a GQ article that chronicles the author's immersion in not just skateboarding but also the surrounding fashion, music, and culture (Russell, 2016). These articles acknowledge what could be a further extension of Arnett's (2000) hypothesis of emerging adulthood, the continued extension of youth culture and the delay of responsibility long into adulthood. While they include some criticism of older skateboarders, more generally they provide an affirmation of the freedom that skateboard can provide people regardless of age.

In niche skateboard media there is similarly increasing recognition of the legitimacy of middle-aged skateboarders. This has achieved authentic recognition with the fact that several professional skateboarders are continuing to be influential in their late thirties and forties, as detailed in the Bones Brigade anecdote in the introduction to this paper. Steve Caballero (aged 51) has been a sponsored professional skateboarder

for 36 years and regularly participates in the Vans Pool Party Legends competition (Vans, 2016). In 2015 Anthony Van Engelen, aged 37, won the coveted title of Thrasher Magazine's 'Skater of the year', a prize normally awarded to skaters in their early twenties. (Thrasher Magazine, 2015). One article titled 'Why 40 doesn't really mean much in skateboarding anymore' lists twelve professional skateboarders around the age of forty who continue to be influential (Pappalardo and Wisenthal, 2015). In another example 40 year old Brian Anderson became the first professional skateboarder to come out and publically identify as gay (Reda, 2016). In these representations age is recast as a positive value. Arguably a younger skateboarder could not have the influence and recognition that Anderson has, to assert an identity as a gay skateboarder (for a contrast in snowboarding see Thorpe 2010, 190). In part his physical and cultural capital is complemented by his legacy, a form of temporal capital. Recognition of this history similarly complements those with the subcultural knowledge to know of, and have followed Anderson's, Van Engelen's, or Caballero's career. The skateboarding field can therefore be understood as recognising age a valid form of capital. Representations of middle-aged skateboarders influenced many of my participants to continue or resume skateboarding. In several cases social media was influential in connecting to peers, but specifically videos and blogs of older and legendary skateboarders were empowering images to motivate and indeed validate the role of the older skateboarder.

One of my participants suggested that the status of veteran and legendary skateboarders is so distinct and respected in skateboard culture because these people cultivated a name for themselves through traditional and slower media. The saturation of skateboard media content and skateboarder generated content via social media means that there are simply too many personalities to follow and older skateboarders

can remain influential because they rose to prominence in an era of pop culture prominence that has now passed. The fact that older skateboarders participated in an era when skateboarding was not a legitimate sport could be seen for further their perceived level of commitment. This issue was distinct in regards to the Youtube videos made by Jeff Grosso which several of my participants cited as influential and inspiring. Gavin a 42 year old skateboarder from the East Coast of the USA clarified the issue.

‘Jeff Gross, he is what like 47 or something? He’s a big huge fat guy...people drool over every word he says. Part of it is just his personality and part of it is...a lot of people who are older and they have been around a while, they have built a name for themselves... it's harder for people or even, at this point, companies that are starting out, to differentiate themselves in a meaningful way.

Gavin thus indicates that famous veteran skateboarders have a relevance to middle-aged skateboarders, and also hold currency in the saturated social media landscape of skateboarding. As part of the corresponding culture the media inclusion of middle-aged professional skateboarders influences the legitimacy of skateboarding for middle-aged novices, amateurs, and veterans alike. Age is often represented as somewhat irrelevant, a number, and time spent only underlines the commitment to skateboarding. A passage from Thrasher magazine serves to underline this.

Getting old? Well, the older you get, hopefully the better you get at being yourself. Injuries, life, setbacks and triumphs - they all happen around you.

When I was 24 I thought 27 was the end. At 27 it became 33. At 33 I knew at 40 it was done. Then you hit 50 and, well, you're in the back of a pickup in nowhere Mexico with some melon pickers that don't speak a lick of English sharing a bottle of Mescal at 7am. Looking back takes guts; looking forward is insanity. Skateboarding was all I ever wanted and I gave unselfishly" (Phelps, 2016: 108).

