 Appearing Extreme: Dampening Reflexivity, Postmodern Identity, and Electronic Colonialism in Action Sports Film

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ABSTRACT
Snowboarding, which originated in the United States, has grown to be the largest international action sport. The research uses a communication perspective to examine the presentation of identity in a snowboard film. Black Winter (2009) is deconstructed in this study because the film is a presentation of symbols and signs that reinforce an identity depicted as the real snowboarder identity. Four scenes from the artifact are deconstructed to expose a commodified postmodern identity that, when consumed, dampens the consumer's reflexive process. The relationship between snowboarding film, commodified postmodern identity, and McPhail's (2007) electronic colonialism theory are discussed.

With an enormous commodification of action sports occurring within the last 15 years, consumption of this industry’s products is becoming increasingly ubiquitous. As marketers and advertisers produce more material blending action sports such as surfing, skateboarding, snowboarding, and a list of others, scholars turn to examining the effects of such material. The present research investigates how a snowboard film can project a stable identity to its audience, and whether or not the identity that is presented to the audience is a counterculture-based identity. The film’s representations, in turn, create a reality that the individual may exist within, or provide an example for how to perform on a daily basis, what Goffman (1959) referred to as being “on stage.” The characteristics of these mass mediated action sports personalities are deconstructed by the researcher and presented as forging an identity for a proletariat-type athlete who can reach the bourgeois class by circumventing the traditional route while maintaining a counterculture-based social identity.

The independent nature of participation in what has become known as “action sports,” “extreme sports,” or, in some cases, “high risk/risky behavior” creates the opportunity for a capitalist economy to produce new goods and services for recreation that identify with a given psychology.
This psychological identification connects with previous work by Midol and Broyer (1995), and Bale (1994), who assert that the American desire for risky behavior is connected to the cultural value of rugged individualism. Further, the independent nature of participation introduces a type of sporting that is postmodern, as are the characteristics of the lifestyle depicted by the individual athlete. The “postmodern society” is understood by Kellner (2002, 52) as one that functions through images, simulation, and signs, and in which “identities are constructed by the appropriation of images, and codes and models determine how individuals perceive themselves and relate to other people.”

The desirability of this alternative form of sporting provides an opportunity for consumer culture to increase the activity’s popularity through consumption, based on identification and participation. As the popularity of this genre spreads and percolates into the mainstream, society must remain critical of when and where the potentially dangerous commodified image is presented. Because many of the action sports were conceived in the counterculture backlash to traditional sporting and a search for new modes of recreation in the late 1970s and 1980s (Midol and Broyer 1995; Potter and Heath 2004), commodification of such lifestyles continues to be laden with the projection of counterculture values to represent the participants. As postmodernity has blurred the area between celebrity and the everyday person, more people create their sense of identity through the consumption of some type of mediated identity (Slater 2007).

The potential for influencing other nations and cultures that do not carry the same values as the United States becomes a large concern as action sports athletes have reached the world stage, with their events being added to the Olympics and reaching national network television broadcast through competitions with large purse (sum of money) winnings. The greatest influence is from the United States, where culture is responsible for the development of this genre of sport (Howe 1998), because the depiction of counterculture value lifestyles on a world stage assists in making the depicted lifestyles/values desirable to an increasingly broader range of consumers. These depictions delude the initial ideology as the consumer base grows, and each new participant in consumption causes a decrease in awareness of the original values of counterculture ideology through which the activity was developed. Further still, the athletes make substantial endorsement salaries (Badenhausen 2009) and, as good marketing will have it, must attend to many contractual obligations for promotional purposes, which increases their connection and exposure to mainstream popular culture. Howe’s (1998) socio-historical context for the inception of snowboarding is acknowledged here to provide a context for the counterculture values of sporting pioneers,
thus producing an understanding of the detriment that counterculture depictions present once incorporated into the mainstream.

