The contribution of skateboarding to societal challenges

Dr PS Radikonyana
Department of National School of Government
Private Bag X759
ZK Matthews Building
70 Meintjes Street
Sunnyside, Pretoria, 0001
South Africa
paul.radikonyana@thensg.gov.za

Prof JJ Prinsloo*
North-West University
School of Business and Governance
Mafikeng Campus
Private Bag X2046
Mmabatho, 2735
South Africa
Hein.Prinsloo@nwu.ac.za

Prof TG Pelser
University of Kwa Zulu-Natal
Private Bag X54001, Durban, South Africa
pelser@ukzn.ac.za

Corresponding Author*

Abstract

Skateboarding started in the 1950s on the west coast of the United States of America (USA) as a response to a desire of surfers to continue their activity "when the surf was flat" This qualitative study focuses on the perception of what skateboarding is all about in South African cities and townships. In doing this, attention is also given to the skateboarding's contribution to societal challenges in South African cities and townships. Skateboarding's sub-culture, like other youth cultures, are commonly regarded as being out of place in open public spaces as they tend to pose 'a crisis for public space' or resist the normative logic of public space and offer unwanted alternative uses. The problem within this context can be conceptualized as "an activity for youths involved in anti-social behavior or undesirable social behavior whereby skateboarders are in general previewed as outcasts, nuisances, and even criminals".

This study is closely allied to the social constructivist where the objective of research 'is to rely as much as possible on the participants' view of the situation being studied'. A grounded theory guideline approach was applied, thus including open axial and selective coding. Four focus group interviews were executed amongst respondents located in and around Pretoria (Menlyn, Atteridgeville, Lotus gardens and Eersterus). Themes that emerged include the need for experience, skateboarding awareness, skateboarding's attributes and values, skateboarding as a leisure activity, skateboarding as a competitive sport, personal characters of skateboarding, and anti-criminal behavior. Societies in general, always use the phrase *"don't judge a book by its cover"*, question is, does the society apply this widely used belief system? The findings of this empirical, proof beyond questioning that society does in fact, *"judge the book*

by its cover". Skateboarding could and should be considered by private industries (profit orientation and social responsibility programs) and relevant government structures (social development), as yet another element of a wider integrated social development plan.

Keywords: Skateboarding, Townships, Open Public Spaces, Societal Challenges

Introduction

'Extreme sports' such as skateboarding have for decades provided a popular avenue through which play and leisure occupations are explored (Haines *et al.,* 2011). Since the 1980s, street skateboarding has remained a popular activity and it is likely to remain a popular activity into the foreseeable future (Wiggin & Bicknell, 2011). With large corporate sponsorships and televised competitions, skateboarding has emerged from its roots of carving the concrete banks to a highly visible and popular activity (Goldenberg & Shooter, 2009).

As the number of skateboarders has increased, many communities have viewed skateboarding as a problem (Young 2004; Howell, 2001; Dahlgren, 2006). Likewise, there are many negative stereotypes associated with the activity itself, such as property damage to public artworks like handrails, ledges, plinths, benches, banks, steps, wave-like forms and low walls (Jones & Graves, 2000; Borden 2001; Wiggin & Bicknell, 2011). Furthermore, the presence or absence of other suitable skateboarding facilities within the vicinity, that is, designated or not can impact greatly on whether artworks are subject to skateboarding, because 'if your city doesn't have a skatepark, then your city is a skatepark' (Landscape Communications, 2009). Although researchers have produced very little empirical evidence to date, Slee (2011), Lemmon and Nowlin (2007) and Powell and Scanlin (2005) made the case that skateparks provide outlets for experiencing success in a safe and supportive setting. Also, the presence of a skateboard park is, for example, perceived to increase the number of available leisure choices and provide an important meeting place for individuals who share a common interest (Dahlgren, 2006). Against this background, skateboarding has been defined as not only an individual sport but also a social activity with a defined culture (Tholander & Johansson, 2010; Dumas & Laforest, 2009). This qualitative study focuses on the perception of what skateboarding is all about in South African cities and townships. In doing this, attention is also given to skateboarding's contribution to societal challenges in South African cities and townships. It is believed that the insights provided by this exploration will provide a better understanding of the perception of what skateboarding is all about and its possible contributory elements in South African cities and townships.

Problem Statement

Skate boarding's sub culture, like other youth cultures are commonly regarded as being out of place in open public spaces as they tend to pose 'a crisis for public space' or resist the normative logic of public space and offer unwanted alternative uses (Carr, 2006; Bäckström, 2007; Penny, 2007). Geographical studies, therefore, have sought to demonstrate how skateboarders critique the normative logic of urban space and as a result are made "out of place" by local authorities who close off public spaces to them (Penny, 2009:7). Skateboarders are therefore reduced to the status of the homeless (Flusty, 2000; Mitchell & Staeheli, 2005; Carr, 2006).

Unlike traditional youth sport, skateboarding is not organized and does not rely on competition (Beal & Weidman, 2003). Nevertheless, skateboarding is perceived to provide an important avenue for physical activity, leisure, and personal development for many individuals (Project for Public Spaces, 2016:7; Haines *et al.,* 2011; Goldenberg & Shooter, 2009). To-date, in post-apartheid South African cities, many questions still remain regarding the nature and use of urban

public spaces in the cities, especially for recreational purposes such as skateboarding (Landman, 2015). Consequently, the statement of the problem can be conceptualized as "an activity for youths involved in anti-social behavior or undesirable social behavior whereby skateboarders are in general previewed as outcasts, nuisances, and even criminals".