A recurring theme in reportage on skateboarding's ageless appeal is that the activity provides an important sense of community and wellbeing to middle aged practitioners. Neal Unger a skateboarder in his late 50s has gained notoriety for his enthusiastic embracing of skateboard culture (juiceaya, 2014). In a video released by the UK National Health Service (NHS) to promote mental health among middle aged men, former professional skateboarder Tas Pappas speaks about how skateboarding has helped him overcome tragedy and imprisonment in his life (NHS Choices, 2016). Indeed, two of my participants claimed that they suffered from depression and that skateboarding was significant in helping them tackle this. Similarly the American Association of Retired People (AARP) released a promotional video about middle-aged mothers who skateboard (Maine, 2015). In the video women advocate the freedom and fraternity that comes from skateboarding.

While these media accounts show that middle-aged skateboarders are negotiating various representations, they also highlight the importance of skateboarding in terms of identity and self-understanding. The power of such an identity was a theme that my participants all referred to.

The Ageing Skateboarder and Identity

Skateboarding was shown to be something of great emotional significance to my respondents. They reflected on the way their skateboarding had changed as they aged, of how they had become both more aware of their physical limitations and how their embodied knowledge on their boards had deepened. Gavin reflected how skateboarding had become an essential part of his identity and being.

I've got 31 years of experience behind me at this point, so it's obviously not the same. But it feels a lot more like it did when I first started. It feels a lot more pure. It feels a lot more, almost integrated into me as a person... when I talk about skateboarding in this sense and what it means to me as a person in 2016 as a 42-year-old, it's when language really starts to break down...It's something that's beyond language and words.

The ineffable meaning of skateboarding resonated with the role that it had played in many of my participants' lives. Peter, 45 from California, stated that he would melt down a skateboard and inject it into his veins if he could. He said that everyone knows that he is a skateboarder, that 'skateboarding is embedded in' his identity. Archie, 41 from the UK, was at pains to highlight how important skateboarding was to him and described the only thing as equally meaningful in his life was his relationship with his wife. Terry, aged 51 from New Zealand, had 39 years of skateboarding experience. He commented on the importance of time and described skateboarding as a central element of his identity.

It means everything to me. It's how I've met most of my really good friends. It's how I've spent my time, its dictated the way I've dressed and the way I talk and a lot of the views I have.

Terry went on to claim that skateboarding was an accepting community that he felt fortunate to be a part of. These comments were interesting in contrast to my female participants.

Gender

Skateboarding has long been critiqued for its reproduction of normative masculinity and its exclusion of female participants (Kelly et al., 2006; Pomerantz et al., 2004; Atencio et al., 2009; Beal and Weidman, 2003; Yochim, 2010). The three female skateboarders I spoke to were all deeply aware of skateboarding's sexist and misogynistic tendencies while they still celebrated the inclusivity and spirit of the subculture.

Sarah, a 44-year-old Californian pool rider argued that US culture in general was sexist and that it was predictable that this same sexism manifest in skateboarding. She spoke about her experiences of skateboarding with one well known professional skateboarder.

I've skated with him a bunch of times and all he does is just like talk shit about women's bodies and fucking girls and stuff. I'm like, it's so gross.

Sarah felt that despite issues of sexism in skateboarding, it remained a space where all forms of difference could be accepted.

Skateboarding seems to be able to hold that complexity you know, like people are allowed to be dysfunctional in skateboarding in a way that they're not in other activities. I mean it's like a fucking community centre sometimes when you're at the skate park...like a social security office.

Sarah also understood skateboarding to not only be inclusive of age, but also going through a renaissance in old school style. In reference to veteran professional skateboarders she noted.

Right now there's a lot of reverence for their generation in skateboarding. A lot of interest in doing old-school tricks and doing... Having old-school style. I see that a lot of times in [skatepark] too, like there's a couple of kids who just look like fucking Jay Adams as a kid.

Debbie a 51-year-old Canadian was similarly positive about attitudes to age as a female skateboarder.

