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ORIGINAL PAPER

Organized Lifestyle Sports in Southern California: Social Facts, Collective Consciousness, and Solidarity Among University Surfers

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Abstract
Leisure among university students can take place on campus or out-of-campus. It can be spontaneous or organized under the umbrella of a fraternity, a sorority, or a club. While there is an important body of literature on fraternities and sororities, less is known about recreational activities occurring in a sports club. To deepen our understanding of leisure in universities, this article seeks to answer the question: how is the practice of surfing made possible by students within a university sports club? Within the positive sociology of leisure framework, this work uses Durkheim's theoretical contribution to sociology and posits that partaking in lifestyle sports may promote solidarity, social bonding, and acceptance of norms and traditions. In demonstrating that social laws and rules do structure lifestyle sports, this research challenges the idea that surfers tend to be individualistic and condemn institutions. Based on a 20-month fieldwork conducted between 2009 and 2013 at two public universities in Southern California, this analysis indicates that university surfers enrolled in a sports club are community-based, tied by social facts, and show solidarity.

Keywords Leisure · Sports club · Social norms · Etiquette · Cooperation · Qualitative research

1 Introduction

In the United States, leisure is usually an integral part of a university student's life. To some extent, it contributes to forging one's identity while promoting wellness. Leisure activities can be "defined as intrinsically motivated, out-of-class activities that [university] students do for their own enjoyment and by their own choice, and

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not to fulfill class requirements or earn grades or credits" (Munson & Widmer, 1997, p. 192). A significant part of leisure activities occurs within fraternities, sororities, and university sports clubs. These organizations provide a wide range of services such as philanthropic activities (*e.g.* volunteering time), networking events (*e.g.* karaoke night), and study groups. Arguably, fraternities, sororities and university sports clubs are exclusive – given the nature of higher education in the United States (Brown & Parks, 2012; DeSantis, 2007; Fouts, 2010; Nuwer, 1999; Torbenson & Parks, 2009; Walker et al., 2015). But university sports clubs seem more open, as membership is not based on age, sex, ethnicity, race, or class. Unlike fraternities and sororities, university sports clubs accept all students as soon as the latter pay for membership. This relative inclusiveness implies that sports participation may promote positive behaviors, such as acceptance and social bonding. For example, Lower-Hoppe et al. (2020) contend that physical activities in higher education strengthen student's attachment to their sports club and to their university.

Such a positive approach to sports resonates with the serious leisure perspective (Gibson et al., 2002; Liu and Yu, 2015; Stebbins, 2020), and with the positive sociology of leisure framework (PSL) (Kono, et al., 2020). This framework "[l] ooks into how, why, and when people pursue those things in life that they desire, the things they do to make their existence attractive and worth living. [PSL] is the study of what people do to socially organize their lives such that those lives become, in combination, substantially rewarding, satisfying, and fulfilling" (Stebbins, 2009, p. xi). From an epistemological standpoint, PSL began by questioning sociology as a science that is mainly concerned with social problems (Stebbins, 2017). These problems include, but are not limited to distribution of power, discrimination, and social injustice. In adopting a more optimistic point of view, PSL contends that sports, social groups, communities, and organizations can promote positive social behavior as well.

Calling attention to positive behavior, PSL usually focuses on individual's freedom of action and categorizes the qualities, rewards, and costs of pursuing an amateur career, a volunteer career, or a hobby (Veal, 2016). Adopting an inductive line of reasoning is particularly useful to understand the reasons for an individual to enroll and actively engage in a sports club. In raising the simple but essential question, what kind of activities do university students favor during their leisure time, one seeks to grasp the complexities of youth identities. In classical sociology, this interpretive approach originates in the work of Max Weber (2019). Weber was interested in the subjective meanings that individuals give to their experiences, actions, and feelings. To him, individuals are rationalistic, which means they maximize their actions using a systematic and often unconscious cost–benefit calculations (Royce, 2015, p. 92). In other words, individuals' intentions, purposes, or motives are at the source of social action. Contrary to Weber's theory, Émile Durkheim believed that individuals were first and foremost driven by social facts. These social facts comprise laws, social norms, and values that all individuals must comply with – otherwise, they may be punished by society or by a given group (Durkheim, 1982/2013, p. 27). Durkheim is not so much interested in understanding the reasons for individuals to think, feel or act in a particular way, but he rather focuses on explaining their behavior from a societal perspective.

Following Durkheim's theory, I adopt a deductive line of reasoning, one that does not focus on the meanings of recreational sports for a university student (*i.e.* inductive model), but rather draws attention to social laws, norms, expectations, and behavioral patterns that a student may learn through play (*i.e.* hypothetico-deductive model). In studying the surf clubs of two Southern California public universities, I broaden the scope of PSL by demonstrating that pursuing a serious leisure leads to deepening the learning of rules, values, customs, habits, and ways of thinking. Rather than addressing the question, *why* do university students surf, this article's original research question is: *how* can the practice of surfing be made possible by university students?

