

# Recruitment and reproduction: the careers and carriers of digital photography and floorball

Elizabeth Shove  
Department of Sociology  
Lancaster University  
County South  
Lancaster  
LA1 4YD

Mika Pantzar  
National Consumer Research Centre  
Helsinki  
Finland

and

Martin Hand  
Department of Sociology  
Queen's University  
Kingston  
Ontario  
Canada

# Recruitment and reproduction: the careers and carriers of digital photography and floorball

## Abstract

*For practices to persist and survive they need to attract and retain suitably committed followers or as we term them, 'carriers'. So how do new practices acquire recruits? In this article we suggest that there are different modes of recruitment, and that these have implications for who is drawn into an emerging practice and for the nature of their commitment to it. This is important because the careers of individual practitioners determine the fate and future of the practice itself. As more or different people become involved so the meaning and experience of involvement changes and so the practice evolves. This has consequences for future recruitment and retention. We examine developments in digital photography and floorball (a form of indoor hockey) as a means of illustrating and elaborating on the dynamic relation between recruitment and reproduction.*

## Key words

Practice theory, recruitment, reproduction, floorball, digital photography

## Introduction

If new practices are to become established and endure on any scale they need to attract and retain recruits. How do they do it? As this formulation of the problem already suggests, we take a somewhat unusual point of view. Rather than focusing on the social, psychological or situational characteristics of commitment (Becker 1960) or on what people get from participation, we concentrate on what practices demand of those who do them. In pursuing this question we explore the theoretical potential of conceptualising people as the carriers of practices the survival of which depends upon successive commitments of time, money, equipment and skill (Reckwitz 2000: 259). We suggest that it is through recruitment, a term derived from the French 'recroître' meaning to 'increase again' (Fowler and Fowler, 1990), that practices endure, transform and extend themselves.

In trying to show how recruitment and renewal actually take place, and how new entities are reproduced through performance, our aim is to concretely examine processes that are implied in Giddens' theory of structuration (1984) and in Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1984). Reckwitz argues that such accounts, collectively referred to as theories of practice, are alike in maintaining that 'social practices are routines' (2000: 255) which are stable beyond time and space and that 'the day to day activity of social actors draws upon and reproduces structural features of wider social systems' (Giddens 1984: 24). It is one thing to recognise the recursive and co-constitutive relation between performance (practice as doing) and entity (practice as durable, embodied, materially mediated, shared meaning) but what of the detail?

This is not uncharted territory. Ethnomethodologists, amongst others, have paid serious attention to the situated nature of social practice whether this be photocopier maintenance or sexual intercourse (Suchman 1987, Gagnon and Simon 1973). Equally, processes of learning and socialisation have come in for concerted scrutiny. Induction into the norms and codes of what counts as acceptable behaviour is, after all, an important part of societal reproduction. More than that, participation in specific activities and avoidance of others simultaneously reproduces systems of distinction and individual identities (Bourdieu 1984). While the business of being and becoming

and the social consequences of doing are familiar sociological themes, there is less explicit discussion of the other half of the equation: namely the emergence, development and disappearance of practices as entities. It is on this aspect that we concentrate.

In what follows, we take practice to mean ' a routinised type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ' things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge' (Reckwitz 2002: 249). Narrowing the field, we focus on cases in which participation is discretionary and from which defection is relatively easy on the grounds that these are particularly demanding from the point of view of an emerging practice. In this article we ask what binds people to things they do for fun and what these types of adherence mean for the continued existence of such activities, and for what they might become. We focus on digital photography and floorball not because we are especially interested in the sociology of leisure or of sport, but because we want to understand how voluntary practices take root and become stable across space and time. We select these two cases in particular in order to compare the relative significance of different elements - material, competence and image - for the dynamics of recruitment and reproduction. This is an exploratory exercise, not a survey of why people become involved but an effort to tease out differences in how these practices are performed and so sustained (and transformed) as recognisable entities.

Shoham (2000) concludes that people select forms of recreation which meet specific psychological needs, hence some engage in sport, in reading or in trips to the theatre, while others do not. By implication, leisure practices take hold because they deliver valued psychic rewards. Elias and Dunning (1970) in turn suggest that such valuation has a social and historical dimension, hence the special significance of excitement in unexciting societies. In explaining the relative popularity of different sports, writers like Cashmore (2000), Mahoney and Howard (2001) Westerbeek and Smith (2003) and Bourdieu (1993) point to the social significance of participation. We might therefore try to account for the rise of floorball or digital photography by figuring out how and why these activities appeal to different sectors of the population. What motivates participation and into what sorts of lifestyles do these activities fit?

