

“SURFING? THAT’S A WHITE BOY SPORT”: AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS
OF MEXICAN AMERICANS’ EXPERIENCES WITH SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
SURF CULTURE

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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The primary purpose of this ethnographic study is to contextualize Mexican American surfers experiences with sport as a lens into race, gender and class relations. Specifically, it seeks to understand how a history of gender, race, and class oppression has played out in this understudied terrain of sports. This study offers empirical insight into the ways in which Mexican Americans navigate and (un)successfully infiltrate predominantly white, male, middle-class sporting arenas. In this study I also examine the relationship between access and barriers, specifically how access to public recreational spaces are constricted by participants’ real and imagined barriers. By exploring Mexican American surfers’ everyday experiences, I unearthed the varying ways Mexican American surfers experienced discrimination and marginalization across intersecting and interlocking identities.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“How could someone be Mexican and dress like a surfer?”--Jack Lopez (1998, pg. 59)

“The waves, the beaches, they’re public goods, but they’re not equitably being utilized by communities of color”--Shelly, Director of a Los Angeles based surfing non-profit organization

“One time I was surfing up north and a group of white bros paddled out next to me. I remember one of them was wearing a sombrero. It wasn’t even Halloween, not that it would make a difference, but I just couldn’t believe what I was seeing. So yeah, surfers, they’re not really my people” --Javier, a younger, working class, second-generation Mexican American male

The sport of surfing is widely perceived and portrayed as a predominantly white male sport, as demonstrated by the confusion expressed in the first quote. These interview quotes from my ethnographic study of Southern California Mexican American surfers illustrate the ways in which dominant cultural ideologies are racialized and how Mexican Americans are breaking out of or challenging racialized viewpoints. They also highlight how ideologies are culturally shaped and the ways in which viewpoints can be transformed or combated interactionally. Sport, in this case surfing, illuminates the core argument of critical sport scholars; sporting spaces are important sites where racial ideologies and existing patterns of racial and ethnic relations are reproduced (Coakley 2016; Burdsey 2017; Carrington 2015). The first quote is from Chicano author Jack Lopez’s autobiography about his experiences being a Latino growing up in 1960s during the surf boom in Los Angeles. In one of his chapters he recounts a confrontational interaction he had with a Latino neighborhood kid, a neighborhood “cholo” who is stunned by his dual and presumably conflicting identities. The “cholo” is puzzled and confused by Jack’s surf attire, so he asks him if he is a surfer. The neighborhood kid clenches his fists and starts to

verbally harass Jack, demanding to know why a surfer is in the “hood,” but his threats are abated when Jack identifies himself as Mexican American. Recognizing the situation might become violent if he doesn’t say something, Jack says, “I’m Mexican,” hoping their shared cultural identity will get this guy off his back. The neighborhood acquaintance nods and then continues on his way. This interaction may not seem important, but it highlights how Mexican American surfers experience racial microaggressions in differing contexts, like when they’re walking around their predominantly Mexican American neighborhoods carrying a surf magazine. Interactionally, he was able to challenge dominant cultural beliefs about Mexican Americans and American surfers, demonstrating how ideologies are constructed, combated and transformed at the micro-level.

The opening quotes also illuminate how issues of exclusion and discrimination reside in the psyches and actions of surfers, which contributes to the perception that public spaces are not value-free or inherently discriminatory, but rather are racialized and gendered spaces where power relations are created and contested (Van Ingen 2003; see also Lefebvre 1991). Specifically, the second quote sheds light on the lack of diversity in recreational public spaces, specifically public beaches in the greater Los Angeles region. In the public’s consciousness, beaches, parks, and other recreational spaces are value-free spaces, but as the Director of a Los Angeles based non-profit points out, these public goods are usually not being occupied by communities of color. Communities of color have limited access to public beaches due to poor public transportation and lack of resources, which she identifies as an “opportunity gap” in recreational participation. Her organization seeks to close the “opportunity gap” for communities of color by bringing youth to the beaches of Southern California with the intent of diversifying public spaces and educating them about

the ocean. Her quote further highlights the need to examine which factors cause restricted access to public spaces and investigate the extent to which these marginalized communities experience real or imagined barriers to access.

The third quote alludes to racialized microaggressions Mexican Americans endure in their everyday surfing practices. The “white surfer bros” the participant describes are mocking Mexican culture and turning its traditions into a caricature. The Mexican American surfer is obviously disturbed by the offensive costume adorned on the white surfer’s body, but instead of confronting the surfers he chooses to paddle away from the group to avoid a conflict. When faced with racial microaggressions in the water, Mexican American surfers must choose between two responses; cope with or contest their marginalized status as a minority surfer. For some surfers of color, their “best approach” (Fleming, Lamont, and Welburn 2012) to dealing with racism may be paddling away from a contentious situation and creating their own space in the line-up. On the surface this approach may be perceived as passive, but for a number of Mexican American participants, avoiding conflict in the water seem like their only option for navigating racially complex predominantly white male surfing spaces. Findings from my study suggest, racialized microaggressions shaped Mexican American surfers’ feelings of not belonging and impacted their decision to occupy certain surfing spaces where they felt welcomed. It’s important to note, Mexican American surfers’ experiences of differentiation and discrimination cut along gender, age, and generational lines, underscoring the influence of intersecting identities. In sum, data from this study allow me to begin the process of understanding how power relations are negotiated in public recreational spaces as well as examining how these spaces are highly regulated, both interactionally and structurally.

The primary purpose of this study is to contextualize Mexican American surfers experiences with sport as a lens into race relations as well as gender and class relations. Specifically, it seeks to understand how a history of gender, race, and class oppression has played out in this understudied terrain of a sport. In this effort I address such questions as the following:

- Are there any racialized structural barriers delaying Mexican Americans from pursuing the sport?
- Do Mexican American surfers experience identity-based exclusionary practices and discrimination while surfing and in other contexts, like their communities or social networks?
- If Mexican Americans are experiencing identity-based exclusionary practices and or discrimination, how are they combating, challenging or transforming these experiences?
- How are Mexican Americans turning to surfing to create a sense of community and or identity to resist racism and sexism in the sport?

This study offers ethnographic insight into the ways in which Mexican Americans navigate and (un)successfully infiltrate predominantly white, male, middle class sporting arenas. In this study I also examine the relationship between access and barriers, specifically how access to public recreational spaces are constricted by participants' real and imagined barriers.

By exploring Mexican American surfers' everyday experiences, I unearthed the varying ways Mexican American surfers experienced discrimination and marginalization across intersecting and interlocking identities. I was also able to contextualize how non-

white participants navigate predominantly white, male, middle class and heterosexual sporting spaces. Specifically, Latinas experienced the most reported cases of marginalization and exclusionary practices. Most notably, Latina beginner surfers reported they felt differentiated because of their ascribed subordinate statuses. Female surfers revealed an implied understanding of the inequitable power relations out in the water. When asked to comment on female surfers' experiences in surf culture, Alex, a younger working class second-generation Mexican American male commented, "I think it's hard as it is to be a female surfer, I think it's also hard to be a Mexican surfer or non-white surfer you know, to feel like you don't belong, so I can only imagine how a Latina surfer must feel. All I know, is I'm happy to not be in her position!" His comment reveals how female participants, specifically non-white female participants, have the least amount of status out in the line-up and are "doubly marginaliz(s)ed" (Nemani and Thorpe 2016: 219) based on their subscribed sex and race.

Female surfers are acutely aware of gender disparities in the water, but at times had difficulty deciphering and describing *why* they believed they were being treated differently. With a variety of factors potentially at play, like gender, race, ability, age, and surf spot, female surfers were left trying to disentangle and second-guess every possible motive behind male surfer's mistreatment. Common inquiries consisted of, "Did they (men) just drop in on me because I am a woman of color, which means I am perceived as 'other', an outsider and someone that doesn't belong out here or is it because I am a beginner and am still learning my place out here in the line-up?" Sport scholars argue that the source of unequal treatment of athletes stems from "stereotypes about the inherent abilities of female athletes" (Merritt, Yap, Comley and Deihl forthcoming: 485), which can burden their

athletic performance. For female surfers, especially women of color, negative stereotypes did affect their athletic performances (and in some cases prevented them from surfing when they were younger). Gendered stereotypes are potent barriers for entry in the sport, often cultivating an “internalized sense that the world sees them as physically incapable,” in many cases leading to diminished performances for many women and girls (Merritt, Yap, Comley and Deihl forthcoming: 486). Data from this study adds to the existing body of knowledge aimed at unpacking the construction and deconstruction of power relations in surf culture as well as the ways in which negative stereotypes create internalized barriers impacting female athletic performances.

Furthermore, data from this study provides the groundwork for understanding the real and imagined barriers Mexican American surfers face as well as the ways in which they overcome or combat microaggressions in and outside of the line-up (the line-up is the area just beyond the surf where surfers wait for waves). There are many intersecting barriers that keep people of color out, both real and imagined. One of the main barriers is financial. For example, participants discussed the initial cost of the activity to be expensive, causing it to be inaccessible *especially* for children of immigrant or working class parents. Mexican American participants reported feeling hesitant or guilty asking for money to purchase equipment when they willingly knew their parents did not have the disposable income to spend on recreation or leisure activities. Additionally, children from immigrant families disclosed their parents emphasized education more than extracurricular activities, which established an internal barrier at very young age. Jennifer, a younger working class second-generation Mexican American female surfer raised by parents that were both immigrants commented, “I just feel like a lot of Mexican Americans feel guilty

experiencing joy, like it's not an emotion we're supposed to feel because we're expected to always be working hard. I find that really depressing that we would feel guilty about experiencing joy. I think there's a joy deficit in our community". This emphasis on how hard her parents worked so she could have a better/successful life which her parents see her doing by attending school and not spending all of her time out in the water exemplifies the concept of the "immigrant bargain" (Alvarez 2015; Smith 2006). This bargain "describes an intergenerational class-based expectation that working class immigrant parents' sacrifices be redeemed and validated in the future through their children's achievements in US schools" (Alvarez 2015: 25; see also Smith 2006). Her parents emphasized education throughout her life and wanted her to have a different life than them, which she internalized at a youthful age. Thus, for this Latina participant a multitude of factors forged real and imagined barriers. To this day, she still feels remorseful for pursuing an activity (surfing) that provides her with so much joy even though she feels marginalized out in the water.

This study also illuminates how Mexican Americans use sport to contest race, class, sex, sexuality, and gender-based ideologies; create a sense of community and identity; and construct empowering transgressive spaces and identities. Evidence from this study suggests there is a growing number of Mexican American surfers adopting an alternative view of surf culture, one which pays tribute to its indigenous past. Learning about surfing's diverse past encouraged a large percentage of Mexican Americans to claim and forge spaces out in the line-up for people of color. By carving out more inclusive and diverse spaces these surfers are redefining dominant cultural narratives about surfers. A handful of Mexican Americans are reflexively engaging in critical inquiries about place, privilege,

politics of identity and the impacts of post-colonialism. Recently, there have been a number of scholars examining the connection between the cultural practice of surfing and settler colonialism (Gilio-Whitaker 2017), the history of the sport through an intersectional lens (Nemani and Thorpe 2016; Wheaton 2017), and the rise of indigenous surfing in other parts of the world, like Australia (McCloin 2017). The case of Mexican American surfers' experiences adds to the body of work presenting and arguing for more counter-cultural narratives within surf culture.

The Case of Sporting Latina/os

To date, few scholarly analyses have explicitly focused on Mexican Americans sporting practices and experiences (Regalado and Iber 2006). Most academic work about Latina/os in sport has focused on their experiences with baseball, boxing, and soccer even though Latina/os have participated in a broader range of sports (Alamillo 2010; Coakley 2016; Iber et al. 2011). Recently, Latina/o scholars have co-authored textbooks on Latina/os in sport, to highlight how culture, leisure, and sports have been a means for them to construct gender, race and sexual identities (Iber et al. 2011; Iber and Regalado 2006; see also Jamieson and Villaverde 2009). Core themes of these texts discuss the history of Latina/os in sport, the rise of cultural identity and the fight for acceptance in these historically white spaces. Sport historians argue, these contexts have also been critical spaces for Latina/os to build communities and social networks as a means for them to advance both politically and economically in the United States (Iber et al. 2011; Coakley 2016). Even with these exemplary texts, it is still vital for sport scholars to produce more empirical studies about Latina/o experiences in sport, especially about Mexican

Americans, who are both the most numerous of the various ethnic groups among Latina/os and the least written about in critical sport studies (Iber and Regalado 2006).

Since the 1960s, Chicano historians have made great strides and have worked tirelessly to expand the field to capture the Mexican American past. Although scholarship on Mexican Americans has grown, most of the attention has focused on social activism and immigration, and hardly, if any, has focused on Mexican Americans in sport (Regalado and Iber 2006). Although there have been many opportunities in the past to explore sport's impact on minorities lives, a majority of these works focused on the white/black dichotomy (Regalado and Iber 2006; Birrell 1989). Precisely, in terms of historical studies of sport, historians have captured African Americans, Native Americans and Asian Americans experiences with sport, but few historical studies have focused on Spanish surnamed experiences (see Regalado and Iber for list of historical references). In fact, Mexican Americans' experiences with sport rarely are mentioned in the index of *Journal and Sport History* (Regalado and Iber 2006). A deficit of empirical studies that focus on Mexican Americans' experiences in sport may be due in part to overall lack of studies focusing on sport in the field of sociology and critical race studies. Critical Race Theory scholars have been criticized for in sufficiently incorporating analyses of sport into their area (Hylton 2010, 2009, 2005; Carrington 2015). By contrast, the fields of sociology of sport and leisure studies have both been criticized for either under theorizing about race or utilizing "old theories" of race (Floyd 1998; Hylton 2010).

The following subsections discuss appropriate literature and argue for more academic studies of lifestyle sports. First, I will ground this study in an overview of past and current scholarship written about the intersections of race, gender, and sport,

specifically within in the fields of sociology and leisure studies. Particular attention will be paid to empirical studies of race since studies in this area has have been undertheorized in comparison to gender (Carrington 2015; Hylton 2009). Second, I will discuss how incorporating a critical race theory and an intersectionality framework can be a useful avenue for examining race and gender-based issues of discrimination and exclusionary practices (Hylton 2010, 2009). Third, I will provide an argument for why lifestyle sports are an important area of inquiry for understanding how non-white people navigate predominantly white sporting spaces followed by a brief examination of race/gender identity-based relations within the sport of surfing. Last, the literature review will contain an overview of methods, including the following: issues in the field, recruitment, descriptive statistics, coding and analysis. In the methods section, the researcher will posit an argument in favor of qualitative research and explain why this research design was advantageous for a study about marginalized sporting people. I will also discuss my positionalities, presenting literature about female researchers' experiences in male-dominated spaces, discussing the pitfalls and benefits of an "insider" status to investigate if researchers with shared cultural characteristics as their participants do indeed possess a "superior position to unearth ideas, arguments and opinions related to the research" (Fletcher and Walle 2014: 249).

Sociological Studies of Race and Sport

Within mainstream American sociology, empirical studies of sport have occupied a marginal position within the field (Pike, Jackson, and Wenner 2015; Carrington 2015; Washington and Karen 2001; Frey and Eitzen 1991). Over the past 50 years, only 24 articles that directly address sport have been published in top journals such as Social

Forces, *The American Journal of Sociology*, and *The American Sociological Review* (Carrington 2015). Of these works, very few of them contributed directly to the sociological analyses of race and sport. When discussions of race do occur, race is typically conceptualized and treated as a statistical variable (Carrington 2015; see also Birrell 1989). Empirical studies of race and sport have also been neglected within the subfield of sociology of race. When sport is mentioned, it is often only in passing and is typically accompanied by references to celebrity athletes. For example, Carrington (2015) points out, in Omi and Winant's (1994) classic text about racial formations in the United States, sport is briefly mentioned alongside conversations about racial stereotypes. This was also the case in Patricia Hill Collins (2002) groundbreaking book, *Black Sexual Politics*. She highlights how sport can offer a potential space for "confident forms of black femininity" (Carrington 2015: 388), but fails to center sports in their analyses and theories. Sport is acknowledged within the field as an important site for the "re(production) of racial meanings, discourses, and identities," but the bulk of the field tends to focus on passing commentary rather than "sustained analyses of sport" (Carrington 2015: 388). Most of the work published on the intersections of race and sport derived from the sociology of sport field.

Sociology of sport became a subdiscipline in the late 1960s (Frey and Eitzen 1991; Coakley and Dunning 2000). From the 1960s to the mid-1990s, most of the research about race and sport focused on measuring the existence of racism within sport and the extent to which ethnic and racial minorities participated in sport (Carrington 2015; see also Birrell 1989; Eitzen and Frey 1991). After the 1990s, the field started to adopt a more critical approach to theorizing about race. During this shift, sports sociologists began to think about

sport as a "productive cultural activity and social institution that makes and remakes ideas about race and not just or only domain that is impacted by racist discourses and ideologies" (Carrington 2015: 388). With this change, some scholars writing about race and sport are now noteworthy, but it's worth mentioning most of the research focusing on race and sport centers the voices of black athletes, specifically men of color (Birrell 1989; Carrington 2015). This is deeply problematic for two reasons; it equates race with black, and it equates athlete with male, which erases gender (Birrell 1989). There are far fewer articles written about women athletes, especially women of color. The experiences and voices of non-white female participants are vastly absent in the literature (Knijnik, Horton and Cruz 2010; Nemani and Thorpe 2016). Twenty-five years ago, the number of published analyses that specifically focused on women athletes of color could be counted on a single hand (Birrell 1989). It should be noted; there is a meager number of published articles written about Latinas in sport (Wheaton 2013; Regalado and Iber 2006; Hylton 2009). The field of leisure studies has overlapping theoretical gaps with sociological studies of sport, but a brief overview will highlight specific fundamental issues within the field.

Sport/Leisure/Race

Race and ethnic issues moved toward the forefront of the leisure studies field in the 1960s. This occurred due to the following factors: The Civil Rights movement and public policy makers/social scientists concern for the growing social and economic inequalities faced by minority populations (Floyd 1998). It was during this period, that a number of scholars started to write more about minorities' experiences with recreation and leisure, but it was also the beginning of some longstanding and fundamentally problematic issues that have been developed within the field (Floyd, Bocarro, and Thompson 2008; Floyd 1998;

Allison 1988). Core leisure studies scholars (Floyd, Bocarro, and Thompson 2008; Shinen et al. 2006; Floyd 1998) have identified three significant issues within the field over the past 20 years. First, theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches tend to be limited in their overall scope. Most scholars' theories of race and ethnicity focus on why participation rates are low for minorities and how/if people face race-based discrimination in leisure activities. Racial and ethnic differences in leisure patterns are often attributed to discrimination, but core theories and empirical works in this area remain underdeveloped (Floyd 1998). Researchers have also treated race and ethnicity as given categories instead of developing criteria to measure ethnic factors (Floyd, Bocarro and Thompson 2008; Shinen et al. 2006; Floyd 1998).

A second issue relates to conceptual definitions of race and ethnicity or rather the lack of proper theoretical development within leisure studies. Both concepts are often poorly defined or confounded which makes it harder to measure intergroup variability (Floyd 1998). Researchers rarely discuss race as a social construct and severely ignore how the history of race relations within the US have openly demonstrated race is, in fact, a social construction (Floyd 1998; see also Omi and Winant 1994). Within the literature, there lacks an adequate discussion of how institutionalized racism affects sport participation among diverse populations even when other studies have shown that policies can have discriminatory effects regardless if the policy didn't have biased intent (Feagin and Eckberg 1980; Feagin and Feagin 1991).

The last issue is the lack of diversity when it comes to measuring dependent variables; studies explicitly focus on participation rates among diverse populations. A majority of studies have focused on participation rates instead of conducting studies in

diverse settings across a range of leisure spaces (Floyd 1998). Solely focusing on participation rates across groups of people is not a sufficient area of inquiry because it does not take into consideration how cultural factors, like residual effects of Jim Crow policies may create barriers. As society continues to become more diverse, resulting in a "restructuring of society" along racial and ethnic lines, more studies will be needed that focus on what factors facilitate and constrain the leisure experiences of various peoples (Shinew et al. 2006: 405). While scholars have highlighted that the field of leisure studies has had many challenges, problems, and areas for improvement, this study seeks to fill some of the gaps and fundamental issues highlighted above.

First, this study understands race as a social construction, not a given category. Second, although the researcher is interested in how Mexican American surfers experience discrimination, this study is not solely focused on understanding why participation rates are low, rather invested in how a myriad of factors contribute to experiences of exclusion. Third, this study examines how structural racism affects sport participation to the extent that policies and laws create a "culture" about who can be a surfer and who can't. The study will highlight how meanings attached to ideologies play out interactionally. Fourth, this project adopts a critical race theory framework for theorizing about race, ethnicity and sport. Recently, there has been a call for sport scholars to adopt a Critical Race Theory lens for understanding the complicated and complex intersections of race, ethnicity, and sport (Hylton 2010; Burdsey 2017; Long and Hylton 2012).

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) can be utilized as both a methodological tool and framework for exploring and examining acts of racism in a society that "privileges

whiteness as it disadvantages others because of their ‘blackness’” (Hylton 2010: 3). Before CRT became a comprehensive framework for understanding how racism operates across a multitude of social institutions, it was a legal theory of race and racism with the intention of uncovering how race and racism operate in the law and society (Hylton 2009; Parker and Lynn 2002). The theory was initially used as a tool for scholars to define, expose, and address legal and educational problems in North America. CRT ascribes from the central standpoint that we live in a fundamentally racist and unequal society in which resources and power are unevenly distributed (Hylton 2009). Currently, CRT contributes perspectives to other areas such as history, disability studies, whiteness studies and sport and leisure studies to explore how racism exists in a plethora of social structures. By using CRT as a conceptual framework, scholars will be able to explore racism in society by taking into consideration the role of institutions and centering the voices and experiences of those affected by racism at all levels of society (Hylton 2009). As sport continues to be a powerful social institution where cultural meanings about people's interlocking and intersecting identities are created and contested, it is imperative for scholars to examine a variety of people's experiences across multiple sporting spaces to further understand issues of identity-based inequalities and relations.

Scholars interested in exploring, challenging, and transforming power relations embedded within sport have recently turned to adopting a CRT framework for deconstructing dominant ideologies of gender, race, class, and sexuality, among others. Prominent sport scholar and CRT advocate Kevin Hylton has written extensively about the beneficial nature of incorporating a CRT framework for theorizing about past and contemporary issues of sport and race. A CRT framework is useful for this current project

for the following reasons. First, scholars can produce work aimed at uncovering the ways in which racism is deeply embedded in sport and society (Hylton 2009). Second, CRT studies of sport can directly challenge racism in their work and examine how prolonged effects of living in a racist society impose on all aspects of people's lives. Third, scholars can centralize race in their work and also recognize that these issues are connected with other forms of subordination and oppression (Crenshaw et al. 1995; see also Collins 2002). Last, scholars can produce work that challenges traditional dominant ideologies, specifically ones around objectivity, meritocracy, color blindness, race-neutrality and equal opportunity.

Considering surfing is often classified as a neutral activity free from societal influence or interference (Wheaton 2013), adopting this type of framework aids in discovering the ways in which dominant ideologies are interactionally challenged within surf culture. In sum, CRT studies of sport can directly challenge the prevailing popular belief that sport is a space that is free from societal influence and produce scholarly work with a clear commitment to forms of social justice that encapsulate elements of liberation and transformation (Hylton 2009; see also Solórzano and Yosso 2001, 2005). In the spirit of moving sport sociology research in a direction that centers marginalized voices and challenges researchers to make their investigation political rather than neutral, analyses from this data will be employing a CRT and intersectionality framework to explain how Mexican American surfers experience and perceive identity-based exclusionary practices and discrimination. Intersectionality will be defined and explored in proceeding sections after the sex/gender/sexuality system (Rubin 1984) is introduced.

Sex, Gender, and Sexuality (SGS)

In this section I take into consideration how the sex/gender/sexuality system (Rubin 1984) relates to the level of sport. The sex/gender/sexuality system, a term coined by Gayle Rubin (1975) describes a “set of arrangements by which society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity” (p. 159). Dominant cultural understandings of sex and gender are often erroneously conflated, that is sex is assumed to be biologically constructed and linked to the socially constructed gender (Fausto-Sterling 2000). The term sex can refer to a “categorisation using binarized genetic, anatomical, biological and physiological differences to form two distinct groups; female (genetically XX) and male (genetically XY)” (lisa hunter 2018: 4). Gender on the other hand has been used to “categorize, often in relation to social or cultural contexts, rather than biological ones” (lisa hunter 2018:7). The concept of gender gives meaning to sociocultural concepts such as masculinity and femininity. Socio-cultural categories such as “men” and “women” are constructs created, changed, and reproduced through complex historical processes within social institutions. Therefore, gender is a concept that “delineates what characteristics are to be considered as masculine and feminine,” reinforcing and upholding naturalized assumptions of sex (lisa hunter 2018: 7). The sex/gender/sexuality system’s relationship is fluid and dynamic, consisting of “complex interactions of practices that reinforce simplistic and normative SGS (sex/gender/sexuality) relationships” (lisa hunter 2018: 4). Scholars adopting this perspective are often referred to as social constructionists.

Social constructionists firmly believe that while social products are typically taken for granted and assumed to be conventional ways of life, they are in fact deeply rooted and reflected in historical and cultural power relations between and amongst groups of people.

Deeply entrenched cultural beliefs about gender binaries only further naturalizes a sex/gender/sexuality system in which heterosexuality is assumed to be natural and positioned as the most desired sexual preference. It's imperative for researchers to pay attention to the ways in which "the interrelatedness of ideas about (hetero)sexuality and gender difference, men and women's assumed psychological and embodied distinctions are widely held to be complementary and to require particular relationships with one another" (Westbrook and Schilt 2014: 37; see also Connell 1995). In order to fully understand how gender, sex, and sexuality are embedded within sports institutions and permeated through sports culture, an "interactionist framework" (Messner 2002) for understanding gender and sport will be adopted.

Using the lens of symbolic interaction permits a deeper understanding of the ways that actors "perform" and "do" gender (West and Zimmerman 1987). Gender relations are made up of concrete relations between men and women, as well as the more symbolic relations involved in the construction of masculinity and femininity. That is, we construct gender meanings through our interactions. Gender is not a static construct but is rather dynamic, both maintained and challenged through social interaction. Studying sport provides an opportunity to explore on a deeper level how women navigate meanings of gender in an arena typically dominated by masculine gender norms. Sport is an arena historically characterized as a space for white, able-bodied, and heterosexual men to reign. In that sense, sport is an important cultural sphere where meanings of masculinity, femininity, ability, heterosexuality, and homosexuality among others are produced, reproduced, challenged, and acted upon. These challenges and constructions are happening both in the relationships and power struggles between men and women, and those between

men (Messner 2002). As sport is increasingly acknowledged as a powerful cultural institution that is strongly linked to identity and ideology (Duncan and Messner 1998), it is a highly salient site for the construction of masculine and feminine identity (Kassing et al. 2004) as well as an arena for unpacking the ways in which meanings associated with gender, sex, and sexuality are both contested and reified.

In the past fifty years, women have made great advances in sport, garnering a magnitude of optimism that institutions and individual behaviors are possibly undergoing an important shift (Kane and Buysse 2005). Since the passing of Title IX of the Education Amendments of the Civil Rights Act in 1972, young girls have significantly increased their participation in youth and high school sports (Sabo and Veliz 2008) while women and girls have made great strides in professional and collegiate sports (Cooky, Messner and Musto 2015). This amendment and notable others across the world (see also the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 in Great Britain) were intended to empower women, counter public discrimination against them, and to remove and prevent any barriers to female participation in sports. Women and girls arguably have the same sporting opportunities as men and boys, but female athletes continue to face barriers in recreational and professional sporting spaces, like equal pay and sex discrimination (Cooky, Messner and Musto 2015).

Prior to the 1970s, female athletes didn't have the same sporting opportunities as men, even in spaces less regulated by government agencies or formal regulations. In recreational sports, like marathons, women were barred from competing with or against men. For example, women's inability to participate in the Boston Marathon, one of the most prestigious and popular foot races of its time, would go uncontested for decades until one female runner challenged the rules. In 1967, Kathrine Switzer registered under her

initials K.S. masking her gender and deceiving the contest organizers. Kathrine successfully ran the race for a few miles until contest organizers attempted to physically remove her from a group of men running next to her. With the help of a few male runners, they pushed and shoved the contest organizers off of her. In the end, Kathrine was allowed to finish the race and went down in history as the first woman to run the all-male long-distance race. Women runners waited five years to officially compete against men in marathons, but Kathrine's individual resistance represents one of the most historic moments in sport history, showcasing the lengths women went to forge a path for future generations of women athletes.

Shifting gears to the professional realm of sports, recently the National Basketball League hired Becky Hammon, its first female head coach and the National Football League hired Sarah Tomas, its first female referee. With significantly higher numbers of women occupying more sectors of the institution of sport, key feminist sport scholars are analyzing whether women athletes and coaches continue to face sexism, discrimination and inequality or if instead we are moving into a "post-feminist era for gender and sport" (Scruton and Flintoff 2013: 106). Sport scholars continue to examine women's experiences and resistance practices in sport with the hope of providing the answers to these complex questions. As mentioned, this project is simultaneously centralizing race while recognizing that relations are connected with other forms of subordination and oppression. Addressing the ways in which societal issues are interconnected and interlocking to other forms of subordination and oppression is commonly referred to as intersectionality.

Intersectionality

Kimberlee Crenshaw (1991) introduced the term intersectionality in her prominent scholarly work centering around race and the law. She is considered the founder and has been a leader in the Critical Race Theory, arguing for an intersectional approach to contextualizing the oppression of black women as their experiences and political concerns were not being highlighted by mainstream feminist movements. In her analysis, mainstream feminist movements tend to converge or ignore intragroup differences despite the shaping of experiences by other parts of identity such as race, class, nationality, among others. By assuming similarities within groups, differences are ignored and experiences are not explored along other axes of identity. This project adopts an intersectional approach to target the ways in which the relationships between multiple inequalities shape Mexican American surfers' experiences.

Intersectional analyses of sport are starting to reach the forefront of the critical sport studies field. Key studies cover a wide range of sporting activities and subjectivities, ranging from studying Black gay male athletes, British Asian female football players, English Black female football players and New Zealand Maori/Pacific Island bodyboarders to name a few (McCormack and Anderson 2010; Ratna 2013; Scraton, Caudwell and Holland 2005; Nemani and Thorpe 2016). A majority of the studies investigate how exclusive as well as inclusive sporting spaces and identities are constructed, addressing “commonalities of oppression” (Anderson and McCormack 2010: 949) for minority participants. These studies also draw attention to differences between identity groups, exposing how participants' experiences might embody “multiple axes of marginalis(z)ation” (Nemani and Thorpe 2016: 214). Oftentimes non-white as well as

female participants triumphantly navigate and negotiate sporting spaces, but their ability to do so tends to depend on their level of conformity and complacency with cultural norms embedded in the activity. Specifically, Ratna's (2013) study of British Asian female footballers takes a stab at "intersectionality-in practice" (p. 1) to examine how and why identities connect in the everyday lives of men and women. Their work begins the process of addressing the need to move away from conceptual understandings of intersectionality to more theoretical analyses that actually examine how people experience intersections of identity. Findings from these studies bring attention to the process of uncovering invisible inequalities, by detailing how experiences of marginalization can shift across spaces and identities.

This project strives to achieve intersectionality by adopting an intersectional CRT framework to investigate how Mexican American surfers' experiences are intersected by sex, gender, sexuality, age, immigration status, geographical location, and class. This project also seeks to investigate the extent to which Mexican American surfers are challenging dominant ideologies in and outside of the line-up, and in particular the ways non-white participants negotiate sex, gender, sexuality, class, and age relations inside and outside of the water. Investigating the day-to-day experiences of Mexican Americans and women aids in uncovering subtle discrimination or "microaggressions" (Pierce 1969) experienced in surfing. In addition to the stated reasons above, this project exposes how Mexican Americans use sport and surf culture to construct a sense of community and build social networks, as well as a potential means to advance them both politically and economically in the United States. In the following section, specific attention will be given to the lifestyle sport literature, as a way to further understand how people of color, women,

and LGBTQ participants experience predominantly white, heterosexual, male and able-bodied sporting spaces.

Lifestyle Sports: The Case for Surfing

Lifestyle sports such as surfing, windsurfing, and skateboarding (also known as action, alternative or extreme sports) are often argued to present alternative and potential challenges to power relations commonly found in modern sport spaces (Wheaton 2013; Thorpe 2008). These types of sports differ from traditional sports in some crucial ways. First, as mentioned above, most lifestyle sports are not bound by any specific rules or formal regulations (Laurendeau and Shahara 2008). Second, lifestyle sports are typically less competitive and male-centric which leads to the third point. Embodied sporting identities are usually less tied to the “reproduction of white male power” (Wheaton 2013: 49). Thus, lifestyle sports are said to present a challenge to the “western sport model” (Bale 1994), which is why many scholars believe lifestyle sports can and, in some contexts, do challenge traditional ideologies about gender, class, race, and sexuality in sport (McCormack and Anderson 2010; Wheaton 2004, 2013). Scholars from the recent publication of *Critical Surf Studies*, a burgeoning area of critical inquiry, are suggesting the cultural practice of wave sliding may offer an avenue for power relations to shift and restructure (Hough-Snee and Eastman 2017). This argument will be discussed further and in-depth throughout this section.

Surfing is a promising site for studying identities and power relations within sport/leisure spaces. First, surfing is not an organized or traditional sport, it is a highly individualized activity and is deemed a “neutral space” (Van Ingen 2003; See also Wheaton 2013) that can be enjoyed by anyone with a surfboard who lives near an ocean. Second, it

was originally a sport enjoyed by indigenous men and women, but when it was introduced and redeveloped in the United States it quickly became a sport dominated by white, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied men (Booth 2001; Ford and Brown 2005; Wheaton 2013; Warshaw 2005). Third, surfing is typically gender-typed as masculine and imagined as a “white sport” (Wheaton 2013), even though there has been a growing number of women and girls from diverse backgrounds that continue to enter the sport’s landscape (Comer 2010; Ford and Brown 2005; Wheaton 2013). Last, as I’ve mentioned above, surfing is a lifestyle sport, which may provide a potential avenue for changing and challenging traditional cultural beliefs about gender, race, sexuality, class, and ability. There are a plethora of lifestyle sport studies that focus on gender and sex, but there is a significant absence of studies that center race and ethnicity in their analyses. Before discussing this gap and need for more studies that center race in their analyses of lifestyle sport, I want to highlight how women face cultural barriers within lifestyle sports and how they are resisting dominant ideologies about gender. Women’s experiences typically revolve around issues of marginalization and exclusion.

Marginalization and Exclusion in Surfing

Within lifestyle sports, exclusion tends to occur in more subtle ways than in traditional sports. This may in part be because alternative physical cultures and activities are not bound by any strict or definitive system of rules (Laurendeau and Shahara 2008). The marginalization or exclusion of women participants often occurs through “cultural understandings and expectations” of how the activities should be performed, or the assumptions about male and female performances (Olive, McCuaig and Phillips 2015: 261; See also Thorpe 2005, 2008). For example, some female snowboarders believe their

abilities are unfavorably compared to “the boy’s scale” (Thorpe 2005: 93) and young male skaters believe the lack of female involvement in skateboarding culture is tied to the ideology that “girls don’t like to get hurt” (Beal and Wilson 2004: 47). These stereotypically gendered assumptions about which bodies should and shouldn’t engage in certain physical activities have embodied effects, and in some cases, restrict or prevent young girls from participating in gendered sporting spaces (Azzarito and Sterling 2010). A visual ethnography conducted with young girls in the United Kingdom found that most girls constructed their “bodyselves” as “recreational bodies in ‘girl-defined’ spaces” (Azzarito and Sterling 2010: 224). There are exceptions, such as within a windsurfing subculture, where not all of the women’s experiences were dependent on gender but rather on their level of commitment and skill (Wheaton and Tomlinson 1998).

Specifically, within surfing, women’s everyday experiences intersected across other identities/positionalities such as motherhood (Spowart, Burrows and Shaw 2010), sexuality (Roy and Caudwell 2014), geography (Knijnik, Horton and Cruz 2010), and level of expertise (Olive, McCuaig and Phillips 2015). For example, a study examining recreational women surfers’ experiences in a small beach town found women felt patronized by the ways in which male surfers engaged with them in the water (Olive, McCuaig and Phillips 2015). Receiving additional attention and support from male peers was more difficult to negotiate than openly discriminatory behavior. By differentiating women in the water, male surfers reinforced and maintained the idea that they are “women that surf” and not “authentic” surfers (Olive, McCuaig and Phillips 2015: 265). Not all women surfers accepted their male peers’ advice, but rather rejected or refused to be differentiated in the line-up. These women surfers illustrated that surfing could be a

medium for which women can challenge dominant cultural beliefs about gender. Unfortunately, women in sport occupy a position that is both compliant with and resistant to hegemonic standards, a contradictory position that they will have to cope with at every stage of their sporting practice (Knijnik, Horton and Cruz 2010). It's important for scholars to capture everyday experiences of women participants because some of these subtle yet insightful interactions might be overlooked or lost at the structural level (Olive, McCuaig and Phillips 2015; see also Roy and Caudwell 2014). The greatest barrier for women surfers is not themselves or even the difficult physical aspects of the sport, but rather the role men play in continually treating them as "Other" (Olive, McCuaig and Phillips 2015; Ford and Brown 2005 see also Booth 2001).

