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**Title:**

Skateboarding and the 'Tired Generation': Ageing in Youth Cultures and Lifestyle Sports

**Abstract:**

This article extends current discussions of ageing through a study of the continuing involvement in skateboarding of individuals who are no longer young adults. We qualitatively examine *The Tired Video* which features older and mostly middle-aged male skaters as our case study. This is done in light of discourses of ageing and a lack of studies examining how older participants remain involved in lifestyle sports typically associated with youth and risk. Our findings reveal four main processes, which we argue assist older skaters to establish an ongoing sense of inclusion in skateboarding. These are modification, dedication, humour and homage. Our study can also contribute insights to other scenes that have reached a 'coming of age' where they no longer accurately fit the description of being a youth culture alone, and the need to redirect thinking about ageing away from notions of imminent departure and deficit over to positive adaptations.

**Keywords:** ageing, youth cultures, skateboarding, sport, subcultures, subcultural capital, sociology, lifestyle sports, active ageing

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## Introduction

Sociological studies of ‘cultural ageing’ (Katz, 2005) and ageing in scenes that began as youth cultures (Bennett, 2006, Hodkinson, 2011, 2012) critically observe that ‘getting old’ is often narrowly viewed as a process of loss and departure from scenes and lifestyles taken up in youth. At the macro level, discourses of ageing also frame it as crisis, with terms such as ‘active ageing’ in the UK (Walker, 2009, Walker and Foster, 2013) and ‘successful ageing’ in the US (Rowe, J and Kahn, R, 1987, Foster and Walker, 2015) embraced by governments and institutions to focus on illness prevention and management strategies rather than new ways of thinking positively about ageing. However, such views overlook how ageing can also entail processes of creative adaptation, playfulness and humour, and shared meanings across generations that keep older individuals engaged with and recognised in scenes, lifestyles and identities they originally connected with in their youth. Furthermore, these adaptations can be physical as well as cultural, such as in action and lifestyle sports, and pushes us to consider the idea of ‘active’ and ‘successful’ ageing in a new light.

This article explores how ageing skaters navigate a sense of belonging in the world of skateboarding, which began and is still typically envisaged as a youth culture (Borden, 2001; Weller, 2007; Wood, Carter and May, 2014). The aim is to further understand what physical and cultural practices are involved with skateboarding and ‘being a skater’ as a core identity beyond youth. By ‘ageing’ the skateboarders we refer to are those who are no longer adolescents or young adults (O’Connor, 2017). The research reports on a qualitative examination and thematic analysis of male skaters featured in *The Tired Video* (Tired Skateboards, 2014), a promotional video made for the *Tired Skateboards* company whose key market is predominantly males aged 30 years old and above. *The Tired Video* made its debut on YouTube in December 2014 and has also generated two sequels (Tired Skateboards 2015a, 2015b).

Research on ageing in skateboarding is timely. As *The Bones Brigade* (Peralta, 2012) skate documentary illustrates, many of its pioneers have reached middle age (late 40s and above) yet continue to influence skating as a sport, a lifestyle scene and

commercially which challenges assumptions that skateboarding is exclusive to pre-teens, adolescents and young adults. The presence of ‘ordinary’ non-famous older skaters can also be observed, such as in blogs like *The Middle-Age Shred* (<http://www.middle-age-shred.com>), in various ‘Masters’ divisions in skate competitions for skaters over 40 and rise of various groups for middle-aged skaters on the Internet (Odanaka, 2014). Studies of skateboarding also highlight that there are not only older generations of skaters who took up the sport in their youth, but those who have taken it up more recently (O’Connor, 2017; Willing and Shearer, 2015). The skaters featured in *The Tired Video* who are the focus for this study are those who have been long term skaters and are now ageing and are all males. Females have also been part of skateboarding from its earliest days (Beal, 1995), but the ways they participate and contribute fall outside the scope of this study. Even so, we recognise that females and also gender diverse individuals (see Xem, 2017) are important populations for inclusion in future research on ageing and skateboarding.

