

# Australian snowsports: Gendered and contested spaces?

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## SUMMARY

*In seeking to understand the level of women's participation in snowsports, this article analyses Australian snowsports tourism images through a scale for measuring sexism in tourism images and explores the impact of the historically gendered, contested and fluid nature of the space in which the activities occur. The results of the analysis highlight the dominance of stereotypical images which convey men as active and competent participants, while women are often conveyed as inactive 'eye candy'. Further reflections and questions are raised about the application of the scale and the impact of the researchers' prior snowsports and life experiences upon what is 'seen' in the images and thus the lack of objectivity of the scale.*

### **Keywords:**

*tourism images; leisure participation; feminist studies*

## INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The initial impetus for this research was the observation that women's participation in snowsports in Australia was lower than might be expected, particularly given that Australian women have for the past decade achieved great success in a range of world class snowsport events. To begin to explore why this might be the case, we looked at how snowsports are promoted through the images in a range of tourism brochures.

The approach drew on previous work exploring tourism images. However, different interpretations of the data by the researchers forced us to confront a number of dilemmas in the research process. Using a feminist framework, this paper explores some of the dilemmas facing two researchers employing a quantitative approach, loosely based on previous research by Pritchard (2001), to explore the gendered construction of images

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in the advertising brochures from the Snowy Mountains region (SMR) where a large proportion of snowsports occur in Australia. In doing so, we seek to firstly contextualise Australian snowsports; secondly, to explore the gendered, contested and fluid nature of Australian snow-space; and thirdly, to utilise, critique and reflect upon a method previously used to explore sexism in brochure representations.

## Context

Australia has some of the world's best women freestyle skiers and snowboarders. Australian women have been very successful in international competition with Zali Steggall (slalom), Jacqui Cooper, Alisa Camplin and Lydia Lerodiconou (aerial skiing) and Torah Bright (halfpipe snowboarding) all achieving one or more podium finishes at Olympic or World Cup events. No Australian male has been as successful.

In contrast to the skill and success of Australian women snowsports competitors, women in Australian snowsport brochures are generally presented as passive, poorly skilled or 'eye candy' for the brochure viewer while men are presented as competent, skilled and extreme. This is consistent with Swain drawing on Kinnaird *et al.* (1994) who notes that 'the predominant tourism brochure representations of men [are] associated with action, power, and ownership, while women are associated with passivity, availability, and being owned' (1995: 249).

Prior to introducing an analysis of snowsports images as one step to understanding the levels of women's participation in Australian snowsports, this paper will reflect upon the development of snowsports in Australia, the level of women's participation in Australian snowsports and the historical context of Australian snowsports. While the scale used in this research may convey an image of a positivist research approach, our

reflection upon the process and our results will demonstrate the challenges faced by two researchers from very different experiences of snowsports, assessing what they see and understand from images in commonly available tourist images.

In the vein of maintaining and promoting a critical and reflexive research space, the primary researchers invited Annette Pritchard, the author of the original paper upon which this research is based, to reflect upon our reflections, concerns and further questions that have arisen as a result of this research.

## SNOWSPORTS IN AUSTRALIA

Australia, with its extensive coastline, plethora of beaches and numerous deserts, is not well known around the world as a snowsport country. Yet annually thousands of people participate in snowsports in Australia including downhill skiing, snowboarding, telemarking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing and tobogganing. Skiing in Australia was first reported in 1861 (Walkom 1991) when bored gold miners, led by their Scandinavian counterparts, attached fence palings to their feet with wire, twine or leather and skied on the snowy slopes surrounding Kiandra, New South Wales (NSW) (in what is now the northern part of Kosciuszko National Park). Walkom (1991) suggests that Australia achieved a world-first by establishing the first ski club in the world in Kiandra in the 1860s.

Accurate snowsports participation figures for Australia are difficult to obtain due to the diversity in collection methods and definitions as demonstrated by the following discussion. The Australian Ski Areas Association, whose members are the owners and operators of Australian ski fields, reported that in the winter season 2004 (June - October) there were over 2.3 million lifted skier days reported.

Table 1

**NEW SOUTH WALES AND VICTORIA SKIER DAY STATISTICS ('000) 1998-2004**

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
New South Wales	973	992	1155	987	1176	1243	1298 (56%)
Victoria	636	631	955	620	769	888	982 (43%)
Total	1609	1623	2110	1607	1945	2131	2293

Source: Australian Ski Areas Association (2005). *Ski Industry Facts: Australian Skier Day Statistics*.

New South Wales resorts accounted for 56 percent of the skier days with 43 percent in Victorian resorts and around 1 percent in Tasmanian resorts (Table 1). These skier day figures did not include activities such as cross country skiing, tobogganing and other snowplay.

From another perspective, the Australian Sports Commission drew upon Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures which suggested that approximately 46,000 Australians participate in ice and snow sports each year (ABS figures combine ice skating with snowsports). The typical participant profile being a single, 25-34 year old male who lives in the capital city regions of New South Wales or Victoria and are Australian born (Australian Sports Commission 2000).

### Women's participation is decreasing

According to an Australian Sports Commission report entitled *Participation in Exercise Recreation and Sport Annual Report 2003* (Australian Sports Commission 2004), women account for just over one-third of the participants in ice and snow sports in Australia. This contrasts with an earlier report which suggested that 46 percent of ice and snowsport participants were females (Australian Sports Commission 2000).