While agreeing that the trajectories of practices are intimately connected with those of actual and potential carriers (i.e. practitioners), we take this to be a complex relation. Accordingly, we suggest that explanations framed in terms of social or psychological reward alone are insufficient. They are so for two main reasons. One is because they fail to recognise the essentially dynamic relation between practices and practitioners. Rather than holding ' the practice' constant and seeking to understand who does it and why, we are interested in how entities like floorball and photography are made and reproduced by those who do them. Second, sociological explanations routinely take practitioners, not practices, as the unit of analysis. We depart from this convention to the extent that we ask what it is that practices demand of those who do them, and how it is that practices enlist and recruit people willing and able to carry them on.

### *Three propositions*

We work with three central propositions. One is that the practices we consider exist as sets of norms, conventions, ways of doing, know-how and requisite material arrays (Schatzki 2001). As such they figure as something that actual and potential

participants can join or withdraw from. At the same time, they are constituted through performance (Lewis 2004). To borrow Reckwitz' s example, football would not exist if people did not play it. And if people played differently, or if they invented different rules, the game would change. Gomart and Hennion put it this way: a rock concert, sculpture exhibit or session doing digital photography does not bring together ' already existing objects, subjects and social groupings... - rather, this is a conjunctural event in which the relevant objects, subjects and social groupings are co-produced' (Gomart and Hennion 1999: 228). On one side of the coin, practitioners are captured by practices. On the other, practices are defined and constituted through participation.

A second related proposition is that the trajectories of practices and of practitioners interdepend. As Becker' s (1963) work on marijuana users and jazz musicians reminds us, there is a social and temporal dimension to ' doing' such that the relation between drug taker and drug taking is constantly changing. Continued participation and defection are always in tension but as Becker describes, jazz musicians and marijuana users experience moments of irreversibility as their practitioner-identities evolve. Our approach differs in that we are equally interested in how practices are given shape and form by the actions and in-actions of past, present and potential practitioners. Although we use the term ' career' and use it to describe developments in personal involvement and in the practice itself, we do not suggest that either follows a ready-made pathway. Indeed the collective and individual construction of such pathways is an important part of our story.

Our third proposition is that practices are constituted through the active integration of materials, competencies and images. Although all three elements are important for generation and renewal, commentators tend to focus more on the symbolic significance of participation than on how necessary competences are acquired or how people become impassioned about what they do (for exceptions see Sudnow 1978, Becker 1963; Gomart and Hennion 1999). Schatzki claims that ' understanding specific practices always involves apprehending material configurations' (2001: 3), yet there is a tendency to understate the part material artifacts play in the conduct of daily life (Latour 1992; 2000). We are therefore interested in the hardware through and with which actors ' put their passions into practice' (Gomart and Hennion 1999: 221). More specifically, we explore the possibility that materials, images and competencies are *variously* important in recruiting and retaining practitioners and hence in reproducing practice.

Putting these pieces together, we suggest that the always fluid trajectory of a practice is shaped by the doings of changing populations of newly recruited, persistently committed and ex- practitioners. To understand how practices develop we should therefore examine the careers of actual, potential and previous practitioners *and* think about how practices command attention. What are the mechanisms and circumstances of enlisting and defection and how do these influence trajectories of normalisation, de-stabilisation and diffusion? Rather than searching for external explanations as to why some discretionary activities take hold and others do not, we home in on the details of what participation involves. We do so with reference to digital photography and floorball.

### *Analysing digital photography and floorball*

Digital photography involves taking and sometimes also manipulating, storing, viewing and displaying digital images. Floorball is an indoor sport in which players try to hit a small ball into the opposing team' s goal. Digital photography is an essentially solitary activity organised around an assortment of high-tech devices including a

camera, computer, printer, storage system and so forth. By contrast, floorball involves a minimum of basic equipment, some friends and a place to play. While digital photography can be enjoyed almost anywhere and at a moment's notice, floorball can only happen when people agree to meet for an hour or so at a suitable location. What can these contrasting cases tell us about the dynamics of emergence and reproduction?

It is difficult to quantify the scale and rate at which these two activities are developing but there is evidence that both are attracting new recruits. Over a third of US households now own a digital camera (Rand 2003). According to a recent Mintel report, (Mintel 2002: 22), UK sales of digital cameras account for 41.4% of the camera market by value, and some 40 million digital cameras were sold worldwide in 2003 (Photo Trade News 2003). Since the foundation of the Finnish Floorball Federation (1985) membership has increased at an annual rate of 30-40% and the craze has now spread to another thirty-one countries, including the UK (International Floorball Federation 2004).

In trying to explain how floorball and digital photography capture effective carriers, and what this means for the development of both, we take a two pronged approach. We begin by tracking the development of the two practices, treating each as a coherent enterprise with a history of its own. Our second step is to consider recruitment and reproduction from the perspective of an enthusiastic practitioner *and* of one who has given up, both being important for what floorball and digital photography are and for what they might become. This exercise allows us to comment on the relation between performance and entity in these two contrasting cases.