In our discussion of *The Tired Video* we explore how male skaters grapple with how their ongoing participation in skateboarding is accompanied by feelings of tiredness, lowered physical agility, and transforming physical appearances that arise from ageing. The main themes we identify are ones of modification, dedication, humour and homage. As we shall demonstrate, certain images, styles and tropes of skateboarding, recognisable to those with insider cultural knowledge, are reproduced in the video. We argue that these four themes are critical to how skaters actively ‘own’ their limitations and continue to perform and embody their identities as skateboarders in ways that are also understood and accepted by younger skaters. We propose the older skaters in *The Tired Video* reframe ageing in a more positive and inclusive way by pointing to an increasingly relevant variant of embodied identity that is unambiguously adult and a fluid extension to a scene and lifestyle sport once only associated with youth.

### **Ageing in Youth Cultures and Scenes**

The theme and focus of this article are indicative of broader shifts in perceptions of ageing which have been gathering momentum for some time. Featherstone and Hepworth (1995) offer a pertinent observation that:

Whilst the biological processes of aging, old age and death cannot in the last resort be avoided, the meanings which we give to these processes and the evaluations we make of people as they grow physically older are social constructions which reflect the beliefs and values found in a specific culture at a particular period in history (Featherstone and Hepworth, 1995: 30 - 31).

Blaikie (1999) also notes how, since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, social interpretations of ageing, at least in developed countries, have started to become more fluid, accompanied by more ‘progressive’ representations of ageing in popular culture (also see Hodkinson, 2012). Bennett (2006, 2013 and 2018) in a further acknowledgement of the impact of popular culture on representations of ageing considers the ramifications of this for how we understand the term ‘youth culture’, as this has conventionally been conceptualised in relation to popular cultural forms including music and fashion. According to Bennett (2006), what were once considered youth cultural lifestyles and scenes, predominantly populated by people between the ages of 15 and 25, no longer holds true. Rather, today it is the case that many of the lifestyles and music scenes once firmly associated with youth – among them punk (Bennett, 2006) hardcore (Haenfler, 2006), independent (Green, 2016), hip hop (Fogarty, 2012) and dance (Bennett and Taylor, 2012; Gregory, 2012) - are now increasingly multi-generational.

However, investigations of ageing in action lifestyle sports and scenes, and especially skateboarding are rare. Studies of lifestyle sports such as surfing (Wheaton, 2016) and rock climbing (Robinson, 2008) confirm this gap, arguing that while ageing is a socially significant aspect of such scenes, it is mostly overlooked in research. The next section aims to explore and further contextualise historical and contemporary aspects of skateboarding, from its emergence as a youth culture to the rise of ageing skaters, while marking out pathways for our own research.

### **Longevity in Skateboarding**

“Skateboarding doesn’t make you a skateboarder. Not being able to stop skateboarding makes you a skateboarder” – Lance Mountain, aged 51, original Bones Brigade team rider and professional skater (Cutting the Stone Website, 2013)

Ageing in skateboarding poses interesting questions about how older participants not only maintain or modify the performative and high-risk aspects of it as an action sport, but also continue to embody and be recognised by others in terms of their identity. In skateboarding this often includes forms of linguistic, sartorial and cultural conventions that borrow from music scenes such as hip hop, dance, punk and metal, and there may be parallels to how ageing is embraced and embodied by such music fans discussed in the previous section (Bennett, 2006; Bennett and Taylor, 2012; Bennett 2013; Hodkinson 2011, 2012). However, studies specifically interested in how skateboarders can be *seen* practicing maintaining or transforming both the physical practices of their scene and their image as they shift from young adulthood over to adulthood are rare.

O’Conner’s (2017) ethnographic investigation of middle-aged skateboarders, who he defines as being aged 40 years and above, confirms older demographics can continue to value the identity of being skaters. He proposes that skateboarders draw on ‘temporal capital’, an idea that builds on Bourdieu’s (1984) theory of how types of capital produce forms of social distinction, a concept that in turn gave rise to Thornton’s (1995) notion of subcultural capital where displays of ‘insider’ knowledge in a scene establish status and belonging. Temporal capital in skateboarding refers to the accumulation of knowledge that older skaters acquire through time and display to keep defining themselves as skaters into middle age. Key examples provided by O’Connor (2017) are famous older celebrity and pro skaters who are seen as elder ‘statesmen’ by younger skaters and as figures of inspiration to ageing skaters to continue to skate. O’Conner (2017: 8) also explains, “Age is often represented as somewhat irrelevant, a number, and time spent only underlines the commitment to skateboarding”. Furthermore, his study reveals that skateboarding can provide middle-age participants with a sense of community and personal sense of mental wellbeing that does not decrease with age and may even be more valued with time.