Objectives

The primary objective was to determine whether skateboarding as a sporting code or sporting activity contribute to the social and physical well-being of certain sub cultural societies.

Secondary objectives comprise:
- the determining of motivational drivers to board skating,
- to determine the general perception of board skating, focusing on the attributes and values,
- the identification of elements that differentiate skateboarding from other sporting codes, and to
- determine whether the popularity of skateboarding contribute to criminal activities.

Literature Review

Skateboarding started in the 1950s on the west coast of the United States of America (USA) as a response to a desire of surfers to continue their activity "when the surf was flat" (Borden, 2001:209). The architecture of cities such as Los Angeles "allowed frustrated surfers to re-enact the sense of being on the sea, rolling down the tarmac drives and roads of its undulating residential sectors as if they were an ocean wave" (Borden, 2001:29). Skaters continue to be renowned for identifying and using found spaces within the urban fabric, which include school grounds, ditches, pipes and on the west coast of America the empty swimming pools of large villas (Woolley *et al.,* 2011). Open spaces within the city which are not designed for the activity of skateboarding, but which are used for it have been called 'found space' (Borden, 2001).

Evolution of skateboarding

During the 1970s there was a move to provide skate parks or 'constructed spaces' which had profitable business opportunities, with investors and skate park designers becoming involved (Borden, 2001). The aim was to provide structures that provided opportunities to re-create the sensations and bodily movements of surfing, together with the experiences of skating in the urban fabric. Many skate parks were built in the USA, whereas the first was created in the United Kingdom (UK) being built during the summer of 1977. During this evolutionary time, period skate parks were built in many cities on nearly all continents of the world. During the 1980s many of these facilities closed (Woolley *et al.,* 2011). The 'ramp' then again became an increasingly important element for skateboarders, contributing to a resurgence of skateboarding during this decade (Borden, 2001:77). Skateboarding became a 'global phenomenon' and popular in different countries across the world, many of which had no direct physical relationship with the sea (Borden, 2001:57).

Motivation for skating

According to studies on skateboarding, the enjoyment and fun of the sport come from watching and learning from others and that can happen only in large areas like parks and streets (Woolley & Johns, 2001). Woolley and Johns (2001) highlight that skateboarding moves, or tricks, are

acquired through learning from peers directly, from photographs in skate magazines, from videos and, increasingly, from photographs and movie files on the World Wide Web.

Many different styles, and schools, of skateboarding exist, some of which still take place on ramps, bowls, low benches or handrails as well as created elements in skate parks, whilst various skating activities occur outside the traditional city built environment (Woolley & Johns, 2001). In many cases, skaters inhabit public spaces when relatively desolated, and in this way skaters exploit the ambiguity of the ownership and function of urban public spaces (Németh, 2006). Some skaters even travel the periphery cities, exploring and utilizing old industrial sites, local streets, parks or shopping centers, estates or any hard landscape that may contain exciting slopes or obstacles (Woolley & Johns, 2001). However, the predominant way in which a skateboarder perceives of their activity is a set of moves performed within a sequence of such moves (Borden, 1998b).

Despite this seemingly positive projection of skate parks, adults tend to view skateboarding in a more negative and disapproving way, often equating it with public nuisance (Woolley & Johns, 2001; Woolley, 2009; Taylor *et al.,* 2010). Those against this activity tend to link skateboarding with its Hip-Hop graffiti-writing and rap music origins, thus, projecting skateboarding to be a rebellious, rule-breaking, male dominated activity, largely pursued by non-conforming/delinquent youths (Davis, 2004; Chiu, 2009; Taylor *et al.*, 2010). Nevertheless, skateboarding is also reported to contribute to important moderate and vigorous physical activity for participants as well as potential mental health benefits such as building self-esteem, social competence and respect for others (Owens, 2002; Bradley, 2010; Taylor & Khan, 2011).

Skateboarders as a sub-culture

Skateboarders are one sub-group of young people who tend to be predominantly male, middle class with a dress code and identity of their own (Beal, 1995; Borden, 2001; Karsten & Pel, 2000; Woolley, 2003b). Their activity is different from organized sports, which are mainly competitive in nature. Within this sub culture, participants learn from each other, are supportive and encouraging of each other's abilities while at the same time being creative and not bound by rules (Beal, 1995; Karsten & Pel, 2000; Woolley & Johns, 2001; Nemeth, 2006). Skateboarders use the urban fabric in a way no other group in society does and have been identified as a resistant sub-culture of their own challenging capitalist norms, cultural forms and physical relationship with the urban environment (Beal, 1995; Borden, 2001).

A perceived risk of injury and liability has sometimes hindered support for skateboarding as a physically active and developmentally beneficial activity (Wood, 2011). However, research has shown that it results in relatively few serious injuries; approximately half the number associated with sports such as cycling or basketball (Kyle *et al.*, 2002).

Popularity of skateboarding
Skateboarding is more than just a form of physical activity or way to pass time, as it also embodies a "culture" (as mentioned in the previous section) that participants identify with (Jones, 2011). Although commercialization has appropriated this culture, to some extent through branded skate clothing and corporate sponsorship of competitions, other aspects of the skateboarding culture are evident in the way skaters interact with one another. They are also increasingly expressed through their use of digital media to share images, video clips and reports of mastered tricks with each other (Jones, 2011).