Since we were ourselves suitable subjects for interrogation, we make direct use of our own personal histories and of a case-history provided by a team-mate and colleague. We treat ourselves as key informants for largely pragmatic reasons, not because we place special value on our own experience but because this method gives us unrivalled access to processes in which we are interested (Reed-Danahay 1997, Ellis and Bochner 2000, Atkinson 2004). Autoethnography is not the only way to study the evolution of practice from a practitioner's point of view but as Sudnow's (1978) account of becoming a jazz piano player demonstrates, this is a situation in which first-hand knowledge matters (see also Lai's work on 'Ozbandy' (1999)).

Mika Pantzar has played floorball regularly for twenty-seven years. We therefore draw on his experience and the experience of players he has observed, encouraged and followed during this period. Insight into doing digital photography is again based on first-hand intelligence, Elizabeth Shove being a keen practitioner, Mika Pantzar a reluctant one. The careers described below are not necessarily typical of all those involved in doing and thereby reproducing digital photography or of floorball. Nor do they represent a careful selection of extreme cases. We know little about the full range of experience of which floorball and digital photography are made. By reviewing four contrasting practice-histories we can nonetheless compare the trajectories of keen and defecting practitioners and show what these mean for the development of the practice as a whole. We start with digital photography.

## **Digital Photography**

While digital and ordinary photography are closely related, the digital version involves the active integration of new materials, new competences and new concepts of what photography is about.

Like their analogue cousins, digital cameras have a lens, aperture and shutter. The difference is that they use a charge-coupled device (CCD), developed by researchers at Bell Labs in the late 1960s (NASA 2004), to collect light and convert it into digital information which is then compressed and stored on a hard drive or memory card. Texas Instruments patented the first film-less electronic camera in 1972. Kodak developed a sensor that could record 1.4 million picture elements (mega-pixels) in 1986 and the first professional digital camera was produced in 1991. Digital cameras are now often included with personal computers and in mobile phones (Koskinen et. al. 2002), and it is important to notice that the camera is only part of the technological system of which digital photography is composed.

There is a sense in which digital technologies simplify amateur photography further than ever before: though one can get prints made from images stored on a CD, there is now no need for professional film processing. While certain features, like the idea of organising images in albums, carry over from ordinary photographic practice others, such as the ability to use software packages like *Photoshop*, do not. As with the analogue version, digital photography can be practiced at very different levels (Bourdieu 1990). Whatever the level, specialists and casual 'snappers' almost certainly require new skills given that competent digital performance depends upon combining and manipulating multiple artifacts including camera, computer, cables and software.

New ideas are also in order for the immediacy and malleability of digital images challenges values of authenticity, permanence and objectivity previously associated with picture taking. Rather than embodying qualities of permanence and stability digital photography seems to be about translation, disposability and mobility. Digital images can be printed out and preserved on glossy photographic style paper, but very few – less than 15% – are. Those which make it past the 'click and delete' stage are often multiplied and circulated through e-mail, saved in electronic folders, on the web or on a CD, or discarded as digital refuse. Recent market research shows that 'the most popular use of digital photos is sharing them via the internet' (Business Wire 2000). Perhaps because of this, new subjects and situations like seminars and dinner parties are becoming photo-worthy in ways they have never been before.

Digital cameras moved into a world in which conventions of amateur photography were already established (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981, King 1986, Spence and Holland 1991, Slater 1995; Gustin 1998). As we are about to discover, the elements of digital photography are being assembled in ways that change and challenge these traditions. Illustrating this process, our first case history describes the career of an enthusiastic recruit.

#### *Case 1: Digital photography - an enthusiast*

*I first held a digital camera in 1998. At that time I owned two 'ordinary' cameras: a good but heavy Minolta and a lightweight plastic model acquired when the Minolta once failed. I like taking pictures and I like the idea of being a photographer but I have probably taken more snaps with the little plastic camera than with any other. When I finally got a digital camera of my own I took care to pick a model with manual control. In the event, what matters to me more is the ability to manipulate images once they have been taken. With the digital camera and the computer and now a CD writer and a colour printer I can indulge all kinds of latent artistic and creative inclinations. There is much more to discover, and learning is itself exciting. The more I have used the digital camera the more fun it has become. I am often thinking*

*of projects through which to explore its potential and the potential of digital photography, broadly defined.*

*It is important for me to have a proper camera but I am not sure when the Minolta will next be used. This is but one of a range of problems the digital technology has engendered. In becoming a digital photographer, I have had to resolve new questions about authenticity and quality, and about storage, display and viewing. Despite acquiring a good printer, I find that prints no longer matter. Instead there is a buzz of anticipation each time I download a new set of images. Each time I am thrilled by their quality on the computer screen. I would say I have been captured partly by the technology, but perhaps more by the challenges of negotiating new practices with the technologies that I now own. These involve playing with colour and composition and they bear some resemblance to photography but they are not at all the same.*

We now compare this experience with that of someone who has resisted digital photography.