Whiteness and Surfing

Recently, scholars have started to examine the relationship between whiteness and lifestyle sports (Thompson 2014, 2011; Stoddart 2011; Comer 2016; Yochim 2010; Kusz 2004, 2006, 2007; Waitt 2008; Gilchrist and Wheaton 2011) in an effort to understand why lifestyle sports are often constituted as a "white space" (Wheaton 2013: 64) or represented as a "cultural space that is overwhelming white" (Kusz 2004: 207). Each sport has its unique history and set of identity and power relations, but the vast majority of lifestyle sports consist of a "white imagery and participant-base" (Gilchrist and Wheaton 2011). Specifically, for surfing studies have started to "unpack the whiteness" of surfing spaces across the globe (Wheaton 2013: 67, see also Hough-Snee and Eastman 2017). Unpacking whiteness of surfing spaces unmask which factors influence why a person of color may not perceive the beach or the sport as a recreational activity for them. For example, findings from Wheaton's (2013) study called attention to perceptions Black surfers had prior to

entering the sport. A majority of participants said they perceived the beach as white space and not a very welcoming place for a person of color. Even after learning to surf, requiring frequent trips to the beach, participants still reported feelings of “otherness” in and outside of the water. Assimilating to beach culture was perceived as a challenge for some and others, it was a smoother transition if they had prior exposure to predominantly white spaces. There are significant overlaps between Wheaton’s study of Black surfers and this project. Mexican American participants additionally perceived the beach as a white space and reported difficulty assimilating to Southern California beach culture. Surfer’s perceptions of the beach as a predominantly white space are in part due to the residual effects of the Jim Crow era, such as redlining and residential segregation (Jefferson 2009).

The Jim Crow era and the decades to follow constructed beaches and thus surfing, as a white sport and space. Specifically, in California during the 1920s, the city beaches around Los Angeles were typically limited to whites only. Economic factors existed besides legal ones, as the rising price of beach real estate contributed to beach communities becoming increasingly white (Jefferson 2009). The residual effects of racial segregation coupled with political and economic factors, such as continued discrimination, were highlighted in Wheaton’s (2013, 2017) study about African American surfers. Her work examined the impacts of exclusionary racial policies, explicitly focusing on the United States and the ways in which structural racism has impacted African American surfers’ perceptions and participation in the activity. Research on African American surfers not only highlights the racialization of American surf culture, but it also provides the groundwork for understanding what factors play into exclusionary practices within the sport. By exploring how African American surfer’s construct racial identities and how

race/ethnicity are related to exclusion processes in surfing, scholars can search for similar themes in other non-normative communities.

Understanding how Southern California beaches became racialized spaces as well as understanding how race segregation continues to have effects long after the Jim Crow era, especially regarding leisure opportunities, contextualizes why non-white people may perceive the beach as a white space. Distinct structural elements such as Jim Crow legislation and the rising costs of living near the beach may deter non-white or working class people from pursuing surfing, but there are other factors at play as well (Wheaton 2013, 2017). Mainstream surf culture, specifically surf media, continues to lack inclusive spaces or communities. By eliminating and erasing non-white surfer's narratives and histories, surf media disseminates what Chivers-Yochim's (2010) terms "an imagined" community of whiteness. The influence of Hollywood surf movies as well as the political context of race segregation are central to the process of constructing surfing as a white sport and white space (Wheaton 2013, 2017).

Surfing's imagery as a white activity and space is a "relatively recent and contextually specific social construction" (Wheaton 2013: 7). Specifically, in Southern California, the beach has discursively been constructed as a "white utopia" that was driven by tourism and the media, especially Hollywood beach movies in the 1950s (Wheaton 2013: 122). These films have been widely recognized as promoting surfing's values to mainstream audiences (Booth 2001; Stenger 2008; Bush 2016; Usher and Kersetter 2015) as well as representing the beaches and surfing as an inherently white space and recreational activity (Wheaton 2013). Black surfers discussed the cultural significance of these films and the ways in which they felt these films seemed to erase "all reference to the

wider racial politics of the era” (Wheaton 2013: 126). These films constructed the California beaches as well as surfing as a white “utopian landscape” (Stenger 2008: 29). By constructing the site of the beach as white space, these films racialized space and specialized race, which is one of the ways that racial hierarchies are reproduced (Stenger 2008). The cultural significance of these films coupled with racialized policies impacted leisure opportunities for African Americans. Currently, there is a growing body of California surfers creating political waves in their communities to combat residual effects of structural inequalities, which will be covered in depth in the final chapter of this project. Next, I want to highlight the history of race, sex, gender and sexuality relations within surf culture.

History of Race, Sex, Gender, and Sexuality Relations within Surfing

Surfing has a “highly colonial past,” dating to its origins in the autonomous kingdom of Hawai‘i and the sport’s evolution through consequent waves of military, evangelical, and commercial colonialism (Usher and Kerstetter 2015: 6; see also Ford and Brown 2005; Walker 2011; Laderman 2014; lisahunter 2017; Warshaw 2005). The impact and influence of colonialism has lasting effects on contemporary race and gender relations in the sport. Surfing is commonly understood as a “Polynesian invention” with most of its development taking place in the Hawaiian Islands (Warshaw 2005), and before surfing was appropriated and colonized by white North Americans and Australians the cultural practice of wave gliding has a long history as a Polynesian cultural form.

Historical accounts of indigenous Polynesians showcase men and women enjoying surfing and surf-related activities since the eighteenth century. Women and men both surfed side-by-side in indigenous Hawaiian culture with no hierarchy based on gender.

Wave sliding was considered a popular leisure activity inclusive of differences of sex, age, royalty or class (Ford and Brown 2006; Malo 1951; Warshaw 2005). Before colonization, the sex/gender/sexuality categories “may have been marked differently to the patriocolonial society that colonized native Hawai’i in the 1900s” (lisahunter 2017: 5-6). Before the social construction of race and sex binaries, which were primarily shaped by white Euro-American culture, *wahines* (female surfers) occupied a more egalitarian position within society. *Wahines* surfed with just as much skill and power as *kane* (male surfers). Oral accounts of *wahines*’ stories illustrate female participants as active members of the surf community not passive or inactive as they are overwhelmingly depicted in popular surf imagery today (Comer 2010; lisa hunter 2018). Gender relations and Hawaiian culture, in general, would quickly change due in part to colonialism.

Women surfers’ active and present position within a local community, their identities as skilled and powerful surfers, and their stories were quickly erased due in part to the “patriocolonial violence” that occurred in Hawai’i during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (lisahunter 2017: 6). Women’s narratives and involvement in the sport have been systematically absent from most historical accounts of the sport, a pattern that exists within most western sport cultures (lisahunter 2017). Surfing as a sport and as an integral part of Hawaiian culture was destroyed when missionaries arrived in Hawai’i and ridden the island of traditional activities (Ingersoll 2009). There were some Hawaiians that did not listen to the missionaries and continued to surf (Usher and Kersetter 2015), but when American businessmen returned to the islands in the 1900’s, Hawaiians were once again faced with foreign attempts to exploit and profit from traditional cultural practices.

At first, indigenous Hawaiians were able to maintain control of their surf schools

and successfully benefit from surf tourism while also maintaining control over their own land (Laderman 2014; Usher and Kersetter 2015; Walker 2011), which included the ocean territory. Surf tourism started to blossom in Hawai'i at the turn of the 20th century (Laderman 2014). As the industry continued to grow and flourish, American businessmen saw an opportunity to exploit indigenous Hawaiians. Over time American investors were able to take control of more Hawaiian terrestrial territory, leaving many displaced and marginalized people on their own land (Usher and Kersetter 2015). The rising prices of land near tourism developments gentrified the area and made it nearly impossible for indigenous Hawaiians to maintain control of the surf tourism market (Usher and Kersetter 2015; Walker 2011). Even though surfing is credited for being reinvigorated by indigenous Hawaiians in the 1900's, the sport would significantly change when it was redeveloped in the United States. Surfing was essentially "taken" (Laderman 2014) from indigenous Hawaiians by American capitalists and eventually became an activity constituted for white, middle class, heterosexual, men. When surfing was first introduced in Western cultures during the early 1900s', it quickly spread between groups of men who were in the social and cultural position to participate in this new sport (Booth 2001; Ford and Brown 2005).

Since white, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied men had more opportunities and freedom for leisure participation, surfing in Western cultures has "undeniably a male-dominated history" (Ford and Brown 2005: 94; see also Booth 2001). Women's participation in the sport didn't peak until the 1950s. Increasing popularity in the sport is often credited with the iconic book/beach film *Gidget* (Ford and Brown 2005; Comer 2010), which told the story of a young girl learning how to surf while embarking on many adventures with her newfound sense of freedom and friendship with a group of local male

surfers. During this period, (1950s-1960s) surfing became an important social space for women to pursue new sporting possibilities that were based on risk-taking and physicality (Comer 2010; Bush 2016). Also, during this time, women competed against men in the International Surfing Competitions until the late 1960s when the contests were eventually sex-segregated (Booth 2001). There appeared to be “fraternal tendencies” during this period, but the fraternal structure of surfing did not fully consolidate until the late 1970s and early 1980s (Booth 2001: 6).

According to Booth (2001), this fraternization of surf culture emerged from two shifts occurring within the culture; first, the radical change in the surf media's representation of women in the 1980s and second, the long struggle waged by women surfers in the 1970s and 1980s to organize their own surf competitions. Surfing became institutionalized through contests and tournaments in the 1970s and 1980s. Women surfers sought to establish their own professional surfing tour because they viewed the professional circuit as a way to contribute to the development of the sport and combat the fraternization of the subculture (Booth 2001). This era in surfing has been described as a “breakout moment” (Comer 2010: 94) for women surfers, consisting of a group of women that grew up in a generation where it was becoming more “socially acceptable” for women to engage in outdoor sports (Bush 2016). During this era, women were “free” to pursue outdoor activities and experience leisure activities like never before, they still faced obstacles and barriers, issues unbeknownst to most male surfers.

The fraternization of surf culture continues to be an issue for women surfers today with women struggling to be seen as surfers instead of “women that surf” (Roy and Caudwell 2014; Olive, McCuaig and Phillips 2015). As Roy and Caudwell (2014) point

out, "Females in surf culture, and in extreme sports cultures more generally, have been subjected to various stages of containment, such as sexism, sexual objectification, and trivialization..." (p. 41). Even with record high numbers of women pursuing the sport, recreational and professional female surfers continue to face challenges both at the structural and cultural level (Comley 2016; Bush 2016; Olive, McCuaig, and Phillips 2015; Ford and Brown 2005; Booth 2001). However, as Waitt (2008: 77) cautions, "surfing spaces are neither intrinsically oppressive nor liberatory," they can offer both variable "pressures and possibilities for a gendered embodiment." As researchers and participants of the culture, it's essential to continue to understand why when faced with adversity, sexism, homophobia, etc. people continue to pursue an activity entrenched with obstacles.

Through the history of the sport, there were moments of less oppressive gender, class, sex, and sexual relations, but like most sports, surfing has strong ties to masculine norms and a long history of valuing and embodying heterosexuality (Booth 2001; Henderson 2001; Roy and Claudwell 2014). Hypermasculinity, heterosexuality, and whiteness continue to be normative identities among men and women that surf. What this means is non-normative identities and bodies are marginalized within the surf community (Evers 2009; Roy and Claudwell 2014; Waitt 2008; Waitt and Warren 2008; Wheaton 2013). If African American surfers experience physical and verbal "racial microaggressions" (Wheaton 2013: 138; see also Burdsey 2011) then to what extent do other non-white people experience exclusionary practices and discrimination? Findings from this study confirm Southern California Mexican American surfers experience verbal and physical racial microaggressions in and outside of the water. Numbers were low for verbal and physical acts of racial microaggressions in the line-up, but a few surfers reported

instances of racism while surfing. Findings from this study also suggest Mexican Americans were impacted by structural racial exclusionary policies, resulting in delayed exposure to aquatic life. Interview data revealed knowledge of the Mexican Surfing Association based out of Venice, Beach California and the Chicano Surf Association formed by an English professor that studied race relations.

This project begins the process of understanding how Mexican Americans might use sport as a tool for assimilation, how they negotiate and navigate the racialized and gendered landscapes of their everyday sporting experiences, the ways in which they break out of and challenge existing cultural barriers that might prevent people of color from pursuing surfing in the first place. Current literature suggests Latina/os experience discrimination to a similar degree as other racial or ethnic groups (LaVeist, Rolley and Diala 2003) with many of them facing barriers in the workforce, education and neighborhoods. By analyzing how Mexican Americans cope with and experience discrimination in predominantly white, male, able-bodied sporting spaces, their stories can provide researchers with the tools to dismantle why the sport of surfing continues to be culturally imagined as well as maintained as a white sporting activity in Southern California. Growing up in working class neighborhoods far from the coast, having limited access to resources, being a child of immigrant parents, and growing up with limited leisure time due to economic constraints are some of the factors Mexican American surfers did not pursue surfing until later in their lives. Specifically, female participants experiences were further complicated by dominant cultural beliefs about gender and sporting bodies. Mexican American women felt doubly bound by both gender and race-related cultural assumptions, whereas non-Hispanic white participants reported only experiencing sexism

out in the line-up. Participants narratives are filled with stories of overcoming adversity and applying cultural knowledge they gained from participating in other predominantly white spaces to combat insecurities they felt while pursuing surfing.

As surfing continues to grow in popularity and spread across the globe, it remains to be a vital sporting space for empirical sociological analyses of gender, race, class, sex, and sexual relations. It also constitutes a space that has the potential to be transformative and productive for Mexican Americans, specifically for women of color. By centering the voices of Latina/o sporting people, this project seeks to illustrate the ways in which Latina/os engage in a multitude of sporting spaces. Surfing has strong indigenous roots; with more and more participants feeling and knowing they belong in a sport for and by indigenous people. In contrast to the opening quote, Mexican Americans do surf, they are submerging themselves into a subculture which can offer them an avenue for transformation, contestation, direct engagement with nature and the pure joy of wave riding.

Methods

In order to uncover the ways in which Mexican American surfers experiences differed from non-Hispanic white surfers and capture the everyday nuances of being a Mexican American surfer in predominantly male, white, middle class sporting spaces, the researcher utilized a qualitative research design. Prior to data collection, the researcher immersed themselves in the local culture to gain access to the field. After a few locals were identified, the researcher used snowball sampling and purposive sampling to interview more participants. In total, the researcher spent a year in the field collecting data by using in-depth interviews, participant observations and observations. Interviews were transcribed

by hand and line-by-line coded to identify core themes. After core themes were identified, the researcher analyzed and integrated codes with current literature. Findings from this study conclude Mexican American surfers, specifically Latina surfers experience the highest frequency of marginalized experiences, combat gender specific cultural barriers and view surfing as a form of resistance to identity-based microaggressions. The researcher was met with a few roadblocks in the beginning stages, but in all, their cultural insider status as a Mexican American surfer allowed for them to tap into the field with relative ease.

Research Design

This study utilizes a qualitative research design, which is best suited for a project aimed at understanding and explaining human meanings (Young and Atkinson 2012; Berg 2004; Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011). Qualitative research is an umbrella term referring to an array of descriptive and interpretive approaches to conducting research (Young and Atkinson 2012). Incorporating this type of lens provides researchers with the tools to understand how humans “make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, and so forth” (Berg 2004: 7). Qualitative research usually consists of research activities such as participant observations, intensive interviews, case studies, and focus groups. This research approach is predominantly inductive and begins with an exploratory question about how and or why people act the way they do in specific social settings. For example, do Mexican American surfers experience the surfing space differently from non-Hispanic white surfers? If they do, what factors contribute to their differentiated experiences? Who is implicated in the discriminatory behavior directed at “outsiders”? Are these behaviors directed proportionately across gender and class lines?

Do these acts of discrimination subside over time or across surfscapes? In sum, qualitative designs have an “orientation to social context, to the interconnections between social phenomena rather than to their discrete features” (Chambliss and Schutt 2016: 200). This type of research design allowed the researcher to gather and grasp social life as the participants experienced it in the specific context of surfing. Empirical inquiries aimed at exposing underlying factors in the everyday experiences of marginalized groups of people in specific social settings greatly benefit from a qualitative design.

Recruitment

Adopting a qualitative design means a researcher tends to spend more time in the field, invest more of themselves into the project and pay particular attention to the subjectivity or role of the researcher (Chambliss and Schutt 2016). In-depth interviews, observations, and participant observations were used to gather the necessary data for uncovering the everyday experiences of Mexican American surfers. The researcher spent twelve months in the field collecting data with seventy self-identified Mexican American and non-Mexican American surfers residing in the Southern California area. The researcher interviewed white non-Hispanic participants, so they could measure the effects of race in addition to other factors such as age, class, gender, sexuality and generation. Specific attention was paid to how Mexican Americans identify, either as first, second, and so forth generation. As Vasquez (2011) highlights, “Generation in the US plays an important role in the way Mexican Americans perceive and respond to discrimination” (p. 144). Therefore, it is imperative to examine what role generation patterns play in understanding Mexican American surfer’s experiences with racial and gender inequalities.

This study focused on Southern California due to its high concentration of Mexican Americans that reside in the area (Vasquez 2011; Pulido and Pastor 2017). In addition to this, Southern California is arguably the birthplace of modern surfing (Booth 2001; Ford and Brown 2005; Wheaton 2013). These two factors led the researcher to believe they would have an ample data source to operate with. Data has been collected from the following major surf regions within Southern California: San Diego, Los Angeles, Orange County, Ventura, and Santa Barbara. The researcher used the popular surfing website *Surflife*, to identify key surf regions in the Southern California area. Initially, the researcher assumed they would meet more Mexican American surfers in the Orange County region due to surfing's popularity in this specific county, but the researcher was incorrect. The highest concentration of Mexican American surfers resided in South San Diego county and north Los Angeles county. High concentration was due to a number of factors, proximity of ocean for communities of color, accessibility, exposure and openness of surf community. These factors will be explored future chapters because they were also reported barriers for participants.

Since the researcher is a surfer and a third-generation Mexican American, they utilized their "cultural insider" (Olive and Thorpe 2011) status to gain access or "get in" (Berg 2004) to the field. The concept of "getting in" is usually defined as the "various techniques and procedures intended to secure access to a setting, its participants and knowledge about phenomena and activities being observed" (Berg 2004: 67). According to Olive and Thorpe (2011), a researcher can use their "cultural insider" status, physical ability and pre-existing cultural knowledge as a surfer to gain access to the desired field. It is commonly assumed being an insider means easier access to a population or site and

possess the ability to “project a more truthful, authentic understanding of the culture under study” (Merriam et al. 2001: 411). For this study, possessing a cultural insider status assisted the researcher in developing relationships with participants, allowed them to get into the field with ease and also aided in building rapport. As an insider, the researcher understands the “nuances of the cultural group” and likely subscribes to the norms of the sporting practice” (Fletcher and Walle 2014: 250).

Acknowledging the various benefits of having an insider status, being an insider can carry potential issues in the field. As others have highlighted (Fletcher and Walle 2014; Olive and Thorpe 2011; Merriam et al. 2001), being an insider can carry potential issues in the field and researchers can be accused of being innately biased. Insider status can impede a researcher’s ability to develop a “critical, analytical distance necessary for contextualizing the perspectives of interviewees and our observations in the field” (Olive and Thorpe 2011: 426). Being an insider can also impair a researcher’s ability to “raise provocative questions” (Merriam et al. 2001: 411) even if they are able to utilize their insider status to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the culture under study. Both arguments are valid, but in order to understand the everyday experiences of Mexican American surfers, the ways in which they navigate the space and how they might experience exclusionary and discriminatory practices, the researcher believes their insider status was invaluable for obtaining beneficial insight. Another way to enhance or “offer a deeper understanding” of researchers’ experiences in the field and reframe the insider/outsider debate can be found in recent discussions from critical and feminist theory, postmodernism and multiculturalism (Merriam et al. 2001: 411). Paying attention to the

ways in which a person's positionality can shift in the field raises pertinent questions for researchers considering the costs and benefits of the insider/outsider debate.

It is often the mistake of the researcher to assume they will be either an insider or outsider at all times during the process of conducting research. One's position in the culture can change, indeed the very idea of positionality assumes that "a culture is more than a monolithic entity to which one belong or not" (Merriam et al. 2001: 411). Instead of framing oneself as either or a researcher should consider and acknowledge how the culture under study is characterized by "internal variation" (Aguilar 1981: 25). Researchers should instead think of their insider/outsider status as relative and account for the ways in which their positionality may shift. It is possible for researchers to be insiders and outsiders, at a multitude of levels and at different times in the research process (Villenas 1996). A more fruitful frame for understanding the outsider/insider argument is to pay attention to how one's positionality shifts across contexts and identities. As Johnson-Bailey (1999) points out, she assumed she was an insider in her study about African American women because she herself is an African American woman, but differences in social class and skin tone (she was light skinned compared to a majority of her participants) made her less of an insider and caused issues for her in the interview process.

At one point in the data collection process of this study the researcher decided to reach out to academic departments requesting permission to send out a recruitment flyer because they were having a hard time locating Mexican American participants. Due to their prior experience with surf culture, the researcher knew it would benefit them if they mentioned they were a surfer in the recruitment flyer. In the past when the researcher didn't mention they were a surfer, participants voiced they were cautious to talk to a "researcher"

about the norms and behaviors of surfers. By positioning themselves as an insider, potential participants were more inclined to speak to the researcher about their experiences out in the line-up. For recruitment and rapport purposes the researcher's surfer identity was advantageous, but when they interviewed male surfers, they noticed a difference in how the male participants responded to questions related to diversity issues in the water.

Male participants were more cautious and careful in how they answered questions related to diversity issues in the water, especially when it came to commenting on how female surfers are represented in the culture. The researcher would ask participants how female surfers were represented in the culture and most comments centered on discussing an increase in female participation and supporting professional female surfers, including some variation of "I love seeing female surfers out in the water, I think it's great, you know, girl power!" or "I've really noticed more women in the water over the past five years, to be honest, I even prefer watching women's professional surfing over men's." Only four male participants discussed the problematic ways in which female surfers are represented in popular surf media. Most men did not directly state treating women differently out in the line-up, but they did discuss differentiating them out in the water. For example, core comments from male participants included, "I would be more inclined to give a female surfer a wave than a male surfer, I'd almost never give a male surfer a wave. He can fend for himself!" Male participants did not regard these incidents as problematic, instead they perceived these interactions as empowering. This theme will be discussed further in the findings section, but the researcher's positionality as woman while interviewing male participants resulted in paradoxical statements. The researcher was not able to test if male

participants would respond differently to a male researcher, but they did take note of their muddled responses.

When it came to interviewing female participants, the researcher occupied an insider status, but this meant oftentimes they had to probe more for explanations. When the researcher would ask the participants to describe their experiences, oftentimes they would respond with “You know” or “Well you know how it is, you’re a woman out there”, so the researcher would have to ask them to explain more. At times, the participants voiced difficulty attempting to explain their experiences out in the line-up, often stating there are some experiences only women share. Another shared response from female participants consisted of the following comments, “It’s hard to explain” “It’s like you know you don’t belong” “No one is necessarily telling you, you don’t belong, but you can just sense it” and “It’s just the way the guys look at you”. In these interactions, occupying an insider position resulted in female participants feeling more comfortable describing their experiences, but this status also meant the researcher needed to know when to probe to receive a more detailed response.

The researcher also noted Mexican American participants divulged more detailed accounts after they discovered the researcher identified as Mexican American. The researcher noticed participants would ask the researcher how they identified racially, typically directly after the researcher would ask them how they identified. After the researcher revealed their shared cultural status, there were shared cultural understandings and silent understanding that didn’t need to be explained between them and the participants. For example, after the researcher disclosed their race, a majority of the participants would smile, immediately ask questions about their family heritage and would

code switch between speaking English and Spanish. Although the researcher isn't fluent in Spanish, they know an adequate amount to understand what the participants were conveying. Being from the same culture helped the researcher gain access and establish rapport with them, resulting in the following common responses, "You're Mexican, you know what it's like to be a brown surfer out there with all those white boys" "Well, I think you know how those *gringos* can be." In these interactions, the researcher's insider status was an asset in gain access and building rapport, but they still had to probe for fuller explanations. Overall, the researcher concludes, their positionality shifted across identities and contexts, but they in sum occupied a shared gender and race identity which proved to be advantageous.

Participant Observations and In-depth Interviews

The researcher conducted participant observations at a number of different beaches in the region outlined previously. Participant observations provided the researcher with a context for the identification and development of relationships with interview guides and field guides (Chambliss and Schutt 2016). In the social world of surfing, an interview or field guide would be considered a local. A local is a surfer, female or male that is the most familiar with the local surf culture and has an established relationship with the local surf community. The researcher identified five locals from various beaches, one female and four male surfers. The female surfer identified as second-generation, working class, Mexican and Puerto Rican American. Of the four male locals, two identified as working class Mexican Americans, one was second-generation and one was 2.5 generation. The other two locals identified as upper class, white non-Hispanic surfers. The researcher utilized these relationships with locals to snowball sample other potential participants.

Establishing these relationships with locals allowed the researcher to gain access to particular social groups that would have otherwise been insulated and isolated from outside members.

The researcher eliminated interviewing novice surfers because they felt this “type” of participant wasn’t as familiar with the surf terrain and possessed a lower knowledge about the local surf culture. This type of sampling method is called purposive sampling or judgment sampling because the researcher sought out a “typical” surfer. The researcher relied on their experience and judgment to define the “typical” case. Purposive sampling results in a non-random sample, which is described as a selection of sampling units within the segment of the population with the most information on the characteristic of interest (Guarte and Barrios 2006). The individual is the sampling unit, using the individual as the sampling unit; the researcher subjectively defines a “typical” case and then selects those individuals which best fit the definition he or she has defined (Guarte and Barrios 2006: 278). Admittedly, one disadvantage of this method of sampling is it is a nonprobability approach, which means the possibility exists that the sample is biased because the selection process is not random (Guarte and Barrios 2006), but it was chosen in order to eliminate error that would come from novice surfers unfamiliar with the culture. The bulk of data collection originated from semi-structured in-depth interviews with participants.

Of the seventy people interviewed for this project, forty participants identified as Mexican American, twenty-eight identified as white non-Hispanic and two identified as Asian American. Forty-three participants identified as male and twenty-seven identified as female. All participants except one identified as heterosexual. The youngest participant interviewed was twenty years old and the oldest participant interviewed was seventy-seven

years old. Of the forty-three male participants interviewed, twenty-eight identified as Mexican-American and fifteen identified as white non-Hispanic. Of the twenty-seven female participants interviewed, twelve identified as Mexican-American, thirteen identified as white non-Hispanic and two identified as Asian American. Of the Mexican American participants, three were born in Mexico and immigrated to the United States when they were children (1.5 generation), thirteen identified as second-generation, twelve identified as 2.5 generation, seven identified as third-generation and five as fourth-generation. Of all the participants, thirty-three identified as working class, twenty-one identified as middle class, and sixteen identified as upper class. Of the forty Mexican American participants interviewed, thirty identified as working class, seven identified as middle class and three identified as upper class. Of the twenty-eight white non-Hispanics, three participants identified as lower-class, thirteen identified as middle class, and twelve identified as upper class. Of the two Asian American participants, one identified as middle class and one identified as upper class.

In terms of surfing experience, twelve identified as beginners, thirty-eight identified as intermediate and twenty identified advanced/semi-professional. Of the twelve beginner surfers, eight were women and four were men. Of the thirty-eight intermediate surfers interviewed, twelve were women and twenty-six were men. Of the twenty advanced/semi-professional surfers interviewed, two were women and eighteen were men. On average, beginner surfers had six months to two years of experience surfing, surfed about once a week and reported “feeling comfortable” surfing in a group or alone. On average, intermediate surfers had two years to five years of experience surfing, surfed two to three times a week and traveled internationally at least once a year to surf. On average, advanced

surfers had over five years of experience, surfed daily, competed in high school surf competitions and traveled internationally more than twice a year to surf. Of all the seventy surfers, ten identified as long-boarders and sixty identified as short-boarders. Respondent's characteristics are included in the Appendix (see Table I).

Interviews took place in coffee shops, surfers' homes and at various beach sites. During the in-depth interviews, the main aim was to explore the "contextual boundaries" (Johnson 2002: 106) of the experience or perception of being a surfer. In-depth interviewing is the best approach because the researcher is interested in a research question that involves different individuals in the same line of activity (surfing) that have complicated, multiple perspectives on how they experience the issues stated above. Therefore, in order to understand if and how Mexican American surfers experience exclusionary and discriminatory practices, the researcher attempted to uncover what is usually hidden from ordinary view. Furthermore, this approach to interviewing is a common method used by researchers interested in checking out theories they have formulated through naturalistic observations, to verify independently (or triangulate) knowledge they have gained through participation as members of particular cultural settings, or to explore multiple meanings or perspective on some actions, events or settings (Johnson 2002).

The interviewer asked semi-structured questions during in-depth interviews. This type of interview method utilizes a number of predetermined questions and or special topics (Berg 2004). The predetermined questions were asked in a systematic and consistent order, but the researcher still had the freedom to digress as they saw fit. In fact, researchers are expected to probe the interviewee far beyond the answers to their prepared questions (Berg

2004). The researcher was careful to word the questions in a manner that is familiar to the people being interviewed because the researcher is approaching the interview from the subject's perspective. Interview questions sought to ask a number of important questions about Mexican American surfers' experiences in a typically white, heterosexual, male-dominated space (Wheaton 2013; Evers 2009). For example, I asked the women surfers, what challenges they faced surfing in a male-dominated space. Did they feel as if their experiences were different than other surfers? A list of semi-standardized questions will be included in the Appendix (see Table II).

Interviews were transcribed by the researcher and open coded. This means the researcher reads their field notes and interviews line-by-line to identify and formulate any and all ideas, themes, or issues suggested in the data (Emerson et al. 2011). Coding is the core research tool in classic grounded theory methodology. Through the process of coding, "the conceptual abstraction of data and its reintegration as theory takes place" (Holton 2007: 265). This technique may be time consuming and exhaustive (Berg 2004) but reading through and coding field notes and interview data line-by-line allows the researcher to be inundated with innovative ideas, insights and connections (Emerson et al. 2011; Charmaz 1990). In other words, coding is the process of applying close scrutiny with the "intention of developing core categories that account for most of the variance in the data set" (Douglas 2003: 46). Coding is advantageous because it proceeds inductively by creating analytic categories that reflect the significance of events and experiences to those in the setting. There are two types of coding in classic grounded theory, substantive and theoretical coding procedures.

Open-coding falls under the branch of substantive coding, in which the researcher works directly with the data, breaking it apart and analyzing it for the emergence of a core category and related concepts. After a core theme has emerged and related concepts have been identified, the next step involves “theoretical sampling and selective coding of the data to theoretically saturate the core and related concepts” (Holton 2007: 256). By asking questions of the data, the researcher strives to preserve their theoretical sensitivity and strengthen a focus on patterns among events that codes emerged from. Since there are no maximum or minimum number of codes a researcher should establish, the researcher coded for as many categories as they perceived fit. Alongside the coding, the researcher was writing memos, keeping track of their thoughts, by simultaneously coding and writing memo, the researcher was able to, “stop coding and capture, in the moment, their conceptual ideas about the codes that they are finding” (Holton 2007: 257). After patterns were recognized by the researcher, conceptual codes were established, and categories were saturated, core categories emerged. Below is a detailed description of the coding process.

After recording the interviews with an audio recorder, I immediately transcribed the interviews by hand. After the interviews were transcribed, I analyzed the transcripts word for word, line-by-line and phrase by phrase. I performed the same task for the notes I took as I conducted the interviews. The first step in analyzing the transcripts is to begin the “unrestricted labelling of all data and to assign representational and conceptual codes to each and every incident highlighted within the data” (Douglas 2003:46). This means I combed over the transcripts, highlighting and assigning codes to incidents I identified as significant. For example, when I asked Mexican Americans if they ever experienced racism or sexism in the water, I paid particular attention to their descriptions of the incidents as

well as their responses. This of course resulted in a rather long list at first, but as I continued to interview more participants, I noticed patterns in their behaviors as well as the way they were being treated by others. As I carefully coded the data, I was simultaneously tracking my thoughts in memos, making sure to stop and reflect on the codes and categories as they were emerging. Emergent categories explain and conceptualize, the data, commonsense understandings of the data and other theoretical interpretations (Charmaz 1990:1162). After emergent categories were identified, I used theoretical sampling, which is when the researcher collects new data to check, fill out and extend theoretical categories (Charmaz 1990). At this point, core categories and themes became clear to the researcher.

Core categories consisted of the following; barriers to entry, construction of dominant ideologies or the ideal surfer, coping and combating dominant ideologies; strategies for navigating and negotiating power relations in and outside of the water; reclaiming and creating communities/spaces. Through the process of open-coding, the researcher was able to identify and analyze core themes for understandings the ways in which Mexican Americans experience identity-based issues of discrimination, marginalization and exclusionary practices. Core themes also illuminated the ways in which Mexican Americans are navigating and negotiating power relations in and outside of predominantly white sporting spaces as well as the ways in which dominant ideologies are constructed, coped with and combated. Mexican Americans' experiences varied and intersected across gender, class, generation, skin-tone, geography and age lines.

On average, Mexican Americans' experiences vastly differed from white non-Hispanic participants, to the extent that a majority of Mexican Americans were never exposed to surf culture at a young age, experienced limited access to resources, are not

represented in popular surf media, expressed feelings of not belonging or being represented in the water and universally feeling as if they occupy two vastly different social spaces. Findings from this study believes surfing continues to prevail as an integral sporting space for sociological studies of race, gender, class, sex, and sexual relations. Contrary to popular belief and white surf imagery, surfing originated as an indigenous activity. There are currently progressively more Mexican American surfers reclaiming and carving out inclusive and transgressions spaces to combat dominant cultural ideologies not just about American surfers, but about Mexican American sporting bodies.

CHAPTER II

RACIAL BARRIERS: LATINOS' LIMITED ACCESS TO RECREATIONAL SPACES

Karl, is a middle-aged working class 2.5 generation Mexican American male whose narrative provides insight at Mexican American surfers racialized barriers they face prior to entering the sport:

This whole time growing up, taking the journey to the coast, I would give anything to live on the coast, you know, we would drive like 45 minutes to get to the beach and I remember I always wanted to live near the beach. I just thought that it would elevate me in some way, so this past winter I decided to find my ancestors in Michoacan, Mexico. I had to step into some fear and the unknown to figure this out. My grandparents lived really close to the ocean in Mexico. And that's where my DNA is from, that feeling inside of me from all of these years. That's why I've always wanted to live on the beach. And I finally accomplished that in Costa Rica. You know to me that was like the biggest status for me. But you know, once that finally happened, you know, no one ever saw me (laughs). That was an interesting point for me. It took me 25 years to find my family down in Mexico. My own DNA, my own internal memory was water based, was ocean based. I always felt connected to the ocean, but never had that experience in my indigenous nation and I have indigenous roots. And to go there and to surf with indigenous Nahua people, my people, these waves are on Native American reservations you know, no one can just go purchase a piece of the land to build a house. They run that territory down

there. I've had the opportunity to surf on Indian Reservations in Panama as well where you know, the whole white privilege thing is reversed

This opening quote foreshadows the process of uncovering a number of roadblocks Mexican American surfers experienced prior to entering the sport. First, he describes being raised in an urban community far from the coast, typically traveling an hour one way to get to the beach. In his inner-city community there was also limited public transportation, so prior to owning a car he was not able to travel to the beach. This further limited his exposure to beach and surf culture. Second, growing up in his community he was exposed to limited outdoor recreational opportunities from visiting local public parks. At a young age, he became involved with gang-affiliated activities, but quickly stopped after a near death experience. Third, he discusses both finally acquiring access to the beach in the later part of his life and the ways he used this access to connect with his newly discovered indigenous roots. Karl's experiences speak to larger patterns of constricted recreational opportunities common to Mexican American communities. For example, a large percentage of Mexican American participants described growing up in similar urban areas, with limited public transportation and recreational opportunities outside of engaging in unstructured play. This chapter is based off of responses generated from questions encompassing the participants' detailed surf history, including information about any barriers they experienced entering to the sport, including data related to beach access and economic constraints.

Compared to white non-Hispanic surfers, Mexican American surfers reported the highest number of obstacles and access-related issues, preventing many of them from occupying coastal recreational spaces early in their adult lives. By underscoring the various barriers faced by Mexican American surfers, this chapter seeks to explore how racialized

structural inequalities like spillover effects from Jim Crow legislation shape and limit Mexican American surfers' experiences. Factors like growing up in urban communities far from the coast or having immigrant parents can impede Mexican Americans exposure and access to surfing spaces. For example, in Southern California, Mexican Americans tend to reside in urban communities (Pulido and Pastor 2013), situated inland as opposed to near the coast and mostly likely amongst other minorities. Mexican Americans tend to live in urban areas due to residual effects of racial and economic inequality in the United States. In the 1920s, residential segregation was enforced by threats of violence, resulting in thousands of "Mexicans, Japanese, and Negroes who lived amidst commerce and industry in the small ghettos of central Los Angeles and San Pedro" (Pulido 2000: 554). Younger generations of Mexican Americans and immigrant Mexicans residing in the Los Angeles region tend to cluster into "immigrant enclaves" (Logan, Alba and Zhang 2002). Generational differences and time period come into play when analyzing why some Mexican Americans viewed surfing as an avenue for assimilation, propelling them into the culture. As previously mentioned, generation also plays a role in how Mexicans perceive discrimination and come to understand their racialized selves.

Of the seventy people interviewed for this project, forty participants identified as Mexican American. Twenty-eight identified as male and twelve as female. In this study, generation will be defined according to Ortiz and Telle's (2012) categorization of generational status. Generation 1.5 refers to Mexican American surfers born in Mexico and raised in the United States (three from this study). Second generation refers to Mexican American surfers born in the United States, with two parents born in Mexico (thirteen from this study). Generation 2.5 refers to Mexican American surfers born in the United States

with one parent born in Mexico and the other in the United States (twelve from this study). Third generation refers to Mexican American surfers born in the United States with both parents born in the United States and two to four grandparents born in Mexico (seven from this study). Fourth generation are Mexican American surfers born in the United States with both parents born in the United States with three or four grandparents born in the United States (five from this study). Of the forty Mexican American participants interviewed, thirty identified as working class, seven identified as middle class and three identified as upper class. Twelve of the working class participants grew up in urban communities approximately 10 to 20 miles south from downtown San Diego County. Five of the working class surfers were raised approximately 30 to 50 miles inland from the coast in Orange County urban communities. The remaining thirteen Mexican American working class surfers lived within a 20 mile radius from downtown Los Angeles in urban communities. The ten middle to upper class surfers lived in suburban communities on the coast in Los Angeles.