In terms of the physical side of skateboarding and progressing their skills however, skateboarding can have a negative impact on older skaters. As a form of compensation, O’Conner (2017: 15) observed, “generous amounts of self-deprecation amongst my participants; they frequently ridiculed their skill level, ability and style”. Such self-mocking humour, we propose, can be positive rather than negative for males with an ability to challenge forms of more hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005) that refers to a type of socially constructed masculinity that values dominance via competition and notions of male superiority, including physical aspects. As we shall highlight, the skaters in *The Tired Video* are no longer in their ‘prime’ and particularly in a competitive sense.

One advantage for all older skaters is that they are currently situated at a stage in time when skateboarding is more accepted, established and:

Stimulated by the growing legitimacy and popularity of skateboarding as a sport (bolstered by the discourse of active ageing), the growth of public investment in municipal skateboarding facilities and the representations of middle-aged skateboarders reproduced in skateboard and social media (O’Conner, 2017: 16).

This resonates with Katz’s (2005) observation that previously conservative interpretations of active ageing are now being challenged by alternative discourses that regard active ageing as not merely associated with good health and independence. Positive effects of identification with, and commitment to, what is best described as the lifestyle over competitive success in skateboarding may mean that ‘hanging on’ can be seen as a virtue rather than a fault. Supporting O’Connor’s (2017) argument about ‘temporal capital’, some studies propose ageing can be accompanied by certain forms of ‘insider knowledge’ or ‘subcultural capital’ (Thornton, 1995) that allow skaters to feel pride and gain respect across their years of participation (Brayton, 2005, Snow, 1999).

Studies of ageing in other sports (such as Phoenix, Smith and Sparkes, 2010), and in particular, lifestyle sports (Salasuo, Piispa and Huhta, 2016, Wheaton, 2016) provide insight into some of the symbolic meanings and affective relations that people continue to foster into mid life. ‘Lifestyle sports’ (e.g. Wheaton, 2013) are contrasted



with mainstream sports due to their involving activity that is not only physical, but also embodies social and cultural components that broaden the way individuals can feel connected and construct identities. There is also a philosophical component to lifestyle sports, which includes resistance to playing by rules, competition and winning and commercialism as the main emphasis or objective of doing any sport (Rinehart 2000, Robinson, 2008).

Lifestyle sports also provide fresh avenues for thinking about what ‘active’ and ‘successful’ ageing means for individuals at the micro-level. This is because while people’s physical skills change with age, individuals construct lifestyle sports such as skateboarding as more than ‘just a sport’ and approach it as an enduring part of their identity. For instance, in a research project conducted in Finland (Salasuo, Piispa and Huhta 2016: 195–213), 96 elite athletes were interviewed across the sphere of 45 disciplines. This includes 11 interviewees representing different kinds of lifestyle sports including skateboarding. The difference in the values and attitudes of the lifestyle sports athletes to those in traditional sports was so remarkable, that many did not even consider themselves athletes at all, less so ‘elite’ – they were just ‘doing it’ (Salasuo, Piispa and Huhta 2016: 134). The study also revealed that because of its lifestyle aspects, there is no clear moment of retiring from such sports, unlike in many traditional sports (see also Price, Morrison & Arnold, 2010).

As this section indicated, existing studies (O’Connor, 2017; Snow, 1999; Willing and Shearer, 2015) based on interview and survey data illustrate that older skaters can still strongly self-identify with the skateboarding scene as they move towards or fall within being middle aged. But there is a gap of knowledge on how such continuing involvement is actually acted out physically by the ordinary, older skaters in terms of their tricks and image, and in relation to the physical environments where skateboarding is practiced. This includes how ageing skaters visually conceal or reveal age-related limitations affecting their physical abilities to perform skateboarding as a normative part of their lives. There is also a lack of studies of how skaters negotiate still ‘looking the part’ despite changes to their bodies as they age. Furthermore, beyond celebrity skaters and professional skaters, there is also a lack of knowledge about how ageing skaters are visually represented within the wider

skateboarding scene as a legitimate part of it. In the next section we shall introduce our case study and explain how skate videos play a vital part in shaping skateboarding as a lifestyle sport and scene.