2 Literature Review

Scholars working on surfing explicitly applied the serious leisure perspective to understand surfers' actions and interactions (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013; Beaumont & Brown, 2014; Cheng et al., 2012; Cook, 2022; Portugal et al., 2016; Sotomayor & Barbieri, 2016). But surfing as a recreational activity has been subject to an entire body of work stemming from different schools of thoughts. While research was limited to a few books and research papers in the 1990s, there has been an important number of journal articles and readers published since the 2000s. This body of research has become so broad that one can identify different fields, including history (Clark, 2011; Doering, 2018; Esparza, 2016, Moser, 2022; Lawler, 2011; Lemarié, 2018/2021; Walker, 2011; Warshaw, 2010), sociology (Corte, 2021; Ford & Brown, 2006; Falaix et al., 2021; Wheaton, 2020), gender studies (Lisahunter, 2017; Mizuno, 2018; Olive, 2019; Roy, 2013, 2014; Schmitt & Bohuon, 2021), sociocultural anthropology (Barjolin-Smith, 2021; Lemarié, 2016; Sayeux, 2008), tourism management (Borne & Ponting, 2015; Buckley et al., 2017; Lemarié, 2022; Mach & Ponting, 2021; Martin, 2022; Martin & Assenov, 2014; Ponting & O'Brien, 2015; Reineman & Ardoin, 2018; Ruttenberg, 2022; Towner & Lemarié, 2022), marketing (Lemarié & Domann, 2019), philosophy and geography (Anderson, 2014, 2022; Falaix, 2014; Khelifi, 2021). More recently, interdisciplinary books and readers have been instrumental in understanding interdisciplinary work in the context of intersectionality and critical studies (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017; Falaix, 2017; Guibert, 2021; Lisahunter, 2018).

When studying surfing, many scholars have faced one major unresolved issue. On the one hand, they contended that surfing carries a specific set of intentions and attributes that are shared by most people who catch waves (*e.g.* the desire to discover new rideable waves). On the other hand, despite universal similarities, researchers identified local dynamics (*e.g.* surf breaks known for their aggressivity toward foreigners and beginners). To seize the contradictions of surfing, authors borrowed concepts such as *communitas*, *fraternity*, *subculture*, *action sports, lifestyle sports* and *neo-tribe* (Anderson, 2016; Beaumont & Brown, 2014, 2016; Booth, 2001; Lanagan, 2002; O'Brien, 2007; Stranger, 2011; Warren & Gibson, 2014; Wheaton, 2007a, 2013). While the terms subculture and lifestyle sports were dominant during the 1990s and the 2000s, recent research has favored the expression neo-tribe – a post-modern concept coined by the French scholar Maffesoli in his book *Times of*

tribes (1996). Despite widespread adoption, this concept has been up to debates. For instance, there is a whole body of French literature addressing Maffesoli's inconsistencies for over 30 years (*e.g.* Bayard, 1992; Gossiaux, 1987; Lamy et al., 2015), and some English-speaking scholars have also acknowledged this controversy (Barjolin-Smith, 2021; Evans, 1997).

Arguably, the neo-tribe concept is "underdetermined and undertheorized" (Schiermer & Gook, 2019, p. 188), as most authors defined it. According to Hardy et al. (2018, p. 9), neo-tribes are:

> ephemeral, fleeting groupings of people that gather together. They may be made up of people from differing of walks of life who are bound by a mutual passion for a particular issue or object. In our daily lives, whether at work, during our leisure time, in person or via digital media, we are all members of neo-tribes.

Based on this definition, the term is so broadly presented that it may be a synonym for a community, a subculture, a club, or even a group of acquaintances. One would belong to myriads of neo-tribes in their leisure time, like one belongs to many fragments of the society as a friend, a companion, a mate, a hobbyist, a partner, or even a parent – such as a mother sharing a common passion for surfing with her child.

In addition to this general definition, the term is often applied uncritically. For example, in studying surf tourism, Holt (2021) claimed that neo-tribes revolve around common lifestyle, rituals, language, interests, passion, emotion and performance sites. Yet, the author did not explain the power relations within these tribes. As informative these works are, scholars do not demonstrate convincingly the structural mechanisms of neo-tribes. In other words, what really makes the sociality of individuals who belong to these neo-tribes? A person may share the same passion, lifestyle, and interest with another person, but this does not necessarily mean that they are tied by a strong social bond. Surfers may belong to the same neo-tribe, but they may disagree on the meaning of their shared practice, or the extent to which their practice shape their identities. One may not recognize the existence of another member in the tribe and conflicts may arise, even though these people speak the same language, and share the same passion for riding waves.

Rather than arguing that surfers are part of a neo-tribe, some scholars favor the concept lifestyle sports (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2016), which has been more theoretically developed. In referring to lifestyle sports, Carey-Penot (2021, p. 19) reminded us that surfers form countless heterogeneous groups instead of one universal neo-tribe. That is to say that on the global scale, surfers may share common attributes, but locally they might follow specific dynamics. To retain a simple definition:

> the term lifestyle helps encapsulate the ways in which participants, and consumers of the activities, seek out a particular style of life, a way of living that is central to the meaning and experience of participation in the sport, and that gives them a particular and exclusive social identity (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2016, p. 187).

While many authors claim that participants in lifestyle sports are individualistic, there are cases where sports practitioners form local communities (*e.g.* Beaumont & Brown, 2014, 2016; Wheaton, 2007b). In the context of territoriality or surfboard-making for example, authors have demonstrated that social bonding between surfers lies in masculinity (Evers & Doering, 2019; Walker, 2011; Waitt & Warren, 2008; Warren, 2016), feminism (Comer, 2017; Olive, 2019; Roy, 2014; Schmitt & Bohuon, 2021), constructive sociation (Cook, 2022), and solidarity (Towner & Lemarié, 2020). Research on emotions and nature-human interactions has further shown that understanding of and connection with nature are two important factors not only in shaping one's identity, but also in creating emotional communities of surfers activists who may protect the ocean (Anderson, 2013; Britton & Foley, 2021; Falaix et al., 2021; Evers, 2019; Fox et al., 2021; Gibson & Frost, 2019; Olive & Wheaton, 2021; Taylor, 2007; Waiti & Awatere, 2019; Wheaton et al., 2021). To deepen our understanding of social bonding in lifestyle sports, I use classical sociological theory and borrow the concepts of social facts and solidarity from Durkheim (1982/2013, 1984/2013).