Core themes in this chapter will cover the range of obstacles encountered by Mexican American surfers, highlighting the distinct routes they embark on to venture into these foreign terrains. As noted in chapter one, CRT research seeks to dismantle hegemonic cultural beliefs about sports and confront “race-neutrality” arguments in sporting practices (Hylton 2010: 337). This chapter will unearth the various obstacles Mexican American surfers overcome to enter and maintain entry into the sport, thus dismantling the cultural belief that sporting spaces are equal playing fields or race neutral. This chapter will also focus on the ways in which sociocultural, economic, practical barriers are experienced by Mexican American surfers, taking into consideration how elements like a historical

interpretation of the outdoors, race, generational status, income, and access to cars intersect and factor into low surf culture participation. Analyses from this chapter will be employing an intersectional CRT framework to explain how Mexican American surfers experience obstacles. Findings from this chapter will showcase how sporting spaces, specifically surfing spaces are contested terrains, requiring a critical lens from which to view it (Hylton 2010; Carrington and McDonald 2001; Hartmann 2000). By examining and exposing what role structural racism plays in the everyday experiences of Mexican Americans sporting lives, scholars can continue to uncover how sport spaces are important sites for the reproduction and deconstruction of race relations in public spaces. The following section will discuss how racism is deeply embedded in society and detail how systematic racism has shaped opportunities for Mexican Americans.

Systematic Racism, Restricted Opportunities, and Understanding the Racialization of Space

Systematic racism impedes opportunities for many Mexican Americans residing in the United States. Scholars define systemic racism as “the persisting racial hierarchy, the discriminatory practices, and the racist institutions integral to the long-term white domination of Americans of color” (Feagin and Cobas 2015: 14). In the United States, racial hierarchies are “historically contingent and regionally specific, varying in meaning over time as well as within different regions of the country” (Almaguer 1994: 206). Racially subordinated groups of people, like Mexican Americans have experienced a host of “oppressive racist realities” in all of society’s major social institutions, like the workplace and education (Feagin 2000: x). Oppression is defined here as an, “unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another

group access to the resources of society” (Collins 2002: 6). Systemic racism includes macro-level experiences of oppression, but also includes micro-level experiences of subtle and covert discriminatory acts wielded at people of color in everyday settings (Feagin 2006). More scholars are beginning to unpack the everyday experiences of minorities to document the persistence and existence of racial microaggressions in white institutions, such as Law schools and the workplace (Evans and Moore 2015; Fleming, Lamont and Welburn 2012).

Periodically, people of color experience micro-level forms of discrimination repeatedly throughout their day. Experiencing racist oppressive acts are not unordinary or unusual within U.S. culture, in fact, “racist expressions are normal to our culture, manifest not only in extreme epithets but in insinuations and suggestions, in reasoning and representations, in short, in the microexpressions of daily life” (Goldberg 1997: 21). Racist ideologies and practices have been well institutionalized and manifested in all major parts of society - including the economy, politics, education, and the family, which disproportionately affect minorities. Current literature suggests Latino/as experience discrimination to a similar degree as other racial or ethnic groups (LaVeist, Rolley, and Diala 2003) with many of them also facing barriers in the workforce, education and neighborhoods (Ko and Perreira 2010; Telles and Ortiz 2008). In the United States, even middle class Latino/as regularly experience racial discrimination (Feagin and Cobas 2015), dispelling the myth class status can eliminate differences in discrimination. Current literature focuses heavily on African Americans experiences of microaggressions in predominantly white institutions (Fleming, Lamont and Welburn 2012), but more researchers are beginning to document the extent to which Latino/as experience everyday

forms of oppression (Vasquez-Tokos and Norton-Smith 2017).

Broadly, Latino/as are subject to relentless and persistent racial profiling and attacks, especially against the Spanish language and Spanish speakers (Feagin and Cobas 2015). In mainstream media, Latino/as are usually depicted and typecast as unauthorized immigrants, criminals, rapists and laborer workers (Rodriguez 2008; Molina 2014). Everyday discrimination against Latino/as can take blatant or overt forms, but also more subtle and covert forms which are typically harder to pinpoint or expose (Goldberg 1997). In the United States, Latino/as are a subordinate racial group systematically subjected to oppressive and discriminatory acts against them. Current scholarship argues Mexican Americans, of all generational statuses, are potentially impeded by an inability to compete in a post-industrial economy and historic and contemporary racist society (Portes and Rumbault 2001). In the past few years, there has been a substantial increase in “negative racial framing” of Mexican Americans and other Latino/as (Feagin and Cobas 2015: 1). In the United States, Mexican Americans comprise the largest subgroup of Latino/as, yet they are the least studied in critical analyses of sport.

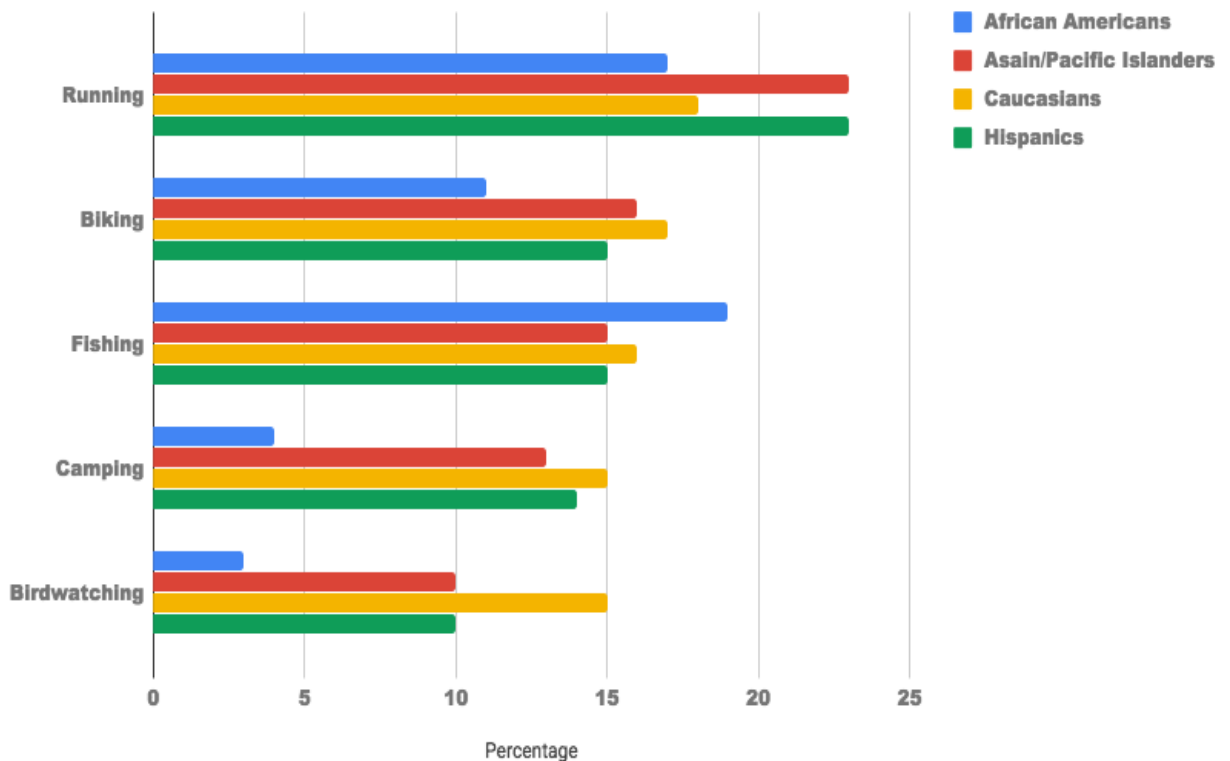
Some scholars argue Mexican Americans have succeeded fairly well economically and socially compared to earlier immigrant groups (Perlmann 2005; Kao, Park, Min and Myers 2010), but they remain a highly stigmatized racial group in the United States (Feagin and Cobas 2015; Telles and Ortiz 2008; Ortiz and Telles 2012). Current statistics estimate 63 percent of Latinos in the United States identify as Mexican American (Feagin and Cobas 2015), comprising the largest ethnic group within Latino category. As a stigmatized group of people, Mexican Americans are often required to navigate predominantly white institutions in many aspects of their lives. In these predominantly white institutions, like

education and the economy, Mexican Americans continue to experience relentless racial barriers which restrict their opportunities and experiences (Vasquez 2010; Telles and Ortiz 2008). For example, many Mexican Americans still experience “frequent reports of discrimination and stereotyping” (Ortiz and Telles 2012: 2) in educational and workplace settings. Most research focuses on their experiences in the workplace and education, but unfair and discriminatory treatment of Mexican Americans exists beyond these realms. For example, Mexican Americans experience discrimination and stereotyping in public spaces as well, like stores and restaurants (Ortiz and Telles 2012). Public spaces and places are erroneously thought of as race neutral contexts but are in fact racially marked as predominantly white (Lipsitz 2011). Cultural anthropologists and geographies studying the production of space, argue racial inequalities and relations are constructed and replicated in public spaces (Lipsitz 2011, Van Ingen 2003). In other words, “The lived experiences of race has a spatial dimension and the lived experience of space has a racial dimension” (Lipsitz 2011:12). For a deeper understanding of minorities recreational patterns and perceptions, scholars suggest understanding how “historical and cultural patterns of oppression” impact participation patterns across racial groups (Erickson, Johnson, and Kivel 2009)

As mentioned in Chapter One, core themes in leisure studies erroneously attribute racial differences and patterns in practices as differences caused by race, when research shows that racial differences in culture are caused by structural differences (Goldsmith 2003). Structural differences are determinants of culture, which include “any difference in the larger social patterns in which groups are embedded” (Goldsmith 2003: 151). The most recent data collected on outdoor participation by race concluded more than 142 million

Americans, nearly half of the United States population, participated in an outdoor activity at least once in 2015 (2016 Outdoor Participation Survey). Below is a chart of recreational activities by race. The running category includes jogging and trail running. The biking category includes road biking, mountain biking and BMX. The fishing category includes freshwater, salt water and fly fishing. The camping category includes car, backpacking and RV camping. The birdwatching category includes wildlife viewing.

Recreational Activities by Race



Consistent with previous years, minorities had the lowest overall participation rates and African Americans had the lowest. Running was the most popular outdoor activity for all ethnic groups. Hispanics had the second-lowest outdoor participation rate, but of those Hispanics who did participate tended to get outdoors the most for a total of 49 times per

year. All ethnicities and races agreed that the number one reason why they did not participate in outdoor activities more often was because they were simply not interested. Expense and lack of time were also other top reasons for not participating, findings consistent with the literature. There was no information about cultural factors and the ways in which barriers or obstacles beyond economic constraints impact outdoor participation. The only lifestyle sport measured was BMX, there was no data about surfing, skateboarding or other lifestyle sports. A recent study conducted by *Surfrider Foundation*, one of the largest surfing nonprofits did not collect information about the surfer's race, ethnicity or sex, rather the study focused solely on the socioeconomic background of surfers in the United States.

More often than not, low participation rates are often attributed to biological or genetic differences between minorities and whites (Burdsey 2011). Many Americans ascribe to this perspective and use biological racism--the ideology that racial differences and racial inequality result from genetic differences between African Americans and Whites (Feagin and Feagin 1996)—to explain the presence of racial differences in sports patterns. Through the understanding of how leisure preferences are influenced by structural and cultural differences, scholars can delve into the ways in which opportunities are framed by systemic racism and a range of cultural factors. Cultural factors like a person's upbringing - like education, family, peers and community -along with values and disposition, are key in acquiring both the taste for, and experience of, leisure activities (Bourdieu 1984). Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) concept of habitus illuminates how "leisure preferences are acquired and reproduced" (Wheaton 2017:183), as well as embodied through a range of cultural factors. Bourdieu's work considers the ways in which

participation and accessibility are related to material factors, like the cost of the sport or what Bourdieu (1984) terms “economic capital,” but also to the cultural and physical capital required to participant in the sport. Lifestyle sport expert Belinda Wheaton has written extensively about the politics of culture, identity and race, often turning to Bourdieu’s work to illuminate the ways in which habitus, gender and race operate in the cultural context of surfing.

Sport scholars adopting the concept of habitus are interested in the “particular and distinctive cultural knowledges that participation demands, and the ways these knowledges are embodied, in gestures, manners, and being in space” (Wheaton 2017: 184; see also Thorpe 2008). Most of Bourdieu’s work focuses on the reproduction of social capital, but recently his theories have been used to explore the “gendered and racialized aspects of habitus, and how they are reproduced historically and spatially” (Wheaton 2017: 184). For example, in Wheaton’s study of African American surfers, she utilized Bourdieu’s concept of habitus to explore the degree to which minorities share or are invited to participate in dominant cultural habitus, and the ways in which they are excluded from participation (Wheaton 2017; see also Burdsey 2004). Factors like family influences, values, community, and peers are central to acquiring the habitus for visiting the beach and ocean (Wheaton 2017), thus granting the greater possibility of access for some African Americans. For example, African American surfers reported being exposed to surf culture through school-based friendships and associations, but some still did not participate in the sport because they associated it with “white culture.”

Cultural factors like communities and peer influence are also shown to be tied to systematic racism, in that the communities’ minorities usually reside in are shaped by the

United States' racial history. Most Mexican American surfers were raised in predominantly working class Mexican American neighborhoods, with their own set of norms and values. Not only was surfing viewed as a "white boy sport," but activities outside of attending school and working were frowned upon by parents, specifically immigrant parents. By understanding the ways in which institutional racism has historically impacted Mexican Americans opportunities and communities, scholars can structurally recognize how opportunities are restricted. Considering how Mexican Americans develop a habitus for visiting the beach and ocean (access) allows us to better understand their recreational patterns and their experiences of exclusion and marginalization. Both of these theories are constructive for mapping out Mexican American surfers' experiences in predominantly white sporting spaces.

In conclusion, Mexican Americans as a racial group are subjected to racial barriers in social institutions, like education, the economy and public spaces. They continue to face and cope with racial discrimination structurally, impacting their day to day experiences. Due to enduring systemic racism, their educational, economic and housing opportunities are constricted. Policies and practices embedded in the social structure relegate Mexican Americans to certain cities, typically far from the coast. Recreational opportunities are also restricted due to Mexican Americans marginalized status as a racial group. Along with other minorities, Mexican Americans underutilize nature-based recreation spaces and resources because they're economically disadvantaged. Specifically, regarding surfing, Mexican Americans experience a range of sociocultural, economic, and practical barriers barring participation earlier in their lives and limited their exposure to the culture. In sum, racialized barriers lead to limited access to the sport, which results in limited access to

public spaces and to internalized feeling of marginalization in nature-based recreational spaces.

In the following section, I will specifically discuss the range of barriers Mexican American surfers encounter. As previously mentioned, these barriers are shaped by the ways in which Mexican Americans have historically been marginalized in the United States and how as a racial group they are considered to be second-class citizens. For example, in these contexts, Mexican Americans feel unwelcome and are made to feel like “trespassers” (Flores-González 2017) or “space invaders” (Puwar 2004; see also Wheaton 2017) because these spaces tend to be racially marked as white. The following questions will be answered in this chapter: How do racialized structural barriers limit Mexican American surfers’ exposure to the ocean and surf culture? How do other social markers such as class and generation intersect with racialized structural barriers? How are Mexican Americans’ access to swimming pools and other public facilities impacted by racialized structural barriers due to residual Jim Crow/spillover effects impacting Mexican Americans’ ability to access the beach? This chapter will argue and showcase how sport is a racialized social structure that contributes to the ways people “shape and experience their own and others’ identities” (Hylton 2009:1). Sport spaces continue to be potent sites for the reproduction of racial inequality and racialization of space.

Sociocultural and Economic Limitations to Public Beaches

Structural barriers identified by participants in this study will highlight the range of factors impeding Mexican American surfers’ access to recreational spaces. Current literature argues that minorities are exposed to a range of sociocultural, practical and economic barriers that impact their recreational opportunities (Wheaton 2017; see also

Garcia and Baltodano 2005). These types of barriers can create disparities in access to public parks and recreational spaces. Practical and economic barriers tend to be intertwined; for example, a realistic obstacle for a low-income surfer might be carrying heavy surf equipment on the bus ride to the beach because he or she doesn't own a car or have access to other affordable forms of transportation. Common economic barriers reported by surfers consisted of participants from low income backgrounds typically residing in communities far from the beach, not owning a car until the age of 18, and not having disposable income to spend on the initial costs of the sport. Common sociocultural barriers, like exposure to systematic racism and generational status, were also frequently reported. Recently, sport scholars have called for more studies examining the impact of "historical cultural patterns of oppression" (Erickson, Johnson and Kivel 2009: 531; see also Wheaton 2017) in order to examine how minorities' use of outdoor recreation spaces and resources are affected by a history of oppression.

Erickson, Johnson and Kivel (2009) examined experiences of African Americans in Denver, surveying their visitation practices at Rocky Mountain National Park. Using semi-structured interviews, they discovered historical and cultural factors, like a history of segregated spaces and a historical interpretation of the outdoors that resulted in low use of the park by African Americans. Some participants argued going to the outdoors is not a "Black thing," so it was not a common practice of theirs or incorporated into their overall lifestyles. Erickson, Johnson and Kivel (2009) argue this perception is compounded by a history of segregated spaces and accessibility to public facilities, resulting in low visitation rates. Disparities in access to parks and recreation are based on race, ethnicity, income, poverty, youth, and access to cars (Garcia and Baltodano 2005), among other factors.

Economic and Income Barriers

The Surfrider Foundation is an international surfing non-profit which collects descriptive data about the characteristics of surfers. Their data has found that the average surfer is 34 years of age, owns four surfboards and earns 75,000 a year (Wagner, Nelson and Walker 2011). Data consisted of information from approximately 5,000 surfers about their income, time spent in the water, and money spent in one day on the sport, among others, but did not collect data about the surfers' race or class. Findings from this study aim to supplement those examining surfer's descriptive statistics by specifically examining how factors like growing up with a fixed income creates barriers for working class surfers. Generally, working class surfers reported experiencing economic constraints preventing access and limiting exposure to the sport at a younger age. For most Mexican American surfers these constraints lasted well into their adulthood because most did not have the financial resources to invest in the sport or the family/peer influence to expose them to it. Working class white non-Hispanic surfers also reported coping with financial stressors, but stated they were introduced to the sport through family or peer influence.

As stated previously, cultural factors like family or peer influence can impact a person's taste and disposition for leisure preferences. Most Mexican American surfers were raised in predominantly working class Mexican American communities approximately 30 minutes to 2 hours from the beach. On average, Mexican American surfers stated they knew of surfing, but associated the sport with white culture, impacting their sense of belonging. This was not the case for working class white non-Hispanic surfers. White non-Hispanic surfers stated facing initial economic constraints that temporarily limited their ability to access public spaces, but they were able to rely on other resources to gain access

to surf spaces like their social networks or peer groups. Working class white non-Hispanic surfers are more likely to reside in predominantly white neighborhoods and be exposed to surf culture through neighbors, peers, and family members. Cultural factors like peer and family influence, helped working class white non-Hispanic surfers develop a taste and identity for the culture regardless of economic barriers like living far from the beach or growing up in a single-parent household. Justin, a younger, working class, white non-Hispanic male surfer explains:

I was exposed to surf culture growing up, my dad surfs and now me and my brother surf together. We used to all three surf together in high school and still try to surf as much as we can. Surfing is a huge part of my life and even though we grew up pretty poor, since my dad had all the boards and gear, it wasn't hard to pick it up. He would also drive us to the beach every weekend to surf, so transportation wasn't an issue. When I finally got a car in high school it was all over, I was surfing every chance I could get.

As Justin's example illuminates, he was able to access surfing spaces because his father was a surfer, so he was exposed to the sport early in his life. Justin said he lived about 45 minutes from the beach and grew up poor in a racially mixed neighborhood. However, since his dad already possessed all of the necessary gear to enter the sport, income, or economic constraints were not an obstacle for him or his brother. In other words, Justin accessed these spaces because he acquired the habitus for visiting the beach and becoming a surfer through cultural factors like family influence. Material factors were not barriers for him, like the cost of the sport (economic capital) or transportation (he said his dad drove him and his brother to the beach every weekend). When Justin bought his first car his public

beach visitation rates significantly increased and surfing remained an integral part of his life. Through repeated exposure to the sport because of family influence, surf culture, and knowledge became an indispensable part of Justin's life. Peer and family influence ultimately eliminated barriers for working class white non-Hispanic surfers and increased their likelihood of accessing public spaces and obtaining the cultural knowledge to be a surfer.

Bryan, another working class, white non-Hispanic male surfer describes his home life and the path he embarked to become a surfer, including peer influence and a low-income surf camp he attended through his church:

I grew up in a single-parent household in a small mountain community in Northern California. My financial situation was difficult and financially hard at times, my dad died when I was young, so my mom had to raise me on my own. I would definitely classify my upbringing as working class maybe even poor. I learned how to surf by attending a summer surf camp run by the local church. Since I qualified for the low-income option, I was able to attend the surf camp free of charge and spend two weeks surfing twice a day. After the two weeks I was totally stoked and started to find ways to get to the beach. A lot of times I would hitch rides to the beach with my wealthier friends in town. It wasn't frequent, but it was enough to keep my 'stoke' going. I now live 10 minutes from the beach and surf whenever work permits me. I'm a construction worker, so I can surf during the day if I want, but it just depends on jobs.

Due to his immediate social circle and opportunity to participate in a surf camp free of cost, Bryan was able to gain entry into the sport with relative ease. He was raised in single-

parent household, so finances were restricted, but since his economic situation qualified him for the local community church surf program. He was able to attend the camp and learned how to surf at a young age, thus overcoming initial economic barriers. He was also able to get rides from his peers in this neighborhood. As he states, “I would hitch rides to the beach with my wealthier friends,” tapping into his cultural capital to acquire the “taste” for surf culture.

Bryan lived two hours from the beach, did not own a car until after high school and was raised in a working class family, but since his wealthier friends surfed he was able to overcome economic constraints through peer influence. For a majority of white non-Hispanic working class surfers, they were able to acquire the habitus for visiting the beach and water primarily through their peers, neighbors and families. Middle and upper class surfers lived in close proximity to the beach, were exposed to beach and surf culture at a young age, learned how to swim at a young age, had access to swimming pools or accessible transportation, and had family members or friends that surfed. Kevin, a middle aged, middle class, white non-Hispanic male surfer explains this point further:

My dad was a surfer, he used to take me surfing before I could swim. Pretty sure I learned how to surf before I was formally taught how to swim. When I was 3 years old he had me a on board. He is an avid surfer himself and grew up out here. Everyone in my family surfs. We would even drive down to Mexico and surf, I don't know how he or my mom did it, but we would take three months off for surf trips down to Mexico. I was exposed to the ocean my whole life and to pristine surf down there with no crowds. I still surf to this day. I was even the captain of my

high school surf team and surfed semi-professionally until I joined the Coast Guard.

I'm actually get back into professional surfing.

White surfers were more than likely to be exposed to the sport because of their racialized habitus, positioning them to be predisposed to surf culture. As mentioned in the prior chapter surf culture originated as an indigenous sport, yet in contemporary popular cultural imagery is conceived as a white space and sport, creating imagined barriers of access for minorities. Scholars suggest that the social and spatial isolation of one group from another often leads to differentiation amongst groups as well as the development of group cohesion and identity (Bonilla-Silva 2010; see also Anderson 1999). In other words, working class white non-Hispanic surfers are more than likely to be exposed to surf culture through their peer and family influences than Mexican Americans due to differences in their racialized habituses. Race scholar Bonilla-Silva (2010: 104) articulates this point further by arguing, "...whites experience even higher levels of social and spatial than blacks," arguing these high levels of segregation and alienation from minorities creates what he terms as a "white habitus." A white habitus is a "... racialized, uninterrupted socialization process that conditions and creates whites' racial taste, perceptions, feelings and emotions and their views on racial matters" (Bonilla-Silva 2010:104). Therefore, it was more difficult and rare for Mexican American surfers to access public beaches due to peer or family influence, but a small number were able be exposed the sport early in their lives when they moved to different communities closer to the beach or met friends in college or the workplace that surfed.

In some cases, Mexican American surfers moved to different communities and were exposed to surfing through family or friends. Christopher, a middle-aged, working

class, third-generation Mexican American male grew up far from the coast, but after his parents divorced he moved in with his older sister in an apartment in Santa Monica and was introduced to surfing through her boyfriend:

Growing up I was never exposed to surfing, you know, like my family we couldn't afford something like that, so I never really thought about surfing. I just played other sports in high school and did what was affordable for me at the time. After my parents divorced I decided to move in with my older sister because my mom, she just couldn't look after me anymore, so yeah, I moved in with my sister in like a shitty part of Santa Monica. Anyway, her boyfriend at the time, who was also Latino, was a surfer. He introduced me to surfing. He would come pick me up after school and we would go surf together. Before him, I would have never surfed you know, it was like so far out of reach for me, but I'm really glad I was exposed to it from him and was able to hitch rides with him. We still surf together and laugh about those days when I'd hitch rides with him.

Lack of disposable income and capital relatively impacted Mexican American surfers' ability to access the beach and as Christopher argues, impacted his exposure to surf culture at a young age. Christopher grew up without exposure or accessibility to surf culture and as he says, he probably would have never been exposed to surfing if it wasn't for his sister's boyfriend. Even though he was raised with limited capital and was still considered working class when he moved in with his sister, he was exposed to the sport through family influence. Belinda Wheaton's (2013) study of African American surfers, concluded similarities about surfers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. She argued communities of color struggle to acquire the material capital required to surf, prematurely

preventing them from entry and exposure to the sport. African American surfers did not become exposed to the sport or access public beaches until later in life, arguing a lack of family or peer influence. Wheaton's (2013) work also considered the impact of Jim Crow laws or the historical cultural patterns of oppression to unearth how African American surfers' experiences were impacted by a history of segregated spaces.

Most working class Mexican American surfers did not start surfing until they acquired their first car or they moved to a city with improved public transportation. Accessing and securing affordable as well as reliable transportation was a common obstacle cited by Mexican American surfers. Miguel, middle-aged, working class, second-generation Mexican American male offers a rich description as to why he didn't surf as a teenager growing up 10 miles from Huntington Beach:

You just need more resources, especially if you don't live close to the beach, you know it's not just having the board and it's not like we were poor, but you know it was just acquiring extra resources, so we just built skate ramps, you know. We spent more time skateboarding than we did time at the beach. Surfing, especially if you don't live at the beach, you need the resources to get there, more than just getting a board, so skating was easier for us to do. You know, we couldn't afford to essentially do it. We would just build a ramp in the backyard. We would just grab a board and head to a parking lot to skate. You know there's just more that goes into surfing. Gotta have the board, the money and transportation.

Miguel's narrative highlights how a lack of resources for working class families can impede participation in a sport requiring "more than just a surfboard." Securing disposable income or others resources, like having a car or accessing public transportation, creates

difficulties for becoming involved in surfing. For example, most city bus stop “up to half a mile from a public path to the beach,” which create “a significant burden,” especially for people carrying recreational gear (Garcia and Baltodano 2005: 201).

Due to economic constraints and limited resources, Miguel and his friends perceived skateboarding to be more accessible than surfing. At least with skateboarding, you could just “grab a board and head to a parking lot to skate.” With skateboarding there is no need to access public transportation to participate in the activity, the cost to purchase equipment is more affordable than purchasing a surfboard, and skateboarders can skate in most public spaces. Skateboarding was a common activity cited by working class Mexican American surfers. Typically, they started with skateboarding and transitioned into surfing later in their lives. Miguel’s narrative also highlights that surfing is more than simply acquiring a board, it consists of an accumulation of resources, which is especially hard for people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds without public transportation or a car. More than 75% of working class Mexican American participants did not own a car until after high school.

A significant majority of working class Mexican Americans interviewed did not surf or swim at a young age or frequently visit public beaches. Only a small percentage of Mexican Americans enrolled in formal swim classes, had access to public pools, knew someone that had a swimming pool or had accessible public transportation to get to the beach. Joseph, a middle-aged, middle class, second-generation Mexican American male recalls the first time he realized a majority of his Latino/a friends did not know how to swim:

Growing up I lived in Texas, so surfing was so foreign to me you know. I didn't learn how to swim until I was older and I didn't realize most of my Latino friends didn't know how to swim either. Now that I am a professor living a relatively cozy middle class life, I own a house with a pool in the back. Recently we had some friends over to show them the new place and I was shocked so many of them did not know how to surf. I mean I know Latinos face economic barriers and aren't exposed to swimming as much and there's you know some barriers from the past, but it was still sort of eye opening to make that realization, you know in my own backyard!

Joseph was raised in a working class community, outside of Austin, Texas, so he did not grow up close to the beach immersed in surf culture or had formal swim lessons as a youth. In later parts of the interview he discusses climbing the social ladder and reaching "middle class success" by owning a home in Southern California, but he still recognizes the barriers Latino/as face when it comes to exposure and access to acquiring aquatic knowledge. He was shocked when he realized most of his friends did not know how to swim, but he understood on a deeper level why they were not able to access this form of cultural capital.

Laura, a younger, working class, second-generation Mexican American female was one of the few surfers with formal training in swimming and early exposure to public beaches and pools. According to her, she grew up swimming in public pools in the greater Los Angeles area, eventually becoming a lifeguard for a local YMCA. Below she describes her experience being a Mexican American lifeguard, realizing it was rare to be Latino with formal training, exposure and access to swimming lessons:

I was actually really lucky that my parents encouraged me to swim at a young age. We spent a lot of time at the YMCA and I grew to fall in love with swimming I enrolled in some formal classes and actually being a lifeguard at the YMCA was my first job. I remember a lot of people being surprised I knew how to swim! I never paid much attention to comments like that, but I do know a lot of Latino/as don't know how to swim or didn't have access to swimming pools because they usually live in low-income areas. Like I said, I was really fortunate to have that access at a young age.

Laura's early exposure to formal swim lessons is an anomaly in this study, but an important reminder of how parental or peer influence can significantly alter opportunities for minorities. As she states multiple times in her response, she knew it was rare for Latino/as to be exposed to swim lessons or public pools.

In conclusion, Mexican American surfers' opportunities are largely structured by socioeconomic factors which influence their abilities to access resources and public spaces. These opportunities, in part, are influenced by their place in the economic and racial hierarchy in the United States due to a history of systemic racism. Only a small number of working class white non-Hispanic surfers mentioned experiences similar to the constraints mentioned by working class Mexican Americans. White non-Hispanic surfers from low-income areas discussed financially struggling in the beginning to afford equipment, but they found other means to acquire resources, like borrowing surfboards from friends or catching rides with peers. White non-Hispanics were able to utilize their social networks to accommodate financial barriers they encountered. A majority of white non-Hispanic participants did not cope with financial barriers preventing initial entry into the sport. As

Karl highlights in the opening vignette, he was raised in a predominantly Mexican American working class community approximately 30 minutes from downtown Los Angeles. Living far from the beach, with no access to public transportation or a car, made it difficult for Karl to visit the beach regularly. A majority of participants grew up in similar communities with the same amenities, but there were some exceptions. The next and final section will cover the exceptions in detail. This section underscored the significance of developing a racialized habitus, enabling surfers to access public spaces and highlighted the ways in which Mexican Americans experience racialized recreational obstacles prior to becoming surfers.

Barrios by The Sea

In general, working class Mexican American surfers reported facing initial economic constraints, which limited their ability to access public spaces, but there were within group differences that cut along generational and geographical lines. Some working class Mexican American participants were also able to gain access through their social networks, peer groups or family influences, but this typically happened later in their lives, like when they attended college, learned to surf on vacation or enrolled in a surf camp. In addition to the stated factors, working class Mexican Americans discussed coping with exposure to youth gang culture due to their social locations, grappling with parental pressures to focus on school instead of leisurely pursuits and feeling out of place in predominantly white spaces. Ricardo, a middle aged second-generation working class Mexican American male explains the interconnectedness between access and geography:

Access. Most of the coastal towns are full of white people. You know, people of color they live inland. There's some barrios by the sea, but most places it's access.

Some neighborhoods here are five miles from the beach and the kids never make it to the beach you know. The time it takes to get to the beach, taking the bus, carrying all your stuff. It's not easy when you don't have a car.

Ricardo believes communities of color face barriers accessing beach communities and lifestyles because of a person's geographic location. He perceives obstacles as primarily an issue of access and other economic and practical barriers, like carrying a heavy surfboard on a public bus. There are some communities of color near the ocean, or as Ricardo refers to them, "barrios by the sea," which allow opportunities for surf culture accessibility and exposure, but the barriers outweigh the possibility of surfing at a younger age. Factors such as economic limitations and limited cultural capital, ultimately constrained their access and structured Mexican American opportunities. As Ricardo stated, "you need to have money to get access" to the coast, simply to live close enough to the beach, to not rely on alternative means to access these exclusionary places. Due to Ricardo's limited resources, social network and access to cultural capital, he was faced with barriers to access which initially circumvented his entry into the sport.

Mexican American participants from lower socioeconomic backgrounds typically resided in urban environments throughout Southern California. Residing further from the beach limited their ability to access the coast and most recreational space. In Southern California, Mexican Americans tend to live in urban areas outside of Los Angeles, mainly in East Los Angeles. Although the presence of Mexicans in Southern California dates back to the late 1700s, its size, influence and geography has considerably changed through Spanish settlement, Mexican Independence, the Mexican American War and Anglo conquest (Pulido and Pastor 2013). Garcia and Baltodano (2005) explain the intentionality

behind limited access to the beach. They wrote, “The fact that low-income people of color are disproportionately denied access to beaches and parks is not an accident of unplanned growth, and not the result of an efficient free market distribution of land, but the result of a history and pattern of discriminatory land use and economic policies and practices” (Garcia and Baltodano 2005:153). Historically, communities of Mexicans have settled in central Los Angeles, eventually moving eastward. The largest continuous stretch of ethnic Mexicans in the United States is in the Greater Eastside of Los Angeles (Pulido and Pastor 2013), which means most Mexican Americans reside in urban communities that are far from the beach.

A small number of participants resided in working class communities close to the beach or as Rico stated earlier, “barrios by the sea.” These were mostly working class, multiracial and multiethnic communities in south county, San Diego and north county, Santa Barbara. All three of the surfers living in these communities identified as working class but differed across social location, time period and generational status. Rico and CJ’s surf histories mirror each other, but vary across generational status, influencing their perceptions of discrimination and propensity for joining a youth gang. Rico identified as 2.5 generation and CJ identified as second-generation. They both grew up in similar communities, exposed to youth gangs at a young age, but ventured down diverging paths. Ralph’s surf history highlights how family exposure, community, and peer influences impact access to beaches, but his narrative additionally sheds light on another social phenomenon impacting access: assimilation.

As mentioned, working class Mexican American surfers were more likely to be exposed to youth gangs than beach culture or surf culture for that matter. Echoing Karl’s

narrative in the opening vignette, CJ, a working class, younger, second-generation Mexican American male surfer speaks more on the subject of being raised in Section 8 housing, in a single-parent household less than 5 minutes from the beach:

My mom was out there grinding, it just wasn't a part of my life. We didn't take advantage of living so close to the beach. It wasn't her fault and you know it wasn't easy to get out of the hood, it was a struggle, there was always struggle to survive and my mom had no help from my pops, so yeah surfing just seemed so far out of reach for us hood kids, you know and we enjoyed the hustle too, so we weren't really into other things.

CJ resided in Section 8 housing in a town just outside of Santa Barbara. He described the neighborhood as mostly working class Mexican Americans, impoverished and heavily gang affiliated. CJ remarks on the difficulties his family faced living and trying to escape “the hood.” His narrative sheds light on the social conditions under which gang activities thrive. For example, “Gangs tend to flourish in low-income, highly segregated urban neighborhoods that are severely marginalized and socioeconomically disadvantaged” (Flores 2014: 4; see also Klein and Maxson 2010). Gang members also tend to be black and Latino men with toxic and strained relationships at home, on the streets and with the police (Vigil 2007). Gang scholars argue that gang activity is a product of social environment and efforts at eliminating “the gang problem” in the United States should address the social conditions that give rise to gangs instead of blaming the individual (Klein and Maxson 2010; Rios 2011; Flores 2014). Young Latino men often perceive gang membership as a means for protection on the streets, group loyalty and a sense of familial belonging (Flores 2014). Considering CJ’s background, it’s evident why CJ remained

involved in gang activity until he attended college. The first time CJ recalls seeing a surfer he was helping his mother clean houses in a wealthier part of town. He replays the memory below:

I remember I used to go with my mom to clean houses, you know, she was a single parent, my dad left us when I was young to go take care of some other family, so I did what I needed to do. We were down south in a wealthier part of town, you know, all white kids and families. I was taking a break from cleaning when I saw these people out in the water. It was some church surf camp. I just remember looking down from the cliff just amazed at what I was seeing. In that moment I told myself someday I would surf, but I didn't surf until after high school.

In other parts of the interview CJ discussed recognizing surf culture was popular in town, but as he reiterates, "I was too busy running the street to pay attention to anything else." He was intrigued by the surfers he saw that day as a young child helping his mother, becoming even inspired by them, but his deep immersion into street life made it difficult for him to cross over into other cultures. CJ mentions pivotal points in his life where he felt differentiated due to his class and race, possibly influencing why he never ventured outside of his norm. CJ shared the following memory with the researcher, drawing attention to ways he felt marginalized in predominantly white spaces:

I remember this one time me and some friends were playing on a football league for the local YMCA. They would let us play for free because you know we were the poor kids and we didn't mind because we were good at football. We would play pretty much all the time until the kids with the money wanted to play and well, we pretty much got the boot. We stopped going after that incident because it just

reminded you that you were poor. You know? They didn't mind using our skills until the wealthy kids came along to take our spots on the team. Whenever I tried to do something new, I just knew I wasn't like the Anglo kids. I talked different, I dressed different and I just felt unwelcome in those spaces. I just continued to do what I was used to doing in my neighborhood, you know, gang banging. Us Mexicans, we don't need to venture too far out of our hoods. We're loyal to the soil.

CJ felt uneasy in "white spaces" and felt marginalized or made to feel unwelcome in places unfamiliar to him. He said he never faced blatant forms of racism, but said, "I just felt unwelcome in those spaces." CJ tended to avoid spaces in which he felt inherently unwelcome or "foreign," a theme to be explored in the following chapter. Moreover, CJ's comment "Us Mexicans, we don't like to venture too far from our hoods. We're loyal to the soil" underscores the familial sense of belonging and loyalty he received from his gang membership. His identity as a gang affiliated youth actually led him to being exposed to surf culture by a rival gang member at the local community college.