PROBLEM STATEMENT
In the social identity, presentation of self, consumption and consumer culture, leisure studies, and postmodern literature, no research exists about the action sports video medium and the effect of the respective lifestyle commodification on cultures consuming the media abroad. This research seeks to clarify nuances that exist within the presence of action sports in the mainstream, while critiquing the continuing depiction of action sports professionals as nonconformist counterculture icons within popular culture. The study aims to connect a commodified counterculture lifestyle with the effects produced from depictions of that lifestyle being disseminated on the world stage. The effect of these images as mass-consumed depictions, their influence on the values of receiving cultures, and their influence on the psychology of viewers are discussed.

RESEARCH QUESTION
This research aims to build understanding about the development of self through the consumption of video content and the creation of a postmodern identity that presents its audience with the notion that each is participating in a subculture in an individual, different, and somewhat subversive way—the presentation of a nonconformist identity that is consumable through the commodified action sports industry that is thriving and clearly permeating global popular culture (Rinehart and Sydnor 200). What has not been discussed is how people create a stable identity through the consumption of goods and services that reinforce their identity without the individual thinking about why she/he places importance on the consumed goods and services that she/he identify with. This study reviews film of a specific action sport (snowboarding, in this case) to express how postmodern characteristics exist in the identity depicted, presenting the audience with a new type of sport. This research seeks to examine how the commodified identity and lifestyle of professional action sports athletes influence consumers’ minds when consumed outside of the culture in which the material is produced. With this in mind, the researcher asked: How do snowboard films present their audience with a stable and consumable identity that, once consumed, reinforces the audience’s sense of participation and authenticity?
LITERATURE REVIEW

Due to the interdisciplinary lens that was used to focus on this topic, it was necessary to review a healthy variety of literature. The preliminary literature offers the foundation for this discourse, while the central literature provides those concepts and theories that are most vital to the assertions of this study.

Commodification

According to Marxist political theory, “capitalism” is the economic system that allows for a commodification, or what Marx refers to as “alienation,” of just about everything (Gilbert 2008). Recognizing a commodity as anything that has been deemed a useful product, “commodification” is understood to be the process by which something is recognized as a product and subsequently produced for public consumption.

In Against the Commodification of Everything, Gilbert (2008) asserted that if a pursuit of neo-liberal ideology were able to commodify everything, as it serves to, innumerable options would exist. The major pitfall of commodification, as Schwartz’s (2005) research expresses, is that having an excess of options can be a degenerating characteristic of a society because it may produce an increase in anxiety as opposed to an increase in happiness. In discussing the commodification of youth culture, Borchard (1999) writes, “the ironies become layered, distorted, almost as if we are lost in a fun house” (10), which is an analogy for the ability of commodities to disable consumer objectivity while the consumers enjoy that which is consumed without critical judgment. McCreanor et al. (2005) studied the commodification of youth experience as a means for encouraging their consumption of alcohol. While these researchers have all focused on different aspects of the process of commodification and its effects, they all express the connection of personality identification of a product to the consumer as a means for heightened consumer appeal.

While projections have been made about the identifying characteristics of society and psychology that influence action sport participation (Lyng 1990), discourse regarding the reality of action sports’ identity commodification and consumption have not been connected to consumption habits being a process of individuation, meanwhile, limiting the amount one thinks about why they project themselves the way they do, or dampening reflexivity (Allan 1998).

Consumption

Bocock (1993) elaborated on consumption through historical patterns, predominantly that of Great Britain following World War II. This historical context paints the conditions for which particular habits of consumption are formed. Through Hoffman’s (1959) account of how people present
themselves in daily life, the discussion of putting oneself on stage, constructing a front, and the managing one’s impression to others, a relationship connection may be drawn to consumption if one understands that goods must be consumed in the process of managing one’s self-presentation. This is the relationship between the consumption of certain products and how those products allow one to channel her/his self-image or the identity she/he would like to project to others around her/him on a daily basis. Mittal’s (2006) research elaborates on how products become the consumer’s extended self through the perceived ability of the product to reflect the consumer’s sense of identity, and the product’s ability to link brands to respective components of the individual. In a related study by Chatterjee (2007), the research asserts that consumer identities are profiled so that companies can package their products in a way that the consumer may find them more appealing because it represents the consumer’s identity.