Table 2  
NUMBER OF PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN ICE/SNOW SPORTS BY SEX (AUSTRALIA), 2000 AND 2003

	2000 '000	2003 '000
Females	84.8 (44%)	74.9 (37%)
Males	106.2 (56%)	124.9 (63%)
Total	191.0	199.8

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2000); Australian Sports Commission (2004).

Table 2 presents comparative data for surveys conducted in 1999/2000 and 2002/2003 (Australia Bureau of Statistics 2000; Australian Sports Commission 2004) for participation in ice/snow sports (ice hockey, ice skating and snow skiing), which suggests the potential for an emerging trend of the decrease in women's participation.

In addition to the lack of accurate snowsports participation data there is limited Australian snowsports participation research exploring aspects such as moti-

vations, demographics and barriers (e.g. Dickson 2004). In order to begin to understand the motivations, barriers and facilitating factors for snowsports participation in Australia one would need to explore broader leisure research, particularly women's participation (e.g. Kiewa 2001; Little 2002; Raymore 2002) and snowsports research from the northern hemisphere.

This northern hemisphere research focused on people who have a very different experience from Australians of snow and snowsports both in terms of living in and recreating within it (e.g. Gibson 1998; Gilbert and Hudson 2000; Hudson 2000). In the absence of relevant Australian snowsport research, a starting point to begin to understand Australian snowsports participation is thorough an exploration of the *space* in which snowsports occur.

### Historically space is gendered, contested and fluid

Aitchison presents a challenge to those seeking to understand and explore leisure and tourism space when she suggests that

*"the new cultural geography" as it has been referred to since the early 1990s, demonstrates that space, place and landscape -including landscapes of leisure and tourism -are not fixed but are in a constant state of transition as a result of continuous, dialectical struggles of power and resistance among and between the diversity of landscape providers, users and mediators (1999: 29).*

Regional analysis, which draws from this new cultural geography, helps us begin to understand how complex hegemonic social processes (Laneyrie and Mylett 2005) interact with the past as well as a variety of contemporary factors in a 'place'.

Location is significant because of the differences between places accumulating over time (Mylett, Zanko, Boas, Gross and Laneyrie 2000; Massey 1994). These theories, combined with gender theories, allow us to begin to think about the dominant masculinist and exaggerated feminine assumptions (Connell 1995) that were embedded in sets of hybrid construction/s (Demetriou 2001) to support particular versions of the dominant masculinity within this location at any given point in time.

According to Demetriou masculinity is 'not a purely white or heterosexual configuration of practice but it is a hybrid bloc that unites practices from diverse masculinities in order to ensure the reproduction of patriarchy' (2001:337). We believe that such a hybrid bloc would influence perceptions (Pritchard and Morgan 2000; Pritchard 2001) of the images and might have an influence on levels of participation in tourism activities. Therefore, an understanding of the historical context was seen as an essential step towards a wider research agenda to explore the complexities of contested constructions located within a particular place and space.

The following brief historical framework of the SMR illustrates some of the strands in the complex web of relationships that are embedded in particular constructions of masculinity in the SMR and illustrate some of the different ways the meaning of this region has been contested and constructed through folklore, cattle grazing, hydro-electricity, recreation and conservation.

One key strand is the legend of *The Man from Snowy River*. The poem by AB [Banjo] Patterson is an important part of Australian folklore. For most Australians the legend evokes images of rugged individualism and skilled horsemen who surmount the steep and dangerous landscape in what can be described as 'extreme' horse-riding. One verse that conveys this sense follows:

*He hails from Snowy River, up by Kosciusko's side,  
Where the hills are twice as steep and twice as rough,  
Where a horse's hoofs strike firelight from the flint  
stones every stride,  
The man that holds his own is good enough.  
And the Snowy River riders on the mountains make  
their home,  
Where the river runs those giant hills between;  
I have seen full many horsemen since I first  
commenced to roam,  
But nowhere yet such horsemen have I seen  
(Patterson 1895/2005).*

The legend of the man from Snowy River emerges from the alpine regions, which were used by local cattlemen for summer grazing of their herds from the early to mid 1800s until 1972 when it was banned after long debate between alpine grazing lessees, the scientific community, land managers, recreators and conservationists about whether alpine grazing should con-

tinue. These debates highlighted the emotional aspects surrounding issues of identity, cultural heritage and natural heritage (Clark 1992). These competing power interests can be described as a 'hybrid bloc' of different types of masculinity, jostling for 'control' of and therefore construction of the 'meaning' of the land.

The concern in the twentieth century over the environmental impact of alpine grazing was somewhat ironic given the significant environmental impact of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme. Planning and design for the scheme began in 1949 with the project taking 25 years to complete covering approximately 5,000 square kilometres of land, mostly within the Kosciusko National Park.

In 1959 at the height of construction more than 7,000 people were involved and a high proportion of the workers were migrant males from southern European (Gare 1992). Stories that emerge from this period represent a second strand of identities that contribute to notions of masculinity in the region. These stories include engineers, single migrant workers and trade union activists who also struggled to 'tame and harness' the wild and unknown environment-exerting power and control over the environment and in particular, the Snowy River.

This has evolved, in more recent times, to the naming and claiming of many of these areas as 'wilderness'. In doing so land managers promote a sense of the 'other', the exotic, that is a counterpoint to the daily experience of the urban masses. Post-colonial historians remind us that images of wilderness, have been domesticated by the penetration of the 'white man's plough' or in this case the hydroelectric scheme's drills (Warren 2000). No studies have been identified that examined the way these historical images might influence how we see masculinity and femininity in the tourism of the Snowy Mountains region.