In Australia, skateboarding is perceived to be popular based on its recreational activity contribution to young people. It provides important opportunities not only for physical activity but also for social interaction with peers. Furthermore, it also enhances the development of relevant life skills that come about informally as they learn to cooperatively take turns, interact with others, work on new skills, and face new challenges (Wood, 2011).

Skateboarding within the African context

Skateboarding in South Africa has grown significantly since 2012. Firstly, growth as a sport, and secondly, as a mode of non-motorized mobility. Since 2012 more and more people are taking an interest in the skateboard phenomena, specifically considering as an alternative transportation option (Sports Trader, 2015). Longboarding has become popular in the Eastern Cape, while Durban, Johannesburg, and Cape Town have been established skateboarding cities for some time. Kimberly in the Northern Cape now also boasts superb skateboarding facilities, put in place for the Maloof Money Cup at the end of September 2011 (RSA Government, 2011).

The Maloof Money Cup was held for the first time outside the United States at Kimberly in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa between 30 September and 02 October 2011 (Barford, 2011:1; RSA Government, 2011:1). This Cup is known as the annual world's biggest skateboarding competition for amateur and professional skateboarders founded by Joe and Gavin Maloof of the Maloof family with the aim to raise awareness of skateboarding and to encourage participation in skateboarding events and activities (Barford, 2011:1). Furthermore, the organizers of this event as Barford (2011:1) alluded, aim to contribute new skateboarding infrastructure and boost retail activity in those areas where events are held. The world's top pro skaters who took part in the competition in Kimberly included Lizard King, Greg Lutzka, Andrew Reynolds, Pierre Luc Gagnon, Sandaro Dias, Bob Burnquist, Nick Merlino and Pedro Barros (Barford, 2011:2; RSA Government, 2011:1). As part of contribution towards the development of skateboarding in South Africa, some pro skaters like Lizard King and Matt Miller arrived early in South Africa prior the 2011 Maloof Money Cup commenced and went out to Postmasburg and taught kids how to skateboard (RSA Government, 2011:1).

Current trends

These include the establishing of governance structures focusing on **the** development of skateboarding. The National Skateboarding Association (NSA) represented by skateboarding task teams consisting of councilors which are active in South African cities. With the growing interest, more companies are also getting involved and supporting skateboarders on various levels to be able to compete on an international level (Sports Trader, 2015).

Literature support that it has become apparent that the stereotypic view of the skateboarder as an unwanted presence is gradually being wiped away. Positive exposure and acceptance of skateboarding in the media (nationwide) creates a more favorable perception regarding the sport/brand (Sports Trader, 2015:2). The NSA, for example, is also working with the Kimberly Diamond Cup on development initiatives, through skate workshops and bringing skateboarding to underprivileged children. The Kimberly Cup which is an international event that attracts some of the top skateboarders in the world with excellent prize money was to be staged in the city from 27th – 29th September 2013 (Sports Trader, 2015:2; Sport Industry Group, 2013:1). Non-profit organisations, such as Skateistan uses skateboarding as a springboard to empower low-income youths (15 -17) in partnership with their biggest supporters, namely, SurfAid International (SAI) and focus their sights on Johannesburg (Sports Trader, 2015). Skateistan

also focuses on addressing gender inequality in skateboarding by creating equal opportunities. They go even further, providing skateboards, helmets and knee and wrist guards during scheduled skateboarding sessions. However, two potential problems faced by the skateboarding market in South Africa alluded to by Sports Trader (2015), include proper funding and the legality to skate on public roads and open urban public spaces (except in the already existing limited skate parks).

Skateboarding and criminal activities

Skateboarders have a unique and strong identity, ethos and outlook which set them apart from their peers (Woolley & Johns, 2001). Through a combination of style of dress, musical preferences and the activity of skateboarding, there is a strong sense of self-identity to be found as a `skater' (Woolley & Johns, 2001). As a result, the subculture of skateboarding has been described as one form of popular culture that resists capitalist social relations (Beal, 1995), mainly because while skateboarders are discovering and using the urban environment in their unique way, they can come into conflict with other users of open urban spaces. Consequently, skateboarding often suffers negative stereotypical associations with youth counterculture, graffiti (Taylor & Khan, 2011) and anti-social behaviour (Goldenberg & Shooter, 2009; Weston, 2010; Bradley, 2010; Taylor & Khan, 2011). In this regard, skateboarders are often perceived as a prelude to criminal offending, trespassers or a problem by other users, the authorities and the business community (Woolley & Johns, 2001; Borden, 1998; Loader, 1996; Taylor & Marais, 2011; Travlou, 2003). Some might even perceive the activity as a `public disorder or nuisance' (Rogers & Coaffee, 2005; Stratford, 2002).

However, Travlou (2003) maintains that skateboarding cannot be defined as a real criminal activity like alcohol and drug abuse, vandalism, shoplifting and other forms of juvenile delinquency. Instead, it is a young urban counterculture that seeks to challenge power relations by questioning the privatisation of public space (Loukaitou-Sideris & Banerjee 1998; Urban Action 2001). Nonetheless, the literature identifies a variety of positive outcomes potentially associated with skateboarding, such as, social development through peer-to-peer skill acquisition and creativity fostered through skateboarding, and the arts of cooperation, negotiation and compromise are learnt informally, in contrast to the structured rules of organised sports (Cohen *et al.,* 2009; Wood *et al.,* 2014).