**Identity and Subculture**

“Identity” is a term that has come out of Freudian psychology, but has been more significantly researched and discussed by Erik Erikson. Erikson (1975) describes identity as a “subjective sense as well as an observable quality of personal sameness and continuity, paired with some belief in the sameness and continuity of some shared world image” (20). Among the notable works included in social identity discourse, Tajfel (1983) defines “social identity theory” as “that part of an individual’s self-concept, which derives from their social group (or groups) together with the value and significance of that membership” (Tajfel 255). This means that when a person is a part of a social group, the group assists in that person’s determination of who she/he is based on her/his recognition of the value and significance of the position she/he holds within the group.

According to Blackman (2005), the term “lifestyle” has been constructed out of the sociological work of postmodern theorists who derive perspective from thinkers like Marx (1848), Weber (1946), and Maffesoli (1988). While Blackman (2005) introduces this term as an alternative to the term “subculture” for use in post-subcultural studies, Shildrick and MacDonald (2006) counter by arguing that post-subcultural theory “is in danger of producing a distorted and incomplete portrayal of contemporary youth culture” (128). With that, Stahl (1999) describes subcultural theory as the “heroic rhetoric of resistance, the valorization of the underdog and outsider, and the reemergence of a potentially political working-class consciousness.”

**High Risk Behavior: Extreme, Action, and Lifestyle Sports**

Research regarding voluntary risk-taking has produced varieties of studies ranging from same-sex partnerships and the transmission of AIDS/HIV
to gambling and drug use. As a result, many terms revolve around the discourse of voluntary risk-taking, such as “sensation seeking” (Zuckerman 1990) and “edgework” (Lyng 1990). Other studies have focused on building an understanding of commercial representation that persuades novice adventurists to participate through the sanitization of the threat of danger of participation (Kidder 2002; Palmer 2004). As a result, the discourse surrounding high-risk behavior overlaps with that which incorporates those sports most commonly labeled as “extreme,” “action,” or “lifestyle sports.”

Rinehart and Sydnor (2003) state that sports labeled “alternative,” “extreme,” “lifestyle,” “adventure,” “X,” and “gravity” are those that are burgeoning in post-contemporary transnational times (1). Wheaton (2004) calls attention to the rapid growth of recreational pursuits in the past decade and a half. Similar to skateboarding and snowboarding, these are recreational activities that have been labeled “extreme” or “lifestyle” and also stand for alternative sporting values (Wheaton 2004). While the description of these sports varies, the individual nature of them does not. The difference between these activities and those that are labeled “mainstream” is expressed through the concern for their meanings, values, statuses, identities, and forms (Rinehart 1998). Midol and Broyer (1995) describe the counterculture roots of the social movements that took place in the 1960s and 1970s as influential to the creation of these values and identities. Many of the alternative recreational activities have characteristics that differ from the traditional rules of sport and competition; most have no rules at all. Furthermore, Bale (1994) states that alternative sports subvert the western sports model, which is the conventional format in which western sporting events are carried out (e.g., quarters, halves, periods, timeouts, fouls, etc.).

Counterculture

“Counterculture” is a word that is quite ambiguous; it refers to the designation of a subverted set of values in comparison to the core culture of a population’s inhabitants (Heath and Potter 2004). Heath and Potter (2004) offer an elaborate description surrounding the success of the 1990s grunge band Nirvana and the suicide of its lead singer, Kurt Cobain, to express how it is that counterculture becomes part of the consumer culture. Heath and Potter (2004) also draw the historical context for this understanding by elaborately outlining the counterculture values of 1960s hippies and their subsequent repositioning to the suburbs, void of what was once the “counter” position. Heath and Potter’s (2004) work provides a reference for how the commodification of hippi
d k, punk, and, in the case of Nirvana, grunge culture serve to delineate the consumers from the original subversive ideology that was inherent to the movement’s origins. The subcultural
movements described and their subsequent commodification produced a good reference to what has happened in action sports.

