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The Engagement and Consumption Experiences of Motorcycling Edgeworkers: A Narrative Approach Examining the Personal, Social and Material Context of Voluntary Risk-Taking

Justine Haigh

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Huddersfield

May 2008

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to explore the engagement and consumption experiences of motorcycling edgeworkers. In understanding motorcyclists' experiences, the thesis takes the position that participants are now living in new times of an 'advanced industrialised society'. With a variety of sites, services and goods available for consumption, it is argued that the contemporary high-risk performer is free to subjectively negotiate the meanings of their experiences from the multiplicity of choices available, which has implications for methodology. That is, the study moves away from utilising a standardised methodological approach of developing 'general high-risk typologies' or 'stress-seeking personality types' towards an approach that stresses its diverse and plural characteristics. Hence, the position is taken that motorcyclists' experiences are characterised by highly diversified patterns of interests and activities and therefore seeks to understand motorcycling as a complex, reflexive process where riders assign different meanings to their riding experiences.

Hence, drawing upon narrative theory, the thesis aims to understand the 'lived experiences' of motorcyclists, exploring the personal, social and material context of riders' lives. That risk-taking involves a complex interplay between sensual or emotional apprehending but also a reflexive understanding of the discursive notions associated with high-risk activities. More specifically, the study adopts what Ussher (1997) and more recently Ussher and Mooney-Somers (2000) describe as a 'material-discursive intrapsychic perspective'. This considers the manner by which cultural/community understandings impact riders' accounts of their experiences but also examines the physical/intrapsychic aspects of the activity which are arguably highly

interrelated. The study also seeks to explore motorcyclists' biographical accounts, examining the diverse ways in which riders draw upon their past in making sense of current motorcycling practice.

Using a narrative approach to data collection and analysis, the data presented is collected in thirty-three in-depth narrative interviews. The data was analysed using a voice-centred relational approach to narrative analysis called the 'Listening Guide', based on the Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (Brown and Gillian, 1991, 1992, 1993 and more recently Milnes 2003) and the data is presented in the form of an analysis of narrative themes from the accounts of the riders, however what separates this 'themed' analysis is differences amongst the accounts are considered alongside similarities. Finally, in exploring motorcyclists' individual biographies, the personal narrative accounts given by nine of the riders are presented focusing on key turning points or 'epiphanies' in their stories.

In order to 'contextualise the narratives', participant observation was conducted at a variety of popular motorcyclist enclaves including motorcycle track days, cafés and venues as well as the review of existing popular text such as magazines, papers and specialist motorcycle press. Several conversations also took place with those who deliver the experience such as motorcycle shop owners and track day tutors.

The research reveals that riders' experiences are more diverse and complex than more traditional studies have often suggested. The analysis of the participants' narratives show that participants draw on both physical/intrapsychic explanations but also on

community understandings in describing their riding experiences. Hence, it is argued that the materiality of the body, its connections to thrill, desire, to the performance of the activity are all intimately tied to the more discursive factors involved (Ussher 1997).

Furthermore, by identifying key turning points in the stories told by the motorcyclists, the diverse ways in which individual riders adapt their motorcycling practice is revealed. The individual accounts show how riders are influenced by their past experience, but also by dominant cultural and/or community understandings which, as acting as cultural resources, guide riders understanding of their experiences.

Therefore, in taking a 'material-discursive intrapsychic perspective,' the study aims to present a more comprehensive understanding of motorcyclists' experiences. Particularly concerned with commitments to TCR (Transformative Consumer Research), the research may therefore assist in informing future road safety research and motorcycling initiatives. That is, due to the manner by which participants engage in their activity in an ongoing and reflexive manner, the opportunity exists for those interested in re-directing motorcyclists' aspirations, such as marketing campaigners or rider education/assessment training schemes, to encourage participants to adopt more safety conscious, responsible riding styles, focusing on competence, wisdom and safety rather than excitement, performance and speed.