CJ also recalls feeling out of place on a college campus, often retreating to a mentors' office to escape his insecurities. One day in class, he recognized "another cat from a rival gang back in the day," so he approached him after class to see if he wanted to hang out. CJ said he felt comfort in seeing another "cat from the hood" on a college campus. Francisco was learning to surf and asked CJ to join him after class. These two would remain lifelong friends, eventually starting a surf camp for youth gang members. CJ describes the ways surfing alter his life in a positive way:

Surfing changed my entire life, it changed my entire zone. It was a catalyst to a lot of things that happened and a lot of self, like deep reflection. When you're running around and like gang banging, you're always trying to figure out who you're beefing with, who messed up, who do we have to take flight on, who's doing what. Like, wait a minute, let's turn this around, let's see what's going on with me. How can I change or how can we make things better? I don't know, it just changed my life, more to like a positive, like let's figure out what we can do you know, let's make things better.

Through surfing CJ constructed a deeper connection with himself and had the time to be reflexive of his actions. Surfing evidently represented a spiritual practice for CJ, providing him with a space for self-reflection, positive change, and most importantly: recovery from gang life. Engaging in spiritual practices is a common strategy utilized by recovering gang members and is a growing area of interest for gang scholars interested in gang recovery (Flores 2014; Rios 2017). CJ's in-depth surf history draws attention to the hardships some working class Mexican Americans face residing in "barrios by the sea," but the positive outcomes and spiritual benefits they eventually find through surfing. Rico's surf history will be detailed next, underscoring the difference across generational status and the impact of family influence on one's surfing practices.

Rico was raised in a "barrio by the sea," over 200 miles south from the social location CJ resided in. Their stories have notable similarities but cut across important social markers: generational status and peer and family influence. Rico had family members in gangs but was not an active member of any youth gangs. Below he explains why he never joined a gang:

A lot of the kids were like in survival mode you know? It was a barrio. Most of the kids never even went to the beach. There were gangs, street life, you know, a corrupt government, mostly brown people out in these areas. I lived on the edge, so I lived in the better part of the barrio and my cousins lived in the real barrio and they were all cholos. I was kind of the odd man out, they would call me coconut-- I was brown on the outside and white on the inside because I would spend all my time at the beach

Rico lived in “the better part of the barrio” and avoided being pressured to join gangs because his cousins “vouched for him.” Since he lived on the edge of the “real barrio” and had the protection of his family members, in many ways Rico was able to cross over into other activities like going to the beach and avoided being “socialized into the street life” (Flores 2014: 11). As Rico states, “I was kind of the odd man out, they would call me coconut--I was brown on the outside and white on the inside because I would spend all of my time at the beach.” Rico may have been teased for being the “coconut” of his family because he adopted aspects of white culture and successfully avoided succumbing to street life, but at different points in his life he was subjected to racism in surfing contexts. These experiences will be explained in the next chapter.

Another important factor assisting Rico in overcoming barriers in the barrio: he was exposed to beach culture through family influence. He was introduced and indoctrinated to beach culture through his father and his father’s stepdad. He learned how to swim when he was 9 months old and would frequent the beach often with family members every summer. According to him, “My stepdad was white, so in the 50s and 60s they would go to the beach a lot, so I was like born at the beach.” Rico described himself as a 3rd generation

“beachgoer.” His father was a lawyer and the Director of Student Diversity at one of the local universities, and was not a surfer, but bodyboarder, which is another form of wave riding (Nemani and Thorpe 2016). Rico was heavily exposed to beach and surf culture through his family, not the neighborhood he was raised in. After Rico’s parents divorced, he moved to the community in which he described, but lived in various working class communities prior to his parent’s divorce. Rico was one of the few Mexican Americans interviewed who was exposed to beach culture at a young age and was an active member of his high school surf team. Differences in experiences of access, exposure and obstacles are also tied to generational status.

Generational status affects self-labeling practices, acculturation processes and life outcomes (Rumbaut and Portes 2001). Immigration further complicates the issues of race and class that give rise to gang membership (Flores 2014). For example, “Second-generation immigrants often suffer strained relationships both with their parents’ ethnic community and mainstream society, and, as a result, are particularly vulnerable to urban poverty, marginality, and gang membership” (Vigil 1988). Both of CJ’s parent were born in Mexico, so he identified as second-generation, whereas Rico identified as 2.5 generation (only one of his parents was born in Mexico). Rico didn’t discuss having an estranged relationship with his parents or difficulties adjusting to or assimilating to American culture. Generation relations coupled with his relative distance from the center of gang activity aided Rico in his ability to become socialized as a surfer instead of a gang member like so many of his family members. An important note, Rico did explain his community was a blend of Mexican and Southern California culture, a unique quality he believes only exists in his barrio. In his words:

Down here closer to the border, you get a pretty good blend of Mexican Americans involved in skate and surf culture. It's pretty common to see a lowrider car with surfboards strapped to it you know? And Chicano Park just recently built a skateboard park, so you definitely see like a combo culture down here. Actually, I used to own a lowrider with the same set up, you know with my boards strapped to the top, but I sold it because I was always getting profiled by cops. So yeah it's different down here in our barrio, but we still have run-ins with the cops and it totally changes the further north you go, so I tend to stay in my area.

Rico's early exposure to surf culture, beach culture, ability/knowledge of aquatics and cultural factors like family influence allowed him to access spaces and overcome racialized barriers in aspects CJ could not. However, as he states above, he still experienced racial profiling and racism in his community, obstacles and everyday experiences of Latinos.

Social Cultural Barriers: Generational Status and The Immigrant Bargain

Working class Mexican American surfers' experiences tended to differ across other important social markers, like generational statuses. Specifically, second-generation Mexican Americans reported grappling with the "immigrant bargain," which in part created a racialized barrier for them. The immigrant bargain describes, "an intergenerational class-based expectation that working class immigrant parents' sacrifices be redeemed and validated in the future through their children's achievements in U.S. schools" (Alvarez 2015: 25; see also Smith 2006). Generation 1.5, second-generation and generation 2.5 (either one or both parents born in Mexico) working class Mexican American surfers also felt conflicted or ashamed of desiring to pursue leisurely pursuits because sports aren't perceived as an honorable achievement. Latino/a immigrants residing

in the United States face unique challenges and obstacles as they navigate and adapt to dominant white culture and institutions. For example, navigating these new terrains can result in a feeling of anxiety and pressure to conform to dominant ideologies (Feagin and Cobas 2015). Jennifer, a younger, working class second-generation Mexican American female describes why she didn't believe surfing was a sport for her because of the pressures she felt as the daughter of immigrants:

So I grew up not playing very many sports, my parents are direct immigrants from Mexico. My dad ran across the border, he tells the story all the time how he did it with no shoes on (laughs) and my mom snuck in a car with her sister's VISA. They're both citizens now, I actually remember that whole process, but that's another story. Growing up their focus was strictly on getting a good education. There was a huge emphasis on getting an education. My parents thought the best possible way to uplift our family, financially and economically, which was our responsibility was to get an education, so no emphasis on sports. Very strictly focused on books, school, universities, and we weren't born with or raised with much. We lived in East Los Angeles, which is pretty much little Mexico, anyone that migrates here pretty much makes a pit stop or stays in East Los Angeles

Jennifer was raised by immigrant parents, feeling pressure to focus on her education instead of sports and to have a career over leisurely pursuits. She felt pressured by her family to pursue higher education and “uplift” her family economically. The pressure to do well at a young age led her on a path of higher education, eventually pursuing her credential and becoming a teacher for inner city students of color at a middle school in Chicago. Acosta's (1999) study of Latina athletes in higher education settings concluded they face unique

challenges, one of them being ambivalent attitudes of family members toward higher education and sport. Although Latinas participation in sport is not a new phenomenon (Jamieson 2005) they do face additional pressure challenges and barriers due the influence of families. Jennifer felt her parents' emphasis on education prevented her from pursuing sports at a young age because she internalized her parents' desire for her to have a different life than them. In a later part of the interview, Jennifer comments on feeling guilty for pursuing an activity (surfing) that provides her with joy. She draws this feeling out of the general pressures she believes Mexican Americans face living in the United States. According to her:

I just feel like a lot of Mexican Americans feel guilty experiencing joy, like it's not an emotion we're supposed to feel because we're expected to always be working hard. I find that really depressing that we would feel guilty about experiencing joy. I think there's a joy deficit in our community.

In this excerpt, Jennifer is drawing a connection between pursuing physical activities and balancing or maintaining a strong work ethic, a common trope associated with Latinos (Vasquez-Tokos and Norton-Smith 2017; Rios 2017). Her parents' concerns underscore their racialized emotions, feeling pressure to conform to "white dominated core culture and institutions" because to be "successful" in the United States one must get an education to accomplish the "American Dream" rhetoric (Feagin and Cobas 2015: 10). Research shows, there is a serious price that Latinos pay in dealing with the persistent and constant pressure to assimilate, often resulting decreased mental and physical health (Rumbaut 1997). Moving from their home country to the white Anglo culture of the United States is a difficult adjustment for many immigrants. Interestingly, although surfing is arguably a part

of dominant culture in Southern California, in this study its perceived by many Mexican American family or peer members as a sport for “hippies or doped out people.”

At first, Jennifer struggled to convince her parents she wasn’t being “lazy” and that all surfers were not “doped out hippies without jobs.” This sport stereotype might in part explain why her parents were concerned or hesitant about her specific choice of sport. If anything, it adds another layer or barrier for sporting Latinas. As highlighted by Jamieson (2005) and Acosta's (1999) work, Latino parents are not supportive of their daughters sporting careers and have mixed concerns as to how pursuing sports will lead to their daughter’s abilities to climb the social ladder and be economically successful in the United States. This was the case for Jennifer at first, they didn’t perceive surfing as a worthy pursuit or even a sport for that matter, but she now brings her parents with her when she surfs, exposing them to her new leisure preference. She says:

Now they pressure me to be safe out in the water and are more afraid of me drowning (laughs), but now they see how much surfing means to me, so they don’t make as much comments as they did before, they’ve really come a long way. Both me and my sister surf now!

Jennifer says she no longer feels pressure from her family to do economically well because she graduated from college, pursued her master’s degree and works in the education field, but the early messages she received from her parents created additional barriers for her when she was younger. Jennifer discusses gender barriers she faced in the water as well, but these experiences will be explored in Chapter four. A number of surfers commented further on the financial burden immigrants face in the United States, arguing most immigrants of color can’t conceive of a lifestyle involving time for leisurely pursuits.

Eduardo, an older working class second-generation Mexican American male surfer specifically focuses on the immigrants' experience and leisure choices:

I live in East Los Angeles because I can buy out here you know, but it's just too expensive to own a home near the beach. And you know if you're an immigrant, you also are starting from a different starting point you know further from the American Dream. You don't have time to mess around and surf, you know so most of these wealthier kids, they'll probably inherit their parent's money, you know, so it's just a different thing for folks like us

Eduardo specifically focuses on the Latino immigrant experience and the impacts of racial inequality in the United States, specifically highlighting the role wealth plays in acquiring the means to access beaches. Due to centuries of "unjust enrichments for whites," which has translated into centuries of "unjust impoverishment" for many Latinos, white as a group have been "...unjustly, the racialized beneficiaries of many government and other societal programs facilitating their prosperity, upward mobility, and wealth creation" (Feagin and Cobas 2015: 9). For example, today whites have on average many times the average wealth of Latino/a and African Americans (Feagin 2006). By framing surfing as an activity for "wealthier kids that inherit their parents money," Eduardo implied their leisurely preferences are not constrained in a similar vein as immigrants or Latinos. Since whites tend to have more money on average than Latinos, they have the ability to purchase a home near the beach or afford to engage in a lifestyle like surfing. For many Latinos, especially immigrants this sort of lifestyle is beyond the scope of their reality, a reality shaped by a racialized society. For some Latinos, being raised in a racialized society severely impacted

their sporting opportunities, resulting in a lifetime of mixed emotions towards engaging in lifestyle sports. The last narrative will highlight this point further.

Andrew, an older, middle class, second-generation Mexican American male surfer also felt pressure to perform well academically. He grew up in a small town outside of Austin, Texas and was the first in his family to attend college. He resided in a mostly working class Latino community. Growing up he rode a skateboard and biked around the city in his leisure time. He also commented on not being able to afford or have time for leisurely pursuits until he became a tenured professor, at which point he started to surf. He now owns a house, commutes over an hour one way to surf, shapes surfboards, and still skateboards. Growing up he witnessed his parents struggling financially and he knew he did not want that life for himself. He pursued higher education so that one day, he could own a car, have a family and be successful in his career. He discussed wishing he lived closer to the beach, but that owning a house in an affordable area is more important to him and living near the beach isn't realistic:

I can't afford to buy out there near the beach, sure it would be nice to live closer to the ocean, so I can surf more, but that's just not realistic for most Latinos.

Andrew is a professor, studies race relations and teaches a class about racial inequality, so he's familiar with the effects of systemic racism, which is why he is so adamant about not framing surfing as a way for Latinos to uplift themselves financially:

So for me, surfing is a great leisure activity, it's a way to keep me healthy. I wish more Latinos did it, but at the same time, it's not something I would promote. I would promote it as a healthy lifestyle, but I would not promote it as, if you're really good at this or you work hard at surfing it's going to bring you riches or it's going

to bring you all kinds of academic success. Yeah no, it's not. I would say do this on the side and if you had the set it aside like I did or not even do it because you are busy obtaining an academic success once you've obtained those things then come back into the waves.

Andrew highlights the potential positive effects surfing can have on an individual, physically it's been a healthy alternative for him, but he would never promote it as a career choice or path.

Mirroring his parents' wishes, Andrew's narrative also implies an emphasis on education over leisure, which in part is shaped by his generational status and socioeconomic status growing up. He is careful to frame surfing as a healthy activity, but he would never promote it as a lifestyle or a potential career path for minorities:

Why would I tell Latino communities to pursue a sport like surfing? So maybe that's why more people don't pursue it, to a degree make some sort of calculation, I don't know if or how Latinos or African Americans do this, but I feel like there is some sort of calculation. But I would think for African Americans there is some sort of instrumental calculation, where they are thinking, if I do football, there is a chance of me doing x, y, z. Why would I do surfing if there is no chance, you know if it's a dead end?

As he reiterates in this quote, Andrew doesn't frame surfing as a potential career path for Latino/as because he believes they should be elevating themselves through education or the workplace. Andrew waited until he was in his early 40s to pursue sports because his family stressed economic success due to their generational status. He said he was too

preoccupied pursuing higher education to value sports and was already on a “fast track to assimilation” when he was a teenager:

And you know, the moment I left my neighborhood to go to college, I was on a fast track towards assimilation, you know, the moment I started to take AP classes, I was already on that path, so again, surfing was not on my mind

Growing up in a working class environment and witnessing the ways in which Latinos are structurally disadvantaged significantly shaped his desire and need to pursue higher education, funneling him into a life with no space for catching waves. Andrew waited until he was financially stable to pursue any sport seriously, but clearly his early exposure to working class conditions and economic constraints influenced his path to education instead of leisure. The pressure he felt to fulfill the “immigrant bargain” outweighed any desire for a life outside of academic. For a majority of Mexican American surfers learning how to surf in the last twenty years, the activity was not perceived as a path to assimilation. In contrast, for a number of Mexican American surfers growing up in the 1960s surfing the surf boom and newly integrated schools, surfing was perceived as a path to assimilation. This theme will be highlighted further in the following section.

Assimilation, Age and Time Period

I was fortunate to interview a few older Mexican American male surfers that grew up surfing in the 1950s when race relations were shifting both in and outside of the water. The narratives from male Mexican American participants surfing in the 1950s covered topics such as navigating newly integrated high schools, participating in integrated sports, growing up in predominantly Latina/o working class neighborhoods within mostly white, middle class communities, and experiencing a “surf boom” which hit Southern California

beaches in the late 1950s (Westwick and Neushul 2013). Nestor, an older, working class, second-generation Mexican American male, comments on his experiences surfing during this time period:

When we were growing up everyone was surfing, it didn't matter if you were black, brown, yellow or white. Everyone was doing it and us Mexicans, we wanted to do it. If the white boys were doing then we figured we would as well. At that time integration was in full swing in the schools too, so you know it was kind of encouraged.

When discussing how this group of older Mexican American surfers navigated their newly integrated high schools, surfing often came up as a tool for assimilation.

As Ralph, an older, working class, second-generation Mexican American male excitedly states:

Surfing was a way for us to assimilate. I had just started going to an integrated school. We saw all the other white boys doing it and figured we could do it too.

Ralph's surf narrative best captures the major themes of this groups experiences of race, belonging and surf culture. His neighborhood was small beach community 50 miles north of Los Angeles County, which he described as having mostly Mexican American families with parents mainly working as migrant laborers. He said the neighborhood was very family-oriented; Every summer families gathered at a local beach, to play in the water, share meals and relax. Before he got into surfing, he spent a significant amount of time at an afterschool program through the local community center. He recalled vivid memories of spending his summer days camping in the woods and swimming in rivers with "the white boys." Ralph was exposed to beach culture, aquatic life, and integrated sporting spaces at

an early age, so for him, surfing was another avenue or tool for assimilation, but it was never a priority or a lasting leisurely pursuit.

At that time, Southern California was experiencing a surf boom. According to interviewees, “everyone was surfing, it was a surfing safari.” Since surfing in the community was a normal activity for most boys, these young men decided they would give it a try and perceived it as a tool for assimilation, but not a priority in his life. For him, working and owning a car was a priority because according to him, “My parents didn’t work hard in the fields all day, so I could become a surf bum, traveling up and down the coast, searching for endless waves.” Ralph’s concern and emphasis on how hard his parents worked so he could attend school and not spend all his time out in the water, also exemplifies the concept of the immigrant bargain. Both of Ralph’s parents were immigrants, which clearly impacted his own expectations and, in turn, constrained his amount of leisure time to spend surfing. As previously mentioned, this theme was consistent for both women and men, especially second-generation Mexican Americans from working class families. Although Ralph was raised in a social context that typically makes it difficult for Mexican Americans to acquire the necessary means for accessing public spaces, the influx of integration laws and the pressure to conform, allowed him to access surfing spaces with relative ease. At least in the social context and time period of these surfing spaces in northern Santa Barbara, he was able to access the beach and ocean without facing racialized barriers. I was not able to speak to any Mexican American female surfers from this era. Female surfing dramatically increased in the late 70s and early 90s, but even by modern standards, women of color in the United States seem to be the smallest number of participants. Latina/o surfers during this time era never mentioned perceiving

the beach as a predominantly white space, instead they perceived it as yet another integrated space for them to “mixed with the white boys.” This was not the case for many contemporary Latino/a surfers, where by contrast many perceived the beach and surfing as a “white boy sport,” constructing imagined barriers of access for themselves.

Imaginary Spaces of Whiteness

In the United States, racialized structural factors shape and determine what spaces people of color occupy. People from different backgrounds are relegated to different physical locations by concrete structural policies and practices, for example, housing and lending discrimination prevented and continues to prevent African Americans from purchasing homes in certain cities across America. Race serves as an important variable when it comes to shaping differential exposure to polluted air, food and land (Feagin and McKinney 2003; Lipsitz 1998). By examining the “racial demography” (Lipsitz 2011:12) of the places where people live, work and play, scholars can begin the process of understanding how exclusion and inclusion operates deeply throughout society. Cultural geographer George Lipsitz (2011) argues, a white spatial imaginary operates as a central mechanism for obstructing opportunities and life chances in the United States. The belief in a racially specific spatial imaginary is not a theory, but “...a metaphorical construct that reveals actual social relations” (Lipsitz 2011:11). Therefore, “whiteness, as a analytical category, refers not only to the ways in which all whites benefit from the association of whiteness with privilege, but to the ways in which public spaces are defined by racial demography” (Lipsitz 2011: 12). In other words, public spaces are overwhelming perceived and marked by race.

Public places and social institutions are informally marked or assumed to be white (Flores-González 2017; Lipsitz, 2011; Bonilla-Silva 2015), including public beaches in Southern California (Wheaton 2013). This particular theme sheds light on the ways in which public beaches in Southern California are constructed through “imaginary notions of whiteness” (Nayak 2010: 2375) that operate as “places of white retreat and safety” (Wheaton 2017: 183), and thereby, not places for non-white participants to freely enjoy the ocean. The Jim Crow era, and the decades to follow, constructed surfing and the beaches as a white sport and space. Specifically, in California during the 1920s, the city beaches around Los Angeles were typically limited to whites only. There is little empirical research examining how Jim Crow sanctions impacted Mexican Americans beach going practices, but from what is available, segregated pools and beaches limited minorities access to public facilities. In addition to prejudice laws, there were also economic factors, such as the rising price of beach real estate that contributed to beach communities becoming increasingly white (Jefferson 2009; see also Westwick and Neushul 2013). Residual effects of racial segregation, coupled with political and economic factors, have made ethnic minorities “feel out of place” in nonurban settings (Wheaton 2017:183). For example, Wheaton’s (2017) study about African American surfers examined the impacts of exclusionary racial policies, explicitly focusing on the United States and the ways in which structural racism has impacted African Americans use of beaches.

African American surfers viewed beaches as exclusionary spaces and a place for “white retreat and safety” (Wheaton 2017: 183). Even after learning to surf, which requires frequent trips to the beach, African American participants still reported feelings of “otherness” in and outside of the water. The same is true for Mexican American

participants, but more will be said about their feelings of otherness inside of the water in the next chapter. I asked participants to comment on their beach and aquatic knowledge prior to becoming surfers. Approximately a quarter of Mexican American participants commented on frequently visiting the beach with family members or friends. Frequently was described as going to the beach more than three or four times a year. Findings are consistent with data measuring participation rates among Hispanics and recent research on beach visitation suggests that Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, and non-Hispanic Whites in Southern California tend to visit different beaches, but conclusive data is not yet available (Garcia and Baltodano 2005). According to the University of Southern California Coastal Demographic Study, people living along the Los Angeles coastline are disproportionately non-Hispanic White and wealthy, compared to the state and county: 68% are non-Hispanic White, 16% are Latino, nearly 8% are Asian, and less than 5% are Black (Anderson and Godfre 2003).

For the surfers with prior experience and exposure to the beach, they would refer to themselves as first, second or third-generation “beachgoers.” A majority of Mexican American surfers exposed to the beach at a younger age said they were introduced by a white family member or peer, Hector, a younger, working class, second-generation Mexican American male recalls the first time he visited the beach:

Growing up my father never took me to the beach, to be honest with you I am pretty sure he never went to the beach. He grew up in Mexico, so I know for him he’s had a really different kind of life than me. He’s always getting on me about being financially stable, but yeah. One of my aunts, she’s white, she knew someone that owned a house down by the beach in Newport, so one summer I went with my aunt.

That was the first time I went to the beach and saw like surfers. Some of my aunt's friends surfed and ended up letting me play around on their boards. I would ask my aunt to take me every summer because I just loved the beach so much. My dad still hasn't visited the beach and doesn't really approve of my surfing.

Only four of the forty participants interviewed said they attended or were exposed to the beach from their predominantly Mexican American families or friends. As previously highlighted, Mexican Americans are often exposed to the beach or surf culture through family or peer influence either in college or the workplace. Mexican American participants stated their perceptions of the beach as a white space also circumvented their participation in the sport. Jennifer, a young working class second-generation Mexican American female explains why she believed surfing was not a sport for her:

And the thing with surfing is I associated it with white culture, like that's something white people do, specifically kids from privileged backgrounds. Like in mind, I thought genetically it wasn't in me like something told me I couldn't do it.

Jennifer perceives surfing spaces as predominantly white male sporting spaces and construct internalized barriers for themselves. As Jennifer states, in her mind she correlates surfing with whiteness and privilege, to the extent she believed the ability to surf is natural for white non-Hispanic people, specifically men. Her racialized and gendered construct of surf culture formed her perception of surf spaces as "white spaces only." Jennifer credited her own ideations and feelings of not belonging as reasons why she didn't surf earlier in her life. When she was younger she lived in a town immersed in surf culture, less than five minutes from the beach, but never imagined she could pursue it. Shawn, a younger, working class, second-generation Mexican American male shared the same cultural

assumption about surfers and surfing spaces, but to the extent it affected his performance, interactions, and perception of other surfer's skills:

There aren't a lot of people of color out in the line-up. And when I do see a white person (surfing) I judge their surfing differently too. I don't know why, but I guess when I see them, I just assume or think they're good at surfing. I also have this preconceived idea about them too. Someone that's white, I just assume they'll be a better surfer than I am. You know, I will implicitly give them waves like I don't mean to but it's just that assumption. I will second guess myself

As he states, he had preconceived ideas about surfers, he assumed white surfers were more skilled than him simply because he associates whiteness with surfing prowess. He implicitly alters and lowers his surfing abilities because he assumes the other surfers will be more skilled than him. Most of the participants interviewed viewed surfing as a predominantly white middle class sport for men, which in turn tends to make non-white participants feel inherently out of place. As these narratives illustrate, Mexican American participants perceive surfing spaces as white, feel out of place and unwelcome in the space. These narratives also shed light on the ways in which "sportscares" become gendered and racialized. According to Stoddart (2010), "Sportscares are places where nature is incorporated into human habitat" (p. 111) and as ideological places, they can confirm "constructions of race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, and nationhood" (Fusco 2005: 305).

These brief narratives illustrate a "geography of racial politics," which point to the ways in which places and spaces are racially marked (Flores Gonzalez 2017:31, see also Lipsitz 2011) as well as regulated. Places and spaces are racially marked and "sustain racial understandings of who belongs" (Flores-González 2017: 32), to the extent the presence of

nonwhites can elicit negative reactions in the physical and nonverbal form. These threats from whites are meant to make nonwhite others feel “unwelcome or out of bounds” (Flores-González 2017: 32, see also Anderson 2015; Feagin and Cobas 2015). Flores-Gonzalez’ work examines how Latino millennials understand race, experience race and develop notions of belonging, arguing Latinos don’t feel accepted by larger society and believe they will never leave their spot at the margins of society looking in. The following chapter will examine Mexican Americans experiences of racial microaggressions, but it’s important to highlight what role perceptions of spaces plays in minorities feelings of exclusion and marginalization.

Surf culture and media only continue to perpetuate what Chivers-Yochim (2010) terms an “imagined community of whiteness” in most lifestyle sports, often erasing ethnic minorities experiences. Prior to becoming surfers, Mexican American participants often perceive themselves as outsiders and feel out of place because they don’t fit into hegemonic ideals perpetuated in the California surf culture. In the United States, the white, blonde surfer dude has become so iconic he has essentially become the face of California (Comer 2016). Data from this subsection illuminates the ways in which surfing spaces are not inclusive and are racially marked as white, constructing imagined barriers of access and exposure. Research on Latino/as experiences in white spaces and places helps explain how spaces are constructed in exclusionary ways as well as shed light on why recreational patterns of minorities vary significantly across racial groups. To date, most empirical studies about participation rates does not take into account the ways in which exposure to oppression or other cultural factors can impact a minorities decision to visit public places.

Conclusion

These brief, but insightful commentary begins the process of understanding how Mexican Americans might use sport as a tool for assimilation, how they perceive racialized and gendered landscapes and the obstacles they face prior to becoming surfers. Current literature suggests Latino/as experience discrimination to a similar degree as other racial or ethnic groups with many of them facing barriers in the workforce, education and neighborhoods. Mexican American participants recalled experiencing racial microaggressions while out in the line-up, but most mentioned the impact of growing up in working class neighborhoods, having limited access to resources, being a child of immigrant parents, and growing up with limited leisure time due to economic constraints as the reasons why they did not pursue surfing until later in their lives. Mexican American surf histories provide insight into the multitude of factors contributing to how Mexican Americans exposure and access to public beaches are influenced by structural and cultural factors.

Analyzing surfers' stories uncovers how entry into the sport, gaining and maintaining access to sporting spaces are intersected by class, race, generation, age, and gender. For example, working class white non-Hispanic surfers faced economic and income constraints, but since they had at least one friend or family member that surfed, they were able to access public beaches through their peer and family groups, providing them with the means for developing a surfing habitus. Utilizing Bourdieu's concept of habitus to explain variance in sporting choices, illuminated how leisure preferences are acquired and reproduced due to influences like family and peer influence, but other cultural factors like exposure to systematic oppression or a history of segregated spaces

significantly structured opportunities for Mexican American surfers. Many Mexican Americans perceived public spaces as predominantly white spaces, which deterred them from accessing beaches. Coupled with perceptions, some Mexican American surfers experienced racism in predominantly white spaces, but those instances will be explored in the following chapter. In sum, Mexican American surfers' experiences and opportunities are limited by a range of economic, practical, sociocultural, historical and spatial factors, underscoring the ways in which their sporting opportunities are constricted.

CHAPTER III
THE CODE OF THE SEA: RACE , GENDER, AND BELONGING IN
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SURF CULTURE

Victoria is a younger working class third-generation woman of Mexican descent whose narrative provides a glimpse at Mexican American surfer's experiences of marginalization and exclusion in California surfing spaces:

Surfing with him and just really seeing how wild people get with him has helped me reflect on my own experiences. I always knew there was “girl privilege” or some extension of it, from the moment I started surfing guys were protective of me. Lots of protection from the men. They would like protect me when I was out there and let me do my thing. But this one time, I was surfing and there was this older white lady, she is always giving me crap. And she'll tell me things like, “Let other people catch waves.” And I'm definitely not the one catching all of the waves. It's like her friends. So I don't know why she has to give me crap, when it's her people catching all of the waves. She is the most noticeable example of someone that thinks I don't belong there and she carries so much white privilege and entitlement. I don't see her behaving this way towards other white people, that's how I know it's an extension of white privilege. I don't see her doing it to other white girls, especially the ones just learning. She's just always only talking crap to me. It happens regularly, so I don't feel like I am being like hypersensitive. I definitely get a weird vibe [energy] from her and I'm not exactly sure if it's about race, I could pass for a lot of different ethnicities or races. Definitely more of a localism thing because I'm

not from Malibu, I've only been there the last few years. But I see localism, the entitlement of or ownership of space as an extension of white supremacy because who the hell owns property down in beach communities? I mean, come on, look at the racism and race effects surrounding swimming pools and swimming. Our people were limited or their access was rather limited. Black and brown people didn't have access to water, it was historically restricted

Victoria is an avid surfer with over 15 years of experience surfing, yet her everyday surfing experiences are marked by racialized and gendered feelings of otherness and not-belonging. At most surfing spots, women of color occupy a subordinate position in the surfing hierarchy and struggle to be recognized as authentic members of surf culture. Women surfers expect the male dominated space to be challenging and are accustomed to experiencing sexism, however the ways in which Mexican American women experience racial discrimination is more insidious and harder to distinguish. This vignette details a number of factors contributing to a majority of Mexican American surfers' experiences of marginalization and discrimination across a multitude of surfing spaces in Southern California. Inside the water all surfers brush up against localism, but Mexican American surfers racialized and gendered feelings of not belonging extend beyond a few surfers treating them differently. Their experiences are exacerbated by *the code of the sea*. The code of the sea is a configuration of factors framing Mexican American surfers' experiences of discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion. The first section of this chapter will define the code of the sea by listing the factors involved in exclusionary practices inside of the line-up and describe how racial structural inequality drives the cultural concept of localism, claimed by white surfers, to mark the space as white and

conceptualize non-white surfers as intruders.

Chapter two outlined and framed the ways in which Mexican Americans experience structural and internal barriers that exclude and marginalize them from public recreational spaces. Mexican American surfers' experiences are largely shaped by continued and accumulated exposure to systemic racism. Historically, Mexican Americans have been *pushed out*: redirected and relegated to urban areas in Los Angeles, restricting and limiting their access to certain public spaces such as beaches. Due to the residual effects of residential segregation, Mexican American surfers experience restricted access and exposure to public beaches. Physical barriers include practical or realistic barriers, such as limited or poor public transportation to beaches, due largely to residential segregation. Whereas imaginary barriers are rooted in white cultural imagery of beach and surf culture, such that Mexican Americans perceive these spaces as inherently white and exclusionary. In summary, Mexican American surfers experience geographical exclusions, limited recreational resources, limited access to public spaces and racialized perceived barriers, but also racialized barriers as demonstrated by the quote at the beginning of the chapter. Some surfers are able to access surf spaces with relative ease due to their racialized habitus; by building and relying on their abilities to accumulate social capital. Despite their innate feelings of exclusion and marginalization, some Mexican American surfers did overcome these racialized barriers and pursued the sport. The many barriers did significantly delay their entry into the sport and continues to weigh on their psyche throughout their surfing lives.

In this chapter, I detail how Mexican American surfers' sense of not-belonging and construction of an inclusive community are inscribed by surf relations in the water, such

as localism and surf hierarchies. Surf relations are shaped and reinforced by white surfers' "colorblind racism" viewpoints, operating as a system of exclusion that disproportionately affects women and Mexican American surfers. Racialized notions of not belonging reinforce dominant cultural ideologies about surf culture and beach culture's inherent and embodied whiteness. My data about Mexican American surfers' experiences will shed light on the subtle and overt ways they are subjected to discrimination, sexism and racism inside and outside of the line-up. Specific questions this chapter will explore are as follows: Is recreational surfing a meritocracy? How is the surfing hierarchy established and reinforced in the line-up? To what extent are non-Hispanic white surfers adopting a "colorblind racism" framework to address diversity and inclusion concerns in surfing spaces? By the end of the chapter these questions will be answered and Mexican American surfers' experiences of exclusion and inclusion will be further unearthed.

The Code of the Sea

The code of the sea embodies a collection of rules, guidelines and norms organizing surfers in the surfing space. The "code of the sea" is conceptually inspired by Elijah Anderson's (1999) ethnography about inner-city Black youth and the ways in which their experiences with interpersonal violence are regulated through an informal, but well known "code of the streets." The ways in which Elijah Anderson frames the seemingly randomness of the streets by focusing on informal, well inscribed rules of inner-city life is a useful frame for understanding how surfers' actions in the water are not arbitrary or random, but shaped by a complex set of norms, power relations and engraved rules. There are no formal rules in recreational surfing, but for the most part surfers adhere to an assortment of norms governing their behaviors and actions in the water. Surf hierarchies

and localism work together to frame surfing spaces as inherently white and mark non-white bodies as “outsiders.” The code of the sea is largely utilized by surfers at the top of the pecking order, known as “locals” to monitor and regulate Mexican American and women surfers’ bodies in the surfing space. By deconstructing the code of the sea, it will be revealed how surfing spaces are not value-free or neutral spaces, but are places bound by racialized and gendered power relations.

The first layer of the code of the sea involves the surfing etiquette. The surfing etiquette is a road map for recreational surfing, it consists of informal rules, morals and surf-related expectations. These rules are meant to promote safety in the water and prevent confrontations amongst surfers “fighting” over waves. Confrontations, misunderstanding and admonishments in the water typically occur when one of the surfing etiquette tenets is violated. In the opening vignette, Victoria is accused of violating one of the tenets because she allegedly is catching an unfair and inequitable number of waves. Any surfer can “call out” another surfer for breaking the code of conduct, but locals are usually the enforcers of the surfing etiquette because they perceive surfing spaces as their turf. Locals can also defy the surfing etiquette, for example, by dropping in on someone (catch a wave out of line or out of order) because they are higher ranked in the local surf hierarchy.

The second layer of the code of the sea is localism and locals. Locals are regulators and enforcers of the surfing etiquette, commonly consisting of white, upper to middle class, able-bodied, heterosexual males. Surfing spots with pristine waves are highly guarded spaces, known for their aggressive and violent locals, but most decent surfing spots will have surfers guarding “their” spot. Most run-ins with locals don’t result in violence, but locals are notorious for policing a surf territory or “turf” they have defined and claimed as

“theirs” (Dakalos 2007). Since locals tend to be long-time beachgoers and surfers, they believe they are inherently “entitled” to the waves because they have invested so much time into the activity as well as the specific place they have chosen to surf. From the perspective of a local, they have “earned” the right to claim the space and usually harbor strong emotions towards outsiders, especially surfers that don’t follow the surfing etiquette. Non-locals or newcomers are expected to “respect the line-up” by “allowing” locals uncontested access to public waves. In sum, locals sit at the top of the “pecking order” (Evers 2009) and are designated as enforcers of the code of the sea, which means they possess the most access to public resources.

In spite of women and minorities’ accelerating presence in the sport (Olive, Roy and Wheaton 2017; Comer 2010), line-ups continue to be dominated by elite white men sitting at the top of the “pecking order” (Evers 2009). A “pecking order” also known as a surfing hierarchy, is an established ranking in the surfing space, with women, non-white surfers, homosexual and other marginalized categories of surfers, sitting below white, middle class, able-bodied heterosexual men. This race/gender/class/sexuality hierarchy reflects the hierarchy most prominent in United States society. Historically, white, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied men have more opportunities and freedom for leisure participation. This dynamic is most visible in western forms of surfing. Scholars argue western surf culture is “undeniably a male-dominated history” (Ford and Brown 2005: 94; see also Lisa Hunter 2018). Women surfers have battled against the “fraternization of surf culture” (Booth 2001) since the early 1960s when professional and recreational women surfers began to challenge the “natural” progression of the male-dominated sport. In the United States, the history of surfing is chock-full of overt examples of sexism and

misogyny affecting women surfers' everyday experiences. Women surfers day-to-day experiences include: navigating male surfers' patronizing behavior (Olive et al. 2016), coping with sexist remarks during professional competitions (Booth 2001; Stranger 2012) and increasing concerns over surf media's hypersexualization of professional women surfers (Henderson 2011; Olive et al. 2016; Schumacher 2017). Women surfers since the 1960s have struggled, but successfully forged empowering and transformative spaces for female wave riders. However, patriarchal surfing hierarchies continue to reinforce an unequal power dynamic in the water, resulting in enduring differentiated treatment of women and minorities perpetuated predominantly by white male surfers.

When I asked participants to describe the pecking order at their local surfing spots, the following order is the most frequently reported surfing hierarchy:

1. white, male, heterosexual and upper-middle class;
2. ethnic/racial minority, male, heterosexual and upper-middle class;
3. white, boy, heterosexual and upper-middle class;
4. white, female, heterosexual and upper-middle class; ethnic/racial minority, female, heterosexual, varied class background;
5. and other marginalized groups of surfers such as non-able bodied or LGBTQ surfers.