Methodology

The philosophical worldview adopted in this study is closely allied to the social constructivist. In a social constructivist worldview, the objective of research 'is to rely as much as possible on the participants' view of the situation being studied' (Creswell, 2009). A grounded theory guideline approach was applied, which according to Leedy and Ormrod (2010:142), is the approach that "… refers to the idea that the theory that emerges from the study is derived from and "grounded" in data that have been collected in the field, rather than taken from the research literature". In turn, 'the discovery of theory from data provided the researcher with relevant predictions, explanations, interpretations, and applications (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).' Focus group interviews were principally used as a data collection method during this study in order to explore 'multiple viewpoints or responses concerning a specific issue (De Vos *et al.,* 2009). Population includes three of these skateboarders came from Menlyn in Pretoria East, four from Atteridgeville, four from Lotus Gardens (adjacent to Atteridgeville), and two from Eersterus (west of Mamelodi). As a result, the researcher managed to construct theory as an outcome of the interpretations of the respondents' stories (Strauss & Corbin, 1994:274; Mills *et al.,* 2006:32).

The data analysis of the focus group interview transcriptions was undertaken using the grounded theory method of coding, sorting and analyzing. Lo

Open, axial and selective coding techniques were employed in the coding, sorting and **analysis of the transcripts of the interviews held with the skaters who participated in the skateboarding activity.**

Open coding
Open coding is the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising data, and identifying concepts embedded within individual statements' (De Vos *et al.,* 2009; Wasserman *et al.,* 2009; Böhm, 2004). Groups of core categories can only be theoretically saturated when new data analysis returns codes that only fit in existing categories, and these categories are sufficiently explained in terms of their properties and the relationship between categories (Badescu, 2013).

Transcripts of the interviews that were held with the skateboarders were coded using an Excel spreadsheet. Once this initial labeling had been done, and through a process of constant comparison, codes that contained similar central features or characteristics were grouped together to form more abstract higher-level categories.

All codes and categories identified during the initial stage of the open coding process were grouped together in 'code families'. These code families were printed and then arranged in Table 1 that has the following headings: category, codes, quote to support the creation of category and comment. This helped to establish groundedness and at times highlighted the necessity to regroup or rename codes/categories.

Table 1: Extracts of the open coding phase - questions

QUESTION 1.3

Category	Code	Quote to support category creation	Comment
Motivation for skating	Need for experiential learning	"I started practicing and got an ally. Once I got an ally he showed me kick flap. I started then and I said I can do kick flap now. That's why I started skateboarding and I mean it is endless opportunities and I say you can do everything"	It might mean having the passion and willingness to learn more about how skating tricks are done

QUESTION 1.5

Category	Code	Quote	Comment
Perception of what skateboard-ing is all about	Skateboardin g is a fun!	"It is all about having fun with your friends"	Understanding skateboarding as a form of entertainment or enjoyment

QUESTION 1.6

Category	Code	Quote	Comment
Views on status of skateboardi ng in relation to other competitive sports	Skateboardin g is just an activity	"So, skateboarding should be taken seriously, because it takes kids out of the street. People think that skateboarding is a sport for the 'white people' and it is also a sport associated with injuries. If skateboarding is taken seriously it will then nullify the perception that if you skate you make yourself look like 'a white person'"	This may mean that skateboarding is perceived as a casual sport without regulations and governance

QUESTION 1.7

Views on popularity of skateboard-ing	A good sport	"I have friends here they come from America and they said that in America you can skate on the streets as smooth as nothing. Skate parks for outdoor you get in America are for free and the indoor Skate parks you get are about 15$ which is about R 150. 00"	It means that skateboarding is a friendly sport in which participation is informal

QUESTION 1.8

Skateboarding sub-culture in relation to criminal activities	No relationship between skateboarding sub-culture and drugs	"For me, it doesn't because it keeps me away from criminal activities. Like I don't necessarily hang around with people who do drugs or either illegal things because skateboarding like for me it is just something that helps me stay away from them. Those people will come and tell you about things, but for me, I am too focused in skateboarding I tell them to go away. So, it doesn't contribute to criminal activities like drugs"	Skateboarding sub-culture and drugs are completely different things

Axial coding

Axial coding involves two processes, that is, reassembling data in new ways after it has been fragmented during the open coding phase of the data analysis process and exploring the axial codes' properties of each dimension (De Vos *et al.,* 2009; MacFadzean, 2007). A thorough analysis was performed around a single category at a time primarily with reference to the coding paradigm outlined by Corbin and Strauss (1990). This implied taking into consideration categories and identifying the conditions that gave rise to it, the context into which it is embedded, and action or interaction strategies in which it is handled, managed or carried during this phase of coding.

For instance, the intense analysis was performed around the higher-level code/category/phenomenon, 'positive expectations' as reflected in Table 2. Some of what caused this phenomenon to emerge was the anticipation of perception of what skateboarding is all about and the status of skateboarding in relation to other competitive sports. The circumstances that surrounded this phenomenon was motivation for skateboarding.

The need for experiential learning, the skateboarding attributes and values and the role of media promotions are factors considered to motivate skateboarders to adopt an enthusiastic attitude and positive approach toward the undertaking.

The consequences of these factors were that skateboarding has become a popular activity with its own unique identity that makes skateboarders different from the rest of the public.