Recreational skiing in the SMR has existed since the early 1900s and is the basis of a third strand of masculinities. With the construction of commercial lodges, increasingly larger levels of commercial investment were attracted to the region. All four NSW snowsport resorts are within Kosciusko National Park and together the resorts play a major part in contributing to the economy of NSW. According to Mules, Faulks, Stoeckl and Cegielski (2002), tourism to the Snowy Mountains generated upwards of \$AUD150 million

dollars of gross state product in 2001 and created the equivalent of 2,300 full time jobs. The importance of the seasonal snow industry to the region is reflected in the estimate that two-thirds of the economic impact is generated during the four month period of the ski season from June to October (Mules *et al.* 2002).

The stories in this strand draw from interests that include consumerism, tourism, capital, part-time workers, residents and visitors. The interconnected nature of these strands is further demonstrated by recent developments by Snowy Hydro to conduct cloud seeding to increase the snow precipitation (Snowy Hydro 2005). Increased water levels in dams can be used for generating electricity to be on-sold. For the skier, it may mean more snow and a longer season. For the conservationist, there is the concern about the impact of the silver iodide on the environment. For the farmer, there is the question whether cloud seeding in KNP will take away from their rainfall on the Monaro plains.

We would argue that the masculine, capitalist and patriarchal interests, who produce the brochures, currently dominate discursive constructions of the SMR. However, we felt that the stereotypes we found in brochures from the region would exhibit masculine and feminine stereotypes from the range of relationships that contributed to the stories in this region including those outlined above. The current debates over recreation, conservation, commercial development and wilderness access are only beginning to address the impact of gender and the range of ethnic influences for a region's history (Humberstone and Kirby 2003). For example, few histories of the SMR acknowledge the history of Aboriginal ceremonies and traditions such as summer food gathering of bogong moths.

Together these interwoven strands create a fluid space that evolves and emerges in different ways as the weight and direction of the political and personal interests of individuals, societies and governments shift over time. What the space is today may differ from the space of the future. This is particularly so if predictions of the impact global warming upon snowfalls is expected to raise the snowline and thus reduce the physical area available for snowsports as well as reducing the length of season.

## BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

As we stated earlier, research into understanding motivations, barriers and facilitating factors for snowsports participation in Australia required exploring broader leisure research and research from the northern hemisphere where there is a very different history and experience of snow and snowsports. Typically, leisure research has focused upon barriers and constraints to participation. These approaches focused on why people do not participate in leisure activity (e.g. Samdahl and Jekubovich 1997).

Raymore (2002), using an ecological systems theory approach, explored the facilitating factors for participation in leisure rather than investigating constraints to participation. Raymore's broad categories of facilitators drew on Crawford, Jackson and Godbey's (1991) model of structural, interpersonal and intrapersonal barriers. Structural facilitators in society that promote leisure participation included belief systems, organisations and institutions. Interpersonal facilitators included friends, family and groups who act as support systems. Intrapersonal facilitators included personality and psychological characteristics.

Snowsports participation and perception research addresses questions of barriers to participation, including women's participation by examining financial, social or physical barriers (e.g. Gilbert and Hudson 2000; Williams and Fidgeon 2000; Williams and Lattey 1994). There is also a smaller stream of research that addresses the notion of the contested nature of, and the changing cultures of the slopes, due to the increased numbers of snowboarders (e.g. Makens 2001; Dortch 1996).

To increase the number of snowboarders, resorts have managed to increase the speed of learning through building on the cross-over of skills from skateboarding and surfing. This cross-over has introduced new challenges that may increase other barriers to participation such as the fear of injury or the image of skifields being for the young (predominantly male) and fashionable rather than a place for families, women or older participants (Williams and Fidgeon 2000).

There is no research that considers the impact of factors such as the hybrid-bloc of masculinities as discussed previously, nor the broader snowsports culture created and promoted by the likes of equipment manufacturers, magazine publishers and event organisers.

This research begins that process by exploring the images of snowsports in tourism brochures.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted here is an emergent design that reflects a reflexive process that has resulted in a shift from a quantitative analysis of tourism brochures content using an apparently objective scale, to a reflection upon factors that have influenced our analysis of the tourism brochures and the impact upon the resultant meanings and interpretations.

## Feminist theory

The researchers both believe that gendered relationships are embedded in complex hegemonic processes that can vary from region to region. Feminist researchers in a number of inter-related fields, such as tourism (e.g. Pritchard 2001; Aitchison 1999), employment relations (e.g. Pocock 1997; Hansen 2002), management (e.g. Hopfl and Kostera 2003), are currently debating with how might we do research differently so that we do not collude with normative positions by inadvertently reconstructing gendered processes and stereotypes (Morrigan and Laneyrie 2005).

Some of the issues that have emerged from these debates include how to be reflexive by putting oneself and the roles one plays in the picture; how to manage the messiness and ethics of feminist praxis; and a concern with power relationships that exist in research activities and in the writing up process.<sup>1</sup> Feminist theory,<sup>2</sup> informed us that in order to understand that images were influenced by 'regional' influences, we also needed to interrogate and tease out our own relationship to the data.