This ordering can be fluid and flexible depending on the geographical location, but this pecking order is the most commonly cited ordering from participants interviewed as well as current research about surf culture (Hough-Snee and Eastman 2017; lisa hunter 2018). Nearly all participants agree women of color surfers occupy one of the lowest positions in the overall surfing hierarchy at most surfing spots in the United States. As Victoria's

narrative highlights, as a woman of color, an outsider and subordinate surfer, she is “doubly marginalized” (Nemani and Thorpe 2016: 219) in the surfing space. Gendered feelings of not belonging are reinforced by the code of the sea and will be explored in depth in the final section.

Localism can best be understood as a “complicated set of informal rules and hierarchies,” meant to impose order on other surfers (Westwick and Neushul 2013: 195). The intensity of localism varies across surfing spots, but localism can be experienced at most surf spots across the globe. Extreme instances of localism involve violence, often referred to as “surf rage” (Young 2000) or “surf-related aggression” (Comley 2011), but for the most part, localism manifests in verbal assaults waged against non-locals or “outsiders.” Localism is arguably a more extreme issue for Southern California surfers especially at highly competitive and skilled surfing spots such as Malibu Pier, where Victoria is surfing at in the opening vignette (Westwick and Neushul 2013). Some believe localism stems from increasingly large and crowded line-ups, but localism has a long history in surfing. Surfers have a long tradition of engraving and embodying this ideology at particular beaches (Evers 2009), attempting to prevent outsiders from surfing in “their” designated local surf spots.

Surf historians believe the first documented examples of localism occurred in Hawaii during the 1970s at the infamous Waikiki beach (Westwick and Neushul 2013). A number of “haoles,” a Hawaiian term for white surfers, reportedly received beatings from Hawaiian locals simply because they were white. During this era in Hawaii, a group of Hawaiian surfers created O He’e Nalu, also known as Da Hui, to defend their local surf spots from the “invasion of haole surfers” (Westwick and Neushul 2013: 195). It was

rumored this group sprung out of the Hawaiian Renaissance movement, utilizing violent tactics to recover ancient Hawaiian culture, but it was later discovered this group was not affiliated with the movement. This case highlights complex racialized factors motivating some surfers to engage in territorial behavior to protect “their” land from outsiders. Indigenous Hawaiian surfers have a long and complicated relationship with American surfers, rooted in colonialism, imperialism and cultural appropriation (Gilio-Whitaker 2017). Localism in the Hawaiian surf context is intertwined with race relations, politics and groups of indigenous surfers “reclaiming” a tradition, a sport and a culture “stolen” from them by white colonizers (Gilio-Whitaker 2017; Walker 2015). For American surfers, localism is a mechanism for small, but powerful groups of white, middle class, heterosexual males to establish power in surfing spaces. Localism in the American context is a complex belief system claimed by white surfers to mark spaces as white, circumventing non-white surfers from accessing public recreational spaces and marking their bodies as “other.” For the most part, locals’ beliefs and actions stem from white privilege and systemic white supremacy, inhibiting their abilities to “see race.” The next section will explore how residential segregation, localism and colorblind racism are interrelated issues affecting Mexican American surfers’ experiences.

Residential Segregation, the Construction of Localism and Color-Blind Racism

Structurally, white, middle class, heterosexual males are in the prime position to progress to the status of “local” and enforce localism because non-white surfers historically had limited and restricted access to the coast. Racial residential segregation has played a significant role in non-white surfers’ ability to occupy these spaces and identities, a factor once believed to be an issue of the past (Glaeser and Vigdor 2012). However, scholars

contest, race remains a “fundamental determinant” of residential patterns in the United States (Massey and Denton 1992: 235; Rothstein 2017; Hall et al 2015; Massey and Denton 1987). Racial segregation has been a defining characteristic of United States cities for nearly a century and has played a significant role in driving as well as maintaining racial/ethnic inequality (Massey and Denton 1988; Hall et al. 2015). Historically, African Americans were “systematically expelled” from predominantly white communities in the south during the Jim Crow era (Rothstein 2017: 41). Southern states adopted segregation statutes first, also known as Jim Crow laws, prohibiting African Americans from attending integrated schools or public transportation, among others. Due to the adoption of Jim Crow laws, residential integration declined steadily from 1880 to the mid-twentieth century (Rothstein 2017).

Local and federal officials began to promote racial zoning ordinances in the 1910s to reserve middle class neighborhoods for single-parent households, prohibiting lower-income families from all races from affording these homes (Rothstein 2017). During this era, racial zoning laws prevented lower-income African Americans from living in neighborhoods where middle class whites resided, preserving these areas for the white elites. Eventually Jim Crow laws spread to other parts of the country, impacting other non-white communities’ housing opportunities in places like Southern California. In the 1930s, a number of states began to legally remedy racial zoning laws, but customary means of maintaining segregation were weakened by United States Supreme Court and California court decisions between 1948 and 1968 (Shelley v. Kramer 1948 and Barrows v. Jackson 1953; Rothstein 2017). The era of segregation ended in the 1960s, but discriminatory housing practices continued to block residential integration (Alba and Logan 1991; see also

Massey and Denton 1992), further increasing racial segregation. For example, Palm (1985:66) found that real estate agents “steered” customers to racially segregated neighborhoods. Specifically, in Los Angeles, Light (2006) argues laws, like housing codes, deflected Latinos from the metropolitan region. The strict enforcement of existing suburban housing codes tended to, “exclude Latino immigrants, who, thanks to their poverty, required legal laxity or outright law change to gain access” (Light 2006:132). Housing codes thus constricted Latinos from living in multi-family high-rise homes and having access to public transportation. Laws such as these mentioned in an effect, “stipulated what kind of house one could occupy, but implicitly as well how one must occupy it, and many Latinos could not meet the implications” (Light 2006:132). Even decades after segregation laws were deemed unconstitutional, race continues to be the number one determinant of residential patterns.

Residential discrimination, formally and informally has traditionally restricted minorities to a small number of neighborhoods that together comprise a small share of the urban environment (Massey 1979), communities typically far from the coast. Despite limited and restricted access to public beaches, segregated recreational spaces became important spaces for non-white residents to engage in leisure and pleasure along the beautiful Southern California coastline (Jefferson 2009). Segregated beaches, like Inkwell beach in Santa Monica were and are important recreational spaces for African American beachgoers (Jefferson 2009; Comer 2016). For example, Inkwell beach was recently recognized as a historical landmark by the city of Santa Monica (Comer 2016). Annually, non-profit surf organizations like Black Girl Surf and Black Surfers Collective hold special events, celebrations and ceremonies to commemorate the history of African American

leisure and pain. Segregated recreational spaces were more than a place for non-white residents to simply soak up the sun and participate in beach culture, they were also highly political spaces. Public “wade ins” were utilized by young African American women and men “fighting for the right to inhabit the Southern California tideline” (Comer 2016: 70). Much of the history of non-whites’ relation to water culture in Southern California is erased and lost in the popular white cultural imagery of California beach culture. Rather recently, narratives of non-white surfers during the Jim Crow era have started to surface. For example, the surf documentary *White Wash* details the story of the first documented African American/Latino surfer Nick Gabaldon. Historical narratives of his life detail how he paddled miles from Inkwell beach to surf the pier, evading police officers and anyone else attempting to remove him from “whites only” beaches. Unfortunately, Nick Gabaldon would one day die surfing at the Malibu pier, but his mostly unknown story documents how there were a small number of non-whites surfing at a time when highly publicized racial tension in the United States spilled over into the shorelines of public beaches. His story, among others, also represents alternative narratives to a mainly white washed history of the sport.

Segregated beaches and public parks were often scenes of violence for non-white people. Desegregation of public spaces, specifically public parks and swimming pools began in the 1940s, but it was not without controversy. The desegregation of public spaces often led to white criminality, a snippet of history often forgotten from “popular memory” (Lipsitz 2011: 27). For example, when St. Louis announced the desegregation of its municipally owned and operated swimming pool in 1949, thirty Black children showed up to swim, but were quickly surrounded by white residents equipped with weapons as they

shouted racial epithets (Lipsitz 2011). Police officers were able to escort the Black children to safety, but white people began attacking random Black people they encountered in and around the park. By the end of the day, five hundred white people congregated at the park, aimlessly attacking Black community members with lead pipes, baseball bats and knives. The violence that ensued throughout the night forced the city to rescind the desegregation order and close its' pools entirely. This isolated, but somewhat common example of white criminality may seem extreme but the very idea of Black people occupying predominantly white spaces "constitutes a criminal transgression of its own [that] still looms in the white spatial imaginary" (Lipsitz 2011: 28). Many aspects of society are still structured by a white spatial imaginary, creating problems for communities of color in the places they live, work and play.

Due in large part to the racialization of space, whiteness in US society has less to do with the pigment of one's skin and more to do with its condition (Lipsitz 2011). Whiteness is a "structured advantage" that funnels biased gains and inequitable enrichments to white people while at the same time creating undeserved and biased obstacles in the way of marginalized groups of people (Lipsitz 2011: 3). Nearly four decades after the Civil Rights era, race is still the single most important factor for determining opportunities and outcomes (Lipsitz 2011). Furthermore, whiteness can extend beyond landscapes and filter into coastscapes globally. As Victoria's narrative highlights, she witnessed over and over again how white women surfers are treated differently in the surfing space when non-white women surfers are present. From Victoria's perspective, she regards the differential treatment as the most recognizable example of white privilege in the surfing space. That is, the other white women surfers are treated with

more respect and are afforded more opportunities simply because they are white despite their lower status as beginner surfers. From the perspective of a woman of color, who is a minority and an anomaly in the water, it appears that white women surfers receive more opportunities and benefits (waves, respect and peace of mind) simply for being white. Victoria recognizes she may not hold a powerful position in the line-up, but as a skilled surfer and respectful participant, she believed the actions of the local woman surfer are interlocked with racial bias.

Localism and the actions enacted by locals, work to exclude Mexican American surfers from the space and make them feel as if they inherently do not belong in the line-up. Residential segregation is the structure driving the cultural notion of localism because small but powerful groups of privileged surfers are hoarding waves and engaging in exclusionary practices to keep outsiders out of the surfing space that they feel entitled as property owners. Segregation has indoctrinated wealthy communities to hoard amenities and resources, and to exclude “undesirable populations” (Lipsitz 2011: 28). Through this process of exclusion and marginalization, surfing spaces are racialized and marked as white. The cultural consequences of the white spatial imagery “naturalizes” and hides residual effects of residential segregation. Oftentimes, the inherent whiteness of surf culture often goes unquestioned. Locals, who are white, fail to recognize the ways in which their actions, behaviors, and unearned privileges extend from structural inequalities that benefit them. Locals also fail to recognize how structural advantages position them socially and economically above non-white surfers. Therefore, racialized structural disadvantages seep into surf culture, enabling white surfers to remain at the top of the pecking order without being overtly racist. White surfers use the cultural notion of localism to defend

their actions and the actions of others. Thus, localism along with surfing etiquette and surfing hierarchies (such as the code of the sea) become major tools for white people to mark surf territories as white, and by proxy exclude non-white bodies by making them feel unwelcomed.

When interviewed, almost all of the white participants and a small percentage of Mexican American surfers faulted localism for any surf-related issues in the water. Their ideologies were a mixture of the following: claiming race or the color of one's skin does not matter; that it is about following the surfing etiquette and respecting locals' and skills matter more than anything; if you can surf then you will gain respect. Surfers adhering to these explanations are adopting a "colorblind racism" frame to argue surf-related issues in the water, specifically that cases of exclusion have more to do with the code of the sea than race or gender. A majority of white male surfers and approximately half white female surfers dismissed any instances of race-related issues in the water and argued instead that surfing is a sport for anyone with a board. A majority of white male surfers agreed that female surfers experience some degree of sexism in the line-up but become uncomfortable when discussing issues related to race. The following section will analyze responses to surf-related issues and highlight the ways in which the naturalization and minimization of race frames are applied to understanding how colorblind racism operates within surfing spaces across Southern California beaches.

When it came to questions about race-related issues in surf culture, white surfers deflected the question and defaulted to arguing localism is the main issue in the sport. All but a handful of surfers could easily comment on the ways in which women surfers experience sexism, but when it came to racial matters, white surfers adopted a "colorblind

racism” frame (Bonilla-Silva 2010). A plethora of surfers commented on the ways in which women’s bodies are hypersexualized in surfing magazines and the noticeable increase in female participants. The film *Blue Crush*, which centers female surfers narratives and lives, was a highly cited film across all genders. In contrast, when it came to non-white professional surfers, very few white surfers could name current or past professional Mexican American or African American surfers. Again, they were quick to name their favorite professional white women surfers. It should be noted that currently on the WSL (World Surf League) there are more professional female surfers than non-white surfers, but with Brazil’s continuous dominance on tour, these numbers are starting to shift.

When it came to films about non-white surfers, approximately one quarter of the Mexican American participants watched the surf documentary *White Wash*. This recent film centers the voices of African American surfers and uncovers the history of their participation in the sport. Many Mexican American participants said they related to their stories of pain, oppression, discrimination and racialized feelings of not belonging. Only one white surfer, a friend of one of the Mexican American surfers interviewed had seen the film and said it changed her perspective on race relations in surfing. Most Mexican American participants expressed racialized feelings of not belonging, starting from the moment they decided to surf. More than half of the Mexican American surfers discussed how residential segregation impacted their access to the coast and race-related issues in the sport. In contrast, approximately 90% of the white male surfers were amused when I asked them if they had ever heard racial slurs or racial epithets in the water. Most white surfers denied the existence of any race-related issues in the line-up, and rather argued they experienced “reverse racism.” Most of the time, white surfers claimed “racism is a thing of

the past” or “there are no barriers in surfing” and “you create your own barriers in the water.” White surfers and a small handful of Mexican American surfers adopt and adhere to “colorblind racism” (Bonilla-Silva 2010). Colorblind racism was the dominant ideology used by white surfers to explain racial matters in surfing.

In Eduardo Bonilla-Silva’s book *Racism Without Racists: Colorblind Racism and Racial Inequality in Contemporary American*, he exposed the ways in which white people utilize a myriad of frames to explain a host of racial issues in the United States. As he argued, presently most white people allege they “don’t see any color, just people” that people need to stop playing the “race card” and everyone needs to just get over whatever “race problem” we have in this country (Bonilla-Silva 2010: 1). Most white people believe race is no longer a central factor determining minorities life chances, but as he argued, these explanations stem from a new racial ideology that he labeled “colorblind racism.” A person adopting a “colorblind racism” perspective views racial inequality as the outcome of “nonracial dynamics” and rationalizes minorities’ current status as a product of a “naturally occurring phenomena” (Bonilla-Silva 2010: 2). Contemporary racial inequality is reproduced through “New Racism” practices operating in more subtle, discreet and institutional forms (Bonilla-Silva 2010). New forms of racism are not overt or as “obvious” as racist practices in the past. In general, white people use four frames of colorblind racism to explain a host of racial realities. All of the frames can be used simultaneously and interchangeably throughout their explanations of racial realities. In this study, white surfers mainly used two out the four frames to explain the racial realities of surfers in the Southern California context.

The *naturalization frame* is simply the ways in which white people “naturalize”

race-related matters. Adopting this frame allows white people to “explain away any racial phenomena by suggesting they are natural occurrences” (Bonilla-Silva 2010: 28). Utilizing this frame reinforces the colorblind logic, reinforcing the myth of nonracialism (Bonilla-Silva 2010). Common phrases such as “that’s the way it is” or the word “natural” are often interjected to normalize events or actions that could otherwise be interpreted as racially motivated or racist. As previously argued, the cultural notion of localism is largely influenced by segregation. Since segregation and racial preference for friends are due to social preference (Bonilla-Silva 2010), surfers adopting this frame are under the illusion, or delusion, as to how social processes shape surf relations. Specifically, in the surfing context, this would be white people normalizing whiteness in surf culture, not acknowledging how residential segregation shapes localism and not recognizing or “seeing” the racial demography of the sport. The importance and significance of this frame can best be illustrated by Jerry, a young, semi-professional, middle class, white male surfer who used this frame a few times throughout the interview. For example, Jerry used this frame to answer the question about why surfing is generally an exclusive recreational activity, regardless of race:

That’s just the way it is. That’s localism for you. It’s not your home. You have to be mindful of that. It’s their waves, so you have to be low key in the water, don’t act aggressive. Mutual respect.

Jerry also used this frame to answer the question about facing any race-related barriers when he surfs internationally:

I don’t think I get treated differently for the color of my skin or because I’m a white boy. I think I get treated differently because I’m not from around there, like any

sort of localism; that's just how it works in every part of the world. That's not your home, so don't expect people to see you and be like, 'what's up dude,' you know? That's not your spot. You can't expect people to react positively and I was always really aware of that when I paddled out.

In both explanations Jerry dismisses the probability of other factors creating exclusionary practices by defaulting to localism for any race-related issues related to exclusion or marginalization. Even when he traveled to other countries, where arguably the racial makeup of the line-up may be different, he doesn't believe race plays a role in exclusionary practices. Since post-racial racial norms don't allow for the open expression of racial views, white people have constructed creative and concealed ways of voicing racial views (Bonilla-Silva 2010). For example, Jerry is utilizing the "rhetorical tool" or "semantic move" of "anything but race" responses, common amongst white respondents to naturalize any race-related issues in the sport. This logic also reinforces the ideology of nonracialism. By stating he does not believe he gets treated based on his whiteness, he dismisses the notion that race may affect his experiences.

In addition to the naturalization framework, surfers used the *minimization of racism* framework to dismiss the differences of minorities' experience in surfing. The minimization of racism framework suggests that discrimination or racism is no longer a central factor affecting minorities' life chances. Specifically, in the case of surfing, people using this framework believe that racism does not affect minorities' opportunities or experiences in the water. Surfers utilizing this frame deny the existence of racial discrimination in surfing. Common phrases were, "maybe back in the day, but I don't think there's any prejudice or racism in the line-up right now" or "race or social class don't

matter when you're sharing a wave" and "people make up their own barriers, there are no barriers in the surf because surfing is for everyone." White people utilizing this frame of colorblind racism to explain racial matters in surfing disregard the ways in which localism can mask racial biases or discrimination in the water. Once again, since localism is the default explanation for all surf-related issues in the water, when surfers minimize how race may impact a surfers' experiences, they absolve locals from being accountable for their actions. The importance and significance of this frame can best be illustrated by Ted, an older, middle class, white male surfer. For example, Ted utilized this frame when asked if he believed there are any barriers in surfing:

I just don't think there are any barriers to the sport. When I am surfing, I was too busy to pay attention to anything else. It doesn't matter about discrimination, it's a tough sport. You need muscles to do it. And for really big waves you need strength. When Ted is surfing, he's not paying attention to anything else in the water. According to him, he's not necessarily aware of social dynamics in the water. Ted doesn't believe there are any barriers or discrimination in surfing. Ted thinks surfing is a tough sport, which takes strength and muscles, so if there are barriers then it comes down to differences in physical attributes such as strength. Ted also uses the "anything but race" rhetorical tool to explain his position on racial matters in surfing, restoring the colorblind image of surf culture. For locals and surfers in dominant positions in the surf hierarchy, they can protect themselves against the "charge of racism" (Bonilla-Silva 2010: 70), by seeing all surf-related issues as a consequence of localism. Localism then can continue to be perceived as nonracial, even though the very basis of localism was constructed in part by residential segregation.

A handful of Mexican American surfers also believed localism was the main motive of exclusion and marginalization in the line-up. Mexican American surfers' answers were more contradictory than whites, oftentimes claiming race is not a factor, but later in the interview would recall stories where race "may have been a factor." To this effect, Mexican American surfers' consciousness was slightly impacted by colorblind racism but was not the main foundation upon which they articulate their views on racial matters in the line-up. Some Mexican American surfers ascribe to a "slightly colorblind" (Bonilla-Silva 2010) lens to explain their experiences of exclusion and racialized feelings of not-belonging. Frank, an older, working class, second-generation, Mexican American surfer illustrates adopting a slightly colorblind racism frame in the following conversation about exclusionary practices:

It would be localism, doesn't matter where it's coming from. It would be localism. Localism drives exclusionary acts. Guys that are locals, they don't want "outsiders" surfing their waves because they see them as their waves, but they are not their waves they are public waves. Localism overrides everything.

At first, he argues localism drives exclusionary acts, but when I ask him if it was different when he started surfing in the 1970s, this is the mixed response he provided:

Localism, it doesn't matter if you're black, yellow, brown, they don't want you at their beach. But if they see some black guy coming down to the beach with a surfboard they're going to say or think 'who's that (racial epithet)?' 'What's he doing here?' Absolutely.

At another part of the interview, Frank also acknowledged that surfers experience discrimination in covert forms:

There is subtle discrimination out there in the line-up and if anyone tells you it's not there they're bullshitting. It's out there. There's no doubt about it.

At first Frank used the naturalization lens to explain racial matters in the line-up, by arguing localism is the reason surfers feel excluded and marginalized. In the second quote, he used the minimization of racism frame to claim it doesn't matter if you're "black, yellow or brown," when it comes to localism, locals do not discriminate. However, he contradicted himself when he commented on what he believed locals would say if they saw a non-white surfer on the beach. In the final quote, he completely altered his position on racial matters, by revealing racial discrimination is an issue in surfing and localism is being driven by exclusionary acts towards non-white surfers. At first, Frank danced around racial matters in surfing by defaulting all feelings of non-belonging as a by-product of localism. However, when asked to about the past, he contradicted himself. Frank's consciousness of racial matters in surf culture are slightly influenced by colorblind racism, but as the conversation continued, he acknowledged racial discrimination in the line-up does exist, but in informal ways. Although Frank underscored how discrimination exists in surf culture, he still relied on the naturalization frame to explain exclusionary practices and marginalization.

For the most part, Mexican American surfers do not subscribe completely to the frames of colorblind racism. Of the small percentage "slightly" subscribing to the frame of colorblind racism, they still felt discrimination exists in the line-up, but it happens more subtly. White surfers on the other hand, predominantly use the frames of colorblind racism to argue there are no race-related issues in the line-up. Instead, white surfers claim localism is the main motive of exclusion and marginalization and non-white surfers create their own barriers in the water. White surfers use of the frames of colorblind racism in part can be

explained by their very limited exposure to non-whites in school, work and leisure settings. A majority of white surfers grew up in predominantly white, middle to upper class neighborhoods, which increased their levels of social and spatial segregation from minorities. High levels of social and spatial segregation and isolation from minorities creates what Bonilla-Silva (2011) terms “white habitus.” A white habitus is a “racialized, uninterrupted socialization process that conditions and creates whites’ racial tastes, perceptions, feelings, and emotions and their views on racial matter” (Bonilla-Silva 2010:104). This coupled with the fact that most surfing spots are predominantly white, furthering their limited interactions with non-whites, white surfers’ consciousness of racial matters in surfing go largely unnoticed. This is not the case for a majority of Mexican American surfers.

Fall in Line: Experiencing Racial Microaggressions in the Line-up

As previously presented, contemporary racial inequality is reproduced through “New Racism” practices (Bonilla-Silva 2010). New Racism practices are covert, institutionalized, and appear to be nonracial. Subtle and often hidden forms of racism have commonly been referred to as racial microaggressions (Solórzano 1998; Smith, Hung and Franklin 2011), which is the “brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group” (Sue et al. 2007: 273). In the surfing context, subtle forms of racialized discrimination and marginalization range from non-verbal cues, like stares or glances to verbal allegations, like “where are you from? I’ve never seen you out here before and I’ve been surfing here my whole life.” In rare cases, Mexican American surfers experience overt forms of racism, like overhearing racial slurs and in one case, being asked if the surfer had “papers” suggesting he is in the country

illegally. Common phrases describing New Racism practices include; “it’s hard to describe, but it’s a familiar feeling” or “it’s a feeling you would have to experience to know how to describe it” and “you just get this feeling like you don’t belong.” Mexican American surfers described most of their surf experiences as positive, but still believed there are racial dynamics in the line-up, affecting their access to recreational spaces, sense of belonging and authenticity in the sport. In the following section, I will detail the subtle and overt forms of racism Mexican American surfers experienced in and outside of the line-up.

Most racialized feelings of not belonging stem from subtle cues Mexican American surfers receive in the water from fellow surfers. Maria, a younger, working class, second-generation Mexican American surfer described a typical everyday experience for her as she paddles out into the line-up:

In the water no one has ever said anything to me, but it’s those side glances, a lack of smile that I would get from anyone else. Pretty much tells you everything you need to know, I’m not brave enough to say something to someone that thinks they can take waves from me. I don’t try to change people, I’m at that phase where I’m not ready to try and change people out in the water. I’m not ready for it, but I know there are people out there doing that and I know we need to do that. Casey definitely does it. You know I’m still at the point where I’ll just paddle away and surf somewhere else

Maria explained that the covert non-verbal cues she received mark her as an outsider or intruder of the surfing space. She clarified she had never been outright told anything about her race, but the glances and stares “pretty much tells you everything you need to know.” The glances and stares erode her racialized sense of belonging, but she is not brave enough

to call out white surfers for their racialized gaze. Even when Mexican American surfers “followed the rules” they were still subjected to subtle and overt forms of discrimination and marginalization. As previously argued, tenets of surfing etiquette strive to construct the surfing space as equitable and promote safety, but Mexican American surfers believe their actions are scrutinized more because they are perceived as “outsiders.” This point is best illustrated by Crystal, a younger, working class, second-generation, Mexican American female surfer:

My sister was really good at learning all the rules, like she looked up where we should and shouldn't surf, how we should behave out in the water, etc. It actually reminded me a lot of when my parents sat us down to talk to us about college, they were like ok, this is what's expected of you, this is how you should behave, kinda like that. And this is very Mexican. You're very polite, so no one has like an excuse to disrespect you or think poorly of you and we kind of used that when we first started to surf. Not only are we beginners, we're women and we're brown, so let's make sure no one has an excuse to cuss us out or cut us off or start something with us. Let's be the friendliest kook we can possibly be (laughs). It was very intentional, learning all of the rules and trying to follow them.

Crystal is an intermediate surfer who surfs frequently with her sister. Even as a novice surfer, she knows women, especially women of color, are a minority in the water. As she is learning about surf culture, she simultaneously makes sure her actions in the line-up are respectful because as she says, she doesn't want to give other surfers a “reason” to disrespect her in the water. Both her and her sister grew up with limited exposure and access to beach culture, so they learned the code of the sea by conducting online research

about expectations in the water. To them, learning the surfing etiquette meant assimilating quickly to surf culture, falling in line with the pecking order and to trying to avoid being disrespected or disrespectful. At first, Crystal believed she could avoid any surf-related issues in the water by following the rules, but as she kept surfing, she started to notice the ways in which non-white surfers are differentiated in the line-up. Her actions are intentional and are intended to minimize racist or sexist interactions in the water. By being the “friendliest kook” out there, she recognizes she’s being differentiated and her actions are being highlighted by more advanced surfers (a kook is a beginner surfer and by virtue of the concept a surfer under constant surveillance). Generally, younger Latino/as often feel their racial experiences make them feel “both hyper-visible and invisible, often both simultaneously” (Flores-Gonzalez 2017: 33). In other words, most forms of discrimination make Latino/as feel hypervisible, a feeling Crystal seems to imply when she mentions the amount of research she conducted when she first started surfing.

Mexican American surfers also experience racialized feelings of not belonging when they unintentionally break the surfing etiquette. Some Mexican American surfers believe they are reprimanded for their actions in the water, more so than white surfers, echoing Victoria’s experience when she witnesses a white local treating other white women more equitably than non-white women surfers. Andrew, a middle-aged working class second-generation Mexican American beginner surfer, described a scenario where he violated a tenet of the surfing etiquette, but felt unfairly treated by a white male surfer. Andrew witnessed other white non-Hispanic surfers also breaking the code of conduct, but their actions fly under the radar, while his are highlighted:

And there have been some instances, like one time I dropped in on some guy, you know, when you're learning you're going to make mistake and some guy called me out on it you know but like everyone was dropping in on each other, it was a party wave, and I was like ok did he tell me that because I genuinely did a "kook" thing or is it because I am Mexican and it's like well I'll never know, but it was one of those moments, and there's been a couple moments where I've been like ok was he calling me out because I was being a kook or was it my Mexicanness or my non-whiteness that kind of makes me stand out a little bit more you know because he wouldn't have called out a white guy.

Andrew admitted to breaking the code of conduct, but recognized he was not the only one violating the code, however, he was the only one targeted for the violation. The other white surfers' actions appear to go unpunished, "allowing" them to break the surfing etiquette without consequences. Andrew knows he can't "prove" why he's being marginalized, if it is his "Mexicanness" or his beginner status (kook), but what he can decipher from his experiences are the ways in which white surfers are given more advantages and the unfair ways in which he is policed by fellow surfers. Outside of the surfing context, marginalized young men are accustomed to being unfairly targeted by systems of social control, often growing up in environments where their behaviors are highly policed by schools, law enforcement, parents, and others (Rios 2017). Some Mexican American surfers, they were highly policed by law enforcement when occupying affluent beach communities. Nico has over thirty years of surfing experience and resides in south county, San Diego. He comes from a family of "beach goers" and spent a considerable amount of time utilizing the beach as a space for leisure, play and recreation. For the most part, his experiences at public

beaches are positive, but when he visited a predominantly white, upper class public beach in the neighboring town, he recounted a highly racialized experiences of not belonging:

And then there's some beaches, like Coronado, they'll send you back over the bridge if you go there, some beaches aren't welcoming to people of color. You know, Coronado is where all the white rich people go, which is ironic, it's right next to Imperial Beach. You could walk there, but if you live in the barrio and drive over the bridge to go to the beach, they'll tell you to leave. They'll escort you back to the bridge. Coronado cops are notorious, it has happened to me! Really. Probably still happens. Especially after the toll, when the toll ended people from the other side of the bridge starting to go more and I think they were just sending them back saying no, don't make this a habit. It's like the super rich tourist [place] and San Diego in general is kind of a corrupt town, so the cops can get away with that sh*t. San Diego has a small-town mentality. You know, send the brown kids back over the bridge, crap like that. Harassing you. Not worth it to fight them on it.

Nico articulated his feelings of not-belonging, emphasizing why some beaches are not welcoming to non-white beachgoers. From his perspective, Nico believes police officers in specific public spaces harbor racial biases towards people from the “barrio.” Coronado, a public beach is patrolled and controlled as if it were private. Whiteness seems to be inscribed and reinforced by Coronado police officers, implicitly and explicitly excluding non-white beach goers. According to Nico, the police officers are notorious for engaging in discriminatory behavior towards “brown people” as he boldly states “send the brown kids back over the bridge.” There may be no proof to corroborate Nico's story, but for marginalized youth, “punishment operates as a social fabric of everyday life” (Rios 2017:

6), labeling them outcasts before they have committed an offense. Mexican American surfers' experiences seem to echo the various ways their everyday actions are policed in and outside of the surf context, labeling them "outsiders" before they can prove themselves as surfers, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Chapter four will dive deeper into Mexican American surfers' emotional responses to controlling images in and outside of the surfing space.

In some cases, Mexican American surfers overheard racial slurs or were told racial epithets while occupying surfing spaces. Mario, an older, middle class, second-generation, Mexican American male surfer described a time when his uncle was singled out for "dropping in on someone":

I remember different times we were together like one time we were in Malibu and people were snaking like everyone, like everyone was doing it, like everyone was going in front of people because if you didn't then you wouldn't catch a wave. I do remember this one time [my uncle] was dropping in on everyone, but everyone was doing it and this guy was like, 'Hey, go back to Mexico, blah blah', yeah I remember many times that happened, but he was always super calm and relaxed, like nothing ever happened. Back in the day that stuff happened, but very rarely now I hear those sort of racial slurs.

Mario was clear to indicate how everyone was dropping in on each other, so his uncle was not behaving differently than the rest of the surfers, but again, he was unfairly targeted for breaking the code of conduct. This time, another surfer overtly engaged in racist discourse, demanding his uncle to "Go back to Mexico," questioning his authenticity as a surfer and as an American. In their everyday experiences, Mexican Americans often face the stigma

of “illegality” (Florez-Gonzalez 2017: 17), unable to escape being stigmatized in public sporting spaces. Mario’s uncle chose to deescalate the situation by not reacting to the racist remarks, appearing to be unaffected by the surfers attempt to make him feel as if he didn’t belong in the surfing space. The code of the sea may exist to promote safety in the water and enforce organization in the water, but for marginalized surfers, it is a double-edged sword. Victoria was following the surfing etiquette but was still accused and targeted for allegedly breaking a tenet of the code. Andrew violated a tenet, along with other white counterparts, but he was targeted and treated unfairly. Due in large part to the ways in which Mexican American surfers’ actions are highly policed and targeted, and white surfers’ “unchecked” white privilege, non-white surfers are subjected to higher levels of scrutiny and surveillance relative to whites. Higher scrutiny creates more obstacles for Mexican American surfers, further racializing the surfing space. For white surfers, their privilege affords them more resources because their actions are rarely called into question.

During the 1990s in the United States, the concept of white privilege became a popular way to explain, “how white people simply benefited from being white” (Pulido 2015: 2; see also McIntosh 1988; Lipsitz 1998). When the concept first emerged, it helped scholars come to understand how racial inequality was reproduced. That being said, white privilege unearthed how regardless of “softer” racial attitudes and practices, the United States was still defined by enormous racial inequalities (Pulido 2015). As Pulido (2015) argues, “White privilege highlighted how the individual decisions of whites were not necessarily driven by racial animus, but often were simply a desire to create the best opportunities for themselves and their families, which, in a highly racialized society, reproduced racial inequality” (p. 2). Unearned advantages for white surfers’ manifest in

meaningful forms in the surfing space. For one, as this study argued, non-white bodies, especially non-white female bodies, are largely perceived as foreign or not belonging. For the most part, white surfers' actions and bodies go unquestioned and they receive unearned advantages, such as more waves. Due to white privilege and the embodiment of white spatial imagery, white surfers' behaviors are less monitored, policed and targeted, shifting the surf gaze to non-white bodies.

Unpacking whiteness, white privilege and white supremacy, "race neutral" spaces, such as surfing spaces, scholars can continue to understand how these spaces consist of deeply ingrained racial assumptions and directives. However, the "racial demography" for the places people occupy, including the places of leisure, expose them to a "socially shared system of exclusion and inclusion" (Lipsitz 2011: 13), as shown by the examples above. A dangerous caveat of white privilege is a lack of awareness when it comes to differential treatment towards other non-white people. By rarely "unpacking" their privilege, white people do not recognize how their actions may be reinforcing existing racial inequalities and biases. White privilege also does not alarm or cause high levels of uneasiness among white people (Leonardo 2004) nor is racial hostility assumed (Pulido 2015). For most people in a powerful social position, they fail to recognize how they have benefited socially, culturally and economically from residual effects of the Civil Rights era.

Outside of the line-up, Mexican Americans report experiences of racial teasing and joking from family members, coworkers and friends. Some Mexican American surfers "downplay" or "mitigate" accusations of racism by claiming racial commentary is "just a joke" (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado and Crenshaw 1993; Picca and Feagin 2007). These jokes function as a means to exclude and marginalize Mexican American surfers, but some

Mexican American surfers perceive jokes differently. For example, Jessie, an older, working class, second-generation Mexican American male downplayed racial jokes his white friends made about him when he first started to surf:

My white friends would make jokes all the time in front of me, you know I was the only brown kid in the group, they would say things like ‘Mexicans don’t surf.’ You know, but I never took it too seriously, it didn’t stop me from surfing. People are going to say things to you, tease you and you just have to sort of deal with it and move on.

Jessie avoided accusing his friends of being racists, instead, he mitigated their actions and denied intent of prejudice. Racialized jokes are commonly perceived as different from “serious” discourse (Burdsey 2011) because they occur in the “context of friendly and joking interactions” (Müller, van Zoonen and de Roode 2007: 341). By claiming racist comments are simply jokes, Jessie adopted a “mitigation strategy” (Burdsey 2011) to avoid accusing his friends as racists. Mitigation strategies reinforce a color blind framework (Doane 2006), creating a space for white people to avoid and protect themselves from being labeled a racist. In contrast, Francis, a younger, working class, second-generation Mexican American male view racist jokes as offensive and exclusionary:

I’m not looking to find a community in the surf community. For example, I went out earlier this year, I remember this group of white dudes and one of the guys had this like big sombrero on and I was like really, you think that’s funny? So, um yeah and everyone else is laughing. You know, thinking of race as a spectacle, so ok cool you’re not my people so I’ll just find my own spot to do my surfing, but for the

most part I try to stay away from surfers in the water and create my own space for myself.

Whereas some Mexican American surfers adopt mitigation strategies to downplay and avoid accusing friends or family members of racism, Francis viewed racist discourse as an extension of New Racism. Francis struggled to find a sense of community in the surf community because of incidents like the one he described. In the wider sporting context, jokes can “underpin divisive and exclusionary aspects of sporting subcultures, and they represent a powerful and symbolic means by which minorities are marginalized from dominant player collectives” (Burdsey 2011: 273). Francis’ experience underscores how some white surfers fail to perceive their actions as racially charged and exclusionary for non-white participants. As previously noted, a majority of white surfers subscribe to color blind frames to explain racial matters in the water.

In sum, Mexican American surfers showed a tacit understanding of racial matters in the line-up. At times it was difficult for Mexican Americans to untangle racism and sexism from the code of sea, but for the most part, they recognized how these factors were intertwined. Interpretation of racial matters depended on the surfers’ level of consciousness with some surfers being more aware of how racial dynamics outside of the water carry over into surfing spaces. Approximately one quarter of Mexican American surfers from this study, enrolled in a Chicana/o Studies or Ethnic Studies course in college, providing them with the tools to deconstruct their racialized experiences. For the most part, regardless of a formal background in critical theories of race, Mexican Americans understand their experiences as racialized, recognize how these experiences erode their sense of belonging, and are able to astutely detect unfair advantages white surfers receive because of white

privilege. The final section will explore how women surfers experience gendered and racialized experiences of marginalization and exclusion in the line-up.