It's something that I definitely noticed as I got older, that suddenly I was no longer just a girl skateboarding... and just as it occurred to me that I might get ridiculed, the opposite happened. I was at a park with my 80s Variflex one day and the young boys with their popsicle sticks were shouting "Old school" and I realized that it was a sign of respect. And the older I get, the more respect I

get... and it has nothing to do with my skill level. The younger generation is visibly impressed that we older skaters are still doing it.

Debbie's account provides a clear demonstration of temporal capital as a quality that older skateboarders can draw on to find inclusion and status within the skateboarding field. Interestingly both Sarah and Debbie were more candid about the celebration of old school style than many of my male participants. I read this to be in part a negotiation of masculine pride in skateboarding, where bragging is shunned upon in a hierarchy that privileges demonstration. A point I refer to again in the discussion of skill below.

The issue of gender was largely relayed in inclusive terms by all participants. Debbie saw skateboarding as increasingly less sexist due to social change, and Sarah's complaints about sexism were balanced by her celebration of the inclusivity of skateboarding.

I think that most guys wish there were more women in skateboarding I think that when I show up that they're like 'oh cool.'

Indeed many of the men I spoke to had positive reflections on female skateboarders particularly because they had grown up in an era when there were very few. Archie spoke about how he first got into skateboarding because one of his neighbours, a girl called Ellen, had a skateboard. He recalled they would play football together and then spend hours trying to skateboard down a hill. Jake a 42 year old from the Southern USA also recalled that he was influenced by a female skateboarder in his youth.

So when I was about 15, I was in a grocery store and I saw the August 1989 Thrasher, with Cara Beth Burnside on the front doing a frontside air. And I was just, like, blown away, you know? Like, the cover, the colours, everything. Like, a girl doing a frontside, you know, like everything. It was awesome. I was like, well, shit, if she can do this, like, you know, I've got to get into this.

While many of my male participants were largely positive about female skateboarders, gender is still an issue of considerable distinction in the skateboarding field. Implicit in some of the positive accounts (as we see in Jake's above) is a paternalism that can be regarded as patronising.

Being Older

Many of the skateboarders spoke in positive terms about the experience of ageing and becoming an older skateboarder. The question of there being anything unusual about being an older skateboarder was mostly irrelevant to them. Only 55-year-old Australian Derek reported encountering any disparaging comments as he took the lift to a business meeting with his board under his arm. In what seemed a well rehearsed anecdote Derek reported that a man sniggered at him and said 'aren't you a bit old for that?', to which Derek replied 'every tribe has its elders.' Derek's account speaks only of derision from outside the skateboarding field. While not encountering any prejudice Archie suggested that the only people to criticise skateboarders were non-skateboarders and argued that 'we've been around the block enough times and we're old and you know, stubborn enough to know how we want to spend our spare time.'

Chris from the East Coast of the USA said that when you are younger you worry what people think ‘when you are 41 years old you don’t give a fuck you just want to push¹.’

For 51 year old Alan from England, the issue of being an old skater had lost meaning as he had first taken on the identity of being ‘an older skater’ in 1986 at the age of 21. Alan, as did others, spoke about the fact that skateboarding had always been accepting of different ages and that this was often a source of great opportunity. In being a veteran skateboarder in the 1990s he became responsible for advocating for the skateboard community and campaigning for the building of a local skatepark. He also became the host to visiting professional skateboarders from the USA, some of which have gone on to be household names. Age and subcultural knowledge of skateboarding positioned many skateboarders in unique situations, and in turn provided them access to social networks that further enhanced their social and cultural capital. Thirteen of the skateboarders interviewed had a social network that included contact with professional skateboarders, often participating in the organisation of competitions, building skateparks, and organising skateboarding events. These opportunities had manifest in most cases because the time they had spent in the scene, and their age, had positioned them as knowledgeable, experienced, and responsible. For Terry the opportunity to socialise with veteran professional skateboarders was part of the pay off in the investment in skateboarding over a lifetime and having the opportunity to organise events.