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Chapter 1: Introducing the Study

1.1 Introduction

The recent rise of involvement in high-risk or adventurous leisure pursuits has drawn the attention of contemporary scholars. Despite the dangers involved, an increasing number of individuals consume high-risk activities. Much previous risk research though has typically utilised standardised approaches of developing 'general high-risk typologies' or 'stress-seeking personality types'. However, in attempting to find an all-encompassing framework for voluntary risk-taking, much past research has overlooked the various personal, social and material factors that might impact participants' experiences. That is, the current study moves away from seeking 'rational' explanations for risk-taking behaviour towards an approach that stresses its diverse and plural characteristics.

The rationale for this perspective comes from a belief that risk-taking participants are now living in new times of an 'advanced industrialised society.' The mass commodification of leisure activities can be seen in the rise of industries which support adventurous leisure activities alongside the fact that the media now increasingly reflects risk-taking behaviours (Celsi et al 1993). Technology also contributes to the increased consumption of dramatic high-risk activities by making some possible and others more feasible and attractive. Improvements in materials and construction have increased performance and lowered costs. Sports benefiting from these advances include sky-diving, white-water rafting, abseiling, bungy-jumping and of particular interest, motorcycling.

Therefore, given the position that the contemporary risk-takers engage with their activity within a unique cultural and technological milieu, this has obvious implications for methodology. It is argued that with a variety of sites, services and goods available for consumption, contemporary high-risk performers are now free to subjectively negotiate the meanings of their experiences from the multiplicity of choices available.

In considering that the contemporary high-risk performer is an active and productive agent, the study aims to understand the individual motorcyclists' unique riding experiences but at the same time explore the social and material contexts of riders' lives. This is similar to that of Milnes (2003), who takes a position between feminism and social constructionism of a notion that whilst self, identity and experience are influenced by culture and language they are not fully determined by these factors. Consequently, the study seeks to acknowledge the specific 'storied accounts' that individual riders give of their unique experiences but also to explore the kinds of local community understandings which respondents draw on in making sense of their motorcycling practice as well as those more socially encompassing cultural notions (prevalent in society writ large) which participants may either comply with or resist.

The researcher also adopts what Ussher (1997) more recently Ussher and Mooney-Somers (2000) describe as a 'material-discursive-intrapsychic perspective' which argues that the physical/intrapsychic aspects of individual's experiences cannot be conceptualised outside of social constructions. That is, the high-risk experience is explored both at the level of the material body, such as through the physical act of motorcycling, through the associated emotive states, but also at the level of discourse

(that the meanings which surround the experience are dependent on and constructed within the social and discursive context in which the person is situated). By considering both aspects, the thesis moves towards a more comprehensive level of analysis and one which hopes to provide a more meaningful reflection of the experiences of those who take up high-risk activities.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

Overall, the aim of the study is to understand individual motorcyclists' riding experiences but also the diverse meanings that riders ascribe to their experiences, including physical/intrapsychic aspects but also social and discursive factors. Thus, in taking an exploratory design, the answers to the following questions are sought;

1. What physical/intrapsychic characteristics contribute to motorcycling participation? This objective aims to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the high-risk activity, to explore the relationship between the physical/intrapsychic (pertaining to the mind/conscious) and the discursive elements. For example, to explore thrill, pleasure, feelings of empowerment and/or anxiety which are arguably interrelated with the more social/discursive aspects of the experience.

2. To what extent do shared motorcycling community understandings impact the accounts that riders give of their experiences and how do these affect motorcyclists in negotiating their riding practices? In addition, what is the role of the context in which motorcyclists commonly meet and interact as well

as the role of the cultural mediators/ legitimisers, such as the specialist press and media? This objective recognises the social and material context which is likely to impact upon how riders make sense of their riding experiences.

3. How do motorcyclists manage their activity in face of conflicting dominant sociocultural standards which may clash with their local community understandings? What risk reduction/coping strategies do participants use to rationalise their activity in order to prolong engagement with edgework? For example, blame attribution, fate and superstition. This objective in particular considers the positioning of accounts, where, it is argued that as actors in a moral universe, individuals must continually create morally defensible positions for themselves.

4. How do motorcyclists past experiences influence their current motorcycling practice? For example, what key turning point moments or 'epiphanies' do riders identify in their accounts? Why do some participants reportedly modify their motorcycling practice? Why do some engaging in more 'risk-taking' behaviour while others drop out of motorcycling all together? Specifically, this objective explores the individual biography of the high-risk performer. How motorcyclists draw upon their unique past experiences in making sense of their current motorcycling practice but it also draws attention to the diversity of the riders' experiences.