“They would never put a girl like me on the cover of Surfer Magazine”: Racialized and Gendered Feelings of Not Belonging

Women surfers’ experiences of marginalization and exclusion are intersected by race, class and sexuality. For the most part, they feel judged first by their gender then by their racial and or sexual identity. For example, female surfers that identify as lesbian recall hearing derogatory slurs, like “fag” or “dyke” while paddling out in hypermasculine surfing spaces in Northern California. Common phrases reported by women included; “People are always surprised to find out I surf because you know, women are not expected to be surfers,” “If I were a dude, I doubt I would feel this way,” and “Surfing is still so male-dominated, it’s not easy being a female surfer.” Throughout the interviews, women surfers expressed concern and frustration over the ways male surfers judged their surfing abilities against a “boy scale” (Thorpe 2008), constantly feeling as if their movements are being monitored. Women surfers also felt male surfers viewed their bodies through a “masculine heterosexual gaze” (Waite and Warren 2008: 363), resulting in implications of heteronormativity for lesbian women who surf (Roy 2016). Specifically, women of color surfers experience “double marginalization” (Nemani and Thorpe 2016) or “multiple marginalizations” (Mizuno 2018) and felt underrepresented in the surf media/industry because they struggled to fit into the typical “surf girl” prototype. Women surfers’ differentiated experiences shaped their gendered, sexualized and racialized sense of belonging.

Over the past twenty years, there has been a considerable and sustained growth in women and girls' participation in recreational surfing (Olive, Roy and Wheaton 2017). Current findings suggest women account for approximately a quarter of the surfing population. A number of factors such as the "so-called economic power of the female consumer and the female-marketed surf industry" (Booth 2001; Comer 2010) have been the driving force behind the female surfing boom (Olive, Roy and Wheaton 2017). In terms of professional surfers, there has been a significant increase in female visibility in both mainstream media and the surf industry. Women surfers are significantly represented in a plethora of Hollywood movies and young adult novels, but the "representations continue to be dominated by one kind of surfer girl or woman - slim, tanned and long-limbed, bikini-clad, with long hair and a big smile" (Olive, Roy and Wheaton 2017, pg. 149). The majority of women surfers represented are also white, heterosexual, cis-gendered and fit into the heteronormative beauty ideals (Olive, Roy and Wheaton 2017) which is typically a bronzed, perfectly chiseled female surfer (Comer 2010). The women and girls often seen in surf media fit a mold of femininity that is highly marketable, non-threatening and hyper-feminine (Comer 2010). There are a few well-known Hawaiian girls and women represented in mainstream surf media, but their differences are often erased or appropriated. These narrow definitions and representations of femininity produced by and in the surf media/industry, affect recreational women surfers gendered, sexualized and racialized sense of belonging in important ways.

In general, women surfers feel the surf media/industry does not display accurate representations of "everyday womanhood" nor does it accurately capture the struggles female surfer encounter in the line-up. Women surfers report a myriad of conflicted

feelings of belonging, often feeling frustrated and overwhelmed by the ways in which their bodies are judged by a “masculine heterosexual gaze” (Waitt and Warren 2008) in the lineup. Samantha, a younger, middle class, white female surfer describes her everyday frustrations negotiating rigid gender norms in the water:

Oh and the way that other surfers react to bodies out there in the water, is really special, like you’ll see a lot of heavy dudes out there and no one gives it a second thought and you know if you see a heavier lady everyone is like, ‘Oh, she’s going to surf?’ And I’m just thinking to myself, ‘Oh, I’m sorry. Does she need a permission slip?’ It’s amazing how rigid it is out there. Like I mostly fit into all the norms for ladies, god help us all, but because I am a little thicker white lady, it’s ridiculous trying to find a wetsuit that fits my body. You know, fit my pear shape body, I am always thinking it is going to fit until it doesn’t go above my thighs. You know and when people think of female surfers, they think of like Roxy girls and the *Blue Crush* chicks.

Samantha’s description of the surfing space vividly details how female surfers have to “negotiate an athletic identity alongside that of patriarchal femininity” (Lisa Hunter 2017: 273). Oftentimes, female surfers’ athletic abilities and bodies are judged by men according to a narrowly defined hegemonic femininity, produced by the surf industry. In contrast, male surfers’ subjectivities are not subject to similar beauty standards, as Samantha argues, “heavy dudes” are not judged or questioned by their size. Male surfers’ authenticity and abilities as surfers are not affected along the same lines as female surfers. This is not to suggest male surfers are not subject to or categorized by hegemonic masculinity (Evers 2009; Waitt and Warren 2008). Throughout the sporting world, players and spectators use

derogatory slurs, like “gay,” “lesbian,” or “fag” to categorize their competitors. These derogatory slurs have been and continue to be used to “disrupt participation and legitimate hegemonic masculinity and femininity” (Lisa Hunter 2017: 275) in the sporting world.

Of three lesbian surfers interviewed, one was a professional surfer in her teenage years and two are “big wave” surfers, surfing in highly masculinized spaces. Rachel, a younger, middle class, white, lesbian, professional surfer directly discussed discomfort with the “hypermasculine male gaze,” growing up in the professional surfing circuit:

I mean being a young girl, in a bikini, surfing in competitions and having men unapologetically staring at you, yeah that really creeped me out. I hated that stuff, now that I’m older, I see that that kind of stuff was encouraged. It’s like this toxic hypermasculinity male gaze that I hated, made me want to cover my body, you know I didn’t want to be sexualized, it made me uncomfortable. I didn’t want their eyes on me, on my breasts, on my ass, so I wore men’s board shorts to cover my body up. I was teased for being masculine. It was a constant struggle of gender identity and not being sexualized.

Rachel did not recognize how the surf industry and media encouraged a toxic environment for young female competitors. Rachel recalls feeling discomfort and “creeped out” with how her young body was being sexualized by men in the industry and male spectators. The discomfort alone caused her to alter her competition attire, adorning board shorts instead of the typical “bikini-clad surfer girl” style (Comer 2010). Stepping outside of the heteronormative beauty ideal, Rachel was teased for being “masculine” because board shorts in surf culture are interpreted as masculine. Rachel’s gendered and sexualized sense of belonging started at an early age and carried on into her adulthood. Rachel does not surf

competitively, but says she still struggles with her gender and sexual identity out in the line-up. Later in the interview, Rachel disclosed the extent to which she heard derogatory slurs, like “dyke” and “queer” and she tends to avoid surfing at spaces where these terms are more likely to be heard from white, heterosexual, male surfers. The two other lesbian surfers interviewed also struggled with negotiating heteronormativity in surfing spaces, often feeling ashamed and outcasted in surfing communities. For lesbian women who surf, there are felt implications of heteronormativity (Roy 2016; Olive, Roy and Wheaton 2017) and real consequences for non-normative subjectivities in surfing spaces.

Another professional surfer, a middle-aged, working, class, second-generation, Mexican American female long boarder experienced conflicted gendered and racialized feelings of belonging because she also did not conform to the hyper feminine, non-threatening standards of femininity. Natalia believed she continues to struggle securing sponsorships because she does not fit the “surfer girl” prototype:

In magazines, in social media, in the professional world of surfing, they’re not sponsoring girls that look like me. I’m not saying there’s a reason why, there’s a reason why it’s not happening, you know, got to fit that mold. Someday, I want to look out in the water and see me reflected out there, like see people that look like me out there in the water.

Natalia has over twenty years of surfing experience and surfed competitively for a few years, but stopped competing professionally because she could not afford to travel or take time off from work. She believes sponsors are not financially supporting “girls that look like me,” highlighting a common struggle professional women experience fighting for equitable representation (Schumacher 2017). Professional female surfers’ careers depend

on their abilities to secure sponsorship funds, but only as long as they are deemed “sexy enough to be marketable” (Schumacher 2017: 290). Natalia, by proxy, doesn’t fit the mold because she is an “older dark-skinned Latina” and her career ultimately suffered because of it. Natalia’s experience echoes recreational and professional female surfers gendered sense of belonging, but additionally attests to the significance of accounting for how race and ethnicity intersect with feelings of belonging. As surfing spaces continue to be white-dominated, it remains imperative for scholars to examine how racial and ethnic identities are represented in surf culture, as well as the ways in which marginalized women’s feelings of belonging cut along race and sexuality lines.

At most surfing spaces in Southern California, women surfers are vastly outnumbered by men. Based off of participant observations, the researcher suggests for every 50 male surfers there is one female surfer. By sheer numbers alone, women surfers feel marginalized, isolated and singled out by male surfers when they paddle out into the line-up. Women surfers believe their surfing abilities are judged harshly and notice how male surfers treat them divergently. Women surfers frequently report male surfers “dropping in” “cutting off” or “yelling sexist slurs” at them in the line-up, resulting in negative experiences and gendered feelings of not belonging. Liza, a younger, working class, third-generation, Mexican American female explains how negative experiences affect her in the line-up:

Your body and mind is being denied something you’re entitled to. It’s your birthright to enjoy the beach. We go to surf to have pleasure. So now you’re this woman, having negative experiences that aren’t necessarily trauma but it’s unpleasant, you know, you’re being denied access. Always pulling back on the

wave. I found myself doing that when I wasn't surfing with my brothers or male friends.

When male surfers disrespect and mistreat women surfers in the water, they're preventing them from the pleasures of leisure, and denying them a peace of mind. Liza's access to waves is denied by the actions of male surfers. Liza's surf experience is also interrupted by juggling how other surfers are treating her and being reflexive of the power dynamics in the surf. Since Liza surfs with men, she readily notices how she is treated differently when she is without them in the line-up. Liza related the experience as "not necessary trauma, but unpleasant" and consistent to the point it affected her "mind and body." Her body is restricted (she stopped paddling for the wave) due to gendered assumptions about female surfers' athletic abilities. Liza's experience is an example of the ways in which sportscapes are gendered (Stoddart 2010) and the embodied effects these spaces can have on participants (Azzarito and Sterling 2010).

A third of all men interviewed admitted to being complicit in women surfers' marginalization. They argued that they might treat a woman differently, for example, "give her a wave" or "cut her some slack" because they "feel bad for women surfers." None of the men interviewed disclosed "cutting a woman off" or "dropping in on a woman," but based on female surfers' interviews, even if implicit, some male surfers are engaging in discriminatory behavior like this. Recent studies have argued that, despite the "sense of support," the ways in which male surfers engage with women can feel "patronizing by treating them as different" and therefore "not authentic surfers" (Olive, McCuaig and Phillips 2015: 266; see also Comley 2016). Gendered practices and perspectives enacted and held by men assume and reinforce dominant ideologies about women's sporting

capabilities. When female surfers are held to different standards by men, these practices bolster gendered feelings of not belonging. Tara, a younger, working class, Mexican American female surfer described her tacit understanding of how male surfers typically perceive female surfers abilities:

Overall, I would say it's the gender thing. Like people are always waiting for you to prove yourself, you know before they're going to let you, you know catch any wave or just let you be or before they start to paddle for your wave. You know, like they'll be paddling for a wave and they know they can get it then they see you paddling for a wave and maybe they think you can get it but they just don't know, you know, but they assume that you won't catch it. I do feel like there is something to prove. I think there's a lot of preconceived things that come along with gender and race.

Tara is often the only female surfer out at her local spot, but when she paddles out at different surfing spots where surfers do not know her skills, she said she has to “prove herself” over and over again until she is “authenticated” as a surfer. Some male surfers perceive female surfer as incapable of catching waves, subscribing to gendered assumptions about female capabilities. By assuming women surfers are less athletic and capable, some male surfers will closely monitor female surfers' movements with the intent of “taking their wave.” This case highlights the pressure women surfers experience, the cognitive assessments running through their minds as they are surfing and the ways in which dominant gender ideologies further impact women surfers' experiences in the lineup.

Some men believe a woman's presence in the water "mellows" the sport out, naturalizing a biology/physiology framework to explain and produce gender differences in the surfing space (lisa hunter 2018). According to surf scholar lisa hunter (2018), "In surfing female/male categories are heavily employed as simple, natural, unproblematic and deeply divisive categories conflated with gender and assumed as an immutable hierarchical binary" (p. 5). Ted, an older, upper class, white male surfer, who coaches a high school surf team exemplifies this process of conflating sex categories with gender:

In a male dominated space, it tones it down, tones down the testosterone. I'm not sure why, but it would be nicer if there were more women. I mean I wouldn't say I'm happy when there are necessarily more people out in the morning.

By arguing women surfers "tone down the testosterone" in the water, Ted naturalizes a sex/gender binary, assuming a woman's presence "naturally" calms down a male-dominated sport. This type of framework reinforces socially constructed gender categories, binaries and hierarchies by assuming women and men are biologically distinct. Identifying with categories, "risk reproducing binaries, hierarchies and position strategies" (lisa hunter 2018: 4) and it is a common strategy used by men to discriminate against women.

Some of the male surfers interviewed can attest to the ways in which women surfers are "othered," based off of their own observations and actions. Specifically, Mexican American men were highly conscious of the ways in which women surfers are treated in the line-up, perhaps due in part to the recognition of their own marginalization. Ascension, a younger, working class, second-generation, Mexican American male surfer describes the ways in which he perceives how women surfers are treated in the line-up:

I recently chatted with a Black woman in the water you know about hostility out in the water. And she was like man, I can't catch a break out here. She's an older Black chick that totally rips.

Later in the interview, he expands on the point he was trying to make about racialized and gendered exclusion:

People of color and women, people are going to cut them off until the woman says something. For women of color, it's a different scale, not to mention you don't get to experience the pleasure of surfing in peace because you're thinking about gender, race, class, et cetera out in the water. You know people are cutting you off, treating you differently.

Ascension's narrative echoes much of what has been said about Mexican American surfers' experiences of racialized exclusion: the feelings of not belonging, reinforced by dominant ideologies inscribed in the sportscape and the inexperience of joy and peace felt by Mexican American participants. Ascension builds on his point to incorporate a gender lens to understanding racial discrimination in the line-up.

As Ascension argues, "For women of color, it's a different scale" because of the double impact or combination of both gender and racial marginalization. Marginalized groups of people are engulfed by power relations in the water, to the point of their experiences significantly being altered. Following the current trend of surf scholars examining "multiple marginalizations" (Mizuno 2018; Nemani and Thorpe 2015; Olive, Roy and Wheaton 2017) in the line-up, this work also seeks to complicate the ways in which women surfers are differentiated in the water. As previously stated, Mexican American surfers feel underrepresented in surf media/industry, feeling othered and

excluded by the representations of mostly white women. The diversity of the sport is shifting, but women surfers from varying racial and ethnic background continue to be erased and hidden by current hegemonic notions of femininity (Comer 2010). Coupled with current hegemonic masculinity in the surfing world, in general women surfers feel differentiated and excluded by mostly “young, white, English speaking, middle class, heterosexual and able-bodied men” (Ford and Brown 2005: 92). By untangling Mexican American surfers’ experiences, scholars can begin to understand how women surfers’ experiences of not belonging are further complicated by race.

In the opening vignette, Victoria expressively describes her experiences of multiple marginalizations. First, men treat her differently in the line-up, even her friends and family members. Over the years, she has noticed how men who surf with her are “protective” and shield her from other men in the line-up. Her male friends may believe they are being altruistic, but as some have argued, differentiating behaviors in the line-up is a patronizing experience for women, reminding them how they are not seen as “authentic” members of the community (Olive, McCuaig and Phillips 2015; Comley 2016). Second, Victoria is treated differently by a local white woman surfer, to which she perceives as an extension of white privilege and white supremacy because of the historical ways in which people of color were structurally excluded from public spaces/beaches. In the surfing space, mostly white, heterosexual, males feel entitled to the space, but as Victoria’s narrative highlights, whiteness has more to do with an embodiment of practices and ideologies than skin tone. Victoria is denied peace of mind while surfing and is not afforded the same privileges as surfers at the top of the pecking order, who are white men. Mexican American surfers are keenly aware of the ways in which they are marginalized and excluded in the surfing space,

at times conflicted by the layers of their oppression which can be difficult to untangle and articulate. This significant theme is best summarized by Crystal, a younger, working class, second-generation, Mexican American female surfer:

And I know I've told you this already, but at times I don't know if I am being treated differently by white men because I am a woman, a beginner, a non-local, a long boarder or Mexican American. I just don't know, it's hard to tell, but I definitely feel like an outsider, like I don't belong out here and like I have to ask for permission. Which is so weird because when I surfed recently in Mexico, the birth place of my parents, the whole line-up was full of brown surfers, you know, like local Mexican surfers. And for the first time, I didn't feel the way I feel when I surf here in Southern California. For the first time, I looked out and I saw other brown people like me. For the first time, I felt accepted, you know, like I belonged in the water. It was a really beautiful moment for my sister and I, like this was the validation we needed or something to feel like surfers, to see our people doing this sport in our home land. It felt peaceful, like the way surfing is meant to be.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I highlighted the sticky layers of oppression Mexican American surfers experience in Southern California beaches. The layers of oppression are compounded by structural forces influencing cultural norms inside of Southern California surfing spaces. First, I highlighted how surfing spaces are organized by the code of sea, revealing how the "informal" rules of the sea are entrenched in colorblind racism. Second, I underscored how the cultural notion of localism is produced by residential segregation, disadvantaging non-white surfers from occupying a higher position in the surf hierarchy. I

also argued how residential segregation constructs surfing spaces as “imagined spaces of whiteness” (Wheaton 2017; Chimeras 2010), highlighting the cultural consequences of the white spatial imagery. Then I describe how this phenomenon “naturalizes” as well as hides residual effects of residential segregation. Third, I demonstrate that most white surfers adopt a “color blind” mentality to argue that there are no diversity issues in surfing. Fourth, I described how Mexican Americans and women surfers develop racialized and gendered feelings of not belonging, arguing that Mexican American women are subject to “multiple marginalizations” in the line-up.

CHAPTER VI

“I TOO WAS A BROWN SURFER”: NAVIGATING WHITE MALE-DOMINATED SPORTING SPACES, MANEUVERING MICROAGGRESSIONS AND DECONSTRUCTING CULTURAL IDEOLOGIES

Karl, a middle-aged, working class, 2.5 generation, Mexican American male recounted his experience being the president of his community college surf club and an active member of MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán), both of which inspired him to carve out diverse and inclusive spaces in Southern California surf culture:

I started to attract a lot of people of color to the club, so when we would do fundraisers or events you know it was pretty interesting to see all the different kinds of people there. MEChA and Black Student Alliance, we would have these like reggae shows and it was kind of like bringing everyone together. Kind of like a conduit. We had other people join the surf club, people probably that would not have done it on their own, you know. It felt like I had a place, you know. That was a really important part of my life. There was a really interesting mix of people from different backgrounds, dealing with racism or racist environments. And I think it was really cool because it was a multicultural setting and we would all go surf together. And we all understood each other. There was more of a connection there. After I graduated, I transferred to University of California, San Diego. I picked the school because of the location to surfing! (laughs) I got really involved in education activism and I stopped surfing. Back then you know I didn't have people I really connected with that I felt like connected to. It's the same today. So yeah back then

I was you know the only brown person in the water. When I would see other people of color out in the water I would always go up to them and let it be known that I too was a brown surfer!

Karl's narrative sheds light on the variety of ways Mexican American surfers navigate the complex environment of white male-dominated surfing spaces in Southern California, underscoring their "everyday responses to stigmatization" (Fleming, Lamont and Wilburn 2012: 401). Mexican American and women surfers utilize a range of individual and structural strategies for contesting and coping with their marginalized status in and outside of the water. Individual strategies are defined as individual acts surfers deploy to contest or cope with sexism or racism, like paddling away from a group of white surfers wearing a sombrero or avoiding certain surf spots self-marked as hyper-masculine and homophobic. Structural strategies consist of group-level or organizational practices surfers employ to contest or cope with sexism or racism, like volunteering with women-only surf organizations or creating a Latina/o surf club that offers a sense and place of community for local surfers of color. Structural strategies typically emphasize social activism, specifically with youth of color, and civic engagement.

This chapter will explain how Mexican American and women surfers navigated white male-dominated spaces, maneuvered microaggressions and deconstructed dominant ideologies about race and gender. As a surfer and researcher, I was interested in minorities' responses to sexism and racism in the water. Drawing from literature examining minorities' emotional responses to everyday experiences of oppression and the ways in which they develop coping and contesting mechanisms, I asked the following questions: Why do some marginalized surfers choose to contest the space and others decide to cope with their

marginalized status, and “just paddle on”? In what ways are Mexican American and women surfers coping with or contesting their marginalized status? Does a surfers’ gender, race, skills, expertise, age and awareness of societal issues influence their ability to contest the space? Are surfers deconstructing or reproducing dominant ideologies about race, gender and space? For the surfers engaging in “micro-resistance” (Evans and Moore 2015) strategies, are they effectively dismantling power relations in the line-up? This chapter delves into these questions.

For the most part, Mexican Americans and all women cope with their marginalized status *inside* the water by engaging in deflation tactics, like underscoring the benefits of sexism. For example, some women subscribed to the strategy of underscoring the benefits of sexism by acknowledging they are treated differently in the water, but believe there are some benefits to discrimination, like receiving more waves. Marginalized surfers (Mexican Americans and all women) tend to confront stigmatization *outside* of the water, like, “educating the ignorant” (Fleming, Lamont and Wilburn 2012) by calling out a co-workers’ racist stereotypes or approaching the moment as an educational opportunity to explain why the comment is offensive. Surfers with higher levels of educational attainment and/or knowledge of Chicana/o Studies, Ethnic Studies and Sociology were more likely to contest than cope (deflation tactics) with their marginalized status both in and outside of the water. The decision to contest racist, sexist and homophobic situations was highly dependent on the surfers’ level of expertise, age, and knowledge of social justice related issues. Overall, there is not a consistently clear pattern of practices marginalized surfers deployed, instead there was an extensive range of tools at their disposal, shaped by a number of stable and shifting factors. It wasn’t uncommon for Mexican American surfers and women to switch

back and forth between confronting or deflating approaches to consciously resist racial and sexist narratives, ideologies, and discourses.

Karl's structural strategies were influenced by his level of expertise, age, and knowledge of social justice issues. As you recall from previous chapters, prior to "carving" out more inclusive and diverse sporting spaces, Karl felt out of place and he described feelings of disconnection and racialized notions of not belonging towards his local surf community in Southern California. Oftentimes he said he felt isolated, racially profiled and disjointed when he first began surfing. Karl's participation in the sport was met with disapproval from friends with claims of "trying to be white" or "white washed." In the moment, he never contested his friends or family members' racial commentary, he just kept surfing yet he continued to feel isolated. It was not until college and at other pivotal points in his life that Karl was able to construct empowering spaces in and outside of the surf. As he became a more skilled surfer and enrolled in more Chicana/o Studies courses, he developed the insight to create and cultivate diverse and inclusive surf spaces for traditionally marginalized groups of people. The more skilled and experienced he became in surfing and in the field of education, the more he strived to challenge racism in the sport through more structural mechanisms of change. In these spaces, he was also able to challenge dominant ideologies about Latina/os and contest the white cultural imagery of lifestyle sports to prove Mexicans do surf.

While attending a community college in Orange County, Karl serendipitously was the president of the student surf club and an active member of MEChA, a student organization on campus. MEChA is a student-run organization that promotes higher education, community engagement, political participation, culture and history for students

from various socioeconomic, race, gender and sexual orientation backgrounds. The student surf club on the other hand, is a club that meets regularly to surf and participate in events related to the local surf community. Karl envisioned the surf club as an opportunity to connect with people of color over their shared experiences of racism, discrimination and sexism within surfing, forging a path for them to create a counter-cultural space within it. Since non-white groups of people are not typically associated with lifestyle or non-traditional sports (Wheaton 2017; Rinehart and Sydnor 2002), the very presence of Latino/as and African Americans in a surf club represents a form of cultural resistance (Comer 2016). As the president, Karl was in a leadership position to encourage members from MEChA as well as the Black Student Alliance to undertake an activity they may have otherwise never endeavored. Together these two seemingly distant groups fused a space for connection, empathy, compassion, resistance, diversity and inclusivity. As Karl coherently conveys, “And we all understood each other. There was more of a connection there.” Karl’s main strategy for managing “the harms of racism” (Evans and Moore 2015: 448) in predominantly white male-dominated settings meant he aspired to confront racism and sexism in the sport by constructing empowering sporting spaces.

Occupying a leadership position also enabled Karl to give back to his community because it provided him with an opportunity to challenge and confront dominant cultural beliefs about race. This parallels other researcher’s findings. Vasquez-Tokos and Norton-Smith (2017) found that “encounters with controlling images inspired economically stable Latino men to contribute to their racial group through leadership efforts that teach equality, cultivate civic improvement, and model paths of mobility” (p. 923). Controlling images are socially constructed ideologies and “major instruments of power,” reflecting the dominant

group's interest in maintaining power and subordination of suppressed groups" (Collins 2002: 68).

Karl utilized the skills he acquired in college to find more ways to give back to his community in later parts of his life. His strong belief in equity coupled with his background in Chicano/as Studies, inspired Karl to design and found a non-profit for indigenous youth across the world, providing him with an avenue for "talking back to controlling images" about Latino/as (Tokos-Vasquez and Norton-Smith 2017). Karl's organization uses surfing as one avenue for connecting indigenous youth with their native waterways and land. The organization primarily helps disadvantaged indigenous youth cultivate a relationship with the ocean and the land they have traditionally been displaced from. Karl's life is best summarized as a lifelong commitment to social change, education and social justice for Latina/o and indigenous communities. For the majority of his life he sought out structural changes, but in later parts of the interview he discussed engaging in individual acts of resistance, like saying to another surfer of color, "I'm a brown surfer too."

Karl understands how it feels to be "othered" and isolated in the line-up, so he intentionally repositions himself in the space when he sees other non-white surfers. This would be an example of an individual frame of change and is another strategy Karl adopted to form diverse spaces in the line-up. By intentionally paddling over to another "brown surfer" he is consciously fusing a collective space of diversity and sense of community in a sea full of whiteness. This is also a strategy to combat feelings of otherness as well. A number of Mexican American participants reported that they were either sought or were sought out by random non-white participants in the water. For a number of Mexican American surfers, this approach of fostering a sense of community led to meaningful and

lasting relationships. For example, Victor, an older middle class second-generation Mexican American male believed another Mexican American male surfer offered to help him out in the water because “culturally we understood each other and I think he knew how rare it was to see another Latino in the water.” In sum, a majority of Mexican American and women surfers engaged in a myriad of strategies to cope with and contest their marginalized status, ranging from individual to structural frames of change. Most surfers chose to cope with their marginalized status in the surf using deflation tactics to ease the discomfort of sexism and racism. The following section will unpack subtle sexism and racism practices in sporting practices.

Subtle Sexism and Racism in Sporting Practices

Empirical studies of minorities’ experiences in sport institutions published in the last decade suggest they continue to experience racialized and gendered oppression in their everyday sporting practices (Mansfield, Caudwell and Wheaton 2018; Fink 2016; Carrington 2015; Long, Fletcher, and Watson 2017) and leadership positions within sportscares (Acosta and Carpenter 2015; Norman 2010). Blatant sexism is not as pervasive as it was in the past, but sex discrimination and domination simply shifted to covert or “hidden from plain view” forms (Fink 2016; Norman 2010). Norman’s (2010) study of elite women coaches revealed they usually didn’t experience continuous everyday oppression, but subtler and “insidious ideologically based oppressions,” that contribute to women’s continued under-representation in the coaching positions (p. 100; see also Halford and Leonard 2001). Such as women coaches’ sexual identities were often questioned and there were “ambiguous” hiring practices (Norman 2010: 101). Findings from Norman’s (2010) study and others explain why in recent years women’s sport and

leadership as coaches and athletic directors has dwindled (Acosta and Carpenter 2015; Cooky, Messner and Musto 2015). Cooky, Messner and Musto (2015) argue, “stubbornly persistent conservative gender ideologies, structured inequities, and sex segregation continue to limit girls’ challenge to boys’ hegemony in sports” (p. 19; see also Cooky 2009; Messner 2011). Sexist ideologies *continue* to be rooted in many sporting institutions.

Like structural racism, sexism is deeply embedded in sport institutions and ideologies (Messner 2002), continuing to restrict women and people of color’s opportunities in participation and employment. For example, in professional women’s surfing, sexism exists in the form of the gender wage gap and limited media coverage of women’s events (Ford and Brown 2005; Henderson 2001). Female surfers on the professional circuit continue to struggle securing fair pay for the same surf events as their male counterparts. When there are female media representations in surf magazines, they are usually defined by normative constructions of femininity (Comer 2010; Henderson 2001). Although professional female surfers have created a space for themselves, they often do so in ways that mimic male styles and performances of male surfers (Ford and Brown 2005). Empirical studies have yet to examine the effects of racism on professional surfers’ careers, but critical surf scholars have suggested surfers who do not conform to “the idea of a singular surfing image” are putting their careers on the line (Hough-Snee and Eastman 2017; lisa hunter 2017). For example, Bobby Martinez, the only professional Mexican American surfer to date, often rebelled against the corporatization of surf culture and the ways he was being marketed by media outlets. Mainstream surf media and marketing companies typically portrayed him as a “cholo” or a “thug” (Hough-Snee and Eastman 2017). These depictions tokenized his racial identity and implied he was a typical

angry person of color. Bobby was well known for calling out the professional circuit for being too “corporate,” challenging normative behaviors and the professional governing board of surfers. It was not long before Bobby lost sponsors and fell off the tour, but his story suggests, as some scholars do, when professional surfers attempt to defy the boundaries of cultural norms in surf culture, their actions are severely reprimanded. Subtle ideologically based oppressions may be less obvious and harder to identify, but as empirical sport studies continue to capture the everyday experiences of minority athletes the more will be known about their lived oppressions.

Sport is generally combative for female athletes who compete in sports traditionally dominated exclusively by white able-bodied men (DiCarlo 2016). Theberge (2000) argues female athletes who participate in traditionally male-dominated sports and play on all-male teams, experience the highest levels of contention on the field (See also Theberge 1995). Surfing is a traditionally male-dominated sport, but it is also a lifestyle sport. As you recall from earlier, recent empirical studies of lifestyle sports argue that these non-traditional sports offer more opportunities for transgressive bodies and identities. Lifestyle sports would then potentially offer minorities more opportunity to contest gender norms and narratives than traditional sports because they are less connected to white male-dominated institutions. Findings from this study suggest women and Mexican American surfers do feel agentic in some aspects, but also feel as if they are constantly in contradictory positions. Mexican American participants discuss difficulties identifying with the culture, often being met with resistance from family members or friends and yet they are carving out inclusive spaces in the line-up. Women and Mexican American surfers must navigate predominantly white male surfing line-ups, oftentimes forcing them to choose between

coping with or contesting their marginalized status. Evidence from this study suggests recreational surfing may offer surfers with opportunities to shift power relations in the line-up, but for some surfers, the cost of dismantling local power structures can be complicated or too high relative to the potential payoff.

As previously argued in chapter three, Mexican American and women surfers' experiences in Southern California surf culture consisted of enduring an array of racialized and gendered stereotypes in and outside of the line-up. Similar to minorities' experiences in predominantly white spaces or institutions, women and Mexican American surfers experienced stigmatization, racism and sexism on a daily basis. Racialized and gendered forms of discrimination oftentimes produced feelings of "otherness" and re-inscribed the surfing space as a white male space. A large number of Mexican American surfers reported overt racist and sexist commentary in and outside of the line-up. This was heard primarily from family members, coworkers and friends, but a small number of participants reported hearing discriminatory commentary from white male surfers. Mexican American surfers frequently stated they were accused of being "white washed" by friends and family members and were repeatedly subjected to racialized discourse such as, "Are you sure you're Mexican?" and "You're not like a real Mexican." Covert discriminatory discourse and interactions occurred mainly outside of the surfing spaces, but a number of participants described navigating subtle forms of racism and sexism in the water. Mexican American women surfers reported the highest incidents of discriminatory behavior and exclusionary practices directed at them because of their gendered and raced hierarchical status. Mexican American female surfers are "doubly marginalized" (Nemani and Thorpe 2016: 219) based on their sex and racial identity.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will cover women and Mexican American surfers' coping strategies for dealing with sexism and racism in and outside the water. In this section, I will briefly highlight the various tools surfers have acquired to cope with their marginalized status. To cope with stigmatization and stereotyping, marginalized surfers utilized *deflation tactics*—mainly individual responses. For example, one woman surfer avoided certain beaches because she had a number of sexist interactions in the water. In some cases, women and Mexican American surfers turned to *structural mechanisms* to cope with their marginalized status, like creating clubs or attending events, which at first began as a coping strategy but eventually evolved into a space of cultural resistance. The second section of this chapter will address women and Mexican American surfers' strategies for contesting sexism and racism in and outside of the water. To contest stigmatization and stereotyping, marginalized surfers used *confrontation tactics*--also mainly individual responses. For example, the more skilled and experienced surfers “called for waves” or confronted racist commentary in the water. Individual and structural strategies for coping and contesting the space will be covered in each section across gender, race, age and ability.

“It took everything in me to diffuse the situation and just walk away”: Mexican American and women surfers' coping strategies

Strategies utilized by Mexican Americans and women resemble the main categories of resistance tactics commonly found in the literature examining how people of color and women respond to stigmatization in predominantly white spaces (Laurendeau and Sharara 2008; Wheaton 2017; Evans and Moore 2015; Fleming, Lamont and Welburn 2012). Adopting Fleming, Lamont and Welburn's (2012) categorization of minorities' emotional

responses to workplace stigma and stereotypes, *deflation* and *confrontation strategies* will be explored. Generally, marginalized surfers use deflation strategies to cope with their subordinate status and confrontation approaches to contest their position in the overall surf hierarchy. Mexican American surfers' emotional responses to stigmatization tended to shift across their life course; a finding consistent with current literature exploring Latino/as' responses to stigmatization (Vasquez-Tokos and Norton-Smith 2017). Mexican American and women surfers employed these strategies in an attempt to negotiate and sustain their surfing selves in these predominantly white male spaces. Most minorities coped with their marginalized status, but a small number of them chose to confront sexist and racist situations. More skilled and experienced women surfers were more likely to confront sexism in the water, using mainly individual strategies. Coping strategies adopted by women surfers reflect similar mechanisms utilized by other women participants in action sports, like avoidance and underscoring the benefit of sexism (Laurendeau and Sharara 2008).

A major method for coping with sexism and racism in the line-up involved deflation tactics to diffuse intense situations or downplay the significance of gender. Deflation tactics were mainly individual responses to sexist or racist situations in the water. The following is a list of deflation strategies utilized by women and Mexican American surfers to cope with their marginalized status: avoidance, underscoring the benefit, and managing the self. The first deflation strategy discussed in this subsection will be *avoidance*.

Avoidance

Women surfers primarily avoided certain locations in an attempt to circumvent conflict with predominantly white male surfers. Under certain conditions, women surfers

opted to avoid conflict in the water and saved confrontations for other scenarios. This was the case for beginner surfers and advanced surfers, but more so for beginner surfers with less skill and experience than advanced surfers. Most women and Mexican American surfers who used this strategy physically avoided going to certain surf spots, paddled away from the line-up or took a break from surfing all together. Taking time off or a break from surfing depended on the emotional and mental stress the incident inflicted on the surfer. This strategy was mostly adopted by women. For example, some women reported avoiding going to certain surfing spots or paddling away from male surfers because of the ways in which they felt marginalized, sexualized and/or trivialized by them.

Under the “white male surfer gaze” (Hough-Snee and Eastman 2017) women surfers from this study believed if they did not perform well on the first wave, their racialized and gendered feelings of not belonging would dramatically increase. Consistent with the sport literature, most forms of sexism reported by female surfers manifested in subtle practices. Mexican American women said subtle racist practices were harder to pinpoint. Mostly they felt othered because they were an anomaly in surf culture.

As you recall, female surfers of color reported difficulty untangling the sticky layers of their oppression. A majority of female surfers interviewed talked about the pressures to perform and to adorn their bodies according to narrow definitions of beauty. Women surfers also felt if they did not perform well, male surfers would use these failed examples to reinforce dominant ideologies of femininity, such that “women are fragile” or “surfing is too tough for women.” Unnecessary male attention, left women feeling patronized (Olive, McCuaig and Phillips 2015) and overly judged. Sasha, a younger, middle class,

white female surfer recalled a time when an older white male surfer referred to her as “sweetie” and was calling her over to him, so he could “show her how it’s done”:

This one time I was surfing Doheny and I was having a hard time. I was still learning and this was the first time I went without my friends, so I was already feeling out of place. This older white guy sees me struggle and tells me, “Come over here sweetie, I’ll show you how it’s done.” It was like he was treating me like a child and it was berating. I didn’t ask for his help nor did I need it, you know? What was it about me that screamed I needed his help. And why the heck did he need to call me sweetie? Incidents like that happen all the time for women, especially when we surf alone. It’s just plain disrespectful and demeaning.

I asked Sasha how she responded to him and she said, “It wasn’t worth getting into it with him, it would just go in one ear and out the other. Like I said, if I was with my group of friends I would have reacted differently. I probably would have felt more confident to point out his sexism.”

Her strategy for coping with gender relations in the line-up consisted of ignoring the comment and to keep surfing because “he wasn’t worth getting into it with.” Sasha believed a conversation about sex discrimination or sexism would have been out of the question, but if she was with her friends, she would have felt brave and agentic. On the surface, her strategy appears passive compared to other surfers’ strategies, but this does not mean she was not exercising agency. Her conscious choice to paddle away, avoid conflict and ignore the man’s sexist comment may resemble a sign of defeat, but for people under

constant oppression, “managing the self” can be a strategy for marginalized people to survive in predominantly white male spaces (Lamont, Fleming and Welburn 2012).

Most of the women acknowledged the influence gender and race had on their decisions to surf at different surf spots, but for white women, gender was the most salient factor affecting their decisions to avoid specific spots. There were a variety of surfing spaces women preferred to go to because they said it had a “friendlier” and “more welcoming vibe” towards women surfers. Doheny State Beach, San Onofre State Beach and “Blackies” were the top three most cited places to surf for beginners as well as female surfers. For instance, Carol, a younger, middle class, white woman explains why she prefers surfing at Doheny State Beach:

I’ve surfed at a variety of places and to me Doheny has one of the friendliest vibes in Southern California. No bad days there. I will go there alone or with my other girlfriends. I’ve never had any negative experiences there, you know and I’ve had bad experiences at different breaks. To the point where I won’t go back.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about those experiences and where they took place?