Table 2: Sorting codes into categories during the open coding phase

QUESTION 1.3		
Category	**Central idea**	**Interviewer**
Motivation for skating	**Need for experiential learning**	**3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 13**
	Character development	**6 & 1**
	Introduced by friend(s)	**3, 5, 8 & 10**
	Media promotions	**2, 4, 7 & 9**

QUESTION 1.5		
Perception of what skateboarding is all about	Skateboarding is a sport or hobby	13 & 1
	Skateboarding is a life-style	6, 7, 8, 10, 12 & 13
	Skateboarding is a sport, hobby, and lifestyle	2, 3, 4, 5 & 9
QUESTION 1.6		
Views on status of skateboarding in relation to other competitive sports	Skateboarding is just an activity	5, 6 & 8
	Should be a recognised competitive sport	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 10
	Activity for self-expression and having fun	1, 2 & 13
QUESTION 1.7		
Views on popularity of skateboarding	A good sport	1 & 2
	A relaxed sport	8, 13
	A unique sport	5
	Affords opportunities to do the tricks	6, 7 & 12
	Skateboarders are friendly and supportive	3 & 9
	Skateboarding should be more accessible	4, 10
QUESTION 1.8		
Skateboarding sub-culture in relation to criminal activities	Skateboarding sub-culture does not promote drugs	1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12 & 13
	Skateboarding sub-culture is a unique identity	2
	Avoidance of criminal activities	4, 5, 6, 8, 10

Selective coding
The main ideas that emerged during the open and axial coding phases were the expectations and realizations of a group of thirteen skateboarders who were interviewed from the identified skate parks or open public areas used for skating between July and September 2016. Three of these skateboarders came from Menlyn in Pretoria East, four from Atteridgeville, four from Lotus Gardens (adjacent to Atteridgeville), and two from Eersterus (west of Mamelodi). These locations were chosen primarily to explore the possibility of differences among skateboarders within these areas. All other categories were related to this core concept. The process employed to refine the description of the expectations and realizations of the skateboarding made use of several overlapping steps. These involved an explication of the story line, in which a general description of the expectations and realizations are outlined. Evans (2007) proposes that it is while explicating the story line that the researcher develops a story that 'brings together the majority' of the elements uncovered during the research. Ideally, only one core category should emerge.

A relationship between categories at a dimensional level as well as the way in which the categories relate to the core category, was then outlined. Evans (2007) suggests that this step involve 'asking questions and making comparisons' of and between the categories and codes uncovered. The relationships between categories were validated against the data by extracting

salient quotations from transcripts of the interviews held with the skateboarders incorporating them in a descriptive passage.

The previously mentioned steps were not seen as distinct from one another but together allowed for the development of an analytic story. This analytic story was outlined in a descriptive passage and is presented along with a literature reflection in Table 3.

Table 3: Selective coding process

Theme	Sub-theme	Interviewer
1.3 Motivation for skating	1. **Need for experience**	3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 1 & 6; + (1.7) 6, 7 & 12
	2. **Skateboarding awareness**	3, 5, 8, 10, 2, 4, 7 & 9
1.5 Perception of what skateboarding is all about	1. **Skateboarding attributes and values**	13, 1, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 9; + (1.7) 1, 2, 8, 13 & 5 + (1.8) 2
1.6 Views on status of Skateboarding in relation to other competitive sports	1. **Skateboarding is a leisure activity.**	5, 6, 8, 1, 2 & 13
	2. **Skateboarding is a competitive sport**	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 10
1.7 Views on popularity of skateboarding	1. **Attributes of skateboarding**	1, 2 , 8, 13 & 5
	2. **Personal characteristics of skateboarders**	3, 9, 4 & 10
1.8 Sub-culture and criminal activities	1. **Anti-criminal activity**	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 & 13
	2. **Skateboarding sub-culture is a unique identity**	2

Filling in Categories and Reflections
Themes that emerged from the participants' reflections regarding skateboarding in South African cities and townships can be divided into seven different sections; need for experience, skateboarding awareness, skateboarding attributes and values, skateboarding is a leisure activity, skateboarding is a competitive sport, personal characteristics of skateboarders and anti-criminal activities/behaviour.

a)   Need for experience
It is apparent from the literature that people who skate do so for a variety of reasons (Walker, 2013:5). According to Walker (2013:5), skating can be any combination of exercise, competition, skill building, socialization, protest, performance, or transportation. Beal and Weidman (2003:343) state that people like to skate because it provides an outlet for creativity and individual expression. In general, as skateboarders strive to become proficient, they are ultimately motivated by opportunities to experience sensations or by mastering the challenges they have set for themselves (Haines et al., 2011:1; Shannon & Werner, 2008:53). This was affirmed by one respondent who cited that:

> "I started practicing and got an ally. Once I got an ally he showed me kick flap. I started then and I said I can do kick flap now. That's why I started skateboarding and I mean it is endless opportunities and I say you can do everything" (Q1.3: Respondent 8).

Furthermore, many advertisements on skateboarding appeal to skateboarders through the core value of masculinity, such as, appeal specifically to male, heterosexual desires, while others appeal to skaters' admiration of toughness and risk-taking (Beal & Weidman, 2003:349). In turn, skateboarding advertisements which often depict death-defying skateboard stunts indicate that skateboarders always want experimental learning through skating. One respondent confirmed this and cited that:

> "Skateboarding is … because people want to try to do the tricks that other people are doing and they are trying to accomplish the same things as other skateboarders" (Q1.7: Respondent 12).