In hindsight our earliest feminist discussions about this theory were almost an ethereal 'way of thinking'. We started asking questions such as, if we highlight 'success' in the context of a sporting contest are we upholding the masculinity of the space that we are seeking to critique? Or, was the successful participation in the sport by women a way of recasting masculinity and femininity in this place?

While these questions are interesting, after analysis of the data the more immediate and fundamental question became -were our own pre-conceptions and values reflected in the data analysis? Was the fact that we had different experiences of being women, and had different relationships with snowsports important? We were forced to consider if and how we had inadvertently colluded with some of gendered processes and stereotypes we were claiming existed in many of the tourist brochures and wanted to debunk. As part of this process we began to reflect upon our own stories and our own experiences of snowsports as a means of understanding our own interpretations of the images.

## Researcher's stories

### Fran

I don't like being cold and I generally associate snowsports with getting 'cold' and 'wet'. These days I'm not into 'sports'. I'd rather enjoy my garden (I'm good at growing rocket, spinach, basil and roses) or stroll on a beach (as long as there is no wind whipping sand into my eyes). My memories of experiences in the SMR are very vague recollections of four short weekend excursions. Most of these memories built are around the experience of relationship with those people I went with, rather than any connection with the place or with a desire to participate in snowsports. My perceptions of snow are more influenced by romantic images on American TV shows and I doubt I could locate any differences between SMR and any other region in the world that gets snow.

As a child (about six or seven), we once visited the snow as a family unit. We went in a small caravan built by my father for his and mum's honeymoon. We all had fair-isle jumpers knitted by my mum for warmth (mine was grey and pink). Other than my jumper the only thing I remember is that we had a kerosene heater in the caravan. Enclosed space ... everyone got sick from the kero fumes in the caravan overnight. I don't remember the snow at all. I expect this first experience was better than I remember.

The second time I went I was 20. It was a honeymoon trip with my first husband. I expect at the time I thought that it would be romantic given at that time of the year (July) there was no prospect of lying around in the sun on the Gold Coast.

The marriage was not a successful one and I am rarely able to recall any really pleasant experiences associated with this stage of my life. I do remember underfloor heating in a hotel in Canberra because it was the first time I'd come across that. I might have had one ski lesson.

In my early 30s I took my third trip to the snow with my two daughters (who were about six and eight then) and a male friend who took his two sons. He and his boys were experienced skiers. When we arrived at the snow on a bus from the lodge in Jindabyne 'the boys' took off up the ski lift within seconds of arriving and we didn't see them again till it was time for the bus to go home. My youngest child was running a fever and projectile vomiting most of that first day so the girls and I were stuck on the bus nearly all day. Second day (you guessed it) he and the boys disappear again up on the ski lift, the girls and I get to play in the snow and do some tobogganing.

On my fourth trip I was over 50. It was a 'girls' weekend with colleagues from work. Terri and I took a ski lesson (taught by some very athletic young men). That was both fun and hard work while Tracey went off to give a ski lesson to someone. I spent a lot of the first lesson flat on my back and by the end of the lesson a blizzard had set in. I did enjoy the experience and think 'one day' I might like to try skiing again. After lunch I retired to do some work in front of a huge fire and stare out at the blizzard (which was very beautiful) with a glass of wine while Tracey and Terri braved the blizzard for more skiing. The most powerful memory was seeing Tracey's car covered in snow when we left to go back to her unit at Jindabyne.

My ability to distinguish between the various types of snow sports was very limited. The news that Australian women did so well in snowsports was a complete surprise to me. Not only had I never heard of any of these women, I did not know the difference between the snowsports they engaged in. Most snowsports looked amazingly dangerous. My experience of ducking young skateboarders while shopping and surfboard riders in the surf made snowboarding appear risky not only to themselves but to others.

### **Tracey**

My experience of the snow is very different from Fran's. I have been skiing for nearly 40 years and very much

enjoy, not just the activity of skiing, but also the whole 'feel' of the area. My first experience of skiing was when I was three years old and we lived in the SMR. For the seven years we lived in the area, downhill skiing was our winter weekend recreation for the family. After moving from the area I continued to ski, though not as often, but it would be at least a week each year as our family would travel and stay in a ski lodge we belonged to. During this time we took up cross country skiing which led to being able to explore beyond the boundaries of the resorts with much freedom and fun, as well as being able to stop and enjoy the views.

Since returning to the region in the last five years, a place I enjoy both summer and winter, I have taken up telemarking, presenting a challenge of learning a new skill and also sending me back to the beginner's slopes where I can empathise with the experience of those new to the sport. I have not only participated in skiing recreationally I have also worked as a cross country and telemark instructor, where I have had the pleasure and the pain (usually from a blizzard) of encouraging others as they learn a skill for life.

My experience of more 'extreme' elements of snowsports has been as an observer, but one who observes in admiration and desire, rather than something to fear. I can appreciate and enjoy someone successfully navigating a steep drop or ploughing through chest-high powder between trees, even if I can't do it myself - yet!

I have often shared my love of skiing with friends, whether it be cross country or downhill skiing. For some they can understand the simple pleasure of enjoying an activity in such a beautiful and, at times, dangerous environment, while others 'just don't get it'.

Skiing for me though is not just racing down a hill, it is stopping for a hot chocolate and enjoying the view, listening to the sounds in the clean crisp environment, marvelling at the strength of trees after the ferocity of a blizzard and basking in the warm sun under a brilliant blue sky in spring.