## **Skateboarding Videos**

For our case study of ageing in skateboarding we chose to qualitatively explore the *The Tired Video*, (first posted on the *Thrasher Magazine* YouTube Channel, December 2014). We specifically chose *The Tired Video* as an object for our research as it is one of the first times a commercial video has been produced documenting the ongoing connection of ageing skaters to the skating scene. Of additional interest are parallels the video displays between the practices of ageing skaters and ageing members of other cultural scenes typically associated with youth, including music and other sporting cultures. At the time when our study last examined *The Tired Video* in February 2018 it had received over 299, 335 views and with links to it shared further via social media. The video is 11 minutes and 40 seconds in duration. *Tired Skateboards* targets adult and mature aged skaters and is owned by *Big Time Distribution* company, who also oversee the *Skate Mental* company that focuses on the more traditional youth market, with team riders who are all under 30. We therefore interpret the market for the *Tired Skateboards* company as being individuals no longer in their 20s, and that this age group is generally considered ‘old’ in skateboarding.

The video can be seen as an interpretation of ageing by a skate company as part of an effort to reach out to a ‘greying’ market in skating. But our interest is in how the video offers a window into the ways ordinary individuals express themselves as older skaters, as those featured in the video submitted clips voluntarily following an open call from the company. Moreover, the video has broader relevance to skaters particularly due to it being posted by *Thrasher Magazine* which is viewed as the ‘voice’ of skateboarding culture (Borden, 2001, Beal and Weldman, 2003, Vivoni, 2009) and its social media sites are seen an extension of its cultural authority.

The use of visual research is widespread and well suited for research into constructions of meaning and representations of reality (Knoblauch et al, 2008) and skate videos are argued to offer rich windows into the cultural world of skateboarding (Dinces, 2011). The medium of filming, including on video, has a special importance in lifestyle sports and especially skateboarding, where ‘skate videos’ produced by specialty magazines, equipment and clothing brands and participants themselves communicate the styles, locations, heroes, and values of the culture (Yochim 2010). Skate videos also use highly similar filming and editing techniques that skateboarders are familiar with (Yochim 2010) and which can be deployed unconventionally or conventionally for things such as humour and homage. According to Yochim (2010), skate videos also work to position skateboarding as a lifestyle or expression of personality as opposed to a competitive sport. Nevertheless, the world of skateboarding typically depicted in such videos feature males who are at once highly advanced and who exhibit ‘hyper’ masculine and youthful traits such as physical prowess and enthusiasm in risk taking.

Our research qualitatively and thematically analysed (Braun and Clarke, 2003) the content of 128 scenes that make up *The Tired Video*. The analysis was continually categorised and refined until four main themes were developed, which we discuss in the findings section. There are 35 skaters who feature in official ‘parts’ who are identified by their real names or nicknames in the video, and a handful of unidentified skaters who also have short clips. Our analysis noted common patterns in the presentation of the combined skate footage, including tricks featured, locations, skaters’ bodily characteristics, clothes and the tone of the content shaped by editing and music.

Attention was also paid to what markers of subcultural capital (Thornton, 1995) and temporal capital (O’Conner, 2017) in the skateboarding scene and traditional skate videos were adhered to and even ‘played up’ to highlight a variety of shortcomings in the ageing skaters seen. This process was assisted by one of the authors of this article being an ‘insider’ in the scene so far as being a dedicated skateboarder now in her late 40s. Sexist attitudes against women skaters can sometimes affect their research in

male dominated scenes like skateboarding in terms of access and rapport to participants (Beal and Weldman, 2003). While this was not an issue in this study given its text rather than fieldwork focused approach, the fact of being an ageing female skater did allow the author particular insights into the gender-coded aspects of the video and the male interactions it depicts. Other advantages of having an ‘insider’ on the team included their being able to identify important skating conventions and symbols displayed by skaters and the makers of *The Tired Video* and importantly, shifts in the skaters’ performance and looks brought about by ageing. Additionally, the online comments left by skateboarders on the YouTube site that the video was posted were downloaded and analysis was conducted for a future stage of this research. While those results fall outside the scope of this article the themes in the comments assisted with to confirm emerging insights such as the cross-generational respect the skaters in the video generated, as well as the lifestyle and subcultural capital they conveyed via trick, location and clothing choices.