3 Theoretical Framework

In studying university students in two Southern California university surf clubs, I suggest that classical sociological theory remains instrumental in interpreting social interaction in lifestyle sports. Consistent with studies on surfing that refer to classical sociologists like Karl Marx (Stranger, 2011) and Georg Simmel (Cook, 2022), I apply Émile Durkheim's theory to argue that university surfers follow social norms, rules, traditions, and values (*i.e.* social structures). In challenging the idea that surfers are individualistic, I contend they are also cooperative and collective (Georgoulas, 2017; Rojek, 1985/2014). Durkheim argues in his first book *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893) that individuals are linked together through two main solidarity systems. The first one is 'mechanical solidarity' or solidarity by similarities, and the second one is 'organic solidarity' or solidarity arising from the social division of labor – meaning that individuals need one another to cooperate, as they specialize in their professional occupations. Whether mechanical or organic, each solidarity is based on many coercive social facts, including but not limited to law codes, norms, and traditions. These social facts become visible when individuals infringe them, and are being sanctioned.

In "classify[ing] legal rules according to the different sanctions that are attached to them," Durkheim (1984/2013, p. 55) identified the different types of behavior that belong to a mechanical or an organic solidarity. Most repressive laws and hard punishments found in penal law codes highlight mechanical solidarity. This solidarity originates in pre-modern societies, where social groups and individuals resemble one another: individuals perform similar tasks and share common behaviors, ways of thinking, norms, values, sentiments, and beliefs. From this solidarity of resemblance a collective consciousness can emerge, which may be "the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society" (Durkheim, 1984/2013, p. 63). Individuals and social groups exist because they coordinately conformed

themselves to the norms of the society. Mechanical solidarity further means that people have unconscious and automatic responses to given situations.

While the mechanical solidarity is prevalent in pre-modern groups, the organic solidarity gained ground as societies became increasing industrialized, urbanized, and complex. The organic solidarity is visible in restitutive laws, whose punishments "consist in restoring the previous state of affairs" (Durkheim, 1984/2013, p. 55). This type of solidarity results from the social division of labor. As individuals become more and more specialized in their occupations, they are unable to reach all their goals by themselves and must rely on the specialization of others in different areas to do so. The social division of labor "ties individuals together in a web of interdependencies, placing them in a dense network of cooperative relations" (Royce, 2015, p. 76). As nobody is nearly self-sufficient in a modern society, everyone contributes to helping others in assuming their duties, and focusing on their occupations.

In the vein of Durkheim's understanding of solidarity, I am arguing that university surfers are part of a social structure, meaning they display both mechanic and organic solidarity in their leisure time. In other words, these two kinds of solidarity explain *how* the leisure pursuit of university surfers is made possible. Then, the specific research questions of this paper is the following: are there demonstrations of mechanical and organic solidarity among surfers at public universities in Southern California, and to what extent do solidarity inform us about lifestyle sports more generally? My hypotheses are (1) that both types of solidarity can be observed, especially among board members of the surf clubs; (2) that mechanical solidarity indicates university surfers belong to the global, yet heterogeneous surf community; (3) and that organic solidarity challenges the ideas that participants in lifestyle sports are by nature individualistic and often against institutionalization. To verify these hypotheses, I will first present research methods as well as the two university sports clubs where I conducted this study. I shall then report the results and analyze them considering Durkheim's theory and the surf literature.

4 Method: From Participant Observation to Autoethnography

This research is qualitative and is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in Southern California. In the past three decades, ethnography of surfers has been conducted with some variations, but many authors jointly use observation with taped interviews. Some limited data collection to a few weeks (Uekusa, 2019), while others grounded their analysis on years of experience as a surfer (Cook, 2022), or as an industry worker (Towner & Lemarié, 2020). For example, Sayeux (2008) adopted a simple observation in France, in addition to a more in-depth fieldwork and to recording interviews. With a higher degree of engagement, participant observation was carried out by Usher and Gómez (2016) in Pavones, Costa Rica. The first author rode waves with resident surfers and documented their experiences through field notes for 4 months. This method was particularly relevant to study issues of territoriality and localism between Costa Rican and foreign resident surfers. A more rare and immersive approach was applied by Stranger (1999, 2011). In tapping into his 30 years of experience as a wave rider, he interviewed over 100 surfers and conducted

a 10-month participant observation across 15 different locations in Australia. Not only the researcher focused on risk taking, bodily experience, and human-nature relationships, but he also documented his own feelings about risk management in big waves (Stranger, 2011, p. 176). While most of Stranger's work is based on participant observation, he did mobilize autoethnography, which was more explicitly developed by lisahunter and Stoodley (2021). As both authors reported being beginner surfers, they jot notes on their own sentiments and observed their feelings in the water. They further collected data through a video camera that recorded both video and audio of their experience.

In addition to previous research, this work is the first one – to my knowledge – to document *in vivo* the life of surfers who are also university students. I collected data for 20 months as a participant observer when I was an exchange graduate student, then a visiting scholar at two Southern California universities between 2009 and 2013. Being eligible to club membership at the time considerably facilitated my fieldwork and helped secure acceptance by the subjects of this study. But, this multi-sited ethnography led to gather more notes that I initially intended. In the manner of Caratini (2017, p. 131), it took several years to fully sort out, comprehend and analyze all the ethnographic material collected – more than 400 pages of notes were taken over 6 notebooks. Specifically in 2009–2010, I wrote 180 pages of notes during my first 10-month fieldwork in a public university surf club in Los Angeles County. Upon my arrival from my home country in August 2009, I joined the university surf club and introduced myself as a participant observer. As the academic year unfolded, I forged bonds with club officers, and contributed to organizing and to hosting club events. Access to the field was facilitated by the club president, who was a French Canadian, and acted as a gatekeeper.