**Postmodernism**

To elaborate on postmodernism without mention of modernism is a terrible mistake because it deprives the reader of the basic context for understanding postmodernism fully. “Modernism” is that formal mode of thinking that believes in order and sanitization of environment throughout all possible facets of society, and can simply be equated to the spread of industrialized society (Giddens 1991). Kaplan (1988) describes “postmodernism” as “useful in implying the links with modernism, while at the same time indicating a substantial move beyond/away from it” (1). Featherstone (1991) elaborates that postmodernism engulfs that which is a rejection or subversion of the modernist perspective. Featherstone (1991) also points out that postmodernism has reached across disciplines to provoke the minds of scholars in music, art, architecture, fiction, film, drama, photography, literary theory and criticism, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, and geography because postmodernism has cut against the grain of the traditional discourse within each discipline. Postmodernism’s relevancy to the current research is drawn from the media-centric landscape of today’s society and the ubiquity of image as an influential mechanism. As an analytical approach, postmodernism defies disciplinary boundaries and is an important element of criticism because it allows the analyst to refuse the assumption of a single and stable meaning.

**Electronic Colonialism Theory**

McPhail’s (2007) “electronic colonialism theory” (ECT) describes how, in current times, the flow of information through electronic media has the potential to influence the minds of those viewing the content. A main assertion about ECT made by McPhail (2007) is that the aim of ECT is “to capture the minds and to some extent the consumer habits of others...[and it] focuses on the global media influence on how people think and act” (23). It is this perspective that encouraged the research of Hackett (1989), who researched the influence and relevance of the mass media on society’s political life. Spennemann et al. (1996) stated that the nature of electronic colonialism, as opposed to traditional colonialism, which required ground presence of a colonizer, does not require the presence of the colonizer in the colonized area because it exercises imperialist tactics through the utilization of technological developments. His research focused on the Internet as a major facilitator of electronic colonialism, while briefly discussing the potential for the Internet to be “a democratizing communication breakthrough which greatly expands individual freedom and autonomy”
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(Spennemann et al. 1996, 1). ECT and the two subsequently referenced studies express the potential for harm through the flow of information electronically, while Hackett’s (1989) research exposes the presence of this happening on television and film and the research of Spennemann et al. (1996) does so in relation to the Internet.

METHODOLOGY

Paradoxically, the participation of one who identifies with action sports and participates through consumption habits restricts his/her recognition of the set of values manifested by the commodified group, which evolved in opposition to traditional society. In other words, every time someone new wants to participate in action sports, it is the act of consuming the goods needed to participate in that sport that blocks the participant from acknowledging the set of values held by the originators of that activity. This process is called “dampened reflexivity,” and the term denotes the ability of continuous depiction of signs and symbols to disengage the critical thought process regarding oneself (Allan 1998).

With snowboard cinema acting as a ritual practice of image reception, this media is expressed to dampen reflexivity. The researcher will examine what signs and symbols are presented to the audience through the depictions that reinforce the identity of a snowboarder. With this snowboarder identity being outlined as one that has clearly been commodified for consumption, the commodified identity tells the consumers who snowboarders are, how snowboarders act, and the way snowboarders dress. ECT is used to express the damaging effects of this media sent abroad, as the content has no rating system or organization to regulate the flow of these video productions. The convergence of independent snowboard cinema and network cable broadcasting signify a new trend that makes the critique of such material increasingly vital as the material reaches a world audience.