I talked to Lester Kasai for probably two hours two years ago. Just sat and had a chat and a cigarette. And I wore one of Lester’s shirts when I was 15. It’s

¹ Push refers to the process of moving a skateboard along.

kind of incredible that I have met these people. I've met Cab. Steve Caballero is a legend.

Skateboarding is still widely recognised and understood as a youth activity, yet my participants find inclusion within the skateboarding field as middle-aged participants. In many cases their participation is justified through commitment to the subculture, a common motif in lifestyle sports (Wheaton, 2013: 29). On another level being older also translates as access to forms of knowledge and networks that younger skateboarders would have difficulty in acquiring.

Children

The opportunity to skateboard with their children as a family activity is a positive motivation for some skateboarders. This is all the more significant as many young adults give up sports as they start a family (van Houten et al., 2015). Seven of the participants had children. Chris who has been skateboarding for over 30 years stated that he has always had a board but that as he ages his skateboarding routine and frequency changes. Presently he goes skateboarding only with his young sons and recognises that skateboarding has changed from a social activity to a family one. Two other skateboarders had got back into skateboarding directly because their children had started.

Skateboarding in various forms has been a consistent feature of Derek's life since the age of 9. By the time his daughters were born in the early 1990s he was no longer regularly skateboarding, but would ride his skateboard as he pushed his daughters in the buggy. He eventually bought them skateboards as teenagers and now

skateboarding forms a key activity in which Derek bonds and shares time with his daughters.

Terry's son is also an enthusiastic skateboarder he and his son spend time at the skatepark, but often with their own groups of fiends. Terry commented on the differences in the skill set of older skateboarders compared to his son's generation.

The younger guys can all go up and do 5050s and stuff, but when they try and put in a slash grind it doesn't go so well – it doesn't look as practised as someone who grew up in the 70s and has been doing them since they were 12 or 13. You know what I mean? My son says “why are all the old men doing frontside slash grinds?” I say, “Well, because we can.”

Skill and Age

There was a certain amount of pride from some participants in the fact that they had not only retained their skills but they had also improved on them over time. Peter claimed that because he never stopped skateboarding he had become more proficient than some of his peers who were naturally more talented. This was also true of Joey, 43 from England, who ridiculed some of his peers returning to skateboarding after several years hiatus because they were unwilling or unable to do tricks in switch stance (the skateboarding equivalent of being ambidextrous). However, such claims were accompanied with generous amounts of self-deprecation amongst my participants, they frequently ridiculed their skill level, ability, and style. In one sense this can be a representation of the self-mocking that Yochim (2010: 122) understands

as asserting alternative masculinity that ultimately reinforces the tropes of hegemonic masculinity.

Scheduling

Fitting skateboarding in with the routines and commitment middle-aged life was an issue that varied between participants. Archie had to consider a baby and juggling his work schedule to find times to skate. He would often steal 20 minutes to skate a local curb, on his own or sometimes with a neighbour. Matt who also had young children was in much the same position and while not able to skateboard regularly, he was happy that skateboarding was a consistent feature of his life.

For many of the other skateboarders finding time to skateboard was a negotiation between work and partners. Derek's wife recognised he needed his 'me' time. Often he would find this time by taking early morning skates, and had a regular Wednesday evening skate session with a large crew of skateboarders that would tour the city.

Debbie reported that because she is both single and without children she had no problems fitting in skateboarding. She disclosed that she did not skateboard for many years when she was in a serious relationship and that skateboarding again became a central part of her life after that relationship ended.

My girlfriend of 9 and a half years, a very important relationship in my life, decided to leave me and what was the first thing I did? It was so odd, I grabbed that skateboard and I went skateboarding...It was back to the source of something that I knew was going to bring me joy at a time that was very, very depressing.