Chapter 2: Literature Review: Understanding Contemporary Consumers

2.1 Contextualising High-Risk Consumption

Concerned with serious leisure pursuits, many contemporary scholars have been drawn to the study of deliberate risk-taking, and this has coincided with the current rise of involvement in high-risk or 'extreme' leisure sports. Hence, adventure activities and holidays involving feats of extreme physical endurance have become of particular interest to scholars who are interested in the cultural importance of leisure activities. As argued by Lupton (1999), serious leisure activities have become a major preoccupation of contemporary consumer's 'thoughts, energies, hopes, desires, expenditures of time and money'. Moreover, Firat and Venkatesh (1995) contend that in an increasingly postmodern world, recreational consumption has come to replace production as the major source of meaning in people's lives; *"The thrills and excitement of the carnivalesque have shifted in location from the religious festival to sites such as the seaside resort, the fun fair and theme park, the adventure holiday and the 'extreme sport'." p. 170.*

2.2 Contemporary Motorcycling

Although risk-taking has always been associated with motorcycling, the contemporary practice stands in sharp contrast to the early 'rocker' era o f the 1960s, working class boys for which biking was a cheap mode of transport. With the decline of the British bike industry in the early 1980s and the subsequent rise of Japanese technology,

motorcycling became associated with high-performance machines, designed to mimic or directly replicate racing bikes. The Supersports motorcycle as they are known in the industry, are large-capacity (over 900cc) bikes and normally have full fairings and low handlebars and are often referred to as race replicas (Mintel 2006).

In addition, Japanese advertising opened up a whole new market for bikes among people who would never previously have been interested in the pastime. Japanese two-wheeled transport was marketed as easy to maintain, convenient and cheap. As pointed out by Stuart (1987), 'riding would no longer be just for the working class'. p.116. Alongside this came a revolution in motorcycling gear. Leathers were no longer plain and black, there was suddenly 'a new colourful world of leathers, with additional improvements such as go-faster stripes, mandarin collars, applied padding or even with full body armour' (Stuart 1987). Indeed, since their rise to popularity in the early 1980s, supersports motorcycles and the subsequent promotion of race replica gear, has defined a new era and rider in British motorcycling.

Today riding has become an expensive leisure pastime. Motorcyclists can now be seen all over the country at a variety of leisure settings, such as motorcycle cafes, races, shows and the currently popular motorcycle track day on high-tech machines with matching accessories. The contemporary motorcyclist is therefore quite different from his/her early predecessor who, in the rocker era travelled and congregated in groups of working class lads (Clark 1995). The multiplicity of leisure goods which the modern consumer society provides for modern cultural groupings can be clearly seen then in the variety of brightly coloured gear and motorcycles which are available for motorcycling participants' identity play. Contemporary motorcyclists' race replica

style therefore no longer clearly reflects its renowned past of the working-class bike boy and his rocker lifestyle and this has arguably coincided with changes in the broader social structure.

2.3 Literature Review Rationale

In light of the view that participants are now living in new times of an 'advanced industrialized society,' it appears practical to review at the onset, the major conceptual developments of postmodern theorising and in particular, to examine other studies which have sought to comprehend the experiences of contemporary consumers whose lifestyles are based on the consumption of symbolic goods/experiences in a variety of leisure settings. It is acknowledged however, that trying to conceptualise 'postmodernism' and 'postmodern subjectivity' is an enormous task due to the fact that the terms shelter a number of related theoretical positions (Brown 1998). Nevertheless, it is hoped that by highlighting several key developments, a stronger premise for interpreting the experiences of those who take part in contemporary high-risk leisure lifestyles is facilitated.

It follows then, that the rest of literature review is concerned with the concept or 'risk.' Wider societal or macro constructions of risk are considered initially but then importantly, phenomenological studies are discussed such as ethnographies which have sought to explore the role of risk-taking in the everyday lives of high risk participants. Ultimately, the purpose in adopting this approach to the literature is to understand the complex experiences of contemporary motorcyclists but in particular, to interpret how riders make sense of their experiences directed by their local

communities but also how more wider socially encompassing perspectives may impact upon these experiences.