My second 10-month fieldwork was in 2012–2013 at a public university in San Diego County. At that time, I was a visiting scholar in the anthropology department who studied the university surf club. I dedicated 220 pages of notes to enhance my understanding of student-surfers' behavior. This experience contrasted sharply with the first one because the university surf club was disbanded when I began working on the field in September 2012. After two months of engaged ethnography, I ended up overseeing most club activities with a handful of newcomers. I was appointed club president in November 2012, which facilitated mixing participant observation with autoethnography (Jerolmack & Kahn, 2018). At first, I disliked being a subject of my own study, since I wanted to learn from university students who would not be so much influenced by me. But after analyzing the situation over the first few weeks of data collection, I realized that I was myself (1) a university surfer who would go out surfing twice or three times per week, and (2) a PhD candidate who would be on the university campus every other day of the week to network, earn credits, and write my dissertation. Therefore, I became an integral part of my research topic, which enabled me to fully participate in club activities and better understand the organization of university surfers.

Despite differences in field positioning and analytic gaze, I spent time with principal club members not only during their extracurricular activities but also at any given occasion. Not only would I go surfing with them, but I would also spend time socializing with them. On average, I would see club members twice or three times per week from 2

to 4 hours each time. While this approach allowed me to befriend club officers and get assigned more responsibilities, it also allowed me to become one of the most involved person in the organization of the clubs. To reflect on this method, the data below is shared thematically. First, I present both clubs and my progressive involvement in the field. Second, I lay out the main recreational and non-competitive activities undertaken by club members. Third, I describe a typical surf session that would occur during fieldwork. Eventually, I link the discussion of the results to the previous literature and Durkheim's concept of mechanic and organic solidarity. Throughout the paper, findings are supported by quotes from participants and by my own fieldnotes. Pseudonyms are used to preserve the anonymity of the participants when needed. The specific names of the universities, and their respective surf clubs are not disclosed either.

5 Results

5.1 Presentation of the Clubs, their Management, and their General Body Meetings

The first set of data was collected at a public university surf club in Los Angeles County. It is unclear when this LA surf club was founded, but according to board members, it was in the 1980s. During this study, the club was composed of a recreational branch and a competitive branch (*i.e.* the surf team). It had 59 students who all paid a yearly $80 registration fee. Members were undergraduate and graduate students aged 19 to 29 years old. Five volunteer officers or board members were managing and administrating the club 10 hours per week. Older board members held the most important positions, namely president and vice-president, while the youngest officers were treasurer, secretary, and team captain. All were assisted by two or three engaged members in communication, partnership, and strategic management. Officers' duties included – but were not limited to – administration, enrollment, fund-raising, and sales of products (*e.g.* surf lessons, merchandising). They would officially communicate thanks to emails and would more informally communicate by phone and text messages. Despite the apparent well-structured organization of the club, I witnessed a conflict after five months of fieldworking. According to the vice-president:

> Me and the president of last year, we revived the club. Two years ago, this whole thing was dead. I like being vice-president, so this year I vouch for Joanna to be president. I knew she would get involved. She is good, but they are tensions between us. In handling the club, she is quite rigid while I am more laid back. (Vice-president of the LA surf club, excerpt from notebook 3, page 48, January 12, 2010)

Even though board members had some tense verbal interactions, they would brainstorm and cooperate with one another every week to provide goods and services to club members such as surf sessions, general body meetings, surf competition, surf lessons, parties, and surf trips. Members would be informed of club events by email or through the club's website and Facebook page. General body

meetings were held every two weeks and were an important part of the club's life. During these meetings, students were introduced to the schedule of events that officers either organized or encourage members to attend. As the LA surf club had a well-established steering committee since 2008, meetings were organized once every two weeks in the same classroom on campus. At the end of the academic 2009–2011 year, 11 meetings were held in total.

As mentioned in the method section, the second data set was collected at a public university surf club in San Diego County. This SD surf club was founded in 1967, and unlike its LA counterpart, it was disbanded when I entered the field in September 2012. While it is unclear how the club had been managed over the years, club archives indicate a structured organization. Former officers would sell merchandise (*e.g.* club T-shirt), organize 'learn-to-surf days,' beach clean-ups, surf trips, 'ding repairs afternoons' and movie screenings. Given that all former club officers had graduated in June 2012 and that no member wanted to take responsibilities, a first meeting was organized in mid-September to hand over the entire organization to anyone willing to go through club registration with the recreational center. Little information was given by the previous administrators, except that the club had an infamous reputation. The official reasons are unknown, but it appears by scouring the club archives that some members may have violated insurance policies, engaged in excessive partying, and might have been accused by the recreational center of corruption during the previous academic year.

Soon after this first meeting, I became in charge of most club activities which mainly included coordinating the general body meetings, scheduling weekly surf sessions and 'learn-to-surf days,' seeking partnerships, organizing two yearly surf trips, and recruiting new members. Being an active board member of this surf club conferred some methodological benefits. For example, I could collect further data about the social status of the participants, including their age, and their major. The registration fees were $20 a year, and when the club had registered 80 members by the end of fall 2012, participants' age ranged from 18 to 30 years old, with an average of 21 years old. The majority of club members were undergraduate students, and the most represented majors were Engineering, Psychology, English for Academic Purpose, and Biology. The least represented majors were Literature, Journalism, and Visual Arts. Some majors were not represented at all such as Black Diaspora and African American Studies, Music, and Philosophy. As club membership increased, my involvement in the field intensified, taking several forms. For example, during winter, new club members explicitly requested that I give a thirty-minute class on oceanography and wave dynamics:

> Today at 6 p.m., we had a general body meeting. New members who registered during the week of welcome asked me to add an oceanography course to the agenda. So, last week, I reserved the room 'Social Sciences Building 105,' and yesterday, I finished preparing a short introduction to oceanography. I gathered materials from a class that I took two years earlier. The meeting lasted for one hour and it went on well. Seventeen people attended, asked questions, and were eager to engage in club activities.