A variety of informants noted that skateboarding became more important to them at the end of a relationship, and in some cases (Charles and Peter) relationships became catalysts for cessation in skateboarding for a prolonged time. Joey said that he had been able to skate since his teens because he had never had kids and had plenty of free time. He claimed that he had only recently slowed down a little because of a mixture of issues, in part wanting to spend more time with his partner. In other cases relationships provided an opportunity to start skateboarding again. Jake for example became disillusioned with skateboarding for some time after a failed business venture, but was inspired by his creative and adventurous new partner. In most cases partners were reported to be supportive of skateboarding, though cautious about injuries and safety.

Many skateboarders commented that they would like to skate more often, but that it could be difficult to do so with the various responsibilities such as work and family life. On average, most of the skateboarders could skate at least once a week. However, finding time to skateboard did not appear to be a big obstacle. While some acknowledged that they did have to find the right time, they did not report, guilt or the selfishness that Wheaton (Wheaton, 2016: 105) notes with regard to older surfers. It may also be the case that skateboarding is easier to schedule because it is also easier to access than sports like surfing and snowboarding and does not necessarily require lengthy travel. Skateboards are versatile and can be utilised in many cases as soon as one walks out the door of their home. In addition, a considerable influence on many of my participants was the growth in numbers of public skatepark that had made skateboarding even more accessible. With these parks came a further issue of scheduling.

Jordan, a 42 year old skateboarder from Chicago would often schedule Sunday mornings at the skatepark because it would not be busy. This sensitivity to timing corresponds with the rhythms of skateparks and skatespots and presents them as places that are understood as timescapes (Adam, 2000; Groves et al., 2011). In work by Carr (2007: 249) the author identifies that middle-aged skateboarders are typically the only skatepark users in the early mornings and middle of the day. Jordan enjoyed not having to deal with a crowded park where there were too many younger skaters trying to do big tricks. He also preferred a slower tempo where he could maximise his time in the park by not having to worry about other users. Jordan's scheduling also included an annual skateboard trip with his friend, where they spend a week away from Chicago and skate a collection of skateparks in Colorado. The importance of this activity was clearly underlined by Jordan.

But I do fear though, you know, I'm one injury away from being done forever...That's kind of why the Colorado trip... Trying to get those, make sure I do those now before it's, you know, too late.

For Gavin scheduling had a deeper meaning as he was aware of an urgency to fit in as much skateboarding as possible before it gets 'too late.' As he got older time seem to be speeding up and he experienced what can be referred to as temporal vertigo (Segal, 2014). Part of his concern is that the body will not be able to keep up with the demands of skateboarding in later life. Now in his fifties Terry swims twice a week to keep himself fit enough to skateboard, he also had a hip replacement operation specifically to enable him to continue to skateboarding.

I kind of wish my body was a bit more up to it than it is... I think the only reason I can skate now is because of the amount of work I put in to try and keep my joints supple and my muscles strong.

Thus scheduling corresponds not only with seeking a time to skate, and managing relationships in order to do so, but also trying to make sure that skateboarding can still be enjoyed with the prospect of both an ageing body and potential injuries. Temporal capital thus also relates to how skateboarders manage their time and commitment to skateboarding.

Friendship and Social Capital

The importance of friendships was a recurring theme in the interviews. While some like Alan, Matt, Terry, Jake, Peter and Gavin had lifelong friends through skateboarding and were very much social skaters, others found that skateboarding provided them with a rewarding friendship group in middle-age. Jordan had cultivated a tight friendship group that had collaborated to pool their resources to rent facilities and build indoor ramps and organise annual skateboarding trips. These friendships also extended to include the spouses of fellow skateboarders. Jordan reflected on how hard developing meaningful friendships in later life must be to people who don't skateboard. He commented on the experiences of a work colleague.

You know, he's the same age as me, and we're, sort of, like, the older guys at work in our department. But he's asking me, like, when you moved to

Chicago, how did you meet people? And I was like, well, I don't know. It's like, all my friends now are through skateboarding.

In this manner time spent skateboarding became a real source of social capital for Jordan, a resource through which he has constructed and maintained meaningful relationships.