#### *Case 2: Digital photography – a defector*

*I bought my first digital camera in 1993. It was reduced in price and I saw it, from the start, as a toy. It was a new gadget but one that had hardly anything to do with photography or with making videos, both of which I enjoyed. This camera, a Canon, had to be connected into the television. There was no way of downloading the images to a computer and there were few controls to master. The results were poor quality, far below those I could achieve with my ordinary camera, and the Canon soon fell out of use.*

*In 2003 a second digital camera was acquired for my daughter – not for me. I put this purchase off as long as possible but in the end my daughter won the battle. As far as I am concerned, the digital camera does not count as a camera and I am unwilling to invest the time required to figure out how to use it. I postpone downloading images and have no interest in manipulating them on the computer. I already have a proper camera that works perfectly well. My career as a digital photographer is therefore empty: there is no story to tell.*

*But that is not the end. I have recently been forced to borrow my daughter's digital camera as a tool for work. At times it has been useful to take digital images that can be shared and incorporated in talks and presentations. I can therefore imagine a future in which I use my real camera for some purposes and the digital version for others. The better I get at taking digital pictures the more I appreciate the quality of old-fashioned slides and the unharried pleasures of composing, taking and viewing images in this form. I cannot ignore the fact that the meaning and significance of photography is changing within my family. My daughter is using pictures in quite new ways, putting them on the web rather than in an album, and taking many shots - as many as ten a day – as a matter of course. For her, photography is a form of social interaction. For me it is still about art and memory.*

What does this pair of stories reveal about the relation between digital photographers and the practice in which they are engaged? One obvious point is that both define and understand digital photography with reference to previous photographic experience. For both, doing digital photography is a matter of negotiating with the past and of figuring out which routines and concepts of quality are to be retained, modified or abandoned. For the first practitioner, digital photography is interesting

precisely because it is *not* equated with the analogue version. For the second, ordinary photography is the yardstick by which the digital experience is judged.

Understandings of what it means to 'do' digital photography appear important for the development (or otherwise) of personal commitment and, cumulatively, for the development of the practice as a whole. If the experience of the first practitioner is anything to go by, enthusiasts are busy creating new conventions and genres, thereby extending the range of what digital photography might become.

A second observation is that in all of this the technology is uniquely important. It is around the digital camera that changes, for instance, in skill or in concepts of what photography is about, revolve. Having said that, the technology does not determine what digital photography is today or how it might develop in the future. As keen practitioners generate new ways of piecing the constitutive elements (i.e. materials, competences, sense of purpose) together, and as defectors resist and refuse to engage so the conditions, circumstances and shared understandings of doing digital *and* ordinary photography evolve. This is likely to have further consequences for future patterns of recruitment and defection and hence for the development, or otherwise, of digital photography as an increasingly stable form.

For our next example we take a practice that is also developing fast but through somewhat different processes of recruitment and reproduction. Again we start with a generic history and again we review the experiences of an enthusiastic and then a reluctant practitioner.

## **Floorball**

People have been playing games with balls and sticks for a very long time yet the specific variant known as floorball has a relatively short history even in Finland, the country on which we focus. Some trace its origins to the USA where street hockey was played in the 1950s but most agree that floorball, as it is played today, derives from a version developed in Sweden in the early 1970's. The story is that Carl-Åke Ahlqvist, a student at Gothenburg University, brought some plastic sticks in a toyshop in Holland. On returning home, he played with his fellow students and they discovered it was fun. Carl-Åke Ahlqvist began importing sticks through his father's hardware store and a few years later founded a company to manufacture them. Ahlqvist's kits, including twelve sticks and a ball, were in turn exported to Finland. Over the last thirty years there have been developments in the design and styling of the sticks, in the range of associated accessories and in the halls in which floorball is played. However, the real transformation has been in the game itself.

People often turn to floorball from some other game. In the beginning, Ahlqvist took his sticks along to handball training sessions. Bit by bit, the handball team spent more and more time playing floorball, finally abandoning handball altogether (Liljeros 1996). Somehow floorball proved a more tempting alternative. Brought to Finland by students visiting Sweden in 1974, 'sähly' (early floorball) was not an institutionalised sport. Literally translated, sähly means mess and for the first decade there were hardly any rules.

The founding of the national association (1985) marks the end, or rather a new beginning for the 'messy' version of Finnish floorball. From this point on, Finns began to play on a larger court and with bigger goals in response to pressure from other countries. The size of the goal and the court was finally standardized when Sweden, Finland and Switzerland together founded the International Floorball



Association (1986). This narrative of progressive institutionalisation is not at all unusual (Guttmann 1978). With floorball, codifying rules and standardizing equipment set the scene for further developments in record keeping and rationalisation. One result is that even junior level matches now require four officials: two referees, one to watch the clock and another to record the game.