Limitations included assumed knowledge and ‘halo effect’ (Nisbett and DeCamp, 1977) where a sense of ‘goodness’ might be imposed on the data due to ‘insider bias’. However, this was balanced with the process of cross-checking with the research team, relevant literature and benefits of pre-existing knowledge of skateboarding discussed above. Other limitations include that the research is unable to access the perspectives of the featured skaters themselves, as none are interviewed in the video. The responses of ordinary skaters who view the video have also been left unexplored in this article but are ripe for further study. This research of *The Tired Video* is, however, particularly useful for observing what kinds of physical modifications of tricks and of style and image that ageing skaters themselves choose to share, as all the ones featured sent in their ‘skate parts’ voluntarily. We can also observe the ways *Tired Skateboards*, as a commercial enterprise, represents and reaches out to an older market through the clips they chose (as not all videos submitted made it into the final cut), and skate video conventions they reproduced in the overall production.

### **Themes in The Tired Video**

“This is for the guy breathing heavily ...who will never have a career in

skateboarding but loves it like nothing else” (opening caption to *The Tired Video*).

Criticisms of paradigms of ‘active’ and ‘successful’ ageing include that the former requires a better understanding of those who age through how they make sense of it, and that the latter suggests there must be ‘winners and losers’ (Foster and Walker, 1987:85). In our study we reveal an almost reverse logic at play through a company trying to market to an ageing demographic, and those who voluntarily portray themselves being active by skating ‘unsuccessfully’ so far as they are past their peak. The driving message in *The Tired Video* is anti-elitist and relies on affective dimensions and non-hegemonic values in skateboarding – that is: if you are past your prime but still love to skateboard, you belong.

Four key themes of interest were identified in *The Tired Video* that generate a deeper understanding of how ageing is represented in the video, concurrently confirming the identity of those featured as being ‘skaters’ and as having an enduring presence and legitimate place within the skateboarding scene. These themes, which sometimes overlap, are modification, dedication, humour and homage. Firstly, *modification* refers to the tricks and attire to accommodate older skaters’ fading agility and changing bodies. This also includes how skaters modify the ways they engage with the spaces they skate, such as choosing obstacles of lower height. Secondly, *dedication* refers to skaters’ displays of persistence, enthusiasm and, sometimes successful maintenance of tricks in skateboarding. Thirdly, *humour* can be seen in skaters’ exhibitions of humility and self-mockery when failing to get tricks or doing them not as well as they once may have. Lastly, as we shall illustrate, the use of *homage* acts to position the skaters in the video as ‘insiders’ and ‘elders’ of a sort who skaters can laugh with, rather than outsiders to be laughed at. This includes from gentle parodies of, and fond nods to, classic skate tricks, locations and spots, and cultural and video conventions.

#### *The Tired and the Dedicated: Modifications in Ageing Skaters’ Skills and Styles*

In this section we discuss the ‘tired yet dedicated’ approach that skaters in *The Tired Video* appear to present and encapsulate. Urban and suburban landscapes are the main

'playgrounds' that contemporary skateboarding developed in and how it is depicted in skate-related magazines, videos and advertisements (Borden, 2001, Chiu, 2009). *The Tired Video* conforms to these conventions with most scenes featuring 'street skating' shot in 'symbolically cool' streetscapes, and only 15 of the 128 scenes filmed in the 'tamer' and less 'lit' (legitimate) environment of skateparks. While youth skate both terrains, older skaters like older music fans (Fonarow, 1997; Tsitsos, 2012) arguably tend to 'zone' themselves into tamer and more controlled environments, such as skateparks. Fonarow (1997), in describing parallel age-related practices in the American 'indie' music scene conceptualises this using the notion of zoning, whereby ageing individuals become less physically involved and move further back into the club based on age and associated levels of physical stamina. Tsitsos (2012) makes a similar observation in relation to slamdancing where he observes that ageing participants can become less engaged in the 'moshpit', choosing to occupy other spaces in the club or venue.

It is therefore significant that in *The Tired Video* ageing skaters are mostly seen 'street skating'. However, despite their dedication, the emerging 'tired generation' of skaters in the video are shown modifying their tricks on street obstacles to pose a lower risk. Examples of modification featured regularly in the video include tricks on gutter curbs, which are low set at ankle height. This is in contrast to doing tricks on much higher ledges as is typical of younger skaters in videos. For instance, at the 3.42 time mark in the video, the skater Dave Waite barely succeeds in doing a street trick on a small ledge. Continuing this theme, at 3.45, Cameron Ireland is just seen by his legs, riding his skateboard along a comically tiny ledge yet shot in a style that mimics how skate videos film and showcase much harder tricks. And at 3.47 a skater called Dan the Destroyer also struggles to do a trick that is small and clumsily done, but nevertheless a recognisably 'lit' that is, a legitimate and authentic street trick also on a low street curb.