Sure. Well I avoid Huntington Beach, that’s for sure. The vibe there is not friendly towards women at all. I’ve had the worst vibes surfing there. Dudes just blatantly dropping in on me all the time because I am a girl. You know? Even if I call for the wave they will still drop in on me. So yeah, I won’t go there anymore because it takes the fun out of it.

Carol acknowledged the role gender plays on her decision to surf at certain breaks. Since she had negative sexist experiences surfing in Huntington Beach, she was reluctant to surf there again. She consciously chose to avoid negative experiences at particular spots, opting instead for more spaces where she felt accepted as a woman surfer. She also described these surfing spots as “more friendly towards women,” underscoring a theme put forth by ecofeminist research which argues, “physical environments are often defined in gendered terms” (Stoddart 2010: 109; Hessing et al. 2004; Moeckli and Braun 2001). As argued earlier, evidence from this study suggests surfing spaces are not gender or race-neutral, rather they are “sportscares” that embody dominant ideologies and discourses about masculinity and femininity (van Ingen 2003; Waitt 2008; Stoddart 2010). Ironically, Carol’s strategy for avoiding overtly aggressive male-dominated surf spaces, re-inscribes dominant ideologies about gender because the less aggressive and more welcoming surf spots are associated with femininity.

Similar to the excerpt above, Crystal, a younger, working class, third-generation Mexican American refused to surf down south in the San Diego region because she had a number of negative experiences at one surf spot in Oceanside. She referred to the spot as having a “white military bro vibe and mentality” because the location is close to a military base where members often surf. Crystal acknowledged the role gender plays in her decision to avoid certain surfing spots and in doing so, she compared her experiences in the United States to other parts of the world. Crystal details her experience below:

There are just some surf spots I won’t go to anymore and I’ve surfed all over the world. I’ve surfed at some really intense places in Hawaii and was treated better there than I was down in Oceanside. Maybe it has something to do with women

being more respected in Hawaiian culture. I mean, I feel as if I can pass for Hawaiian. I'm not sure what is it exactly, but I definitely have had worse experiences in Southern California. Some of the worst, which is funny because everyone says Hawaii has the worst vibe, the worst cases of localism, but I disagree. I think this place down south is the worst. It's like this white military bro vibe and mentality. You know that place is right next to the base, so you get a lot of that, um, kind of person in the water. After a few bad experiences, I decided to stop going there, you know? I just got tired of putting up with that shit. I just feel like I am going to get into a fight when I go there.

Crystal attributed the differential treatment to local gender relations and cultural norms. Such as in Hawaii, specifically Hawaiian women are treated with more respect than non-Hawaiian women. As previously argued, in Hawaiian surf culture, there is historical evidence indicating women and men surfed together harmoniously, suggesting gender relations may be less restricting in Hawaiian culture (Gilio-Whitaker 2017; Walker 2011; lisahunter 2018). This finding also reminds researchers of the significance of “intersecting subjectivities within surfing spaces,” paying particular attention to interlocking politics of gender and race identities in the surf (Olive, Roy and Wheaton 2017:151). Outside of the United States surf context, it is probable that non-white surfers do not experience the same level of discrimination in the water because the local politics shaping gender and race identities/relations have less ties to standards of white heteronormativity commonly found in mainstream US surf culture (Booth 2001; Evers 2009).

White surfers from this study argued they experienced “reverse racism” because of the often-contentious relationship between local surf communities and tourism. There is some evidence to suggest surf tourism has negative impacts for local residents of rural “surf towns” (Usher and Kersetter 2015; Hough-Snee and Eastman, 2017; Ruttenberg and Brosius 2017), resulting in mixed feelings within the home community and foreign tourists. As previously mentioned, in Hawaiian surf culture there is a history of cultural appropriation, native erasure and exploitation (Gilio-Whitaker 2017) which underlie relations between surf tourist and locals. White surfers claims of “reverse racism” overlook surf culture’s explicitly racist and exploitive past, and speak to a larger issue of “colorblind racism” argued in the preceding chapter. It may be the case that some white surfers in these sociopolitical contexts experience stigmatization, but this claim only continues to minimize the power of contemporary racism by framing white surfers as “the true victims of multiculturalism” (Cabrera 2014: 30, see also Bonilla-Silva 2010). Surf scholars are just beginning to unpack and grapple with the intersecting politics of surf tourism, colonialism, race and gender (Hough-Snee and Eastman 2017; Ruttenberg and Brosius 2017). More studies are necessary to assess white people’s seemingly spurious claims of “reverse racism.”

Considering Crystal “passed” as Hawaiian due to her darker complexion, she avoided being perceived as a tourist, and coincidentally she was treated with more respect than in her home country. From her perspective, the amount of gender discrimination she faced in the line-up was worst in Southern California. Due to the “white military bro vibe and mentality” encompassing some surf spaces in Southern California, Crystal avoided particular spots to avert conflict. Laurendeau and Sharara (2008) found some women

snowboarders adopted similar strategies for negotiating certain mountain terrains to also avoid the politics of gender. Some women snowboarders avoided certain parts of the mountain because they felt judged and marginalized by male snowboarders. Oftentimes women snowboarders claimed they avoided certain terrains because of their skills, but the researchers suggest “some women recognize the assumption that women are poorly skilled boarders, but refrain from casting this as an issue of gender discrimination, instead framing it as an issue of skill and expertise” (Laurendeau and Sharara 2008: 35). Unlike women snowboarders, women surfers from this study did not downplay the role gender plays in their decision to surf at certain spots, instead they discussed in detail the varying ways they are treated because they are women who surf.

Many women surfers openly discussed and acknowledged how gender impacted their decision to surf at certain spaces, framing it in terms of gender discrimination. It seems a majority of women surfers had a clear sense and understanding of their experiences of stigmatization. In recent years, issues like gender discrimination and sexism in the surf industry are increasingly and openly discussed in public forums as well as academic scholarship. On the surface, it appears women surfers are more conscious and comfortable speaking on these issues as well as challenging a variety of issues in the sport (Comley 2016; Comer 2010; Wheaton 2017). As an avid surfer, I have personally observed a surge of non-academic surf articles discussing sexism in the sport. Twenty years ago, I cannot recall observing any mainstream surf-related articles about women’s empowerment and gender equality. On the surface, it appears more women are conscious of gender discrimination in surf culture and are seeking avenues to challenge gender and race

relations in the line-up. Women's challenges to sexism in their everyday surf experiences will be covered in the next subsection.

Mexican American surfers employed the strategy of avoidance to bypass bigotry in the line-up. For a handful of Mexican American surfers, race was the salient factor that impacted their decision to surf at particular spots. Mexican American surfers did not perceive surfing spots as non-white spaces or "Mexican friendly" surf spots, but most preferred to surf in San Diego or Los Angeles rather than Orange County. Participants stated they preferred to surf at more diverse beaches to minimize feelings of otherness, but for some this meant traveling far distances, which was not always an option. A number of Mexican American surfers consciously avoided surfing in Orange County not due to gender discrimination, but due to the perceived or actual threats of racial violence and to avoid racial profiling. Marcus, a younger, working class, second-generation, Mexican American male surfer explained why he does not surf in Orange County due to perceived threat of violence:

I remember this one time my friends and I decided to surf in Huntington Beach. The waves were pumping down there, so we went for it. We don't usually surf that far south, we just stay in Los Angeles because we're more comfortable surfing there and you know, I had heard stories about the Orange County area.

Researcher: What kind of stories?

Well as I was about to say, this one time we went down there and as we were walking back to the car we saw these like skinhead looking dudes glaring at us.

Before too long they started to yell some shit at us and they started walking fast in our direction.

Researcher: Were they surfers or skaters?

Not sure if they were surfers, we didn't see any boards with them or anything, but then again, we weren't really trying to stay there much longer. We quickly jumped into our car and took off. That was the last time I ever surfed there because of that incident. I mean I know there are some white supremacist in Orange County, so yeah, definitely not trying to get jumped over some waves.

As Marco vividly described, he and his other non-white surf friends avoided surfing in Huntington Beach due to perceived threats of violence against people of color. The incident did not occur in the ocean or amongst surfers per se, but the racially-charged verbal assault happened in close proximity to a popular surf spot and in a city associated with groups of white supremacists. For people of color, the perceived threat of racial violence in public spaces constrains their choices and opportunities to surf quality waves. The ramifications of perceived threats of violence move beyond the scope of surfing and spatial constraints. It impacts Mexican Americans' social relationships and sense of community. Current research on the positive impacts of public parks argues park spaces may build social relationships and increase the sense of community (Kweon, Sullivan and Wiley 1998), maintain community cohesion and pride, build social capital (Glover, Shinew and Parry 2005), and improve interracial interactions (Shinew, Glover and Parry 2004). Therefore, the perceived threat of racial violence has real consequences for Mexican American surfers

beyond the scope of surf culture, spilling over into other aspects of their lived experiences such as harming their sense of community and group cohesion that equal access to public spaces can provide.

For some male Mexican American surfers, they avoided certain surfing spots because they faced a racially motivated threat of violence. One incident in particular was more complex than simply avoiding a surfing spot after a racist interaction in the water. In the following case, Ascension, a younger, working class, second-generation, Mexican American male surfer described a time a white surfer verbally harassed him in the water:

I was surfing this one time at the point in Malibu and some white local guy kept dropping in on me, so I decided I was going to drop in on him. I mean on that day everyone was dropping in on every one and no one was saying anything. And I know this guy, I see him all the time. He's that typical older white dude that thinks he owns the place. Anyway, I go for this wave and he starts barking at me to get off the wave. I don't and as I am paddling back he tells me, "Stop acting ghetto". So immediately, I paddle over to him and confront him, I start telling him how racist he sounds and maybe he should get out of the water, you know trying to explain to him the history of that term. I told him to get out of the water so we can talk about this further. He backs off and everything is fine until I am in the parking lot. I see him pointing at me and laughing with his friends, so I confront him again and ask if there is a problem. Now at this point things are getting intense and, in the moment, I am not thinking about racial profiling or anything like that, but it's in the back of my mind, you know? Like if shit were to go down, who do you think the cops would believe? This older white dude, who will act all innocent or me, some angry dark-

skinned dude? Just look at what's happening in our country right now. Anyway, I quickly switched my thinking and just started to de-escalate the situation and apologize, but I'm not going to lie, I stopped surfing for 6 months because of that situation. It just emotionally and physically impacted me.

At first, he deployed a confrontation strategy, directly addressing the situation in the heat of the moment in an attempt to "educate the ignorant" (Fleming, Lamont and Welburn 2012) on his offensive use of a racial slur in the line-up. In this situation, Ascension believed he needed to explain to the white male surfer the derogatory and historical use of the term "ghetto." Fleming, Lamont and Welburn (2012) concluded that African Americans adopting this response believed it was necessary to educate non-black people about African Americans culture and history. According to their study, African Americans felt, "they can gain recognition by challenging stereotypes and diffusing a more complex and detailed portrait of black people" (Fleming, Lamont, and Welburn 2012: 407). Ascension further challenged and confronted the surfer by asking him to get out of the water, hoping they could continue to talk about the matter further. The surfer in question appeared to be remorseful, so Ascension continued his session believing he successfully dismantled the racist commentary and provided the surfer with some historical context. All was well until Ascension noticed the same surfer in the parking lot laughing and pointing in his direction. He then decided to approach and confront the surfer again, believing they were presumably laughing at him. After the second heated exchange, Ascension quickly rescinded his emotional response when he recognized he was behaving aggressively towards the white male surfer. At that moment, Ascension realized if he continued to pursue the situation and it became violent, he would be reifying racialized dominant

ideologies about Latino men, potentially criminalizing himself. To prevent this from happening, Ascension “managed the self” (Fleming, Lamont and Welburn 2012) by controlling his feelings of anger and attempting to de-escalate the situation.

Managing the self is a strategy used by minorities to control and contain one’s emotions to avoid “confirming racial stereotypes or being perceived as incarnating them” (Fleming, Lamont and Welburn: 408). Ascension mentioned calming himself down because he did not want to be “some angry dark-skinned dude” because Latino men are often depicted and perceived as violent, aggressive, gang-affiliated and unruly (Vasquez and Norton-Smith 2017; Rios 2017; Flores 2014). In a later part of the interview, Ascension said, “After I saw the situation for what it was, I realized I had to calm myself down because who is going to believe a dark-skinned surfer versus a white surfer, especially in a white ass place like Malibu.” Latino males often are raised to not trust police officers due to a history of negative framing and police brutality against dark-skinned males. Recent research suggests Latino youth encounter punitive and violent police treatment to the same degree or level as African American youth, but these incidents rarely receive national attention (Rios 2017). Rios (2017) argued there is a “national crisis” of police mistreatment, misjudgment and misunderstanding aimed at young males of color.

Ascension's mistrust of law enforcement and the local surf community exemplifies Rio’s argument. After carefully considering his actions, Ascension decided to switch his strategy to deflation instead of confrontation to avoid conflict. This example also sheds light on the amount of emotional labor minorities engage in as they negotiate predominantly white male-dominated spaces. Evans and Moore (2015) found that after law students of color discussed their experiences of everyday racism with the researchers, they

mentioned having to also manage their reactions to these situations because of “the discursive characterization of people of color as overly emotional” (p. 446). The scholars believed this can be one of the most “challenging and contradictory aspects of emotional labor – people of color were forced to negotiate ideological and discursive assumptions about their problematic emotional characteristics” (p. 446). For Ascension this was the case. He talked at lengths describing the mental process he embarked on when these situations arise. Ascension was concerned with being labeled an angry person of color, worrying not only about his reaction, but also anticipating how others will react to him, like by calling the police. This finding further highlighted why Mexican American male surfers in many cases decide to deploy deflation tactics over confrontation strategies out of fear of confirming stereotypes or interactions with law enforcement. By de-escalating the situation, Mexican Americans can also deflect racial and gender stereotypes about minority people.

In general, adopting deflation tactics to avoid conflict was a common strategy utilized by marginalized surfers. Men in particular defaulted to deflation tactics to avoid confirming negative stereotypes about Latinos. Surfers felt it was best at times to pick their battles and diffuse intense situations. Besides paddling away or walking away from confrontational situations, surfers discussed engaging in relaxation techniques to calm themselves down before they entered the water. A few surfers stated they performed these rituals to remind themselves they deserved to be in the ocean, that the ocean belonged to everyone and they had a right to surf. They referred to these rituals as “brain games” or “mental training,” so they could be prepared for potential conflicts in the water. Monica, a

younger, working class, second-generation, Mexican American female discussed how she dealt with confrontations in the water:

Researcher: You mentioned using relaxation techniques to deal with sexist and racist confrontations in the water, can you explain a bit more what that means?

Monica: Sure. Meditation, yoga, focus on being the best female surfer and to be a role model. That's where I'm at. To be a mentor. I try to remind myself to not fight with the dudes and to be a good role model. Uniqueness is your power and once you start to recognize that you can become unstoppable and when you can just be your fucking self, like, people will respect you.

By calming herself down, Monica believed she could “rise above” most situations in the water and remind herself why she surfs. For her, being a good role model and being herself will lead to more respect in the water. To stay focused on her goals, she believed she must emotionally detach herself from the situation. Surfers engaging in what Evans and Moore (2015) coined “conflict deflecting strategies” do so to “manage their emotions in the space to both avoid being viewed as emotionally problematic and protect their emotional health (Evans and Moore 2015: 448). On the surface this strategy may appear minorities are accepting mistreatment by white male surfers, but many of them believe challenges in the water are better suited for other contexts. A majority of Mexican American and women surfers did not believe white male surfers were reflexive or critical of their actions and would rather “paddle on” than try to engage in an enlightening conversation in the water.

Underscoring the Benefits of Sexism

A second strategy women surfers employed was underscoring the benefit of sex discrimination. Recognizing men treat women differently in male dominated sports, some

women choose to underscore the advantages of the biased treatment. In surfing, waves are a scarce resource, oftentimes resulting in surfers physically fighting over waves (Comley 2016; Young 2001). Women surfers occupy a lower spot in the surf hierarchy, so one of the central advantages of being treated differently by men is that women surfers are likely to receive a wave from another male surfers because “they feel sorry for us women.” Jody, a younger, middle class, white female surfer explained this phenomenon:

You know, if you (men) want to give me this perfect A-frame wave then I am not going to complain! (laughs) Thanks! (laughs again) But by me taking it, I’m kind of going back on my beliefs. You know, a guy giving you a wave is like a slap in the face?

At the end of the quote Jody expressed feeling conflicted for “accepting” a wave from a male surfer. Similarly, in skydiving, if men blatantly treat women differently, women skydivers frame the mistreatment within a beneficial frame. Laurendeau and Sharara (2008) found women skydivers happily accepted the extra guidance and support given to them by men. Women skydivers recognized men were going to treat them differently, so decided to benefit from the differential treatment and become a better athlete through men’s differential treatment. In surfing, Jody recognized that she can benefit from the differential treatment by scoring more waves, but she contemplated what role she was playing in her own subjugation. By accepting the wave, she was perpetuating the sporting myth that “women are weak,” but if she didn’t accept the wave the men will judge her surfing ability as well. Jody was caught in a contradiction no matter the choice she made, so caught up in the moment, she ultimately chose to acquire more resources. As scholars have argued, marginalized surfers’ experiences and subjectivities are often complex as well as

contradictory (Knijik et al. 2010). If women surfers do not accept waves from men or perform well, they risk the possibility of male surfers perceiving them as “inauthentic” members of the surf community. Jody explained her conflicted feelings further in the following response:

Dude, really, we're trying to surf here. Maybe you should take us more seriously. Yeah, we may not be as strong as you and that's nice of you, but really, don't do it because you feel sorry, do it because you think we need a wave because you think we are going to go crazy if we don't get one!

Jody expressed her concerns being in a contradictory and complex position, but she underscored how acceptance of difference added to her own subjugation. In the moment, Jody willingly accepted waves from men, underscoring the benefits she receives from sexism but ultimately, she wanted to be seen as an equal member of the community. Jody wanted to be treated as a surfer, not a woman that surfs, a common theme expressed by women in action sports (Olive, McCuaig and Phillips 2015; Waitt and Warren 2008; Thorpe 2008). This theme is echoed further by another female surfer who claimed she intentionally “acted the part,” so she could reap the benefits of sexism. Katie, a younger, working class, 2.5 generation, Mexican American female surfer explained below:

Sometimes I play dumb and pretend like I can't surf. And I used to care what the dudes would tell me. I've been called a bitch, a c-word. I've been told to get out of the water, but men need to know we're more than tits and ass. I'm a good surfer man, I deserve respect, no, I command respect. I've worked super hard, so I demand respect. If someone treats me like shit I will prob eat their head off.

Katie played into the differential treatment because it benefited her in the moment. She received more waves and had more chances to improve her skills. She chose to accept differential treatment and ignore sexist commentary. In the past, she allowed discrimination to affect her, but now she demands respect when she surfs. Katie's response and approach to gender discrimination is two-fold: sometimes she intentionally pretended to not embody the proper knowledge for surfing and other times she said if she was mistreated by a male surfer she might "eat their head off." Women's confrontational responses to sexism will be explored further in the following section.

Lastly, some women believed if you "play the part" long enough then eventually you will stop feeling as if you have to "prove yourself" in the line-up. Some women surfers believed the tactic of "playing the part" eventually will pay off. Alexandria, a younger, middle class, 2.5 generation, Mexican American female surfer explained:

Like people are always waiting for you to prove yourself, you know, before they're going to let you catch any wave or just let you be out there or before they start to paddle for your wave. You know, like they'll be paddling for a wave and they know they can get it then they see you paddling for a wave and maybe they think you can get it but they just don't know, but they assume that you won't catch it. I do feel like there is something to prove. But once you do then that feeling goes away and then they see, you know, what you're made of. I do see that with other girls though more so than dudes. Like that don't get that chance to prove themselves. I think there's a lot of preconceived things that come along with gender and race in the water.

Alexandria was aware of the unfair system, but instead of trying to shift or change it, she accepted her position in the surf hierarchy and paddled on. Alexandria viewed the code of the sea as a rite of passage, one that would eventually lead to male surfers accepting women surfers in the line-up. In this sense, Alexandria was contributing to the dominant ideology that women surfers occupy a subordinate position and are expected to prove themselves in the water. Pierce's (1996) study of women in gendered organizations suggests that women lawyers are required to engage in particular emotional performances as one aspect of their job roles within the organization. For example, women lawyers are expected to be nurturing, calm and mothering toward their male colleagues. Pierce (1996) discovered, "By playing this emotional role, women paralegals unwittingly reproduce their subordinate position in the law firm hierarchy. On the other hand, women who violate these emotional norms are harshly criticized for their 'unprofessional behavior' sanctioned through a reduction in an annual raise, or, in the most extreme case, faced with termination" (p. 3). Pierce's pivotal study of gendered organizations is similarly reflected in women surfers' experiences. Women surfers are expected to be passive and play the part, which *maybe* will lead to being accepted by their male peers. Women surfers challenges to the gendered hierarchy will be explored further, but these excerpts show the ways in which gendered organizations and institutions restrict women's opportunities and foster hidden emotional labor.

Finally, some women surfers recognized that gender affected their experiences in the line-up, but they struggled to invest in individual strategies to contest these spatial experiences. For some women, they chose to employ structural strategies to challenge power relations, like joining an all-women's surf club. Structural strategies will be

discussed in the following section, but a number of women said they were still learning to speak up for themselves, so they either go with other women to feel a stronger sense of belonging or they accept the way men treat them without underscoring the benefits. Bethany, a younger, middle class, white female surfer touched on the latter in the following:

It's not super welcoming even at the beginner spots, to go alone, as a woman that's in her 20s and just learning to surf. They (men) don't want to deal with you. I think it's more brutal towards women, like they'll (men) cut in on you and not even acknowledge you. I just don't think it's as welcoming for women. Like they'll (men) tease the guys out there on their wave storms, but they will treat women even more different. It's like we're invisible out there. The only person that will give you a heads up out there will be another woman. Like at beginners' spots, if you see a woman there, she will be more friendly. Whereas the guys are like thinking, "I have to get this wave and if you're in my way then I am going to cut you off. So you better get out of my way."

Bethany's narrative continues to underscore the ways in which women surfers face discrimination in the line-up, and she does not believe this mistreatment is beneficial. As an inexperienced and beginner surfer, being a woman further compounded her experiences of belonging. Experience level seemed to affect female surfers' strategies for negotiating the space. The less experienced and exposed surfers were still in the process of navigating and acclimating to the space, which may explain why Bethany preferred to surf in a group rather than alone. A number of female Mexican American surfers discussed battling or "finding the courage" to contest constraining gendered and raced stereotypes. Jennifer, a

younger, working class, second-generation, Mexican American female discussed struggling to find a path for resisting power relations in the line-up:

That was something that especially as a Latina, you know you're usually told just to be quiet you know follow the path that's already been laid. And I am still learning how to speak up for myself out there when I feel as if I am being mistreated by dudes. I know other women speak up for themselves, but I'm just not there yet.

As Jennifer explained and as other women surfers have expressed, according to dominant ideologies, women, specifically Latinas, are expected to be docile, nurturing and complacent. Jennifer struggled to speak up for herself or find the courage to “talk back to controlling images” about Latinas (Vasquez-Tokos and Norton-Smith 2017). Vasquez-Tokos and Norton-Smith (2017) found controlling images are a powerful “mechanism to control underprivileged groups” (p. 914), possessing the ability to restrict opportunities and constrict self-images of Latinos, as reflected in Jennifer’s comment about Latinas. Controlling images can be summarized as socially constructed ideologies and “major instruments of power,” reflecting the dominant group’s interest in maintaining power and subordination of suppressed groups (Collins 2002: 68). Collins (2008) coined the term to describe how racialized constructs affect and engulf Black womanhood, playing an important role in U.S. Black women’s oppression. Jennifer commented on having a difficult time engaging in micro level responses to racism in the line-up but was in the process of forming a group for Latina/os surfers to foster a sense of community and create a space for resistance. She was still learning the tools to counter racist and sexist ideology in her everyday surf experiences. However, as she continues to find and build a sense of

community within surfing, she believed she will find the “courage” to challenge power relations and cultural narratives.

Power relations in surf culture were mostly reflected, rather than shifted, from dominant culture, underscoring how sport spaces often help to “reshape wider social relations” (Carrington 2015: 389; see also Hartmann 2003; Carrington 2010). There is some evidence to suggest surfers are challenging cultural norms in and outside of the water. The following section will focus on the ways women and Mexican American surfers are resisting or challenging gender and race relations in the water as well as the strategies they employ to “carve out” spaces for themselves in this sporting context (Laurendeau 2008: 25; see also Comley 2016). Women and Mexican American surfers mostly developed individual strategies of resistance to cope with and contest gender and race relations, but a number of them discussed structural strategies for contesting sexism and racism in surf culture. Women and Mexican American surfers may continue to face oppression in their sporting practices, but their experiences are not without exercises of agency and collective resistance.

In sum, Mexican American and women surfers engaged in a number of deflation tactics to negotiate and navigate predominantly white male sporting spaces. Women surfers avoided certain surf breaks, to prevent a confrontation or high level of sexism. Mexican American men avoided specific surf breaks due to perceived racialized levels of violence and/ or actual threats. Mexican American men also reported avoiding surfing at surf breaks because they were concerned with being perceived as hyper-violent or a threat if they confronted racist acts. This only occurred when male surfers chose to confront a racist situation instead of employing a deflation tactic. Recognizing they were going to face

sexism in the water, some women surfers underscored the benefit of the biased treatment. When male surfers gave women extra attention in the water, potentially resulting in more waves, then some than women viewed this dynamic as a positive outcome of sexism. By confronting racist ideology, Mexican Americans are acting against racial prejudice and stigmatization, but risking confirming racial stereotypes. As Evans and Moore (2015) remind scholars examining strategies employed by people of color in white institutional spaces, “People of color within white institutional spaces carry the burden of having to choose between tacitly participating in their own objectification and marginalization within the institution or actively reacting against these racial dynamics at the risk of institutional alienation, and possibly exclusion” (p. 441; see also Pierce 2003, 2012). Overall, marginalized surfers are tasked with the “impossible burden” (Evans and More 2015) of negotiating racial and gendered microaggressions in their everyday surf experiences.

Resistance Strategies

In order to counter racist and sexist ideology, women and Mexican American surfers employed a number of strategies to combat dominant ideologies about race, gender, and space. The following section will present women and Mexican American surfers’ individual strategies or acts of “micro-resistance” (Evans and Moore 2015), mirroring research investigating the ways in which minorities negotiated white male-dominated organizations. A majority of marginalized surfers developed individual or micro level acts of resistance, and but more than half discussed developing structural strategies to contest and cope with stigmatization as they devoted more time to the activity. Individual strategies will be considered first followed by structural strategies.

Peterson (2008) investigated the changing gender relations within the Swedish Armed Forces and found when women entered this highly male-dominated organization they developed individual and structural strategies to cope with and contest their minority status. Women officers who adopted an individual perspective of change believed that in order to create shifts in the gender order the primary target of change was to be accepted as a member of the military profession. Competing against men in physical feats, like racing them on the running track was a way women felt they could “level the playing field” and show men they could stand their own ground as women officers without explicitly challenging the status quo.

Recall from the previous chapter, many women surfers believed in order to be accepted and feel as if they belong, they have to “prove” they belong to be there. In some cases, women verbally challenged the gender order by shouting or “claiming” a wave as “theirs,” signaling to the other surfers they intend to take off on the wave. Calling for a wave is one way surfers attempted to regulate the open space and try to avoid overcrowding a singular wave. In some surfing spots, all surfers take off regardless if anyone calls for it, but for the most part surfers follow the well-known and inscribed code of the sea. As mentioned earlier, according to the code of the sea, male surfers sit at the top of the surf hierarchy, oftentimes causing women to feel inferior in the line-up. In most male-dominated sport spaces, generally it is assumed that women athletes are not as skilled as men, resulting in some men engaging in practices that devalue, sexualize and marginalize women participants (Laurendeau 2004; Thorpe 2005). Some male surfers engaged in marginalizing practices by “dropping in” and “snaking” waves from female surfers because they assumed they were superior. Victoria summed this up perfectly by arguing, “Men

assume we're (women) not going to catch the wave, so they drop in on us until we prove ourselves." As she underscores, some male surfers devalued women's participation in the sport, so in order to "prove" they belonged out there women needed to perform well under pressure. Usually the more skilled surfers contested the space by deliberately defying the code of the sea and calling for waves or calling off male surfers. Kristy, an older, upper class, white female surfer exemplifies this point:

You really have to get out there and call for waves, you know, if you know what you're doing. The guys aren't going to respect you if you're out there waiting for waves. You have to be dominant, paddle right up next to them and challenge them. If you're in the right position then take off for the call or call them off. They will respect you more if you do that, but if you are going to call for the wave you better catch it or you will look like an idiot for fucking up. I surf at the same spot every day and I call for my waves, for the most part the dudes back up when I act aggressive.

Kristy is a highly skilled surfer who used to compete professionally in high school and mentioned to me she worked in a male-dominated workplace, so she 'is "used to the male ego." Due to her skills and experience, Kristy felt empowered to defy the code of the sea. As Kristy states, she "has been surfing at the same spot for about twenty years," so she has adapted and adopted the local norms of the space, enabling her to verbally challenge the gender order. It should be noted that Kristy would be considered a local, which also enables her to be in a position to challenge gender norms in the surfing space. Kristy did not mention her experiences at other surfing spaces, but at least at her home break she relies on her locality, skills, and experience to defy the code of the sea. For skilled and

experienced female surfers, skills and experience are the main strategy employed to confront power relations in the water.

For surfers who may be lacking in skills and experience with surfing to confront sexist or racist incidents in the water, they often turned to other strategies to challenge oppressive tropes. For the most part, marginalized surfers discussed experiencing microaggressions within their family and peer groups. Mainly Mexican Americans in my sample discussed confronting restrictive stereotypes. These surfers believed their mere presence in the sport challenges dominant cultural norms about sporting practices, so when they are met with pushback from their families or peer groups, they often advocated for themselves instead of brushing off the comments. Victor, a middle-aged, working class, 2.5 generation, Mexican American male expands on this point further:

And I know how some Mexicans can be you know, they like what they like and they stick to what's comfortable, what's the norm for them. I didn't want that life for myself, so I stepped outside of the norm in my family and I remember my wife wasn't very supportive in the beginning. She said to me, 'Are you sure you want to surf because that's not what WE do' and I told her well it's going to be what I do. The 'we' of course referring to Mexicans. I try not to pay attention to the negativity. If I do hear it I tend to just zone it out. She supports me now, but still won't go to the beach with me (laughs).

Victor was met with resistance from his family, but he considered this opportunity as a way to break out of racialized norms and to form his own path to a recreational lifestyle. He recognized racial stereotypes exist, which prevented some Mexican Americans from pursuing activities outside of racial boundaries, but he desired to construct an alternative

identity for himself. He took his passion for surfing and turned it into a side business, shaping custom surfboards in his backyard. He regularly takes one of his teenage daughters surfing with him on the weekends and hopes she will continue to surf as she gets older. Victor downplays any negativity around him by “zoning” it out and doing what he loves, a strategy proven successful for him.

Mexican American female surfers’ experiences and negotiations are further compounded due to coping with and contesting racialized and gendered feelings of belonging and the experience of microaggressions. Mexican American women discussed navigating and juggling a “double burden” or “double marginalization” while surfing, resulting in difficulty untangling the sticky layers of oppression. As reported by Mexican American female surfers, overt and subtle forms of racism are less common than overt or subtle forms of sexism. In general, when discussing strategies for coping with and contesting the space, Mexican American surfers discussed drawing from similar experiences in other white male-dominated spaces, like their workplaces or college campuses. Findings from this study suggest that Mexican American surfers were more inclined to confront racist and/ or sexist situations with coworkers, friends or family members, which presented them with more opportunities to challenge dominant ideologies. Jennifer, a younger, working class, second-generation, Mexican American female explains below:

I have gotten from people, co-workers of mine, I have gotten this like multiple times, I’ve had people tell me, ‘You’re not Mexican, you surf and you do all these other cool things, you’re not Mexican.’ And I’m like excuse me! Yes, I am Mexican and, yes, I had to break a lot of barriers to do things that don’t technically run

through my family. I am Mexican and Mexicans do surf. People think I am Hawaiian or something else. My features are very Mexican, I have very dark skin, but for some reason people deny that. Even people that I do Jiu Jitsu with, they're like, 'No, it's not possible that you surf, you're from Pico Rivera'. They really think it is impossible. You'll get that backlash from people in your community too. You just have to use these opportunities as moments to educate them.

At work and her local gym, Jennifer chooses to confront stereotypes and prejudices about Mexican Americans. Her co-workers and friends are in disbelief of her racial identity because she does "cool things" like surfs and travels the world. They repeatedly insisted she is Hawaiian, which once again, is assuming and perpetuating the cultural belief that all dark-skinned people who surf are Hawaiian. Their assumptions erased the possibility of alternative subjectivities and reify, instead of challenge, dominant cultural beliefs. Jennifer uses these opportunities to challenge dominant stereotypes about race and pave a new path for multiracial surfers. She mentions having to break a lot of barriers to engage in activities outside of the boundaries of what is considered acceptable in her family and community. She adopts confrontation strategies when she 'was not surfing, but for the most part engages in deflation tactics in the water because as you recall from earlier, she was not "comfortable" challenging surfers in the moment when incidents occurred. Jennifer viewed problematic situations in her workplace as opportunities to advocate for herself, her culture and "to prove" Mexicans do surf. In the final subsection, I will cover structural strategies Mexican Americans and women surfers adopted to challenge dominant ideologies in sport and carve out a space for themselves in the field.

Structural Strategies

The beginning of this chapter focused on the micro-level or individual coping and contesting strategies minority surfers adopted when navigating predominantly white male sporting spaces. I now turn to structural or macro-level strategies surfers adopted to confront and challenge racism and sexism in their everyday sporting experiences. Structural strategies consisted of surfers engaging in resistance practices aimed at dismantling central aspects of surf culture they found problematic and marginalizing. Participants mainly discussed participating in women-only surf events or clubs, forming a Latina/o surf club, using social media to connect with and share their experiences with other minorities, educating themselves about the history of the sport, and advocating for or creating media representations of non-white male athletes. Surfers adopting macro-level acts of resistance were primarily interested in increasing diversity in the sport, showcasing their participation/contribution to the sport/lifestyle, and carving out a space in the line-up for non-normative identities of surfers.

Structural frames of change provided Mexican American and women surfers with creative and community-focused resources for challenging surf culture's central tenets. Their strategies incorporated practices primarily aimed at deconstructing cultural norms produced and created by surf culture's sexist and racist past. Peterson's study (2008) of women army officers concluded that when women officers adopted a structural perspective of change, they focused on changing the structures of the organization by challenging central aspects of the organizational life in the Armed Forces. In this situation, there was no interest in being accepted by their male peers, but rather to question the legitimacy of male norms in the organization and challenge the very structure that creates the inequality.

Oftentimes surfers challenged or coped with their marginalized status in the water through micro-resistance practices while also engaging in macro-level forms of resistance outside of the water to challenge central aspects of surf culture. However, there was no clear or consistent pattern. For example, a male surfer may avoid conflicts in the water by paddling away from racist locals, but once a month volunteer with a local Latino/a surf club providing free surf lessons for underrepresented youth in his community. For a significant number of marginalized surfers, they believed in order to dismantle and challenge norms embedded in surf culture, central aspects of the culture needed to change and be addressed structurally. Everyday micro-resistance practices can create change interactionally, but a number of Mexican American and women surfers were interested in participating in other forms or acts of resistance. A significant number of marginalized surfers were consciously and actively pursuing a variety of avenues to create a culture that celebrated and showcased diverse representations of Southern California surfers.

Women surfers adopting a structural frame of change often joined women-only surf camps, online groups, or participated in events about women's history in the sport. Many women commented on attending, contributing to and supporting events for professional women surfers. For example, The Supergirl Pro, the only all-girls action sports professional competition, is held every year in San Diego. More than 50% of the female participants I interviewed attended the event in the past five years. I attended the event with a participant and witnessed swarms of young girls in the main event crowd, on the skate ramps and walking around with super(s)hero capes draped over their backs. Most of the surf events are primarily attended by men and boys, so witnessing a sea of women cheering on the surfers was truly a sight to see, as well as a gendered phenomenon. Participants stated they

also supported professional female surfers by following their social media accounts. By supporting their content, they believed they were contributing to “alternative representations” of the sport. A few male surfers agreed and they also made a conscious effort to support women’s professional surfing. Charles, a younger, working class, 2.5 generation, Mexican American male commented:

Women surfers are just as good as the guys, but they don’t get the same amount of coverage. Shit, they can surf better than me! So, yeah, I try my best to support professional women’s surfing, I think more guys need to do that, but not like follow their accounts because they think they’re hot or something like that. Don’t get me wrong, there are a lot of beautiful professional women surfers, but they’re also badass too, so support them because they surf really well, not because they look good in a bathing suit.

Outside of the line-up, women and men are discovering ways to deconstruct power relations by utilizing social media. Social media in particular can be an empowering medium for women and other minorities to challenge dominant ideologies embedded in lifestyle cultures, oftentimes providing a safer and supportive environment (MacKay and Dallaire 2013; Olive 2013). A small, but significant, number of women also mentioned posting photos of themselves surfing, hoping to inspire other women to surf. Olive (2013) argues that social media applications, such as Instagram provide women with an, “alternative to mainstream surf media, images posted on Instagram by women who surf recreationally both disrupt and reinforce the existing sexualization and differentiation of women in surf culture” (p. 99). The images themselves are not necessary resistant, but it gives women a platform to assert themselves as a “voice of surf cultural authority” through

the process of sharing and engaging with the images they post (Olive 2013: 99). Marginalized surfers discussed viewing limited examples of empowering images of women in mainstream surf magazines, so one way they “carved out” a space or challenged dominant narratives was to seek out alternative communities and images online.

Four of the women surfers interviewed were filmmakers, content creators of surf-related blogs, or frequent contributors for alternative surf media outlets. These women surfers believed media representations needed to drastically be changed, so they embarked on creative endeavors to confront gender norms in the industry. The media content created by this group of women surfers ranges from making a documentary about women’s big wave surfing to starting a blog about “surf feminism.” Layla, a middle aged, middle class, white female surfer discussed how she contributed to combating sexism in the surf industry by producing a documentary about women’s big wave surfing and the battles they have endured to gain the “right” to enter one of the most famous surf events for big wave surfing:

I just filmed a documentary about women’s surfing. I have the utmost respect for women big wave surfers. They’re out there surfing big waves and I think they’re such good role models. You know? They’re breaking down so many stereotypes. They don’t even have to say anything, just visually they’re breaking down stereotypes. I think that’s important for feminism. I’m not a big wave surfer, but I love the sport and I wanted to make a movie about this battle over Mavericks.