Floorball is easy to pick up and novices and casual players can have a good time. However, more devoted practitioners acquire experience and an array of techniques that make them better players. The personal and collective accumulation of competence is important for the development of the game. The formalisation of Finnish floorball has, for example, depended upon and generated a hierarchy of competitions, leagues and championships through which serious players and teams progress. But not all floorballers are serious. In Finland, many have continued with older versions of *sähly*, taking no notice at all of new-fangled regulations. For these people the game is as much a social as a sporting event being defined not by the rules but by the cohorts of friends with whom they play.

With floorball, as with digital photography, we can see how requisite materials, skills and images come together and evolve over time. We can also see that two versions of floorball have taken hold, one more organised than the other. In this case, more obviously than with digital photography, the future of each form depends upon who continues playing and who defects and on the types of competence that develop amongst the population of players as a whole.

The following case histories illustrate something of what the reproduction of floorball involves from the point of view of two variously committed practitioners.

### *Case 3: Floorball - the enthusiast*

*It all began in 1976. At that time I played football in the gym once a week. One week our coach brought in six yellow and six red plastic hockey sticks and a plastic ball. We immediately began to play. I have played floorball every Friday (8am-9am) since. Nowadays I also play with friends from my childhood (Sundays, 10.00-11.00 am), with fellow researchers (Mondays, 5pm-6pm), with work mates (Wednesdays, 11am-12am) and with friends who work in the media (Thursdays, 7am-8am).*

*In the beginning the only rule we had was that the sticks could not be raised above the knee (high stick). Very soon we started to play in tournaments. After a while, new rules emerged to prevent people playing too violently. I won several trophies and in 1983 took part in the first Finnish Championship. This was a kind of joke tournament for students from all over Finland. We even drank beer while we played!*

*For me, an important turning point came when I bought a stick of my own and began to play with different people and in various places. It was about this time that my old school friends switched from playing football to rink bandy and very soon to floorball. We began with a collection of sticks that I bought for all to share but soon everyone wanted a stick of their own. Luckily for us national rules and teams emerged at around this time as did standardised equipment and places to play.*

*I have played floorball seriously and successfully for many years and my bones and muscles have suffered. I am aware of my physical limits can no longer play as aggressively as I need to when winning is critical, as it is on Friday and Monday mornings. On Sundays I still like to score goals but on Wednesdays, when playing with work mates, it matters less. When I started *sähly* I was playing with other students. Today I play with my son and with my friends and colleagues. All versions*

*of playing are socially rewarding, more and more so, yet the details are different. Sundays are family oriented. On Mondays and Fridays I talk about work. To begin with these social aspects were irrelevant: if there was any talk at all it was during the game, or when we celebrated winning another trophy.*

*Looking back, I see that I have recruited others to the game. When my son was about two he would stop to watch the floorball in the sports hall. I bought him a stick soon after and we used the living room as our arena despite my wife' s advice. Now he can hit a ball so hard it travels at 140km/hour, the fastest in his team. I have bought sticks for other people too: for my childhood friends and again for my workmates,<sup>1</sup> in both cases setting in train patterns of play that continue today.*

As with photography, devoted practitioners actively shape the games they play. At the same time, the keen practitioner has been captured by a game that makes demands of its own. Having fully become a player it is difficult for him to give up. Because floorball involves other people the precise nature of these demands and the game' s ability to retain his enthusiasm relate to the ambitions and commitments of those with whom he plays. Vigorous forms of floorball (like the Friday game) demand players who are in good physical condition and our enthusiast will have to take care if he is not to be rejected by the game he serves and on which at least some of his identity depends.

None of these considerations apply to the defector.

#### *Case 4: Floorball – the defector*

*I was introduced to floorball at primary school. I already played ice hockey and it was easy to pick up this new game. I was skillful enough and it was fun, especially because we played with girls our own age. But when I finished primary school my embryonic career came to a sudden end: there was no longer anywhere to play or anyone to play with. In any case, the game was changing in a direction I did not like. I would have been happy to continue playing the ' messy' version I enjoyed but wanted nothing to do with pretentious rules and organised teams. I left floorball behind and went on to rink bandy, which is like floorball but played on ice.*

*In the last few years I have become interested in playing floorball again. Regular exercise would be good for my health and I have been invited join a group that plays in the sports hall at work. I am busy and I have family commitments but I could make time to play on Friday mornings. I went along. It was terrible. I used an abandoned stick that did not work at all well. Though this was annoying, there were some advantages: at least I could blame the stick for my performance. The others had been playing together for several years and I was not up to their standard. Playing was physically hard work but I know from experience that it takes a while to adapt to this kind of sport. I am optimistic about the future. I am not entirely sure but I think this might be the game for me. I will play a few more times and see how I feel.*

Comparison between these two histories illustrates three particularly important features of the specific dynamics at play. These first-hand accounts show how different versions of floorball are constituted on the ground. The equipment, the process and the conventions are roughly the same, yet these basic elements are linked together in very different ways.