(Author as president of the SD surf club, excerpt from notebook 5, page 40, January 29, 2013)

Beyond my initial activities, I sought volunteers, surf instructors, and built up a stock of learning equipment including surfboards and wetsuits. Following the instructions of a former board member, I promoted the club among local surf communities at surf shops and in other clubs. Besides, I ordered printed T-shirts with the club's official logo. Being one of the most active officers, I faced an important workload. Admittedly, I was not prepared to become club president, and I would organize meetings and some events upon request. As the year unfolded, I delegated work to a few engaged members, because I deemed my involvement in the field too important. I was subjective in data gathering and I could not adequately analyze students' behavior. By the end of the academic year, other board members took more responsibilities, and I could be more objective. Eventually, five general body meetings were organized. The most important and frequent gatherings were 'learn-to-surf days,' which occurred around twice a month.

5.2 Main Activities: Fund-Raising, Seeking Partnerships, Going on Surf Trips and 'Learn-to-Surf Days'

One of the ongoing issues in both LA and SD surf clubs was fund-raising. Depending on the number of undergraduate and graduate students registered, each club received little or no subsidy from their respective university. This situation led principal members to raise funds through memberships, partnerships, sale of products (*e.g.* surf lessons), and the organization of various events (*e.g.* movie screenings). Recruiting new members was an ongoing preoccupation, but most newcomers would register during the student organization fairs – held twice a year during the week of welcome at the beginning of the fall quarter in September and during the winter quarter in February. At these fairs, both clubs were given a spot, a tent, and a table to advertise their activities on the main university alley. At least six weeks of preparation was required for tabling to be successful. After developing a communication plan, the board members would print banners, posters, and flyers. While all university students were welcomed to the club, preference was given to female and foreign students because they were known to be less 'demanding,' as mentioned by the oldest club officers. Targeting these students required a strategy. For example, during the second week of welcome at the LA university, I was asked to attend the event and recruit new members:

> You are French, so the girls here might like your accent. We [board members] believe this is an asset to draw them in. Here are some flyers, hand those around, and direct the girls to our table. Just be yourself, this will be fine. (Female president of the LA Surf Club, excerpt from notebook 3, page 55, February 2, 2010)

Besides increasing membership, building partnership was another important mission for officers to raise funds. Not only would partnership give credit to the club, but it would also help acquire more surfboards and wetsuits. At the

beginning of the academic year, the LA club secured a few sponsors from local companies. Every other month, club members were given samples and experimental products that companies were developing (*e.g.* soy based wax or new skateboards). It was expected from club members to give feedback about the quality of these products. As for the SD club, I secured a partnership after two weeks of operation with the manager of the university surf shop. The shop was located on campus, right next to the university library, and the manager showed great interest in partnering with the surf club. He viewed members as potential customers that would purchase or rent surf equipment from his store:

> So, you are a new board member of the surf club, huh? You know, we have a lot of exposure here. Many students came by and asked about the club since the beginning of fall. If you want, tell your members that I will sell them surfboards and wetsuits at a 25% discounted rate. Also, you can advertise the club's events on my front door. (Manager of the SD university surf shop, excerpt from notebook 4, pages 6-7, October 17, 2012)

The manager would later tell me that he sold substantial gears to club members. To ensure that club members would repetitively purchase equipment from his store and/or recommend it, he provided human, financial and material resources to the SD surf club all year-round. For instance, he helped organize a movie screening on campus in winter and supported the two surf trips that the club completed in the academic year 2012–2013.

Surf trips were one of the most expected events in both clubs given that only two or three of them were planned during each academic year. These trips allowed students to travel to renown surf breaks in Southern California, such as Trestles. They further offered the opportunity to operate off the university radars and throw a party. Trips gathered from 10 to 20 club members and were planned over a weekend. They usually began on a Thursday or a Friday afternoon and involved a two-hour or three-hour drive. After checking in at the campground, principal members would do groceries to host a barbecue starting around 6 o'clock. Party goers would usually drink, eat, play games, and do drugs until 2 or 3 in the morning, only to wake up around 8 a.m., and go out surfing. At first glance, surf trips seemed entertaining, but they required a lot of preparation:

> Today at 9 a.m., I met the club secretary who organizes the upcoming trip. He already booked the first campsite for 8 people a few weeks ago, and we discussed some urgent matters in order to best accommodate members. The following issues were raised: (1) Verify tents, sleeping bags and blankets as it is expected to be 50 degrees Fahrenheit at night. (2) Look for essential camping gears, including headlamp, camp chairs, duct tape, mallet, trash bags, etc. (3) Fetch a bundle of wood to make a fire. (4) Buy food to barbecue, such as hot dogs, burgers, and buns. (5) Get gallons of water, refillable bottles, cups, drinks, and pot for partying. (6) Double check the carpooling situation and ensure that we have enough cars and surf racks. (7) Have everyone signed the release form (Author as president of the SD Surf Club, excerpt from notebook 4, page 99, November 28, 2012)

Principal club members had to make sure that trips occurred when most club members were available, and when a good swell fills in. A lot of coordination was required to find responsible drivers who would commit to drive others. Besides, a few days before the trip, club officers would purchase important quantities of liquor and drugs. Those over 21 years old – including myself – would buy liquor, while those receiving medical prescriptions from their doctor would go to dispensaries and purchase different strains of marijuana.