As a result, creativity takes the form of expression in movement, not only skateboarding as a physical activity but also as a movement through the city, because skaters move between different skating locations in the city and therefore cover large areas (Bäckström, 2007:155). By all indication, as Beal and Weidman (2003:343) alluded, the skateboarders feel that they have more opportunity to be creative in skateboarding than in traditional organized sport. *It is worth noting that the open coding 1.7 (6, 7 &12) has been incorporated into this theme because they seem to fit well into it.*

b) Skateboarding awareness
It is reported in the literature that through corporate sponsorships, televised competitions and various media, such as, magazines, photographs and posters, videos and websites, skaters write their own history, create their own self-images and produce their own self-sustaining mythology (Buckingham, 2009:12; Goldenberg & Shooter, 2009:1; Beal & Weidman, 2003:3; Hunter, 2003:22). Through these media, skateboarding is often linked to other forms of youth cultural activity or expression, most obviously fashion, music and other so-called 'extreme sports' (Buckingham, 2009:12). As such, skateboarding has emerged from its roots to a highly visible and popular activity (Beal & Weidman, 2003:3). One respondent confirmed that media is playing a critical role in creating awareness of skateboarding amongst the youths by citing that:

> "When I started skating then I saw it back when ESPN was still on TV. I saw a competition on ESPN and I and friend used to talk about it and decided that many of the youths running around here no-one can skate, that is why I 'gonna' know how it is done and got a touch in it" (Q1.3: Respondent 7).

According to Buckingham (2009:14), short videos or trailers can be viewed or downloaded at most specialist skating websites. The US-based site skateperception.com, for example, is a large site dedicated specifically to skating photographers and videographers, which includes facilities for mail-order shopping. Therefore, videos can specifically be used as a source for learning new moves and tricks, which is particularly important for new skaters (Buckingham, 2009:14-15), and this viewpoint has been confirmed by one respondent who cited that:

> "I started skating because I used to go to town when I was schooling to do some research and check on videos. You know sometimes when you login into the Internet it shows advertisements, YouTube, and videos something like that. I just watched the videos showing skateboarding stuff like that, so I got interested into that like

every day I went to the library to watch those videos on how to skate" (Q1.3: Respondent 4).

This quote highlights the critical role that multimedia technologies, such as, TV and videos are playing in creating skateboarding awareness.

c)   Skateboarding attributes and values

Skateboarding is in regards to golf a relatively modern and new sport, which started sometime back in the 1950s when surfers put wheels on wooden boards and started skating empty pools (Slee, 2011:1; Tholander & Johansson, 2010:2; Penny, 2009:150). It was not until the early 1980s that street skating first emerged as a unique style, employing various 'tricks' to interact with architectural elements and street furniture (Howell 2001:4). In this respect, skateboarding can be considered a social sport with a defined culture which some might even say is a way of thinking, doing and lifestyle (Haines *et al.,* 2011:2; Slee, 2011:3; Tholander & Johansson, 2010:2). Skaters, therefore, should be able to have reasonable access to quality facilities which are enjoyable, challenging, cater to a broad range of skills, well-maintained and which minimise the risk of injury or harm (Hansen, 2004:2). In supporting the fact that skateboarding may be viewed as a lifestyle, one respondent cited that:

> "It is a lifestyle because if it was a hobby it would be something that you do just to pass out sometime. So, if it is a lifestyle it is something that you would live for because it is something that you would always look forward to doing and most of your life is based on the sport. Like you can see it in your clothing sometimes in your phone like every time you lose a skateboard you make sure that you get it as soon as possible. It is something like you gonna feel every day that you need to do it. So, it is a lifestyle" (Q1.5: Respondent 10).

It also became apparent from the literature that some of the skateboarding attributes and values relate to social opportunities, skill development, fun, physical fitness, stress relief, and healthy living which are among the most salient outcomes of seeking personal fulfillment through skateboarding (Slee, 2011:3; Beal & Weidman, 2003:341; Goldenberg & Shooter, 2009:8).

The studies on skateboarding, for example, by Walker (2013:36) as well as Shannon and Werner (2008:53) indicated that 'many youths expressed that skating was more challenging, exciting, and fun than what they have been able to create for themselves on the streets and in the parking lots, and the opportunities to experience these sensations motivated their attendance at the skate park'. This was confirmed by one respondent who cited that:

> "I will say it is a sport and a hobby because anybody can skateboard. Most children would consider it as a hobby. I consider it as a hobby and sometimes for my friends they can consider it as a sport" (Q1.5: Respondent 1).

Another respondent cited that:

> "For me, it's gonna be like a little of the three factors (sport, hobby, and lifestyle), because for most people make a living out of it as a sport. For others, they can use it as a hobby that is a way of relaxing and trying to unwind. A lifestyle like we follow the skateboarding trend where the skateboarding should use brand shows and all that" (Q1.5: Respondent 9).

Another respondent also cited that:

> "It is a sport because it also helps me to exercise. You have to get fit
> and everything like that when you skate because if you are not fit I don't
> think you will do well in skateboarding" (Q1.5: Respondent 5).