Floorball' s institutional career has been shaped by pioneering players through whom the practice has been developed and reproduced: as a result of their efforts there are now others for whom the game represents an elite sport requiring a great deal of

commitment and practice. But ordinary players are also important. In following the rules of the International Floorball Association and in seeking to become more and more skilful, our enthusiast and his team mates have helped turn the messy version into a game that the defector no longer wants to play. From this we draw the more general conclusion that practices can develop in ways that alienate some fraction of previously loyal carriers.

Second, the two cases suggest that messy and formal versions interdepend in ways that are themselves important for the future of each. Institutionally, the elite game has spin-offs for the more casual form with the result that it is now easy to find a place to play and people to play with. At a more personal level, the keen practitioner and his team mates have together maintained and generated *different* versions of the game, playing it week in, week out, over a period of many years. The enthusiast has recruited others, some of whom now take floorball extremely seriously. By playing in his own living room he also sustains an image of the game as a rebellious rather than an organised activity.

Third, and in contrast to digital photography, social networks are vital for recruitment and reproduction. Although the reluctant player was drawn back to floorball by a friend he has yet to form interpersonal ties strong enough to secure his lasting commitment. For the enthusiast, playing is a means of keeping up with people whose physical and technical skills have evolved together.

Having identified features that appear important for the development first of digital photography and then floorball, our next step is to see what these mean for a more general understanding of how practices evolve.

## **Recruitment and reproduction**

No longer a novelty, digital photography is something millions of people now do. Over the last decade, the technical qualities of digital cameras have changed dramatically, their average cost has dropped and new conventions of digital imaging have emerged. In designing and marketing new models, major players like Canon, Olympus and Sony fuel and follow these emergent trends, increasing the number of pixels and adding as well as removing aspects of complexity and control. Meanwhile, floorball has grown from the ground up. Never the scene of corporate competition, the game has nonetheless increased its reach and range. More people are playing than ever before and as the variety of players increases, so do the ways in which the game is reproduced.

There are relevant differences in the detail of what is involved in becoming either a floorballer or a digital photographer. Providing sufficient versions of floorball are carried (i.e. carried on) by other players, the game exists as something casual practitioners can opt into and out of at will. With floorball, the critical ingredients are those of other people, some plastic sticks, a ball, and space and time in which to play. The basic mechanisms of recruitment are interpersonal: existing players draw others into the game. It is harder to generalise about what keeps floorballers going yet certain attractions like those of accumulating skill, the thrill of competition and the pleasure of social interaction seem to increase the more one plays.

With digital photography, acquiring a camera is a critical moment: you can't be a digital photographer without one. Whatever the incentive (in the cases above, these include social pressure, curiosity and work-related functionality), this move re-configures your position in relation to other forms of photography. Resisting the

digital model is as much part of this story as is its selective or promiscuous use. What keeps people going, as digital photographers, is again a complicated question to which there are many answers. The details of appropriation are at least partly defined by the relation between previous practice and the possibilities that digital photography affords. Whatever form this takes, digital photographers are hooked (or not) by the nature of their interaction not so much with other people as with the technology itself.

Do practices differ systematically with respect to the social and/or material networks through which practitioners are enlisted? There maybe something to this, but it would be misleading to conclude that digital photography is devoid of social meaning and interpersonal significance or to deny the material and physical aspects of floorball. A casual photographer can take digital snaps with the same equipment as that which enthalls a more serious practitioner. As with floorball, the material does not determine the nature of the practice. That said, the always dynamic relation between material, image and competence *is* vital. What it is to do floorball or digital photography evolves over the course of any one practitioner' s career. Repeated performance has the dual effect of binding the practitioner more closely to the practice in question whilst also changing his or her relation to it. Scaled up, this has cumulative consequences for the career of the practice as a whole.

## **Limitations, implications and conclusions**

In this article we have considered the evolution of two forms of ' serious fun' (Stebbins 1982). Before commenting on the general implications of our argument, some qualifications are in order. As explained in the introduction, we set out to explore the dynamics of practice development from a particular point of view. As a result we have not sought to explain why certain types of people are attracted to digital photography or floorball. Nor have we written about the cultural significance of participation or what it means in terms of lifestyle politics, identity and consumption. Practices are frequently exclusive whether with respect to gender, physical ability, age or social class. While interested in mechanisms of recruitment, we have yet to acknowledge that floorball and digital photography have variously demanding entry requirements. More generally, we have said nothing about the historical emergence of hobbies or of leisure as a distinctive class of practice. As mentioned before, we have used terms like recruitment and defection but we have not sought to compare the steps and stages of career progression within floorball or digital photography. As we hope to have shown, exercises of this kind run the risk of obscuring the specific processes with which we are concerned.