There are also tricks at times that are clumsily done but repeated in slow motion in the video underlining the fact that ageing has taken its toll. These modified reproductions of street skating conventions on smaller obstacles by the older skaters still act as symbolic signs of subcultural capital flagging that they are legitimate skaters, despite their slowness and struggles. Such moments can also act as both moments of self-

recognition for the tired generation and, as our discussion of the theme of humour and homage further highlights, an occasion for empathic identification by all skaters.

Some tricks on higher ledges, rails and big ramps are shown to be done by older skaters in the video but are again modified to be less risky. Handrails and stair sets tricks are for instance not ten plus steps in height and are instead five steps and below. But while such modifications decrease the extremeness of tricks and risk, they do not totally eliminate it. At the 3.29 point of the video for example the skater Bill Senga does a 'kickflip' (a standard trick in skateboarding that nevertheless requires and demonstrates above intermediate skill) down a stair set, landing both feet on the board. He almost rolls away but his feet leave the board and he floats out of the cameras view, presumably falling. At 3.56 Filipe Maia does a 'hardflip' (an advanced trick in skateboarding requiring a high degree of flexibility and agility) to ledge trick on a metal edged ledge or 'grind box' as it is also known. However, he barely comes out of it, and, with arms flailing to keep him on his board, has to put one hand down on the ground and ends up being shown with his bottom in the air. And at 3.58 Frank Stringfellow is shown standing in a full pipe of some kind and attempts a trick but fails falling on one side of his body.

The struggles and failures in the video are not displayed to denigrate ageing skaters, but rather illustrate the physical sacrifices and at times, exhausting efforts they are still willing to make, driven by their ongoing dedication to skateboarding. The 'almost' successful rather than victorious attempts promote the idea skating is ultimately fun and joyful to them, but still involves skill and risk. While the issue of skaters balancing between persisting with and taming their tricks as they age is reported in other studies of ageing and skateboarding (O'Conner, 2017, DuPont, 2017), we argue that *The Tired Video* reframes this process as something endearing, fun and admirable rather than weighted down by negative perceptions and doubtfulness.

Skaters also make sartorial adjustments, with age-related body diversity seen in skaters' physical appearances and clothing choices. Such accommodations, we argue, may find more acceptance from skateboarding than more traditional sports due to it being seen as a lifestyle and scene that goes beyond elite athleticism and competition

alone. For instance, the body diversity emphasised in the video contrasts with the popularly portrayed body of a skater in magazines, videos and advertisements that are typically youthful, lean and muscular and often pictured shirtless. The skaters in *The Tired Video* are heavier, greying and with less or no hair on their head as a biological outcome of ageing, and none are shown skating shirtless. They are not at their physical 'peak' in comparison to their younger days as skaters, which is often seen as a point for departing more traditional sports (Salasuo, Piispa and Huhta, 2016).

This is a strategy we can observe that is frequently also used by ageing individuals in music scenes to manage their ageing bodies through a modification of their visual image. Bennett (2006) in a study of ageing punks observes how this often involves the shaving of hair (often to compensate for hair loss) but also wearing less spectacular clothing, with many ageing punks opting to wear items more low key than when younger. Many ageing punks in Bennett's (2006) study legitimised this toning down of their visual image by claiming that with age, they had absorbed the qualities of the scene and lifestyle to the extent that there was no need to visually display their punk credentials on the surface of the body in the more visually dramatic ways often associated with their younger peers.

Importantly, the mature aged men featured in the video *do still dress* like skaters, from those wearing snapback 'trucker' hats to styles of t-shirts, jeans and shoes typically seen worn by younger skaters. That is, the process is not so much a 'toning down' or abandonment of a 'look' for internalised identifications as observed in some lifestyle and music scenes (Bennett, 2006). Instead, the process is more along the lines of modification to the look to accommodate biological changes skaters experience with ageing. Modifications include clothes that are looser and darker in colour for larger skaters, perhaps to draw less attention to rounder and less lean body parts. This includes 'Dan the Destroyer', who is the largest of all the skaters. While certain other sports might no longer identify him as a fellow 'athlete' because he is technically obese and has low agility, he is clearly accepted and identifiable as a skater in the video due to his skate gear, albeit looser in sizing to accommodate and conceal rather than reveal his physique.