Artifact
The researcher selected the film Black Winter (2009), produced by Standard Films, as the artifact in focus for multiple reasons. First, Black Winter is a snowboarding film, and snowboarding has received solid attention from writers and researchers (Rinehart and Sydnor 200; Humphreys 200; Howe 1998) as the largest and fastest growing action sport in the United States. Second, the research question asks how it is that these niche market films influence their audience, making it important to choose a video that reached a large audience. With Black Winter being sponsored by Fuel TV, a unit of Fox Cable Networks, segments of the video were aired through the television station’s broadcast of The Standard Snowboard Show (a program produced
by Fuel TV to highlight Standard Films projects that featured sponsored snowboarders), so it was not only able to reach a larger audience, but it also represents the new trend of co-optation existing in the genre. By reaching a larger audience than most films in the action sports film genre, *Black Winter* is able to influence more viewers, thus making it a good selection for analysis. Third, *Black Winter* includes fairly balanced and neutral depictions of athletes in the sense that it does not cater to any specific sub-genre of the sport as other videos usually do. Finally, the 2010 Winter Olympic games provided a context for why this type of research is necessary, when Japanese snowboarder Kazuhiro Kokubo was criticized on the world stage for what was claimed to be inappropriate self-representation that reflected negatively on his country. In a global marketplace, it is important that the producing culture understands the influential elements that are detrimental to the receiving cultures.

**Postmodern Analysis and Deconstruction**

A postmodern approach is taken in analyzing *Black Winter* through deconstruction, a method developed and used heavily by philosopher Jacques Derrida (1976). “Deconstruction” is a tool that has broached heuristic discourse exposing new understanding about messages and symbols by examining how a sign or symbol constructs meaning, rather than what the meaning is. Deconstruction stems from the linguistic field of semiology developed by Ferdinand de Saussure (1959). De Saussure’s work presents a model of signs that assert a diametric element to every sign: the signifier and the signified (1959). The “signifier” can be described as that which provokes some sort of response, while the “signified” is the actual response that the signifier tries to produce, thus expressing their diametric relationship. The deconstruction of niche market snowboard films is conducted here to reveal how the video scenes present particular signs that refer to a presumed truth of certain values and beliefs about the world. Researchers (Koerner 1997; Kusz 2004) have argued that the characteristics of action sport athletes offer a new form of rejuvenated American masculinity, and that there are inherent American values portrayed in action sport athlete presentations. Rinehart (1995) argued that the mainstreaming of extreme sports includes an inevitable creation of dynamic relationships between fans, participants, and sponsors through the commodification of the activities, thus facilitating mass appeal. Using a postmodern approach to deconstruct *Black Winter* allows the researcher to expose and label particular signifiers within the film to evaluate what meaning is transmitted, or signified, to the audience through the visual message. As semiology suggests, the researcher exposes how this genre of film constructs meaning for the audience.
Black Winter is comprised of 16 total scenes, with the first and last of those scenes each displaying the film’s opening and closing credits, respectively. The 14 remaining scenes were each dedicated to individual riders who showcase their talent at resorts, in backcountry environments, and in urban spaces. The scenes have a running time varying between 32 seconds and over 5 minutes, so the scenes selected were based on classification of content rather than length of scene. Categories are classified by either expressing a particular type of riding that is specific to certain conditions and environments, or the actions and statements of the individual while not snowboarding. These labels are as follows: commentary/lifestyle, resort park, big mountain/backcountry, and urban. The “commentary/lifestyle” category is that which depicts riders talking and doing things in association with the snowboarder’s identity presentation, but these scenes do not show them actually riding a snowboard or doing tricks. The three remaining categories each cover the environments that snowboarding participants are utilizing when they engage in the activity. “Resort park” is the category used to group those clips that have been shot at a resort on artificial features; the “big mountain/backcountry” clips have been categorized based on their location being in mountainous open spaces where access requires a snowmobile or a helicopter; clips grouped in the “urban” category are those that depict riders in urban spaces sliding handrails, cement ledges and walls, and other non-natural features.