Layla herself is not a big wave surfer, but the first time she saw a local San Francisco woman take off on a large wave she was inspired to produce a film about their immaculate surfing abilities. In her film, she discusses the history of big wave surfing, arguing that only men’s big wave surfing is usually covered in mainstream media, but women have

been surfing big waves since the late 1990s. Sarah Gerhardt is the first reported woman to surf Mavericks and has been advocating for women's big wave surfing ever since she surfed the wave in 1998. Mavericks, the famous monster break off of the Northern California coast, has become the battle grounds for women's equality. Every year, Quiksilver holds a surf event titled "Men Who Ride Mountains." No woman was invited until 2016, but only then because the contest was forced to in order to receive a permit from the California Coastal Commission. Layla covers the controversy in her documentary, along with powerful images of women "riding mountains" and talking about the petition they created to challenge Mavericks' contest rules. In general, these filmmakers and bloggers discussed the change occurring in the culture, such as increasing media representations of women of color in smaller, private or locally funded surf magazines. For example, Nike, who owns major surf company Hurley, this year featured its first African American woman in a surf-related advertisement. The woman is a model not a surfer, but even so, it was the first time an African American woman was featured in a Hurley advertisement. Digital media has played a vital role in the "democratization and critical turn of surf writing" (Hough-Snee and Eastman 2017:11). Blogs, online communities, and open-access documentaries have become major tools for politically minded surf writers and creators to forge communities across a multitude of borders (Hough-Snee and Eastman 2017: 11). Creating alternative forms of media representing a diverse body of surfers, is just one way women surfers are engaging in structural change, but it is increasingly becoming a popular tool for them to disengage with central norms in surf culture.

Participating in or creating women-only surf clubs or groups was a major avenue for women surfers to challenge sexism in the sport. A handful of women surfers discussed

joining women-only surf camps when they first started to surf. Most of these women were older and said they felt more comfortable learning from other women. Women-only clubs or groups in lifestyle sports are a common business and an empowering space for women to learn a new skill (Thorpe 2008; Comley 2016). Thorpe's (2008) study of women snowboarders argued, that even though women snowboarders are constructed as "other" against which masculinity is defined, they have begun to create their own spaces where women can come together to learn how to snowboard in an environment that is free from objectification and devaluation. The creation of snowboarding camps for women challenges the masculine image of the sport, often providing women with the confidence to confront sexism when they ride in other settings. Women joined these spaces to cope with sexism in snowboarding culture, but eventually used these contexts to contest their marginalized status. Mary, a younger, working class, second-generation, Mexican American female surfer commented on why she feels more "exposed" when she 'was not surfing with a group of all women:

You know, the way people act towards us, like the tone of the situation. But, the first time I went out with Giselle and a bunch of girls I remember feeling comfort with them and I remember going out other times alone and not feeling that comfort. You know? I felt very exposed to the locals looking at me and thinking you don't even know how to paddle right or whatever. I just felt very exposed and linking that to my workplace, I have to remind myself that I have a right to be here. I deserve to be here and I can learn just as much as the next person whoever that may be. And in order to explain that to someone that believes we're making this up or it's not happening, just look at professional women's surfing.

Mary believes her actions were scrutinized and singled out when she surfed alone. She was still learning to surf, so she felt less comfortable if she was not in a group, to the point where she felt her actions were magnified. She draws connections to her workplace, which was also male-dominated and intimidating for a woman. To reassure herself in the water, she surfs with other women to build her confidence, underlining the benefits of surfing in a group of women. In groups, women feel more agentic and reframe their experiences as empowering instead of isolating (Comley 2016).

Mexican American surfers voiced the same concerns as women surfers, expressing a need for more inclusive and inviting surf spaces, but they said they did not know of any Latino/a surf clubs or groups. A majority stated they yearned for an organization to connect them with other Latino/as in and outside of the water. As mentioned, more than a few stated they often looked for other “brown people in the water,” but rarely met other minorities in the line-up. Only a small percentage of marginalized surfer heard or knew of the surf organization *Brown Girl Surf or Surf Bus Foundation*, two nonprofits aimed at diversifying the sport. A few participants stated they heard of a group of Mexican American surfers out in Venice Beach, commonly referred to as the Mexican Surf Association. I was not able to contact any members, but the truth remains: Mexican Americans were searching for a community within mainstream surf culture. Most Mexican American participants resorted to using social media to connect with other Latina/o surfers in the Southern California area. Two Mexican American women I interviewed ended up starting a surf club after the project commenced. I checked in with them after the data collection phase to see how the group was evolving. The following is an excerpt of my conversation with Jennifer and Victoria:

Researcher: First off, thanks for agreeing to chat with me again, I am excited to hear about the Latina/o Southern California Surf Club. I saw on Facebook there are about 60 members!

Jennifer: Of course, dude, your interview really inspired us to get the ball rolling on this club. Victoria and I have been talking about it for so long now! We met like a year ago on Instagram and talked about it then, but we never like got it like in motion. We're so happy you're doing this project!

Victoria: Yeah dude, seriously. So happy this is finally coming together. We have about 60 members on the Facebook page, which is a good start, but we're hoping to find more and more people to join as we start doing more events. For now, it's just really a way for us all to be connected you know? Like finally we all found each other. I knew there were more Latinos out there that surfed!

Researcher: Can you tell me more about the objectives of the club and maybe where you see it going in the next 6 months?

Jennifer: Well, we really want to help inner city youth, so our plan is to hold like surf clinics and invite whoever to come down to the beach and try surfing. You know, provide them with that access and resources that we talked about in the interview. Encourage them to step outside of their comfort zones and try something they've never done before. We want to call it Courage Camps because it takes courage to try something new and go against the grain. For us, surfing has been such a place of healing and self-discovery, we just want to provide that for our communities. You know, both me and Victoria grew up in East Los Angeles, we

never knew a life like this could exist for us. We simply want to give back to our communities. Start small and expand it in the future.

Victoria: Exactly. For now, we want to start small, do monthly get togethers and offer free surf lessons. I am a surf instructor and semi-professional surfer, so it's easy for me to provide free lessons to anyone. And we're both teachers, so it's perfect really. Eventually we would love to expand it to other sports like jujitsu or skateboarding, you know sports not associated with Mexican Americans. At this point it's really just about community and giving back like Jennifer said. We'll see where it goes. We made shirts too! So yeah representation matters and like I said before, Mexicans do surf, so do Puerto Ricans and African Americans, you know, we do all sorts of rad things!

Victoria and Jennifer started the club to fill a gap in access, exposure, and resources which they felt are prevalent barriers in Mexican American communities for beginning to surf. Growing up, they never imagined surfing was a possibility for their lives, but over time they managed to overcome a variety of barriers to become lifelong surfers. Their shared love for surfing brought them together, but it was their shared devotion to social change that helped them overcome their feelings of not belonging in a predominantly white male sport. Both of them recognized surfing is not associated with non-white cultures or customs, but they believed it can be an empowering activity for inner-city communities of color. Although not primarily the goal of the club, it is a site of sporting resistance, possessing the potential to play a dynamic role in Mexican Americans lives. Burdsey (2017) and others (Carrington 1998; Williams 1993) have long studied Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) sport clubs' role as sites of resistance. For example, Carrington

(1998) highlighted the role of local sports clubs in constructing macro and micro African-Caribbean identities. In his work, he argued local cricket clubs can be symbolic markers of the “black community” and presents them with a space to reflect on challenges they face in their attempts to access other local clubs. The Latino/a Southern California Surf Club has the potential to serve the same purpose because it is creating a place for marginalized people to build a transformative community within surf culture. Victoria and Jennifer started the club because they felt isolated and alone in other spaces, so for them it is a place of resistance.

The final structural strategy consists of surfers turning to their embodied critical knowledges they have acquired in higher education institutions to dismantle power relations embedded in surf culture. Mexican American surfers are utilizing their awareness of social justice related issues to examine surfing’s problematic past to move forward and forge new paths for surfers of color. More than a fourth of Mexican American surfers discussed that a background in Chicano/a Studies, Ethnic Studies, Native American Studies and Sociology propelled them to recognize stereotyping and racialization. Generally, education exposes Mexican Americans to more interactions with white people and may “sensitize minorities to experiences of racialization” (Ortiz and Telles 2012: 12). Learning about the history of racism and discrimination against groups increases minorities awareness to social justice related issues and enables them to see the existence of racism in their lives.

For my sample of Mexican American surfers, possessing a background in critical studies of race, ethnicity and indigeneity, provided them with more insight and resources to combat racist and sexist interactions in the water. Being familiar with Chicana/o

Literature also affects “self-concept, consciousness, and worldview” (Vasquez 2005: 904). This group of “conscious Chicano/as” viewed surfing’s indigenous roots as a resource for challenging and contesting dominant ideologies in the sport. They discussed at length the value they discovered in educating themselves about surfing’s complicated colonial past. By reading historical accounts of surfing’s origins in places outside of Hawaii, they could rely on this cultural knowledge to foster a sense of belonging in their local surf communities. They started to “unpack” and “unsee” the sport as a predominantly white middle class male sport and began to envision a place for themselves in the community. In the last section of this chapter, I will discuss how Mexican American surfers are discovering new ways of being and challenging the “presumed racial profile of surfers” (Comer 2016: 68) by untangling narratives from the past to transform the boundaries of modern surf culture.

In the opening quote, Karl discussed connecting his passion for surfing with his yearning for social activism. Eventually he used surfing as a tool to connect indigenous people with the land they have historically been displaced and dislocated from due to colonialism. What started out as a passion of his own became a resource for Karl’s healing and self-discovery. I was able to visit Karl and volunteer with his non-profit when they hosted a surf day in San Diego. After four hours of surf lessons with local indigenous youth, we sat down and talked more about his organization:

Like I said before, I felt guilty incorporating surfing into one of the programs, but the more I thought about it, I started to understand why I felt guilty because we think this is a life we don’t deserve. That somehow, we can’t be surfers and that comes from trauma in our past. When you think about indigeneity, you know the

coast is important to our identity. It's our birthright to have access to the coast. The coast is important to indigenous people, so why not encourage them to develop that connection by using surfing. But again, I didn't want to put surfing forward in the program, so that others wouldn't think that I was doing it for my own selfish needs. I was initially shy about situating it into the program. Part of the problem was like a selfish guilt, I think surfing can be a selfish guilt. And I think back then I think it was because surfing was seen as such a white thing and male dominated and it wasn't as mainstream but now surfing is so different. Bottomline, one of the goals of the program is to help Native Americans in the San Diego region experience a sort of rebirth of culture, you know, coastal Native Americans need to be connected back to the ocean because water is life. Water is life.

Karl believes surfing can be a “pedagogical tool” (McCloin 2017: 199) to connect with indigenous cultural practices of the past. McCloin's (2017) work with indigenous surfers in Australia discovered surfing is often presented to young indigenous surfers in accordance with, “different cultural knowledges, histories, experiences, and cultural values” (p. 199). In other words, surfing is promoted as the “reclamation of cultural pride and pleasure” for local indigenous populations in Australia. Viewing surfing through this lens directly challenges the Westernized frame of surfing as leisure, providing these youth with a way to connect with traditional ways of being. Karl aimed to do the same for the indigenous youth he primarily worked with in the San Diego region.

Karl was one of four surfers identifying as an indigenous Chicana/o. Although I recognize there is “significant confusion regarding Chicana/o indigeneity,” for the scope of this project I will be speaking to the claims made by participants instead of trying to

unravel this tangled history. For more on this topic, please see Pulido's (2018) work which provides the necessary theoretical underpinning to extricate the complicated relationship between non-native people and settler colonialism. Generally, Chicano/a indigeneity is rooted in a desire to "reclaim their past" to a remember a time and a longing for a "pre-colonial past that can never be known" (Contreras 2008: 165). In recent years, Chicano/a activists have begun to reclaim their indigeneity, drawing heavily on an Aztec heritage, such as Day of the Dead celebrations and Aztec art and dancing (Pulido 2018). For this group of indigenous surfers, they are turning to surfing to connect with traditional customs and practices. As Karl stated, one of the goals of his program involves connecting indigenous youth to the history of place and helping them make sense of their deep connection with the coast. As he beautifully illustrates, historically indigenous people of the San Diego region were displaced and dislocated from their native land, from their communities and they long to be connected to the space again. Below he develops this idea further:

I always felt connected to the ocean, but never my indigenous nation. All these years I've been searching for that connection. I have indigenous roots, I'm not Latino, you know, I'm Chicano. I felt so different when I went to Mexico and realized how much of that was me. I am indigenous. I identify as indigenous. And to go there and to surf with indigenous Nahuatl people, these waves are on Native American reservations you know, no one can just go purchase a piece of the house, white, American, even Mexicans, can't purchase land. They run that territory down there. I've had the opportunity to surf on Indian reservations in Panama as well where you know the whole privilege thing is reversed. Birthright over privilege. I

try to share this with the young people, we have a birthright to access to lands where we think our ancestors are from, but we are all a part of a waterways or oceans. Educating young people about the history of the land and advocating for their use of a space, considered by indigenous folks as a “birthright” instead of a privilege, was a key focus of his program. He also speaks to the ways in which the coastlines in Southern California are perceived as privileged places. As he argued below, people never stop to examine how property or land right acts in California shaped these landscapes and removed indigenous peoples from the land:

And we’ve been gentrified, look at the history of California, the bill of state, you know we’ve become the outsiders and it’s like we’re always yearning for it. We’ve been gentrified from this privileged thing (the ocean) and it’s not necessarily a class thing. Even though it felt like a class thing, you know, like I told you, not necessarily trying to be or act white, I now know it was a birthright thing, it was a natural thing for me to yearn for the ocean.

Before realizing he had indigenous roots, Karl felt unwelcome in surfing communities, while simultaneously feeling a strong connection to the ocean. He now attributes this drive to his indigenous ancestry, believing his desire to be near the ocean was built in his DNA instead of an aspiration to move up the social ladder. Ascension, who does not identify as indigenous, but understands how colonialism impacts surf culture, discussed how embodying a critical worldview encouraged him to confront issues in the water:

Generally white folks mythically believe they have ownership over the land. Claiming land and feeling like you own it. And you can see that colonial mythology in surfing. You know, when another surfer asked you, ‘Where are you from, I don’t

recognize you and I've been surfing here my whole life' they are trying to dominate that space, but I don't play into the myth of settler-colonialism; that's bullshit. This is the ocean and you know this is actually indigenous land. After that it's Mexican land then California land.

Settler-colonialism is defined as settler societies, like the United States' desire to "replace indigenous peoples in order to take their land, rather than simply control resources and labor" (Pulido 2018: 2). Settler colonialism challenges hegemonic representations of colonization by re-centering native peoples' narratives and demands their experiences be taken seriously (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014; Pulido 2018). Ascension challenged the "colonial mythology in surfing" by advocating for everyone's right to surf and interrogated white surfer's inherent belief in ownership of the waves. Ascension utilized surfing's indigenous roots and his own cultural knowledge as a resource for confronting dominant narratives in surf culture. He explained that he thinks more people of color should deconstruct the "colonial mythology in surfing" to forge new ways of being:

And that's something I like to bring to the table; that people of color have been doing this activity or something very similarly for centuries. More evidence now that it wasn't just natives but other non-white folks surfing. And I think we need to reinvigorate that knowledge that knowledge and spirit of, yeah we should be doing this for everybody.

More critical sport scholars are turning to uncovering the impacts of colonialism, white supremacy and racism on indigenous oceanic cultures. Indigenous oceanic cultures and embodied knowledges have been erased and replaced by master narratives of Westerners' conquest for land ownership, cultural appropriation, and surf culture revival. As Ascension

underlines, there should be a reinvigoration of knowledge within surf culture, starting with highlighting indigenous cultures' extensive histories, and their social as well as spiritual relationships to waterscapes and surfing. Due largely in part to a lengthy history of erasure, indigenous people's histories and narratives are largely absent from dominant culture, including surf histories (Gilio-Whitaker 2017; Dawson 2017; Thompson 2017). Gilio-Whitaker argues most surf literature fails to discuss what role racial dynamics played during surfing's "renaissance" and downplay the extent to which colonialism has impacted modern surf history. By denying the existence of surfing's highly colonial past, many surfers are unaware of the underlying dynamics embedded in surf culture. A significant percentage of Mexican American surfers are delving into surf culture's problematic roots to challenge and confront dominant narratives about who does and does not belong in surf culture. In sum, they are utilizing their embodied knowledges and critical worldviews to produce paths of self-discovery and healing within surfing spaces.

Conclusion

When people start to realize Mexicans surf and go to the beach, they will stop saying ignorant things, but until there's more representation in the culture, we will just have to keep proving we exist (Victor)

When I envision marginalized surfers' micro-resistance strategies and emotional responses to stigmatization, I image a double-edged sword. If Mexican American males confront racist or sexist situations in the water, they run the risk of reifying or confirming dominant ideologies that frame Latinos as violent and aggressive. If they attempt to deflate the situation to avoid a conflict in the water then they miss an opportunity to deconstruct power relations. Women surfers experience the same burden when navigating sexism in a sea full

of men. If a woman she avoids certain surfing spaces because of sexist encounters and instead opts out for a “girl friendly” beach, she re-inscribes the space in gendered terms. On the other hand, the “girl friendly” beaches, which happened to be the beaches for less skilled surfers, are defined as feminine and leave female surfers with fewer opportunities to challenge the surf hierarchy. Since predominantly white male-dominated surfing spaces are constructed around a history of exclusionary practices and are embedded with racialized discourses and ideologies, the experience of non-white surfers are often subjugated or silenced. Surfers of color and women within these spaces carry the additional, “burden of engaging in emotion work that is not equally distributed with their white counterparts” (Evans and Moore 2015: 452). Therefore, marginalized surfers are faced with the “impossible burden” (Evans and Moore 2015) of successfully navigating racially complex gendered surfing spaces on a daily basis. Even though some scholars argue lifestyle sports offer the potential for participants to challenge dominant ideologies, their decisions and abilities to do so are complicated by a surfer’s concern for how others will perceive their behaviors. Generally, marginalized surfer preferred to adopt individual strategies to confront racial stereotypes within their social networks and adopt structural tactics for combating central tenets embedded in surf culture instead of engaging in direct confrontation. Surfers believed structural strategies, like forming a Latino/a surf club, will increase representation and lead to more counter-narratives to transform the boundaries of surf culture.

CHAPTER V

Rethinking, Redefining and Reclaiming Southern California Surf

Culture/Communities

I'm way more fearful of being a female of color on land in America than I am out there in the middle of the shark triangle." --Surf Coach from *Brown Girl Surf*

Last summer, the Northern California based non-profit surf organization *Brown Girl Surf* uploaded a series of promotional videos. The videos contained scenes depicting women of color surfing and discussing the organization's strengths, as well as the way the organization benefits inner-city youth. In one of the videos, a surf coach discusses her experience with the organization and the various ways it has helped her overcome insecurities in the water as a woman of color. She says, "Women of color have troubled experiences with water due to historic factors, such as residential segregation." She believes *Brown Girl Surf* is a part of a larger movement to teach young women of color how to surf and become more comfortable in the water. More clips include images of young girls practicing yoga and meditation, highlighting other activities the organization promotes. The rest of the video contains information about swimming statistics and stereotypes about African Americans. Before the video ends the surf coach says, "Women of color surfing is a powerful form of resistance."

I was elated to view a powerful video discussing parallel issues and concerns brought forth by participants in my ethnography about Mexican American surfers'

experiences of belonging. I noticed this video was re-posted by a number of online magazines, such as *The Root* and *Fader*, gaining more popularity with each viewing. I was curious to see how the video was being received by the surf population, so I scrolled through approximately 100 comments. As I was reading and jotting down notes, I recognized a familiar, and disappointing, theme: white male surfers denying the existence of race or gender related issues in the sport. Instead these surfers were arguing localism is the main reason people may feel “excluded” or “alienated in the water.” This “magnified moment” represented and challenged core cultural beliefs about modern day surf culture, underscoring a fissure present in the community: surfers of color discussing diversity issues in the water and predominantly white male surfers denying or downplaying the presence of racism in the sport.

Sport scholar Michael Messner adopted Arlie Hochschild’s (1994) concept of a “magnified moment” (p. 4) to underscore the conditions under which gender boundaries become activated and enforced in the everyday sporting experiences of children. A magnified moment, or moments, are “episodes of heightened importance, either epiphanies, moments of intense glee or unusual insight, or moments in which things go intensely by meaningfully wrong. In either case, the moment stands out; it is metaphorically rich, unusually elaborate and often echoes [later]” (Hochschild 1994: 4). Magnified moments can offer a glimpse into the “social construction of reality,” presenting researchers with a rich opportunity to unearth “gendered meanings and processes through an analysis of institutional and cultural contexts” (Messner 2000: 766). The videos posted by *Brown Girl Surf* are a window into the ways in which people of color, specifically women of color, are constructing gendered and racialized counter-cultural surf narratives.

This magnified moment also represents the racialized barriers minorities overcome to participate in the sport. Additionally, the comments by white male surfers illuminate a “color-blind racism” framework they tend to adopt when discussing race-related issues in surf culture. Although this study specifically examined Southern California Mexican American surfers’ experiences, there are critical overlaps between the two geographic locations and a potential future comparative study. In the following sections I will briefly highlight findings from this study, reflect on the larger implications and include notes on how this experience has changed my own understanding of my surf experiences as a minority surfer.

Contributions to the field of sociology

Broadly, my dissertation investigates how Mexican American surfers experience structural and interactional forms of racism and sexism in public sporting spaces across the beaches of Southern California. Mexican Americans’ experiences in surfing are lens into race relations and how a history of racial, gender, and class oppression play out in this under-studied terrain of sport. This work also underscores the ways in which structural forces, in this case, residential segregation, shapes cultural norms in the surfing field. My work sheds light on the larger processes by which marginalized populations come to develop racialized, classed and gendered feelings of belonging, or feelings of exclusion, in recreational spaces. Mexican American surfers navigate predominantly white, heterosexual, male and able-bodied sporting spaces. The direction of my work and its major arguments, however, show that Mexican Americans engage in sporting activities as a means to break out of racialized, classed, and gendered categories. Mexican Americans use

sports, in other words, to contest race, class, sex, sexuality, and gender-based ideologies and to create a sense of community and identity. In so doing, they construct empowering transgressive spaces and new ways of being.

One of the most interesting aspects of my research findings has to do with the diverse and inclusive sporting spaces that some communities of color are creating now, despite their own histories of structural disadvantage. One example is an organization of Latino/a surfers offering accessible surf lessons for at-risk inner-city children. One thing is for certain, sporting spaces are not neutral or value free spaces, rather they are spaces shaped by a legacy of race, class, sexuality and gender inequalities outside of the surfing context. In other words, power relations outside of the water tend to be reflected inside of the water.

Findings from this study contribute to the field of critical race studies, critical sport studies and gender studies. To form the basis of my argument, I pulled theories from the fields of critical race studies, sociology of gender and leisure studies to examine minorities experiences in public spaces and leisurely pursuits. By centering the voices of underrepresented and understudied athletes of color, this work adds to emerging the body of literature focusing on how minorities respond to stigmatization and marginalization in predominantly white male-dominated institutional spaces. This work also adds to the growing body of literature examining how Latino/as continue to cope with and contest structural racism in their everyday lives. Showcasing Mexican Americans acts of micro-resistance underscores the persistence of microaggressions and the ways people of color navigate this terrain to carve a space in white sporting institutions.

My work fills a gap in the body of literature examining minorities experiences in white male dominated sporting spaces. Specifically, this research gives a voice to an understudied terrain in the literature: sporting Latina narratives. Findings from my study are connected to larger conversations examining structural racism and the everyday experiences of Latino/as in white institutions. Evidence from my research demonstrates how microaggressions manifest in public spaces as well as the micro-resistance strategies deployed by people of color. In order to continue surfing and become skilled surfers, Mexican Americans and women must navigate complicated and conflicting racialized as well as gendered terrains. However, despite structural racism and sexism, Mexican American and female athletes are carving out counter-cultural spaces, engaging in acts of resistance, and forging a path of belonging, which deserves to be elucidated in the scholarly cannon.

Core Findings

After spending a year in the field collecting participant observation and in-depth interview data with surfers in the Southern California region, I found minority surfers (non-white Hispanic and female) experience a range of microaggressions in predominantly white male sporting spaces. Utilizing my insider knowledge and positionality as a woman of color and surfer, I interviewed 70 participants from the area to capture their experiences of oppression. From these interviews and observations, I weaved through diverse narratives describing the racialized, classed and gendered landscape of Southern California surf culture. I listened tentatively to stories about overcoming access barriers or succumbing to oppression as they navigate and (un)successfully infiltrate predominantly white, male, middle class sporting arenas. What I found and concluded, argues sporting spaces are not

neutral or value-free, rather surfing spaces are highly racialized and gendered spaces where inequalities are reproduced and in some cases challenged.

Before diving into how minorities experience microaggressions in the line-up, I investigated the extent to which Mexican American surfers experienced any barriers prior to entering the sport. I found Mexican American surfers tend to bump up against structural and imagined racialized barriers that exclude and marginalize them from public recreational spaces. I argue, Mexican American surfers' experiences are largely shaped by continued and accumulated exposure to systemic racism. Historically, Mexican Americans have been *pushed out*: redirected and relegated to urban areas in Los Angeles, restricting and limiting their access to certain public spaces such as beaches. Due to the residual effects of residential segregation, Mexican American surfers experience restricted access and exposure to public beaches. Physical barriers include practical or realistic obstacles, such as limited or poor public transportation to beaches. These practical barriers at first present a blockade to their exposure and access to the sport. Whereas imaginary barriers are rooted in white cultural imagery of beach and surf culture, Mexican Americans perceive these spaces as inherently white and exclusionary. At a very young age Mexican American surfers construct dominant ideologies about surf culture, oftentimes choosing to engage in other sports more suited to their self-concepts. In sum, I concluded Mexican American surfers experience geographical exclusions, limited recreational resources, limited access to public spaces and racialized perceived barriers to surfing. I argue, some surfers are able to access surf spaces with relative ease due to their ability to acquire a racialized habitus by building and relying on their abilities to accumulate social capital. Despite their initial innate feelings of exclusion and marginalization, Mexican American surfers overcome

these racialized barriers and pursue the sport.

In addition to facing and overcoming barriers prior to entering the sport, I found Mexican American surfers' racialized sense of not-belonging and community are impacted by surf relations in the water, such as localism and surf hierarchies. I argue, local customs and cultural norms within the surfing space are shaped by structural forces outside of the surfing space. In other words, surfing spaces are organized by "the code of sea" revealing how the "informal" rules of the sea are entrenched and shaped by structural inequality. For example, the cultural notion of localism, the strong belief in ownership of the waves, is produced by racial residential segregation, disadvantaging non-white surfers from occupying a higher position in the surf hierarchy. Localism allows white, middle class, males to sit at the top of the pecking order, continuing to reproduce inequalities. Inequalities in other words, are played out in the surfing space and reinforced by the code of the sea. In addition, racial residential segregation constructs surfing spaces as "imagined spaces of whiteness" (Wheaton 2017; Chimers 2010), highlighting the cultural consequences of a white spatial imaginary, which is rooted in exclusivity (Lipsitz 2011). A white spatial imaginary "naturalizes" as well as hides the residual effects of racial residential segregation.

When surfers were asked why the sport was not more diverse, mostly white, middle class, males claim localism was the major reason more people don't surf. They claim surfing is a sport for everyone who can afford the cost of a board. In other words, white, middle class, males, who sit at the top of the pecking order and benefit the most from the local surf hierarchy, see the ideology of localism as a race-neutral dynamic when in fact, localism is produced by structural racism and drives exclusionary practices. Therefore, I

argue most surfers in a dominant position in the local surf hierarchy adopt a “color-blind racism” framework to explain diversity related issues in the sport. For the most part they use this stance as a shield against racially charged accusations, absolving them from playing any part in other people’s subjugation. Surf relations in the water are shaped and reinforced by white surfers’ “colorblind racism” viewpoints, operating as a system of exclusion that disproportionately affects women and Mexican American surfers. On the other hand, Mexican American and women surfers, the ones the most oppressed in the surfing space, experience a host of overt and covert acts of sexism/racism/homophobia in and outside of the water. I found Mexican American women are subject to “multiple marginalizations” in the line-up, often feeling oppressed by intersecting relations. Mexican American and women surfers’ experiences of exclusion and inclusion were unearthed to illuminate the “intersectional hierarchies” (Nemani and Thorpe 2016: 229) in the surf field. In sum, racialized notions of not belonging reinforce dominant cultural ideologies about surf culture and beach culture’s inherent and embodied whiteness. Mexican American surfers’ experiences are subjected to sticky layers of oppression, oftentimes difficult to unravel.

In order to be successful surfers, Mexican Americans and women must navigate white male-dominated spaces and maneuver microaggressions. As a surfer and researcher, I was interested in their responses to sexism and racism in the water. Drawing from literature examining minorities’ emotional responses to everyday experiences of oppression and the ways in which they develop coping and contesting mechanisms, I concluded marginalized surfers are faced with the “impossible burden” (Evans and Moore 2015) of successfully navigating racially complex and gendered surfing spaces on a daily

basis. In order to successfully navigate these spaces and deconstruct dominant narratives, marginalized surfers employed micro-resistance strategies. Mexican American and women surfers engage in individual and structural frames of change. For instance, some surfers chose to cope with their marginalized status by avoiding hypermasculine surfing spaces and surfing at more favorable geographic locations. Although there was no consistent pattern of responses, there was a range of emotional reactions to marginalization and stigmatization.

I found marginalized surfers' emotional responses fell into two categories, which mirrored the literature: *deflate* or *confront* racist or sexist microaggressions. Individual deflation tactics were the most highly utilized strategy for responding to microaggressions in and outside of the line-up. Oftentimes surfers opted to deflate conflict and cope with their marginalized status to avoid potentially aggressive confrontations in the water. For example, Mexican American males were concerned with confronting racist or sexist situations in the water because they run the risk of reifying or confirming dominant ideologies about race, potentially framing Latinos as violent and aggressive. I also argued surfers of color and women within these spaces carry the additional "burden of engaging in emotion work that is not equally distributed with their white [male] counterparts" (Evans and Moore 2015: 452). Although most marginalized surfers preferred to adopt deflation tactics, a significant number of surfers believed structural strategies, like forming a Latino/a surf clubs, will increase representation and lead to more counter-narratives to transform the symbolic boundaries of surf culture. In sum, marginalized surfers are creating and carving out inclusive spaces in predominantly white male dominated sporting spaces.

Limitations and Future Research

Preparing for this study, I worried I would not find an adequate number of Mexican American surfers to interview. If I did not have the support of my committee or close colleagues, I'm positive the following interactions would have deterred my progress. When I started the data collection phase, I called up a former friend who surfed semi-professionally in college. I was asking him for connections and he joking said to me, "No offense, but are there even Mexicans that surf? I mean I know Mexico has great surf, but I never see Mexican Americans in the water". A few days later I was at work reading Jack Lopez's book *Of Cholos and Surfers* when one of my students asked me what my project was about. I pointed at the book and said I am studying Mexican American surfers. He looks at me and starts to laugh, "Ms. C, Mexicans don't surf that's some white people shit. We like to kick it at the park, so we don't need to go to beach." After the rest of the class was finished laughing at my project, I felt both determined and deterred. Based off of their collective responses, I understood why sociological studies of sport are understudied: sporting contexts are not perceived as spaces where race and gender relations exist. As I have argued and shown, sporting spaces can offer researchers a glimpse into how power relations are inscribed and contested in spaces perceived as neutral or value free. Reflecting on the process of data collection, I will present limitations of the study and future research.

My data was collected utilizing a qualitative multi-methods design, which consisted of in-depth interviews, ethnographic field notes, and participant observations. I understand a downfall of research utilizing a qualitative framework is a smaller sample size. Although I was able to interview a significant number of Mexican American surfers, in the future,

researchers could design a large-scale survey to capture a larger pool of participants. This type of survey could be used to capture a larger population and perhaps used in junction with face-to-face interviews. Additionally, I spent approximately a year in the field, traveling back and forth between the San Diego and Santa Barbara region. I decided to set the parameters of my study to the Southern California region because I believed it would yield a higher number of Mexican American surfers because a large percentage of Mexican Americans reside within those distances. This means I did not interview surfers from the Northern California region, including Santa Cruz, arguably the second largest “surf city” in California. According to recent studies conducted in the past five years, most surfers in California reside in the Southern California region, but there are increasingly more surfers cropping up in the northern region of the state. This is another potential area of study a researcher could tap into.

As illustrated by *Brown Girl Surf's* video, there's also a significant number of women of color residing in the Bay area, thus it's a potential area to conduct a comparative study in the future. I was fortunate to spend time with the core members of the non-profit, listening attentively to their life histories and struggles as women of color. From their stories, I learned why they focused on women's empowerment and how they envision the non-profit growing in the next five years. In the future, it may be interesting to examine and immerse within this organization to learn how board members make structural decisions. In other words, focusing on the organizational level of analysis and the ways in which empowering work and sport spaces are co-constructed. Also, it should be noted, I was employed as a full-time employee at a local school district, so I was only able to collect data on the weekends or early mornings before work. Most surfers travel to the beaches on

the weekends, but that being said, it's possible I was not able to interview a small percentage of the population who opt out to avoid the crowds and surf during the week. Overall, I believe the research design and region I decided to cover enabled me to study in depth and detail social phenomena, which would have been more difficult if I adopted a quantitative design.

Spending time in the field and listening to participants stories of struggle and triumph caused me to reflect on my own experiences as a minority surfer. I was raised in a predominantly Mexican American neighborhood, so I can relate to feelings of otherness. However, I am a light skinned Latina, so I recognize I carry a considerable amount of white privilege. I can recall more experiences of sexism in the water than I can racism because I believe my white skin benefited me in some situations in the surf field. This resonates with Long and Hylton (2002), who argue for white people, "associations are more positive, less open to question, and to a certain extent, take for granted" (p. 90). I felt in order to gain participants trust and build rapport, I had to reveal my racial identity, especially when a majority of my participants asked if I was Mexican. Although I may not personally experience racial microaggressions in the water, I learned a great deal from participants' stories, in particular from indigenous Chicano/as. In the future, I would like to further explore indigenous Chicano/as experiences by spending more time with *Native Like Water*, potentially conducting a study about Mexican surfers residing in "surf towns" scattered across Mexico. I would need to brush up on my Spanish, but I would love to study surf culture in Mexico and compare notes!

APPENDIX

Table I: A Sample of In-depth Interview Questions

When did you start surfing? How often do you surf? (daily, weekly, etc). How long have you been surfing? What is your ability level? (beginner, average, expert)

How did you get involved with surf culture? Did someone teach you how to surf? Have you ever taken surf lessons?

Where do you typically surf? How often do you surf at that particular location?

What's the female-to-male ratio out in the line-up (at your local spot)? Is it a crowded spot? Competitive, localized, mellow etc. Basically, how would you describe the local vibe? (try to get a grasp of age and skill level) Are there any unwritten rules that local surfers follow? Local hierarchy or is it a "free for all"?

How would you describe the line-up? Is it racially diverse? Have you ever heard of some surfing spots that are more diverse? (more non-white people that surf there) More so or less than other surf spots you have been to? (Probe if they report the spot as ethnically/racially diverse. Same for if there seems to be more women than men)

What qualities/characteristics do you associate with surfing? For example, what kind of a person surfs? Did those ideas impact your decision to pursue surfing? What do you think when you see someone who doesn't "fit" the description you just stated of a 'typical surfer' in the water?"

How did/do those perceptions impact your own gender identity?

How did/do those perceptions impact your own racial identity?

When you were growing up, did you know other Mexican American surfers? What about within your family? Anyone surf? What kind of sporting experiences did you have when you were younger?

Questions related to race/gender-based discrimination in the surf

*Depending on how they answer some of the above questions, the purpose of these questions is to gauge if they have ever experienced race/gender-based discrimination.

Looking for both personal accounts and/or stories they might have heard.

How do surfers usually treat each other in the line-up? Describe it in detail. Ever notice patterns based on race/ethnicity or gender? Tell me/describe any stories that you have personally experienced. Could also be stories that you heard about another surfer. If you did witness/personally experience discrimination, why do you think this happened to you?

In your life, have you ever heard or been told, “Mexican’s don’t surf”. Probe to ask about who said that to them, why, etc.

Do statements like “Mexicans don’t surf” impact your decision to pursue surfing?

Did that kind of statement deter you from pursuing surfing at a younger age? *Depending on their questions to the above questions, but I am interested in exploring why they chose surfing or why they waited. What factors lead to that decision etc.

Do you recall dealing with any instances of discrimination because of your race? Were they overt instance? Covert?

What about dealing with any instances of discrimination because of gender?

Do you think women surfers have the same experiences as male surfers? Do you think they have an easier or harder time?

Do you think it was different for surfers in the past? (60s-70s).

Did you know surfing was an indigenous sport before it was introduced to the US?

What are your thoughts about that?

Table II: Demographic Information

<u>Respondents</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Percentage of</u>
<u>Sex</u>		
Female	27	39.5
Male	43	61.5
N	70	
<u>Age</u>		
18-24	15	21.1
25-29	20	28.5
30-39	15	21.1
40-49	11	15.7
50-64	6	8.5
65 +	3	5.6
N	70	
<u>Generational Status</u>		
1.5	3	7.5
2nd	13	32.5
2.5	12	30
3rd	7	17.5
4th	5	12.5
N	40	
<u>Income</u>		
Working Class	35	50
Middle Class	20	28.5
Upper Class	15	21.5
N	70	
<u>Race</u>		
Mexican American	40	57.2
White Non-Hispanic	28	40
Asian American	2	2.8
N	70	

<u>Respondents</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Percentage of</u>
<u>Sexual Orientation</u>		
Straight	68	97.1
LGBTQ	2	2.9
N	70	
<u>Type of Board</u>		
Shortboard	60	
Longboard	10	
N	70	

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