The way that all the skaters in the video dress emphasises that they are, and have long been ‘insiders’ of skating culture, not just ordinary guys or ‘posers’ who buy skate clothes without knowing and being dedicated to its cultural expressions and traditions. This, we argue, is an important reminder that the leverage offered by subcultural capital in various scenes needs to be contextualised. Unlike music, lifestyle sports appear to rely on, or allow for, an extended investment in visual and physical displays of identity rather than internalised ones alone. However, common insights we can draw across music and skateboarding scenes include that ties to the affective and cultural dimensions of scenes and lifestyles typically associated with youth cultures are also maintained, sometimes with a sense of being even more in touch than ever before. The ways this is displayed with the more physical demands of skateboarding, however, is not with arrogance but rather warmth, humour and homage as the next section illustrates.

#### *For Laughs and for Love: Humour and Homage in The Tired Video*

The appeal and driving theme of the *Tired Video* is its use of humour to frame the reality that skaters ‘get old’ but can still continue to be skaters. Importantly, as highlighted in the method section above, it is ageing skaters themselves who volunteered all the video clips that are featured, and this process has continued and been met with overwhelming enthusiasm in the two sequels after its debut. Moreover, comments posted by viewers of the video confirmed a sense of skaters being on board with the light-hearted approach in how older skaters portray themselves. Therefore, skaters in the video are inviting viewers to laugh with them, rather than at them, backed up by subcultural knowledge of the conventions of skating culture. Moreover, *The Tired Skateboards* and its YouTube host, *Thrasher Magazine*, do not seem to be making fun of ageing skaters but rather, celebrating them. The introductory caption posted by *Thrasher* to introduce *The Tired Video* exemplifies (and also steers) this message, stating, “Some of us had it, then lost it. Most of us never had it, but still love it. This video is for you... and you too. Welcome to the team.” (see *Tired Skateboards*, 2014).

Humour sets the tone right from the beginning for viewers in *The Tired Video*, with the opening scene featuring a man who has a slight ‘paunch’, receding hairline, brindle hair and beard and thick glasses doing ‘360’ pivots on the spot beside an urban basketball court. As he stumbles away from the trick he lets out a defiant “woohoo!” and the opening credits appear. These credits feature a cartoon image of a racing dog sprinting then collapsing and falling asleep, followed by the *Tired Skateboards* logo. The trick is outdated, almost childish and not technically impressive and the mascot is a dog past its prime – a signal to viewers that this video aims for a comical, humble tone.

One of the most obvious displays of ageing, tiredness and humour is shown at the 4.23 mark of the video featuring a skater called Jonny Nevada. He is old yet conveys a ‘cool’ skater style, with a long but greying beard and wearing a black baseball hat, black t-shirt and jeans. He is seen dripping in sweat, and doing street tricks on low curbs that are instantly recognisable as technically legitimate but not high risk. Then, at 4.29 the video cuts to him lying on the ground on the street, on his back. Seemingly gasping for breath, he says ‘I think I may have had a heart attack, I think I’m dying right now’. The scene is comical in tone, particularly as his tiredness is not from doing any highly physical tricks that should make him (or a younger skater) so exhausted.

The final scenes in the video featuring Scuba Steve confirm the importance of humour and the skaters’ willingness and ownership of the comical side of their tiredness and ageing. At 10.54 he is shown in a loose black t-shirt and ‘baggy’ shorts, rolling up to a big stair set where it looks like he is thinking of doing a standard, highly technical and risky trick down the ‘hubba’, which is slang for the flat diagonal ledges at each side of the staircase officially designed to act as wide flat handrails. Instead, he sits on his board on his bottom and slides down with one foot on the skateboard, then completes the ‘trick’ at the bottom. There is no soundtrack, just the sound of his skateboard scraping down the concrete stair rail. Then, at 11.01 in the video, Scuba Steve is seen standing at the bottom of the staircase, his rounded stomach visible through his loose t-shirt, getting a high five from a younger skater, who is lean, and shirtless. Obviously pleased for his older friend, this younger skater is heard saying,

“that was sick” in an enthusiastic and genuine way before rolling away into the distance with an obviously higher degree of agility on his skateboard than his older friend. However, they seem to be ‘on the same page’, and to have connected through an understanding of the iconic importance of the obstacle based on subcultural capital generated from skateboarding, and that the older skater dedicates himself to still skating ‘street’, establishing a clear mutual respect between a younger and more ‘tired’ generation.