As such, visiting the skateboard park provides youth with opportunities for external recognition and a chance to develop self-esteem and self-betterment through skill development in a social setting (Goldenberg & Shooter, 2009:8). Skateboarding, therefore, is seen as a masculine sport in which daring achievements are prized (Karsten & Pel, 2000:334). Furthermore, 'skateboarding is seen to make skaters active mentally and visually', thus many skateboarders are involved in or inspire other forms of the arts (Borden 2001:204). Ultimately, skateparks can be perceived as favourable spaces for attracting youth to safe and active lifestyles (Dumas & Laforest, 2009:31). *NB. The open coding 1.7 (1, 2, 8, 13 & 5), as well as 1.8 (2), seem to fit well into this theme.*

d)   Skateboarding is a leisure activity

Members of the public perceive skateboarding differently. In contrast to the negative stereotypes reported in the literature, such as skaters being 'viewed as rebels, social deviants or unruly vandals and dangers to themselves and the public" (Slee, 2011:1; Rankin, 1997:55), skateboarding appears to provide an important outlet or avenue for physical activity, play, leisure, and personal development for many individuals (Haines et al., 2011:1; Goldenberg & Shooter, 2009:1). One respondent confirmed this by citing that:

> "Simply because skateboarding like I just said now is not meant to be a thing
> where you compete with your fellow peers or friends. It is all about expressing
> yourself and having fun, but at the same time when you get there and then
> obviously you are forced to compete because sponsors want you on the podium
> as they want to make money. But, for me as an individual, I don't want to make
> money out of skating. I want to skate and have fun" (Q1.6: Respondent 13).

Another respondent also cited that:

> "I would like it to be recognised. Like I said before it is a sport, because now in
> America they see it as a huge thing. But, then here like in other countries they
> take it just like not it is in America. It is a sport, so I want to see it as a competitive
> sport so that everyone can compete" (Q1.6: Respondent 5).

This quote confirms the fact that skateboarding is still being perceived as a leisure activity in countries like South Africa.

Seemingly, skateboard parks represent one outlet among other programs and facilities offered by community recreation centers that can address a growing problem of youth inactivity (Goldenberg & Shooter, 2009:1). In addition, integrated urban skate spots are also seen to 'provide a legitimate, inclusive space for young people who share a common interest to gather, relax, recreate, socialize and express themselves in a safe and informal environment' while participating in an activity that is important to them (Slee, 2011:7; Wiggin & Bicknell, 2011:167; Shannon & Werner, 2008:52).

The promotion of lifestyle sports like skateboarding can also be perceived as a fruitful strategy for increasing the level of active leisure involvement amongst youth or supports health promotion endeavours (Dumas & Laforest, 2009:30; Goldenberg & Shooter, 2009:1). As a

result, one of the potential health benefits of skateparks is that they are viewed as health-resource environments intended to attract youth to fun and safe place to exercise (Dumas & Laforest, 2009:20). As health-enhancing environments, skateparks enable youth to benefit from social participation and to create relationships which otherwise might not have been possible through other sports or street skateboarding. In this respect, skateparks are generally conducive to social cohesion, social interaction and informal coaching/learning, while their limited number encourages the cohabitation of youth from various socio-cultural horizons (age, social class, and place of residence) (Dumas & Laforest, 2009:28).

e)   Skateboarding is a competitive sport

In the late 1970s, skateboarding became less of a sport based upon contests and competition, and more of an all-consuming lifestyle documented on film and showcased in various subculture media outlets (Snyder, 2011:17). For the past twenty years skateboarding has largely been an alternative recreational undertaking (Miller, 2004:2). Nevertheless, skateboarding is among the nation's fastest growing sports especially with the International Association of Skateboard Companies making it a much better-accommodated sport like soccer and tennis among youth ages (Miller, 2004:1). This assertion has been confirmed by one respondent who cited that:

> "It is a competitive sport because once you start skating you compete. So, skateboarding should be taken seriously, because it takes kids out of the street. People think that skateboarding is a sport for the 'white people' and it is also a sport associated with injuries. If skateboarding is taken seriously it will then nullify the perception that if you skate you make yourself look like 'a white person" (Q1.6: Respondent 6).

As a competitive sport, skateboarding appears to put more emphasis on social and skills-based values, while other sports like biking and soccer place more emphasis on ideological values (Walker, 2013:35). Unlike baseball, soccer or tennis, there are very few facilities to accommodate skateboarding, and this has been shown by the fact that the nation's cities and towns like Portland and Oregon, for example, are perceived to be unprepared for the waves of skaters flooding their streets, parking garages, and plazas (Miller, 2004:1). Nevertheless, skateboarding is increasingly becoming a competitive sport, because in the United States of America, for example, skateboarding is encouraged by some state and local governments as a way of promoting youth recreation and reducing traffic congestion (Wiggin & Bicknell, 2011:163).

f)   Personal characteristics of skateboarders

One of the issues that emerged from open coding of the data from responses relates to the factors responsible for making skateboarding a popular activity. Although, skateboarding is not organised like traditional youth sports (Beal & Weidman, 2003:338), it is apparent from the literature that skateboarding has been defined as not only an individual sport but also a social activity, because skateboarders support each other and look for acceptance from their peers whenever a trick is successfully executed (Dumas & Laforest, 2009:28; Karsten & Pel, 2000:335). One respondent re-affirmed this assertion by citing that:

> "It is more popular because people who do it like professionals motivate kids to do it and to go outside and try it" (Q1.7: Respondent 3).

Another respondent also cited that:

> "A skateboarding I think it is popular because it is one of those sports where you are not judged by your appearance or economic background. Like where-ever we go as skaters we are so welcoming and look warm and we all get together. There is nothing like you come from a poor township and I mean everywhere you go you find skaters regardless of where the location is… you find skateboarders welcoming and warmly" (Q1.7: Respondent 9).