Besides surf trips, much time and effort were dedicated to hold 'learn-to-surf' days, but their organization was different from one club to another. While the LA club scheduled them twice per semester, the SD club ran them nearly every weekend. Unlike the informal surf sessions which involved two to four intermediate surfers, 'learn-to-surf' days targeted beginners who had never, or almost never surfed before. In accordance with the university policy, beginners filled out a release form at the beginning of each semester. Depending on the number of people attending the event, two or three experienced riders would act as surf instructors. Beyond teaching, surf instructors answered questions, and made surfing look easy, pleasant, and attractive. For example, they would explain what the best conditions are at a given break:

> Here at Bolsa Chica, it is best to surf between low to mid-tide, as the tide gets higher. You will have a clear line-up and enough room to paddle out and surf before you reach the shore. When the tide is high, the waves break on the beach, which is not suitable for surfing. (Team captain of the LA surf club, excerpt from notebook 1, page 11, September 26, 2009)

Since 'learn-to-surf' days were relatively rare at the LA club, they were very well-organized. Officers scheduled them in early fall and late spring to make sure that the water temperature would be warm enough, and the waves suitable for beginners. During the events, surfboards, wetsuits, food and drinks were provided to all registered club members. As for the SD club, 'learn-to-surf' days were only dedicated to surfing – no food or drinks were provided, but surf equipment such as surfboards and wetsuits were. Given that such days were planned almost every weekend, beginners had more opportunities to bond with intermediate and experienced riders.

5.3 A Typical Surf Session

One of the most important missions of each club was to provide access to surf equipment and to waves. Most club members were freshmen or international students who lived at least five miles away from the ocean, and who did not own a surfboard or a car. To tackle these issues, club members would be in touch every day on social media. For instance, one could read posts about somebody offering a ride, or someone asking for a ride. Club members would only surf at one or two different breaks, according to where they lived, and the difficulty of the wave. After a few weeks, subgroups were formed based on members' proximity to one another and to a break. These surf sessions occurred twice or three times per week during mornings. They would typically last between three and four hours, including preparation, driving,

and surfing. In conducting fieldwork, I observed that members of both clubs applied similar routines and behavioral patterns.

(1) First, university surfers would go surfing when they did not have to attend class early or work in the morning. They would wake up between 4 and 7 o'clock. Since winds usually pick up around 10 a.m. in Southern California, all participants claimed they prefer sleeping less to ride cleaner waves, with no or little wind. Besides, participants reported enjoying surfing when fewer people were in the water, which tended to occur early in the morning as well. When their schedule allowed it, they postponed non-surf-related tasks. But more than just being a personal choice, waking up early was the norm. While nobody was congratulated for surfing before going to class or work, surfers who would go out late, around 10 or 11 a.m., were criticized and sometimes excluded by others.

(2) Second, surfers were expected to assess the conditions at a given surf break by browsing online. Specialist websites provided all information, including the tide height, the swell period, height and direction, the wind strength and direction, as well as the water temperature. Then, participants prepared their equipment according to the conditions. For example, they usually preferred riding longboards when the waves were small (*i.e.* ankle to knee-high). Given this context, surfers who chose the wrong equipment were subject to jokes or covert insults. If one brought a shortboard on a small day, he or she may be called a '*kook*.' This term is commonly known in the English-speaking surf culture and corresponds to a beginner surfer who does not follow the etiquette. As shown in the literature (Anderson, 2013, p. 968; Beaumont & Brown, 2014, p. 3; Olivier, 2010, p. 1224), calling someone a *kook* is a derogatory term. It reminds every surfer that one must conform to the norms of the local surf culture.

(3) Third, car owners ought to carpool. Since most club members acknowledged that it was more fun to surf with someone and share their experience in the water, car owners were responsible for picking up and dropping off one or two club members. Often, car owners were students who were born and raised in California, while passengers were students coming from other States or countries. Interestingly, ridesharing promoted compassion and solidarity. After surfing, and before returning home, surfers often ate lunch together at a fast-food restaurant. These activities contributed to the integration of newcomers into the local surf culture and lifestyle.

(4) Fourth, after parking near a surf break, surfers had the same ritual. They would take their board out of the car and put them on the sidewalk. When deemed necessary, they would apply wax on their board, and put on their wetsuit. Under their wetsuit, women usually kept their swimsuit on, whereas men preferred being naked. Once they were ready, surfers would lock their car, hide their keys, and walk toward the beach. No bag or belonging would be brought to the beach.

(5) Fifth, surfers would assess the conditions (tide, winds, wave height, rip currents, etc.). Because experienced members associated surfing with solidarity and positivity, they often helped beginners to identify the peak of a given wave and observe the surf etiquette (Daskalos, 2007; Kaffine, 2009; Waitt & Warren, 2008). While paddling out, one was expected to follow a channel or wait for a

lull not to interfere with riders going toward the beach. Once at the line-up, surfers would wait to catch a wave and yielded the right of way to the surfer located the closest to the peak. Sometimes, on a small day, the most experienced riders would encourage beginners to catch the same wave, calling it a 'party wave.'

(6) Sixth, after surfing for one or two hours, surfers would not stay at the beach. Rather, they would take care of their gear and their body. They would carefully rinse off their wetsuit, their surfboard and themselves, either at the public showers, or at their car using about a gallon of water. Rinsing off was particularly important to prevent rashes, infections, and to ensure that their gear last longer.

(7) Seventh, surfers would often eat on their way back home. They would not go to a fancy restaurant, but rather pick a burger or a taco place. Eating together after surfing appeared to strengthen ties between club members, since they would debrief their surf session and talk about their daily life.

(8) Eventually, as car rides lasted for about 20 min, many social interactions would occur in cars. Beginners often asked questions to more experienced riders about the mechanisms of the tides, the swells, and the winds. These informal oceanography tips not only provided knowledge to beginners but strengthened solidarity between group members. Other topics of discussion included prospective purchase of equipment, reflection on former surf sessions, and how to behave while in the water.