My experiences of skiing have been a mixture of families, friends and solo days. Many of my women skiing friends are highly skilled yet as I look at the images of skiing in brochures, television advertisements and other media, I wonder which is real, my experience of women skiing or that which is portrayed in the media.

I don't see my experience of skiing reflected in the brochures.

### Tourism images in our study

The six brochures chosen were the full range of brochures on display at the Snowy Region Visitors Centre in Jindabyne and represented a cross section of resort-only brochures with information on lifts and lessons (n=2) and broader brochures providing information on packages and information on lifts, lessons and accommodation (n=4). All but one brochure focused only on NSW resorts with the other covering all Australian mainland resorts. The brochures had a total of 176 images with people in them showing a total of 538 people/figures. Other images in the brochures that were not included tended to be internal and external shots of accommodation.

### Analysing the images

Together we numbered each image in the brochures and identified the number of figures in the images. Individually we categorised all images into male, female, children and unclear. The category 'unclear' was added because with snowsport images, beanies, goggles and unisex clothing styles could make gendered identification difficult. This contrasts with Pritchard's (2001) work which had an emphasis on summer resorts and thus often easier to determine gender and age. As best we could we wanted to avoid imposing our own paradigms into the interpretations.

In order to classify the four categories of images we used Pritchard's (2001) scale for measuring sexism in tourism representations (Figure 1).

Preliminary analysis of the tourism images using Pritchard's categories highlighted the complex nature of these images. The images often did not easily fit within an 'either/or' category, but rather a 'both/and', reflecting Aitchison's (1999) comment that the dualistic structure of western society tends to be constructed around dichotomies of public/private, nature/culture, urban/rural and masculine/feminine.

### RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

It became obvious to us early in the classification process that we were each having difficulties assigning ostensibly 'simplistic' categories to each of the images. In this section of the paper we explain some of these difficulties within the context of six themes that we saw emerging from the images.

### Emerging themes

The six themes, with notes of our observations are:

#### Instructors of children

Women are seen as the nurturers, with arms around the children while male instructors are seen standing back from the children.

Figure 1

#### A SCALE FOR MEASURING SEXISM IN TOURISM REPRESENTATIONS

	Women	Men
Level IV	Women and men as individuals	Women and men as individuals
Level III	Women in non-traditional role (sport, authority, etc)	Men in non-traditional role (child-care, submissive etc)
Level II	Women in traditional role (passive or beauty activities, child-care)	Men in traditional role (sport, authority etc.)
Level I	Women as a one dimensional sexual object or decoration	Men as a one dimensional sexual object or decoration

Source: Pritchard A. (2001).



This may reflect some legal and social pressures in Australia related to the protection of children under child protection legislation.

The potential impact of our experiences is reflected in our analysis of images depicting ski instructors with children. The images in our data set tended to depict female instructors teaching children in different ways to male instructors teaching children.

Women instructors were often depicted as touching in their caring for children, whereas male instructors were generally depicted as caring in a masculine way, that is hands off and either protectively standing over or watching children from a distance, or leading a group.

However, we had differences of interpretation about this. In one image where a child is learning to ski, Tracey categorised the instructor as male. Fran saw this same instructor as being female. What did this mean? Were there different ways we ascribed 'caring', that moved beyond traditional gender ascriptions? For Fran (upon reflection) her experiences on the snow and more broadly in teaching different skills to her children as a single parent involved guidance and 'letting go', often with heart in mouth, so that children could gain confidence they needed to move on independently. This may have influenced her choice of female in the image.

In contrast, Tracey's experiences of children in the outdoors has been as an instructor, trainer and program director in a predominantly male industry where females and males worked alongside one another teaching children. These differences between our choice of gender were compounded by the either/or classification of the four levels that would measure sexism. For Fran the next question was should the female instructor be categorised as being in a traditional role of caring for children (Level II), or in a category of being in a non-traditional role of being sporty and an authority figure given her role as a ski instructor (Level III)? For Tracey, the next question was should the male instructor be classified as non-traditional because he was in a caring role?

Rather than seeking to resolve these sorts of issues, we decided to let the differences stand and to later explore what had contributed to these differences. To try and establish an agreed interpretation may seem

to contradict how marketing images are used (we could not imagine that potential buyers would sit and discuss with other potential buyers what an image may mean and whether an image was conveying stereotypical roles). We also wanted to try to avoid collusion that might collapse our different views into something that might more stereotyped because of the pressures to agree and present a coherent argument in an academic paper.

The second theme focused on instructors again, but here they were involved with adult learners.

### Instructors of adults

No women are seen as instructors of adults, even when advertising a women's only program or beginners groups. Male instructors are the only ones shown in charge of adult groups. This theme highlights the question as to what is traditional and non-traditional for females and males as a whole and for females and males as individuals.

The cover page of one brochure advertising snowsports lessons had two images, one of a male instructor (identified as an instructor by the red uniform) enjoying skiing down the slopes the second image showed a woman arms around a child to help them up a lift. It is unclear at first glance whether the woman is an instructor or a mother, she does not wear the full instructor gear, but she does have on a red vest, we both assumed this was a traditional image. On the following page the first image was of a male instructor on a snowboard. Both researchers indicated that this figure was male and in a traditional role.

The second image on this page depicted this same instructor helping male students on snowboards. Would male students be classified in a non-traditional role as a learner (Level III) who is not in authority (Level III) or should they be categorised as being involved in a physically active sport, which is a traditional role (Level II)?