Middle-aged skateboarders also provide sociological insight to the impacts of friendships made in youth. This relates directly to the interests scholars have had in the social capital of skateboarding (Jenson et al., 2012; Rogers, 2006; Atencio et al., 2009; Weller, 2007) and provides a further example of temporal capital. For Alan this was especially relevant as he spoke about how central skateboarding had been in transcending his working class origins. He articulated that his working class habitus had been forever changed by skateboarding, something he could reflect on now as an adult but something he was entirely unaware of as a teenager.

I made friends with people that I would possibly not have otherwise made friends with, so there's a social mobility there that I'm getting to know people that we have something in common, and it's a passion, and then finding out something else about some people, that's growing up, that's empathising I guess. It's trying to figure out who you are and who is everybody else...We met people from other towns. This is not something you do as a working class person, you don't really even meet people from the next school unless it's for the purposes of combat...I've always said that skateboarding was a fabulously democratic activity because of these reasons. It's not an expensive, but very sophisticated activity.

One account contributes to an ongoing discussion on the issue of race and ethnicity in skateboarding (Brayton, 2005; Yochim, 2010; Wheaton, 2013). For Matt who has a Mexican background, it was skateboarding as a teenager that provided him with a way to transcend the petty racism of middle class rural England. On skateboard trips he made new friendships and experienced new social worlds.

I used to go to Portsmouth there was, you know, black kids, white kids, Indian kids, Asian kids. I'd never had relationships with other ethnic minorities until I did skateboarding, you know, that was literally the first time I met a black kid.

My respondents underlined that these encounters were experiences that formed their life trajectories, that influenced their careers and personal politics. So in contrast to the social capital derived from Jordan's friendships, Alan, Matt and Terry saw that the friendships they had made through skateboarding were a powerful resource that made them who they were. As a result each of these men deeply valued the time they had spent skateboarding and recognised skateboarding as a way they could make a narrative of (Phoenix and Sparkes, 2009) and make sense of their lives.

Conclusion

I have argued in the paper that time and the notion of temporal capital provide a way to understand middle-aged skateboarders. Time is relevant to these individuals in a

way that does not correspond to the experiences of younger skateboarders. In these accounts and in representations of middle-aged skateboarders in the media, we can understand that older skateboarders garner respect, recognition and even emulation in the broader skateboarding field. The status of older skateboarders appears to be negotiated in part through what has been termed a corresponding culture (Yochim, 2010: 4). In addition, middle-age skateboarders derive temporal capital through their commitment to skateboarding, old-school skill and style, friendships, networks, and subcultural knowledge. It appears that regardless of whether a middle-aged skateboarder is male or female, a parent or single, a returnee or a veteran, age operates in a largely positive way. These skateboarders also articulate an emotional engagement with skateboarding that provides them with an identity and meaning to make sense of how they have spent their lives. An issue that clearly resonates with concerns about wellbeing and active ageing.

I also suggest that the growing visibility and participation of middle-aged skateboarders can be in part explained by a group of interacting issues. Firstly many skateboarders have simply come of age, either never having stopped skateboarding, or never rejecting the subculture and simply returning to the practice as they have found more time in later life. This has been stimulated by the growing legitimacy and popularity of skateboarding as a sport (bolstered by the discourse of active ageing), the growth of public investment in municipal skateboarding facilities, and the representations of middle-aged skateboarders reproduced in skateboard and social media.

There are several distinct limits with this research. Firstly the data here largely focusses on the experiences of skateboarders who have either never given up, or returned to skateboarding after a break of a few years. Only one of the skateboarders I

spoke to could be regarded as a novice. The appeal of skateboarding to middle-aged skateboarders must be more fully explored with references to individuals who are new to the sport. Secondly the impact and importance of social media in motivating many of my informants to continue or resume skateboarding was distinct. The ubiquitous influence of social media in the lives of these middle-aged skateboarders is an issue that required separate analysis, but is without question significant in the current popularity and visibility of middle ages skateboarders. Thirdly, to balance the findings of this research attitudes towards older skateboarders must be sought from younger participants.

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