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COMS 424 Alternative Media
Final Project Rationale

“Meet the Shred Queens”

For my final project, I wanted to investigate women’s place in action sport cultures and how female athletes, professional and recreational, are changing the game with self-run social media. I have always been aware of how female athletes are represented differently than male athletes in the media. If you google many well-known female athletes, half of the images displayed are of them doing sports and the other half are sexualized and commercialised images focusing on their bodies and beauty. Professional female athletes are still taken less seriously in some ways than male athletes, and this trickles down into recreational sports. As a skier and a beginner surfer, I have always felt I was less qualified to take part in action sports than boys, and only recently started to find confidence in these sports because of a group called Shred Queens.

Shred Queens was started in Montreal by Heidi Nixon, Hannah Sourbeer, Jade Chretien, and Devon Phelps about a year ago. All students at Concordia University, they were all involved in the Concordia Ski and Snowboard Club, and shared a passion for the outdoors and action sports. They started Shred Queens as a way to bring women together to do action sports, to get women outside, and build the female community that they themselves were lacking. Shred Queens has a Facebook page and an Instagram page where they share events such as skateboard nights, ski and snowboard meet ups, rail jams, freestyle ski film festivals, and meet and greets – all geared towards women. In

must over a year, they have successfully created a growing community through events and social media for women who share a passion for action sports and the outdoors, that has spread outside of Quebec to across Canada, and to other parts of the world.

I wanted to do my project on Shred Queens because it has not only made an impact on my life and made me see myself as a female athlete more positively, but it is a group with an alternative message, disseminating their message through alternative media. Shred Queens shares images and videos of women that go against the mainstream media's representations and instead represent female strength and ability, female friendship, and female-led outdoor adventures, without sexualising or trivializing them in any way. Shred Queens wasn't created for commercial success, it was created as a community for women by women who needed a community where they can be themselves and feel comfortable doing the activities they love. I created my final project for this class as an interactive introduction to Shred Queens and the women who started it, in hopes to spread their message and show how they are filling a need.

My project is a form of alternative media because it is showing something that is not typical to the mainstream media's representations of female athletes and action sport cultures. I edited interviews with three group founders where they explain why they started the group, and why there is a need for it in the community. They are honest with their experiences as women who take part in action sports – experiences that led them to creating Shred Queens. I also created a video highlighting Shred Queen's most recent event, where they led the all-girls section of iF3, an international free-ski film festival in Montreal. As a part of this video, there are interviews with participants who discuss what

Shred Queens has meant to them. I made the project with the interactive documentary program Klynt, so that the viewer could explore each founder's interview, and other Shred Queens media in an immersive experience. I tried to make this project an honest depiction of the women involved with Shred Queens, and give an honest look at the bigger issues at play that created the necessity for a group like this one. I will disseminate my project through my portfolio website, and Shred Queens may also use it in the future on their social media.