We use floorball and digital photography as examples with which to consider the *dynamic* relation between practice as entity and practice as performance. Macro and micro level accounts of these discretionary but fast-developing practices have allowed us to elaborate on the propositions with which we began. Other substantive issues would have almost certainly arisen had we written about wind surfing (Dant 1999), baseball (Holt 1995), mountaineering (Lewis 2004) or skateboarding (Beale and Wilson 2004). Further work is required to put our arguments to the test with respect to a other cases and situations but for the time being we draw the following provisional conclusions.

Practitioners' careers are shaped by an irreversible accumulation of experience and competence. At the same time, we observe a measure of indeterminacy generated by the also unfolding trajectories of other people and institutions. Like Giddens (1984) and Pred (1981) we argue that the self-transformative, self-perpetuating

practices of each individual (artefact, human being or organization) are bound through reciprocation to those of others such that individuals and goods are embedded in larger systems.

Practices acquire a separate identity through repetition. Stabilisation consequently occurs as practices are replicated in increasingly faithful ways by existing and new practitioners alike (Pantzar 1993). Tendencies of this kind have been documented in different sectors: in the life cycles of products and industries (Tushman and Romanelli 1985); in social habits (Löfgren 1990) and in the biographies of things (Kopytoff 1986). Social and psychological processes including those of socialization, learning or habit-formation are important in explaining why everyday life revolves around so many repeated routines. If routines result in the closure and co-evolution of practice, how do we account for novelty and innovation? The usual answer is that external conditions change. However, our discussion suggests that practices also develop from within or, more accurately, as a consequence of the continual re-positioning of practitioners with respect to the entity or practice they sustain and reproduce.

New hobbies can enter our lives by accident and chance encounter. On this point, there is more to be said about the social structuring of opportunity and hence the relation between systems of inequality, power and the evolution of practice. As practices become more popular, so chances to participate change (it is currently easier to find a floorball team to join in Finland than in England). Whatever the circumstances, the more general point is that first exposure carries with it the seeds of further development both for potential recruits and for the practice itself. For an individual, the pattern seems to be one in which positive experiences give rise to processes of repetition and reproduction through which the new entity, be that floorball, photography or whatever, becomes part of an individual's life. In this way people become the carriers of practice. The fact that the nature of their experience changes over time, as when the pleasures of novelty give way to those of familiarity (Becker 1963), or that carriers have continuing careers does not change the basic structure of the process.

In our introduction we suggested, somewhat provocatively, that we might think of practices as vampire like entities capturing populations of suitably committed practitioners (i.e. hosts and carriers) in order to survive. We have not gone quite so far as to attribute agency to floorball or to digital photography. Yet we recognise that by being drawn into such activities practitioners lend resources, sustenance and support to these emerging forms of fun. At the same time, we have argued that practitioners are not innocent carriers of ready-made entities. Exactly what digital photographers and floorballers do is really important for what digital photography and floorball might become. Will digital photography result in new genres of image making, will the contexts and situations in which pictures are consumed and produced change beyond recognition? Will the cohorts of school children who have grown up with floorball turn it into something else? What will happen next? It is difficult to say, but one thing is certain, when considering the evolution of practice, recruitment and reproduction are intimately connected. So much so that in this context, to recruit is not simply to increase again, it is also to change.

## References

- Atkinson, P. (2004) 'Performing ethnography and the ethnography of performance' *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 25(1): 107-114.