The third image on the page depicted the same instructor with three students, one male and two females learning to ski. In this image, the (white) male instructor appears to be chatting with a (non-white) male student while two (white) women look on. Fran classified all four figures as traditional (Level II) whereas Tracey classified the two female students and the male

instructor (authority) in traditional roles (Level II) but the male student in a non-traditional role (Level III). Our differences pointed to the relevance of asking, traditional for whom? Does what is traditional change depending upon your life experience, including experiences of generation and culture?

### Social groupings

In pictures of non-active groups men can be seen in dominant and powerful positions with arms draped over the women, as well as men being in the dominant numbers. Such images contained multiple layers. For example, an image of three people (one female and two male) standing still, but all wearing skis (thus the women is involved in an active physical sport) could still be construed as being gendered when the shorter female is placed between the two males in a 'protected' place and with one male placing his arm around the female and drawing his 'property' towards himself.

### On-snow relaxation

Images of on-snow relaxation tended to focus on women. One image included three women, sitting on the snow looking 'pretty' while there is action in the background. We both classified these figures as traditional, although Fran struggled with wondering whether or not this should be Level I given she couldn't imagine anyone sitting directly on the (cold and wet) snow to eat chips and toasted sandwiches. Tracey struggled with the same thought for an additional reason - she knew where they were sitting and knew it to be a very busy (and often unsafe) place to be sitting!

### Off-snow relaxation

Stereotypical roles continue in off-snow relaxation images with a group in a bar scene showing the women appearing to laugh at the man's joke, while the men continue to control the cooking of the BBQ.

### Extreme action

Of the nine images that might be deemed extreme, showing significant jumping moves and/or tricks, only one is clearly of a women. Most extreme images tend to be of snowboarders which has a dominant young male audience.

## Analysis of images

Rather than focusing upon the average of the two key researchers' analysis, the following information is presented to highlight the differences in how the two researchers viewed the images. In images containing adults we agreed on 259 of the figures as to whether they were female or male, with a further 51 agreed as being 'unclear' for a total of 310 (58%). There was disagreement over the gender of 45 adult figures and a further 64 were different with the researchers differing on whether a gender was indicated or 'unclear'.

Table 3 summaries the initial analysis which divided the images into women, men, children and unclear. The first obvious difference in our data sets are the number of figures we classified male/female or unclear. Fran classified more figures unclear but on reflection still made assumptions about figures that Tracey classified as unclear or a different gender. One of these images depicted an instructor (whose back was to the camera) involved in an individual lesson with a snowboarder. Fran classified both figures as male, Tracey classified one figure as female and the other unclear. On reflection Fran realised she made assumptions based on previous images in the brochure which depicted all instructors in clearly defined coloured uniforms, and women instructors had appeared only with children. Fran also classified some figures that were not clear as male or female based on the colour of clothing and by imposing expectations lengths of hair on some images.

Table 3  
TOTAL PEOPLE IN ALL IMAGES

	Tracey	Fran	Total*
Females	28%	25%	42%
Males	39%	35%	58%
Children	19%	18%	N/A
Unclear	14%	22%	N/A

\*Excludes children and unclear images

The second key difference was that distribution across the categories (Table 4). Tracey had more women and men as window dressing (Level I) than Fran, and had more non-traditional (Level III) women and men than Fran.

Fran classified a higher proportion of female figures as individuals (Level IV) and traditional (Level II). Fran also had more male figures in Level IV. Does this mean anything? Given our diverse experiences conveyed in our stories, this may not be unexpected. Further Fran reflected that given her lack of understanding about the sports, she might have classified levels of categories on 'action' pictures on how she perceived the risk of the activity. While Tracey, having worked in the outdoors as well as enjoying recreating in the outdoors probably has a very different perception of what people can and/or should be able to do in outdoor pursuits.

Table 4  
PROPORTION OF ADULTS AT EACH LEVEL

	Tracey	Fran
Level I: One dimensional	13%	2%
Level II: Traditional	65%	84%
Level III: Non-traditional	22%	6%
Level IV: Individuals	0%	8%

Level I images (Table 5) include women luxuriating in pools or saunas. As noted earlier, Tracey may have different expectations of what females could or should do and thus a different interpretation of what might be one-dimensional.

Table 5  
LEVEL I: ONE DIMENSIONAL

	Tracey	Fran
Females	10%	1%
Males	3%	1%
Total	13%	2%

Level II images (Table 6) have women doing the nurturing/mothering role of putting sunscreen on children's noses, while for men it means they are out being active and participating in snowsports activities. The meaning of a traditional role can also be problematic. Is a bar scene where females and males are sitting around drinking and talking an example of traditional roles?

Table 6  
LEVEL II: TRADITIONAL ROLES

	Tracey	Fran
Females	18%	35%
Males	48%	50%
Total	66%	85%

Level III (Table 7) are non-traditional images, where women are being more active, and men may now be in a more passive role or in a child-care role. In this level, Tracey classified more women in non-traditional roles than Fran. The differences in classification were based on different assumptions underlying our choices. For Tracey activity in snow sports was the basis for classification in this category. Fran looked first for the relationships between the figures in the images and the sets of pictures on the page. For example in one image where there were two female and one male figure skiing down a slope, Tracey classified the male as traditional and the women as non traditional. Fran classified all figures as traditional as the women were skiing next to each other and behind the male. For Fran the male figure looked like he was going faster (more competitive) and captured on a riskier angle. On reflection her inexperience with what can be done safely on skis may have influenced the interpretation. A second image was a back shot of a skier wearing a pink and white jacket going down a long slope into a valley. This image was on a page with two other long scenery shots, all figures were shot from behind. In the other images in this set one figure wore a bright orange jacket and the other a blue jacket. Tracey classified the figure as female and non-traditional, Fran classified the same image as unclear (rather than female) and decoration. Fran felt the figure was there to contextualise a snowy valley shot and had opted to categorise the images as a set. Tracey felt the pink jacket was a clue. Fran knows men who wear pink shirts, but realised that she too had categorised one female figure based on that fact that she didn't believe a man would wear cream with pale orange trim.