A noticeable break from skate video conventions is detectable in what is absent in *The Tired Video*. For instance, there is no text or talk in the video explicitly talking down females using derogatory terms, explicit homophobic language nor use of cutaways and clips that sexualise females that promote a culture of homophobia and sexism, which is criticised as being an issue in skateboarding (Beal, 1996, Ihaza, 2014, Portwood, 2016). A skater at the 6.08 mark of the video is self-identified by the nickname of ‘Poof’, but there is no mocking of him. The video is otherwise absent of homophobic and hetero-sexist slang when they appear uncourageous that is common to the predominantly male skate scene. It is not possible to confirm from the video if such trends reflect maturity around such issues in these older skaters, but a toning down of hegemonic masculinities to alternative formations is observed in male dominated youth cultures and lifestyle scenes more generally, and particularly as participants age (Dahl and Sandberg, 2014, Fogarty, 2012, Mann, Tarrant and Leeson, 2015). These insights offer interesting directions for future research, such as whether older skaters more fully embrace the lifestyle and alternative ethos of skating in ways that are not derogatory against minorities and can positively influence skateboarding culture.

*The Tired Video* does pay homage to numerous other conventions that shape how skating is visually and stylistically performed and recorded in videos of famous and non-famous skaters alike. Moreover, it often plays up the narrative conventions and way cameras typically follow a ‘line’ of tricks that skaters do, the choice of street locations, and building of suspense in the lead up to skaters attempting big tricks. The grandiose lead ups in this video, however, often lead to clumsy fails, where we are prompted to laugh with the tired, mature age skaters who still have the attitude and dedication, but with a fading or passing ability. These older skaters’ tricks and lines

demonstrate to ‘insiders’, that is, other skaters, clear signs that they once ‘had it’. As a consequence, the viewer gets a sensation that the tired skaters can afford to laugh at themselves. This reflects studies such as O’Connor’s (2017) work on older skaters that also emphasises the role ‘self-depreciation’ plays in keeping their ongoing relationship to skating, one based on good feelings and joy rather than a sense of shame from failures, and inevitable retreat and defeat.

## **Conclusion**

The inaugural promotional video by *Tired Skateboards* pushes open the conceptions of who is participating in skateboarding by highlighting an overlooked but increasingly relevant variant of adult and visibly ageing male skaters. We have argued that, through use of modification, dedication, humour and homage, the skaters and the way that *Tired Skateboards* presents them carves out a positive and inclusive space for older male skaters. There is a need to draw critical attention towards unrecognised populations kept on the periphery of skateboarding, such as females who remain invisible in this video and, to date, its two sequels (*Tired Skateboards* 2015a, 2015b). Even so, our examination of *The Tired Video* does illustrate how older participants in scenes mostly associated with youth can create a democratic space to share with their younger counterparts, in ways more so than in mainstream ‘sports’. Key observations include its emphasis on older adults being ‘active’ at a non-elite level, and with more body diversity including ‘overweight’ bodies that fall outside more conservative notions of ‘successful’ ageing.

We propose that *The Tired Video* offers a much more relatable and accessible representation of skateboarding that is set in contrast to the high performance and hyper-masculine representations in typical skate videos, and particularly in most commercialised representations of skateboarding (Dinces, 2011; Lombard, 2010, 2016; Wheaton, 2013). *The Tired Video* has the potential to act as a ‘reminder’ or ‘reflection’ to skaters of what skateboarding actually entails and looks like for most who age, and also an occasion to consider the agency of skaters who are ‘not-so-good’ anymore physically yet create strategies to actively extend and maintain their identities and lifestyles ‘successfully’ as they age. The themes observed in *The Tired Video*, we argue, further cements skateboarding as a fluid and flexible identity and

lifestyle that can be embraced well into middle-age. The themes in the data also reveal that this lifestyle sport and scene has reached a ‘coming of age’ where it no longer accurately fits the description of being a youth culture alone. This research also presents a further opportunity to redirect thinking about ageing in ‘youth cultures’, away from notions of imminent departure and deficit to positive outcomes, such as lifestyle longevity, cultural legacy and various social, physical and emotional benefits. We recommend future research into how both older and younger skaters respond to *The Tired Video* and ageing skaters in general for further understanding of the positive impact older generations have on skateboarding.

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