- Beale, B. and Wilson, C. (2004), ' ' Chicks Dig Scars' ' , in Wheaton, B., ed. *Understanding Lifestyle Sports*. London: Routledge.
- Becker, H. (1960), ' Notes on the concept of commitment' *The American Journal of Sociology*, 66 (1): 32-40.
- Becker, H. (1963), *Outsiders*, New York: The Free Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984), *Distinction*, London: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990), *Photography: a middle brow art*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993), *Sociology in Question*. London: Sage.
- Business Wire (2000), ' Digital Camera Revenue to Surpass Film Camera Revenue in 2000' 5 May 2002.
- Cashmore, E. (2000), *Making Sense of Sports*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, London: Routledge.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. and Rochberg-Halton, E. (1981), *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dant, T. (1999), *Material Culture in the Social World*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Elias, N. and Dunning E. 1970 "The quest for excitement in unexciting societies' in Luschen, G. (ed). *The Cross-cultural analysis of sports and games*, Champaign illinois: Stipes: p31-51
- Ellis, C. and Bochner, A. (2000) ' Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject' in Denzin, N. and Lincoln, I. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Fowler H. W. and Fowler F. G. (1990), *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Gagnon, J. and Simon, W. (1973), *Sexual conduct: the social sources of human sexuality*, Aldine: Chicago.
- Giddens, A. (1984), *The Constitution of Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gomart, E. and Hennion, A. (1999), ' A sociology of attachment: music amateurs, drug users' , in Law, J., (ed.) *Actor Network Theory and After*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gustin, C. (1998), ' Pictures in the digital economy' in Tapscott, D., Lowy, A. and Ticoll, D. (eds), *Blueprint to the Digital Economy*, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Guttman, A. (1978), *From Ritual to Record*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Holt, D. (1995) ' How consumers consume: a typology of consumption practices' , *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22: 1-16.
- International Floorball Federation (2004) <http://www.floorball.org/>
- King, G. (1986), *Say Cheese*, London: Collins.
- Kodak (2004), [http://www.kodak.com/US/en/corp/kodakHistory/1878\\_1929.shtml](http://www.kodak.com/US/en/corp/kodakHistory/1878_1929.shtml) - accessed 2.2.04.
- Kopytoff, I. (1986), The Cultural Biography of Things: Commodization as Process, in *The Social Life of Things, Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Arjun Appadurai (ed.), London: Cambridge University Press.
- Koskinen, I., Kurvinen, E., and Lehtonen, T. (2002), *Mobile Image*, Helsinki: IT Press, Edita.
- Lai, F. (1999), ' Floorball' s penetration of Australia: re-thinking the nexus of globalisation and marketing' *Sport Management Review* 2: 133-149.
- Latour, B. (1992), ' Where are the missing masses? The sociology of a few mundane artifacts' , in Bijker, W. and Law, J. (eds), *Shaping Technology/Building Society*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Latour, B. (2002), ' When things strike back: a possible contribution of ' science studies' to the social sciences' , *British Journal of Sociology*, 51(1):107-123.
- Lewis, N. (2004), ' Sustainable adventure' , in Wheaton, B., (ed.) *Understanding lifestyle sports*, London: Routledge.
- Liljeros, F. (1996), Elitinnbandy. Skapandet av en elitidrott. Sociologiska institutionen, Stockholms Universitet, October 1996.
- Löfgren, O. (1990), Consuming Interests, *Culture and History*, Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag.

- Mahony, D. and Howard, D. (2001), ' Sports Business in the Next Decade: A General Overview of Expected Trends' *Journal of Sport Management*, 15: 275–296.
- Mintel (2002), *Cameras and Digital Cameras*, April 2002.
- NASA (2004) [http://rainer.hq.nasa.gov/Sensors\\_page/DD/HST&GLL\\_CCD.html](http://rainer.hq.nasa.gov/Sensors_page/DD/HST&GLL_CCD.html) accessed 2.2.04.
- Pantzar, M. (1993), ' Do Commodities Reproduce themselves through Human Beings?' *World Futures, Journal of General Evolution*, 38: 201–224.
- Photo Trade News (2003), ' The state of the imaging industry 2003: the photo market weighs in on what to do with all those digital images' *Photo Trade News* 67 (10) 1 October 2003.
- Pred, A. (1981), ' Of Paths and Projects: Individual Behaviour and its Societal Contexts' , in Golledge, R. and Cox, K. (eds), *Behavioural Problems in Geography Revisited*, London: Methuen.
- Rand, B. (2003), ' Kodak and Rochester: a changing picture' *Democrat and Chronicle* 14<sup>th</sup> December 2003, Metro, 8A.
- Reckwitz, A. (2002), ' Towards a Theory of Social Practices: A development in culturallist theorizing.' *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5(2): 243–63.
- Reed-Danahay, D. (1997) *Auto/Ethnography*, Oxford: Berg.
- Schatzki, T. (1996), *Social Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schatzki, T., Knorr Cetina, K. and von Savigny, E. (2001), *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. London: Routledge.
- Scitovski, T. (1976), *The Joyless Economy*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Shoham, A. (2000), ' Predicting Future Sport Consumption: The Impact of Perceived Benefits' *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 9 (1): 8–4.
- Slater, D. (1995), ' Domestic Photography and Digital Culture' , in Lister, M. (ed) *The photographic image in digital culture*, Routledge: London.
- Spence and Holland (eds.) (1991), *Family Snaps; the meanings of domestic photography*, London: Virago.
- Stebbins, R. (1982), Serious leisure. A conceptual statement. *Pacific Sociological Review*, Vol 25, No. 2, 251–272.
- Suchman, L. (1987), *Plans and Situated Actions: the problem of human-machine communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sudnow, D. (1978), *Ways of the hand: the organisation of improvised conduct*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Tushman, M. and Romanelli, E. (1985), ' Organizational evolution: a metamorphosis model of convergence and reorientation' . *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 7:171–222.
- Warde, A. (2003), ' Consumption and theories of practice' Draft CRIC Discussion Paper. University of Manchester.
- Westerbeek, H, and Smith, A. (2003), *Sport Business in the Global Marketplace*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> Some of the enthusiast' s cast-off sticks are now in active use in a small village in Northern England ([www.waterhouses.info](http://www.waterhouses.info)).