Table 7  
LEVEL III: NON-TRADITIONAL ROLES

	Tracey	Fran
Females	15%	4%
Males	8%	2%
Total	23%	6%

Level IV (Table 8) images show people being 'individuals'. But what is an 'individual' in a snowsport context? Is a women who is skiing strongly and competently an individual or is this a non-traditional role? How much does our own snowsports experience impact our expectations of what is an individual and what is non-traditional? In the overall context of the images, Level 4 images are a small proportion of all images with Tracey indicating that no images are at Level 4.

Questions that could be explored further firstly, include how these images relate to and communicate with the target market; and secondly, and what does it mean to be 'individuals' across the three applications of the scale we have discussed here. How do our individual, social, and national contexts influence what we consider traditional, non-traditional and individual?

Table 8

**LEVEL IV: SEEN AS INDIVIDUALS**

	<b>Tracey</b>	<b>Fran</b>
Females	0%	2%
Males	0%	6%
Total	0%	8%

Despite these differences in interpretation our analysis demonstrates that traditional images of masculinity (Level II) dominate the classification of male images. Both researchers rated more males in traditional roles (48 percent and 50 percent Tracey and Fran respectively). The masculine images that are represented do not represent all masculinities you will find in the SMR.

However those versions of masculinity (instructors, students and other visitors) are represented in a hybrid bloc that presents gendered image of males as more skilled than females at snowsports. This is achieved through a patchwork of images that evolved in the six themes where gendered images tend to present instructors of children as women; instructors of adults as men; social groupings that depict men in more powerful and dominant poses; more men involved in extreme action; stereotyped on-snow and off-snow relaxation images. The exaggerated femininities (Connell 1995) that compliment the represented masculinities see female instructors touching and holding child students; images of women students that have male students in more dominant poses; and female skiers in fewer action poses.

The analysis of women is not as straightforward. While we both ranked traditional images of femininity (Level II) more highly (18 percent and 35 percent Tracey and Fran respectively) than the other categories, Tracey ranked almost as many women in non-traditional roles (Level III) as she did in traditional roles. These results could be expected given our various experiences in the snow.

However, the reversal of roles that applies to Levels II and III is intriguing. Neither of us would see ourselves as either traditional or non-traditional women in the way that the women in these brochures are depicted. Our own understanding of ourselves does not fit the narrow definition of 'caring' or 'action' that is depicted in these brochures. Fran's experience of 'caring', as a single parent at the time she took her children to the snow did not correspond. Tracey's experience as a non-traditional female on the ski slopes and the successes of Australian women in snowsports cannot be made to fit with these images. In our attempts to understand the 'desirable' masculine and feminine images in the brochures, we have not managed to find a language to express a sense of loss in the project or move beyond reversing categories that cast women as 'other' and part of the re-construction of the 'ideal' masculinities and exaggerated femininities that are represented in the brochure.

## **OBSERVATIONS, REFLECTIONS AND FURTHER QUESTIONS**

### **Observations and reflections on the scale**

In brochures where people tend to be clothed from head-to-toe, including beanies, goggles and gloves, it is not always clear whether the image is of a female or a male as reflected in the 14 to 22 percent of images we have classified as unclear.

From a marketing perspective one might ask whether having androgenous figures adds to or subtracts from the marketing message or whether it makes no difference at all given what the target market might be. However, as noted by the researchers in discussing this, the brochures are more likely to be targeted to the new or inexperienced participants than the experienced one who might already have information sources outside of tourism brochures.

In reaching a decision our assessments seem to have been influenced by a range of factors including:

- Our previous outdoor experiences, including snowsports such as what we expect women or men to be able to do in snowsports
- What each of us expects or believes to be traditional or non-traditional for women and men which is, in part, a product of our individual life experiences
- A combination of these factors that influences our expectations of what is traditional or non-traditional for women and men to do in snowsports.

The process of using this scale has raised some further questions about its use. The results from the analysis can be somewhat misleading given that Level III and Level IV images of women are where they are being active and involved (6 to 15 percent of figures), while Level II and Level IV images of men are where they are most likely to be active (48 to 58 percent of figures).

Pritchard (2001) highlighted that in her study of the images of the UK tour operators' brochures there was a lack of children even though the brochures were at times targeting a family market. In contrast, children represented 19 percent of the figures in the snowsports brochures. In the context of the scale the presence and the activities of the children helped define the roles of the adults, but the scale does not address how one might assess the representation of children and whether a similar scale could be used to look at the roles taken by girls and boys.

### Further questions

While the initial thought behind this research was to look at the impact of the region on the representation, our analysis to date has only begun to scratch the surface of this question. Further investigation may be conducted into the impact of the diverse histories of indigenous presence, cattle grazing, hydroelectric, schemes, commercial operations and conservation agendas on the representation of the area as well as the roles and participation levels of women in the region.