6 Discussion

6.1 Mechanical Solidarity Based on Similarities

Undergraduate and graduate students of this study belonged to the public university system in the United States. In enrolling in a sports club, they had to comply with the regulations of the university recreational center. But unlike school-based physical education, these students were not supervised during their activities, and it is up to them to conform to the norms of the public university system. In the context of primary education or childhood in the United Kingdom, in Australia and in Aotearoa New Zealand, scholars stressed the importance of lifestyle sports to stimulate the adoption of positive behaviors, such as learning skills, engaging with others and risk evaluation (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2017; Leeder & Beaumont, 2021; Prins & Wattchow, 2022; Säfvenbom et al., 2018; Silva et al, 2022; Wheaton & Townsend, 2022; Wintle, 2022). For example, Beaumont and Warburton (2020) explained that curriculum lifestyle sports such as parkour, skateboarding, kayaking and surfing help forging group identities.

As for the participants of the current study in higher education, the construction of individual identities and solidarity through partaking in a physical activity were not only linked with their compliance with university policy, but also with the universal surf etiquette (*i.e.* the surfer's code). The surfer's code "is a set of social norms widely understood by surfers that dictates priority and behavior based on a surfers' position and skill-levels in the water to reduce collisions and increase collective benefits" (Mach & Ponting, 2018, p. 1850). In other words, the surfer's code is a 'social fact'

as defined by Durkheim, which is "any way of acting, whether fixed or not, capable of exerting over the individual an external constraint" (Durkheim, 1982/2013, p. 27). While many surfers wish to surf alone, previous research demonstrated that they usually comply with the surf etiquette to ensure that well-known and relatively crowded waves can be ridden safely. Such rules like one surfer per wave, or paddling back out around the peak, were documented in many places, including but not limited to Australia, California, Hawai'i, the United Kingdom, and Aotearoa New Zealand (Cook, 2022; Fletcher et al., 2011; Rode, 2022; Towner & Lemarié, 2020). To say there is a surfer's code means the global surfing community has established social norms for its members to adhere and enforce, and therefore cast doubt on the idea that lifestyle sports take place "without external regulation or institutionalization" (Wheaton & Townsend, 2022, p. 441). In studying localism for example, Olive (2016), Towner and Lemarié (2020), as well as Estrada Milán and Escala Rabadán (2021) showed that people who transgress the tacit surfer's norms may be sanctioned verbally and/or physically.

Consistent with Durkheim's understanding of social facts and collective consciousness, these surfer's injunctions to be respected indicate a mechanical solidarity. Like full members of a global surf community that goes beyond the realm of their university, the subjects of this study were expected to comply with the rule "one surfer per one wave" during the surf sessions, not only because it is safer to do so, but also "because the rule is known and accepted by everybody" (Durkheim, 1984/2013, p. 60). Yet, defying the norm was tolerated locally under specific conditions, as illustrated in the 'party wave' situation, when the waves were small enough to be caught by at least two surfers. When writing about party waves, Corte (2021) also alluded to mechanical solidarity among big-wave surfers on the North Shore of O'ahu, Hawai'i. He argued these waves "contribute to the excitement and encourage bonding with one another" (Corte, 2021, p. 4).

Aligning with Corte's ideas, my findings reveal that local customs were specifically observed by university surfers, some of which may not systematically be replicated elsewhere. For instance, carefully rinsing off surf gear is not reported in any ethnographic study on surfing, suggesting this practice mostly occur in Southern California or that it is not important in previous works. By the same token, calling a peer a *kook* for bringing a shortboard on a small day is not mentioned by another scholar either. Using this derogatory term seems more related to an inside joke than being a proper insult that applies to all surfers on a global scale. In other words, these confined customs suggest that a local solidarity exist, besides the universal code that surfers comply with. Consequently, surfers were more than members of a neo-tribe since they were not just linked by common interests, passion or similar lifestyle. They were rather closely linked to each other because they conformed to universal norms, and potentially subverted them at a local level. This informs us about the structure of lifestyle sports which contains general attitudes and values, and yet carries unique local customs and cultural politics (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2016).

Since every participant of this present study attempted to abide by the rules of both the local community and the universal surf etiquette, they necessarily did bear close resemblance to their surfer peers locally, and globally. Of course, these students were of different age, gender, class and race. They came from different places,

but they all surfed the same breaks at about the same time, and respected the same set of norms. Whether it was in Huntington Beach, Orange County, or at Black's Beach in San Diego, there was a sense of tradition, a shared feeling that a club member should surf at this specific location. This further echoes with Durkheim's understanding of mechanical solidarity inasmuch that club members identified themselves with a relatively small given place, and that is by tradition that surfers replicated the same behavioral patterns. "In simple societies, where tradition is all-powerful and where almost everything is held in common, the most puerile customs become categorical duties from force of habit" (Durkheim, 1984/2013, p. 125).

Such a vision of mechanical solidarity and sense of belonging is particularly relevant when members wished to surf different breaks, farther away. Traveling was so special that it deserved a special name (*i.e.* a surf trip), and that more people were involved, thus requiring extra planning. Beyond being mere expeditions, surf trips acted as rites of passages (Turner, 1969). For instance, to the LA board members, surf trips facilitated the identification of the most committed students. Those who participated in the events gained a new status within the club as they integrated certain traditions of the surf culture – such as going camping and riding new waves. As for SD board members, surf trips were a way to assert their authority, to show partners and beginners that their recent appointment as president, vice-president, treasurer and secretary was legitimate, and that their organization was indeed that of an official club. Thus, going on a surf trip served, at least, two purposes. To beginners, it helped gain recognition as a serious surfer. To organizers, it symbolized social anchoring and legitimacy.

6.2 Organic Solidarity Based on Organizational Behavior

The results of this study indicate that going surfing is rather difficult, especially for the new club members who did not own equipment and did not live within walking or biking distance from a surf break. To address these issues, principal members of both surf clubs applied a formal and informal distribution of roles. Fulfilling their function of president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and team captain, club officers strived to build solidarity within the club. They cooperated daily ensuring that all members could get access to equipment and waves. Thanks to their mutual trust and constructive interaction, they applied a certain division of labor. As in a complex society, principal members were characterized by their differences in age, gender, class, race, pursuits, and life experiences. For example, the president of the LA surf club was French Canadian, the vice-president was born and raised in California, and the secretary was Latino. Despite this, there were able to form allegiance, and tolerate their differences.