One scene representative of each of the four classified groups is selected, focusing the researcher on four of the total sixteen scenes. The scenes chosen for deconstruction are selected based on how representative the scene is of the classified group. The four scenes selected needed to encompass all categories of classification because there are some riders gravitating toward one type of snowboarding and others that test their skills on a variety of obstacles and environments. As such, scenes featuring Tornstein Hormgo (Scene TH), Xavier De Le Rue (Scene XD), Halldor Helgason (Scene HH), and Leanne Pelosi (Scene LP) have been chosen for deconstruction. Scene TH displays the widest variety of riding in the feature, exercising Hormgo’s prowess on resort park, backcountry, and urban features, each with running times just short of five minutes. Scene XD offers just over three minutes of strictly big mountain riding, which is described as high stakes, steep and rocky terrain through which the rider must negotiate the descent. Scene HH is predominately portrayed in urban spaces with a length of over three minutes; it also includes some resort park features as well. Finally, scene LP was the only scene of a woman rider. With a running time of 32 seconds, scene LP is the shortest scene in the video. All of these scenes were selected to represent the full spectrum of snowboarding images depicted in Black Winter.
Arguments Against Deconstruction
The rejection of deconstruction as a just mode of producing unrecognized meaning is clearly expressed by Ellis (1989), who claims deconstruction is only effective because it relies on the naïveté of the audience to produce new understanding of something that is not necessarily new itself. This assertion does not hold weight against the current research because it is not the audience’s naïveté that produces the new meaning, but the scholars work to outline the relationship between identity in postmodern times, action sports media, and ECT. Other critics (Bloom 1979) write in opposition to deconstruction with an argument that is focused on literary deconstruction, which is not the aim of this study. Royle (2000) justified studying film with a deconstructive lens with his assertion that the combination of deconstruction and film studies was inevitable (125).

PROCEDURE
The expressed categories are each representative of specific elements of the film that connect to different aspects of the viewer’s identity. The film’s scenes facilitate the acceptance of a particular referential and objectified truth, or a reference for understanding what the real experience is like while simultaneously objectifying the identity of a snowboarder. Following selection, each scene was deconstructed to expose signifiers in the frame, which were evaluated to expose the signified meaning expressed through the signifiers. The signified messages were examined to produce a clear connection to American cultural values, which is the producing culture of the artifact.

Rider appearance and equipment in each clip were deconstructed to express how the film’s cinematographers were able to reinforce nonconformist, individualistic characteristics that resonate the core values of the sport to the video audience. Some scholars (Humphreys 2003; Howe 1998) have recognized these nonconformist, individualistic characteristics as something inherent in the early days of the sport, as it was conceived within the skateboarding and surfing genres. However, these scholars have also recognized that the aforementioned values have subsided now that the industry is controlled by multinational corporations and organizations that have sanitized the sport. The anomaly exists, then, in the continuation of using the original core values for marketing purposes, giving rise to a genre that seemingly subverts the mainstream while coalescing with it.

The weatherproof clothing, predominantly worn in oversized fashion by snowboarders, became a defining characteristic that separates the core from the peripheral participator through the unconventional form of self-presentation. Karsten and Pel’s (2000) explorative study on skateboarding
reported that skateboarders wore baggy clothes as an expression of alternative masculinity. Also producing results regarding baggy clothing, Alvez (1994) reports that baggy clothes are a window to violence because they can easily be used as hiding places for weapons. Also viewing baggy clothes as offering hiding places, Dabney, Hollinger and Dugan (2004) report on baggy clothing’s ability to assist shoplifters. From an intercultural view, Lee’s (2001) research on Hmong American high school students reports a statement from an interview in which a parent claimed that baggy clothes are a signifier for trouble. All but one of these studies report negative findings toward baggy clothing; while the author is not pointing this information out to claim an alternative masculinity is a negative thing, rather, to assert that violence, theft, and a parent’s exclamation of trouble being signified by baggy clothing do reflect the negative connotation associated with the style.

RESULTS

Observation of the four selected scenes exposed the continuous depiction of signifiers that present the audience with the identity of a snowboarder through the depictions on screen. The film’s scenes become a reference for the identity of a snowboarder and offer objectified truths about who a snowboarder is, how one executes maneuvers, and, to a certain degree, how a snowboarder acts in and responds to society. Viewing such films becomes a ritual process that stabilizes the depicted identity as the real type of identity of the athlete while offering the brand signifiers for the consumable lifestyle products. The logos of different snowboard companies are clearly present in most shots of each scene, offering the audience symbols identifying a brand that produces goods of the commodified identity.