Given the contrasting assessment of the images from just two researchers, it may be of interest to take a

smaller sample of images, including those that were rated differently by the researchers, to get feedback from a diverse range of people such as; skiers, boarders, beginners, experienced, non-participants, males, females, resort marketing personnel, target markets, young, old, diverse ethnic backgrounds, different physical abilities, and so on. This would help to begin to explore how people might 'read' and interpret the images differently.

In addition to exploring how these images might be read or interpreted, further research might explore how these images impact upon the readers' perception of the region and snowsports generally, as well as the impact upon the buying decisions of the target market. This latter research focus would build on previous research that suggests that women have a significant influence upon the vacation buying decisions of families and couples (e.g. Bieger and Laesser 2004; Litvin, Gang and Soo 2004).

While this research has focused on the representation of women in snowsports brochures, additional analysis could be influenced by predictions about the growing ageing population as well as Australia's multicultural society to investigate the representation of people across age groups, ethnic groups and physical ability groups. Contrast could also be made with brochures from other snowsport resorts in Australia and internationally as well as brochures focusing on similar target markets but with different product offers such as island resorts or adventure tourism products.

As a result of our research our final questions were: Have we reconstructed the stereotypes using public/private, nature/culture, urban/rural and masculine/feminine dualisms in a way that did not transcend either/or dichotomies (Aitchison 1999)?

Further, by focussing on ourselves as different women with different interests in snowsports did we understand more about how masculinity and femininity were constructed in the brochures? The brochures advertise snowsports for conspicuous consumption; our discussion did not explore the notion of instructors as a possible site of consumption for target audiences of the brochures. How can we use what we have learnt about our own reading of the images to further understand the gendering of snowsports in the SMR?

## Annette's reflections

I am delighted to have this opportunity to reflect on the methodological approach Tracey and Fran adopt in this paper. Their invitation allows me to expose some of the issues inherent in the application of any method and has created a rare but valuable space for reflection, given the demands of academic publishing conventions and practices. Reading and reflecting on my original paper after a gap of five years, underlined for me how any writing is always a reflection of one's current thinking and how much our ideas evolve in the course of our life and research journeys as we continually struggle to engage with ideas and debates and with our own shifting intellectual and political positions. Too few occasions allow for such reflection or transparency in the research process.

The 'consciousness scale' was first developed by Butler-Paisley and Paisley-Butler in 1974 in order to evaluate magazine advertising content. It allows the measurement and comparison of media representations and was developed very much within a positivist epistemological perspective. I first utilized the scale in my Masters thesis (Pritchard 1993), which examined representations of men and women in the men's lifestyle magazines of *Playboy* and *GQ*. In 2001 I combined the scale (adapted to allow for the weighting of images according to size, the merging of two categories of analysis and the use of an independent coder) with discourse analysis in an analysis of the gendered and sexed representations in tour operators' brochures.

Although I included a methodology section within the paper which discussed the problems and limitations of the scale, my re-reading of it now also underlines for me how the presentation of research in a journal can unintentionally sanitize and obscure the messiness of the research process. I wrestled with the very same issues of image classification and interpretation which Tracey and Fran discuss here. At the time, I felt that this issue could be partially addressed by the assistance of an 'independent' coder. Potentially, of course, this in itself may have simply revealed shared assumptions between myself and the coder, since we occupy similar social and cultural positions. The multi-layered nature of any image made (and makes) simple classification difficult and this is laid open here by the authors' decision to foreground their positionalities and embodiments.

At a stroke, their open discussion of their life experiences transforms 'the reflexivity of research from a problem to a resource' (Harding 1991: 164). By rendering visible that which for so long has remained invisible (and masked by a supposed aura of objectivity), they have strengthened the research process through the exposure of these 'cultural and biographical aspects of knowing' (Maynard 1998: 122). Such researcher acknowledgement of self forces us to confront the notion that the sense we make of others' texts, words, actions and arguments is an expression of our own consciousness and that here our own lived experiences are crucial.

Central to Fran and Tracey's paper is their discussion of hybrid-bloc masculinities and their potential impact on leisure spaces. These hybrid-bloc masculinities provide a discursive framework through which to interpret the consciousness scale's more quantitative data. This fusion of different textual analysis tools produces richer and more complex analyses than would be possible through content analysis applications alone (Slater 1998). Whilst this fusion approach is challenging and creates tensions of method and perspective, it also demonstrates how 'the really interesting problems are to be found when we combine ... seemingly contrary alternatives' (Rosengren 2000: 10).

Those of us who are firmly committed to a critique of the positivist and post-positivist project must embrace the notion that we are epistemological and methodological bricoleurs and agree with Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 7) that qualitative research 'as a set of interpretive activities, privileges no single methodological practice over another'. The collapse of foundational epistemologies has created spaces for many methodological innovations and the contribution of this paper here lies not only in its exploration of the gendered nature of space and representation, but also its exposition of the tensions inherent in the research process.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> These debates emerged at the Special Interest Group: Gender-Related Effects of International and Regional Integration at 13th World Congress, International Industrial Relations Association, Berlin, September 8–12, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> We acknowledge that there are multiple fluid feminisms but we are unable to label our approach other than generically 'feminist', given we both have different approaches to feminist thought influenced by our diverse life experiences.

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