Unlike previous studies reporting conflicts between surfers of different gender, ethnicity, or country of origin (Hansen, 2021; Mizuno, 2018; Olive, 2016; Usher & Gómez, 2016; Walker, 2011), the subjects of this research positively cooperated and implemented rules that were not only set by the university recreation center, but also but by the club officers themselves. Social cohesion in forms of constructive planning, mutual trust and reliance on one another was obtained when club members

successfully gathered resources (*e.g.* cars, surfboards, wetsuits, etc.) and increased their odds of surfing together. For example, during the first 'learn-to-surf day' of the LA surf club in September 2009, I was a new club member. Yet, I was assigned by the officers to purchase drinks and food using the club's debit card. Then, on the beach, I was asked to greet beginner surfers, while principal members were unloading surf equipment from their cars. In this case, organic solidarity could be observed in the form of trust in other club members to help achieve one goal of their organization.

University students adopting cooperative behavior and organic solidarity were particularly visible during general body meetings, and surf trips. Being well-coordinated and organized was a constant preoccupation for board members, who delegated their responsibilities when they felt overwhelmed. Sometimes, if one would not act according to the tacit expectation (*i.e.* in the LA club, the vice president is too laid-back, or the president is too strict), club officers would still work together without exchange of insults, or sanctioning the wrongdoers. This collective behavior is typical of Durkheim's organic solidarity. Indeed, he explained that: "the relationships that are regulated by these [collaborative] laws are of a nature entirely different from the preceding ones [*i.e.* the mechanical laws]; they express a positive contribution, a cooperation deriving essentially from the division of labor" (Durkheim, 1984/2013, p. 96). In studying positive interactions between surfers in Hawai'i and in the United Kingdom, Cook (2022) further demonstrated that constructive sociation choices in the form of acts of omission and commission occur in local and global surf cultures. While borrowing interactionist concepts by Simmel (1908), Cook rightfully pointed out that "conflict resolution in social networks is made possible through bargaining and compromise leading to the tolerance of triadic closure or the unity of sociability" (Cook, 2022, p. 2).

In alignment with Cook's work, this study nuances the idea that participants in lifestyle sports are self-reliant, self-serving, individualistic, and denounce institutionalization (Wheaton, 2013). To some extent, previous research has shown that surfers may create tight-knit communities, activist groups, and non-profit organizations, thus taking part in the process of institutionalizing surfing collectively (Falaix et al., 2021; Lemarié, 2017; Wheaton, 2007b; Weisbein, 2022). As for this fieldwork, it is important to note that the results were likely to indicate institutionalization and cooperation in the form of organic solidarity, given that board members were the core of the study population. By definition, the functions and duties of club officers lead them to supervise staff, organize events, manage projects, and implement rules. Similarly, when Goreau-Ponceaud (2021) analyzes the institutionalization of Indian surfing, the author can only mention the structuring attributes of local clubs. In other words, "the collection of data [and their analysis] involves the subjectivity of the researcher" (Marsac, 2015). This means that lifestyle sports are not by nature positive, collective, and institutionalized, but they can be seen as such if the researcher study their organizations.

Finally, the results of this survey indicate that the greater the degree of immersion of the researcher in a surf club, the more she or he will be likely to argue that the recreational practice of surfing promotes organic solidarity. In 2009–2010, I was able to thoroughly observe boards members of the LA surf club after earning their

trust. It was then that I could observe a division of labor between them. By the same token in 2012–2013, organic solidarity was more visible among SD club members, as I spent more time managing this organization and delegated tasks. Similar to Sumpter (2020) who spent two years conducting autoethnography across surf breaks in Southern California, it appears that the length of the fieldwork and the engagement of the researcher are decisive in indicating that some surfers collaborate and can be inclusive.

7 Conclusion

In answering the question, how is the pursuit of surfing among university students made possible, I demonstrated that social facts, collective consciousness, and solidarity between club members are positive and driving forces. Borrowing the concepts of mechanical and organic solidarity from Durkheim, I argue that university students abide by the laws of their similar occupation of riding waves and of their differentiation in managing a sports club. Despite their apparent individualistic pursuit of enjoyment and fun, university surfers conform both to the norms of modern organizational behavior and to the traditional attributes of surfing. Using the positive sociology of leisure approach with Durkheim's theory, I cast doubt on the relevance of the neo-tribe concept, and further theorize the term lifestyle sports. Instead of limiting the study to shared practices, common interests, similar way of life, and passion for surfing, I show that university surfers are rather linked by local and global social structures, including but not limited to laws, norms, traditions, rituals, and codes of conduct. In other words, people partaking in lifestyle sports are not systematically individualistic and do not necessarily condemn regulations. To the contrary, I demonstrate that surfers enrolled in a university sports club promote the practice of lifestyle sports through connectedness, solidarity, tolerance, and inclusiveness.

Yet, despite these conclusions, one important limitation of this study is the correlation between the solidarity type (*i.e.* mechanical or organic) and their associated norms and law codes (*i.e.* repressive or restitutive). As Durkheim's approach to society is law-based, he made great effort to analyze law codes, including constitutional, penal, civil, commercial, administrative, and procedural codes. This present research did show that there are unwritten rules and that punishments may occur if a surfer does not follow the proper etiquette. Yet, drawing parallels between such rules and actual punishments with a repressive or a restitutive law code remains to be explored. Future research could use Durkheim's framework to identify more norms in lifestyle sports and the extent to which these norms may forge local and global collective consciousnesses.

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Declarations

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