The branded logos become the signifiers for the companies that produce authentic products for the snowboarder market, as the brands and their products reflect this authentic image of what a snowboarder is, and influence consumption by participants. A process of reinforcing one’s identity occurs through the consumption of the products and brands that are presented in the scenes. As consumers are influenced to purchase products of the brands presented on screen, the products are packaged with the commodified snowboarder identity that is present in Black Winter. The act of consumption becomes a participatory practice because the product they consume reflects the identity that has been established in their minds by a film as the authentic snowboarder identity. With that product transmitting the commodified identity’s values to the consumer, that consumer feels more like a participant.
DISCUSSION

The fact that *Black Winter* depicts a postmodern identity of a snowboarder is important because of how the images influence the film’s audience. Whether the images are received within the producing culture or internationally, understanding the ramifications of constructing identity through consuming products, a process labeled “consumption individuation,” is a main concern of the researcher. More specifically, the researcher seeks to understand how rebellious, subversive, or counterculture values are transmitted through the consumption of goods packaged with a commodified identity.

Recognizing the convergence of cable networks and independent niche media producers that *Black Winter* represents, it is important to pay attention to the development of the broadcasting that caters to the segmented audience of action sports enthusiasts. Fuel TV’s internationality presents a new wave of action sports lifestyle material to an increasingly large global audience, making this research timely. As critical researchers, we must question and critique the role of media conglomerates taking hold of a subculture through commodification of that group’s identity and respective lifestyle in an effort to attract a larger audience for profit.

IMPLICATIONS

With a clear profile of the snowboarder identity existing and being promoted as a commodity in foreign markets, it is important to recognize the flow of this content as it has the potential to influence other countries. This fact, the researcher infers, exposes the need for a regulatory organization that is both aware of the values of the producing cultures, and those of the cultures that consume the media to enforce a rating system on the films.

The example of Kazuhiro Kokubo, the Olympian who was criticized for not conforming to traditional Olympic values, nor those of his home nation, Japan, is a reference for the effect of commodifying an identity. Kokubo, who was viewed as having chosen to adhere to values characteristics of the snowboarder identity by expressing a reluctance to align his appearance with the traditional mentality of the Olympics, expressed the affect of video content reinforcing the audience’s understanding of who snowboarders are and how they act. The subversive, counterculture values that were inherent to the core foundation of the sport continue to be exploited as that which defines the identity of a snowboarder, which is anomalous when one considers that the industry is run by multinational corporations that only use this image to bolster sales through market identification. The projection of this media abroad creates potential issues through content reception because the receiving audiences’ values are farther away from those of the culture in
which the material was produced. Current depictions of this media place the emphasis on English-speaking athletes who are predominately white males, as the content moves throughout the globe.

LIMITATIONS
The fact that this study was the researcher’s first attempt at work of this scale and the time constraint of the semester limited how much he could work on the research. Also, because of the interdisciplinary lens used in this research, the researcher was required to read a great breadth of information, presenting more time restriction to the synthesizing of data.

One characteristic of the media that may be viewed as a limitation is Fuel TV’s sponsorship of Black Winter. As a unit of FOX cable networks, Fuel TV was able to contribute more to the film’s budget than many other film sponsors. This fact may have also sanitized parts of the video because Fuel TV knew that the material would be broadcast abroad. The fact that the researcher did not communicate with anyone from Standard Films or Fuel TV may be viewed as a limiting factor because doing so could have produced information regarding the film’s budget and Fuel TV’s contribution to the project from one of the two organizations.

CONCLUSION
The researcher seeks to further this research by conducting a field survey or focus group, in which the aim is to gather data about the audience’s feelings toward the depictions that action sports media presents them. To ensure that the phenomenon described through this research is not something that is specific to snowboard cinema, it is important to extend our focus onto other action sports media producers, especially those that are converging with network television broadcasting.

Considering the ubiquity of the Internet and the access to niche media that it creates, the researcher finds it important to examine differences between frequency of use and credibility of Internet video compared to DVD viewing. This is invaluable to the current research because it may open more doors to understanding how this media content is being absorbed abroad, and, furthermore, the differences in how an audience perceives the two media as authentic and credible.
REFERENCES