The conclusion may be drawn from the respondents' responses that the personal characteristics of the skateboarders are perceived to be one of the contributing factors towards making skateboarding a much more popular activity. In this respect, the skateboarders define their sport, at least partially, by claiming that it is significantly different from mainstream sport, hence, skateboarders see themselves as nonconformists (Beal & Weidman, 2003:341).

g) Anti-criminal activities/behaviour
The sub-culture of skateboarding is not well documented within sociology, because it is an extraordinarily rich social and stylistic arena, which is constantly shifting and re-defining itself, drawing on new forces of influence and distinction (Hunter, 2003:45). However, from the 1970's the discourse in academia and popular media, such as newspapers, magazines, videos, and internet sites placed skateboarding as a rebellious spatial sub-culture resisting mainstream society (Penny, 2009:15; Howell, 2001:17). The skateboarding sub-culture is reported to be characterised by an unconventional set of values, style and world view that are not commonly seen from the norms of the dominant culture (Slee, 2011:20; Donnelly, 2008:198). In addition, the world of skateboarding forms simultaneously an alternative sub-culture, because members of this sport have their own distinct language, skill set, use their own slang, live by their own rules, wear particular types of clothing to represent who they are and make an effort to be noticed by others (Snyder, 2011:9; Karsten & Pel, 2000:335; Maeda, 1991:17). The prevalence of skateboarding sub-culture is already been confirmed by responses on skateboarding attributes and values, that is, theme 3, for example, one respondent cited that:

> "Skateboarding promotes a certain type of culture like skateboarders live in a certain kind of life that other no more people don't live. They do things differently from other people. We do things our own way. Skateboarding does not have a certain kind of attire, but we wear like skateboarders' brands that skateboarding promotes like we see in the movies" (Q1.5: Respondent 7).

Unfortunately, skateboarding sub-culture(s) are generally perceived to be oppositional to dominant sport culture (Donnelly, 2008:198). As an admittance to the skateboard sub-culture, skateboarders are therefore willing to forfeit public acceptance which may come with conforming to general norms and values, because being perceived as authentic by other skaters is so important (Beal & Weidman, 2003:351; Karsten & Pel, 2000:335). As a result, it is of vital interest how skateboarding has become visible as a cultural phenomenon in certain locations and how places are formed by skateboarding, because the investigation into where in the city skateboarding is practiced and how it is performed tells us something about the relation that skateboarding and skaters have to the city and to society in general (Bäckström, 2007:154).

However, Walker (2013:17) highlights that the conflation of skateboarding with issues such as homelessness or chronic drug use is misled assumptions. It is worth noting that the respondents also had the same views about this assertion. One respondent cited that:

> "Skateboarding prevent us from becoming involved in criminal activities. As I said earlier, the reason why I started skating was too shy away from criminal activities such as drugs. Skateboarding can save you from criminal activities

> because it takes a lot of one's attention and once skating you spend more time doing that. So, skateboarding sub-culture does not lead to criminal activities" (Q1.8: Respondent 6).

Another respondent cited that:

> "For me, it doesn't because it keeps me away from criminal activities. Like I don't necessarily hang around with people who do drugs or either illegal things because skateboarding like for me it is just something that helps me stay away from them. Those people will come and tell you about things, but for me, I am too focused in skateboarding I tell them to go away. So, it doesn't contribute to criminal activities like drugs" (Q1.8: Respondent 10).

The fact that skateboarding sub-culture does not promote criminal activities such as drug abuse is also supported by Steyn who highlights that the makeup of skater sub-culture is not generally drawn from disadvantaged populations or groups that utilise the drug trade, but of middle and upper-middle class youth, in groups which are "highly consistent across the socially constructed categories of age, class, race and gender" (Steyn, 2004:15). Slee (2011:10) also highlights that another important aspect of the skateboarding sub-culture is the style and image behind it. In the public eye, skateboarding is viewed as an extreme sport, of which Slee (2011:10); Snyder (2011:9) and Hunter (2003:22) insist that from looking at the clothing a skateboarder chooses to wear, the reality is that the style of skating technique indicates that there are significant divisions within the skating culture, such as the punk and hip-hop skaters, which in turn is a display of identity and authentic skateboarder.

Managerial implications

Although skateboarding is being perceived as a typical sub cultural activity which favor a niche marketing approach, the relevant industry should consider the following:

- Skateboarding within the context of this study is still in the introduction phase of its life cycle. This sporting code allows for creative thinking, transport as well as physical activity.
- The potential for more extreme visual showcasing of this activity allows for potential sport sponsorship advantages. Organised competitions would also contribute to this financial viability. Marketing positioning could contribute to further development of this sporting code.
- Skateboarding is seen by participants as to be a sport, hobby or even just a leisure activity. This tendency, however, widens a business opportunity and approach to further develop of skateboarding.
- Within the ambit of sport business development, skateboarding, although relatively young as a sport, allow opportunities to develop as a competitive sport, maybe even an Olympic sport.
- Industry can get involved in social responsibility programs, promoting and using skateboarding as a useable platform.

Conclusion

Societies in general, always use the phrase *"don't judge a book by its cover"*, question is, do the society apply this widely used belief system? The findings of this empirical, proof beyond questioning that society does in fact, *"judge the book by its cover".*

Skateboarding as a leisure, competitive or a lifestyle activity, without any doubt has only contributory aspects and influences for the participant or even the micro or sub societies on hand. The emerged themes and specific citations from respondents support and confirms this notion. Skateboarding could and should be considered by private industries (profit orientation and social responsibility programs) and relevant government structures (social development), as yet another element of a wider integrated social development plan.

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