2.4 Toward Postmodern Conceptualisations

Changes in the broader socio-economic and political climate in contemporary western societies since World War II has provoked much theoretical discussion amongst cultural commentators. Theorists such as Jameson (1984), Lyotard (1984) and Baudrillard (1988) have noted a movement towards a 'postmodern age'. Lyotard in particular (1984), designates that the state of culture since the end of the nineteenth century has altered the rules of science, literature and the arts. Perceived as a broad cultural phenomenon postmodernity is often used to refer to a particular set of generalized developments constituting a new cultural paradigm and social consciousness (Lash, 1990 and Urry 1990). This suggests a break from modernity involving the emergence of a new social totality with its own distinct organising principles; *"Postmodern theorists claim that in the contemporary high tech media society, emergent processes of change and transformation are producing a new postmodern society and its advocates claim that the era of postmodernity constitutes a novel stage of history and novel sociocultural formation which requires new concepts and theories." (Best et al 1991 p. 3).*

Further, a number of commentators, such as Bell (1976), Jameson (1984), Baudrillard (1988), Featherstone (1991) Giddens (1994), Thompson (1995) and Clarke (2003), describe postmodern culture as the culture of the consumer society. This is related to a relative shift in importance in society from production to consumption along with

post-Fordist flexible forms of production, making small batch production, customisation and niche marketing viable. Consumer culture is therefore believed to be premised upon the expansion of capitalist commodity production which has given rise to a vast accumulation of material culture in the form of consumer goods and sites for purchase and consumption. As Bell (1976) argues, the cultural transformation of modern society is due the diffusion of what were once considered luxuries to the middle and lower classes in society.

Accordingly, much work on consumer culture has emphasised the world of goods and their centrality to the understanding of contemporary society, involving the symbolisation and use of material goods as communicators and not just utilities. For example, Baudrillard (1983) (1988) has been particularly important in theorising about the commodity sign. Drawing on semiology, he argues that consumption entails the active manipulation of signs, where, central to late capitalist society, sign and commodity have come together to produce the commodity-sign. Hence according to Baudrillard, consumption must not be understood as the consumption of use-values, as material utility, but primarily as the consumption of signs.

Moreover, Baudrillard (1988) contends that the electronic mass media has played a key role in producing the excess of images and information which has threatened people's sense of reality in contemporary society. As pointed by Jameson (1984), a society saturated with signs and images has effaced the distinction between the real and the imaginary, where in a world of signs and spectacle there is no real originality, but a hyper-reality. This is a depthless world, or as Lash (1990) puts it, there is a 'new flimsiness of reality'.

In addition, according to early work by Adorno (1977), in contemporary society, commodities are now free to take on a wide range of cultural associations and illusions. Advertising in particular, argues Adorno, is able to exploit this and attach romantic and fantastic images to mundane consumer goods such as soap, motor vehicles and alcoholic drinks. In such a society then, mundane and everyday consumer goods have become associated with luxury, exotica, beauty and romance with their original or functional use increasingly difficult to decipher. As Featherstone (1991) indicates, the postmodern is marked by the rearrangement and juxtaposition of previously unconnected signifying objects to produce new meanings in fresh contexts. He describes this as a process of re-signification by which cultural signs with established meanings are reorganised into new codes of meaning, 'a collapse and blurring of genre boundaries within cultural products' p. 85.

2.5 Anti-Essentialist Subject

All these changes inherent in contemporary society are therefore seen as contributing to a particular way of understanding self and world and that differs dramatically from earlier eras. With the collapse of societies traditional values, and the rise of the ever-expanding industrial, capitalist society, many contemporary theorists, argue that modern man now has a fragmented sense of identity. As described by Lash (1990), contemporary conceptualisations of identity, trace the development of decentred or postmodern subjects in shifting, fragmented and multiple identities.

For many commentators, the postmodern subject is anti-essentialist, in that the theory of a unified self is rejected. Essentialism, which evolved from the enlightenment

period, explored people's 'essential' underlying identity. Essentialism in particular, refers to the idea that the person is a unified whole, that there is an essence at the core of an individual which is unique, coherent and unchanging (essential nature could refer to a number of things such as 'personality traits' or 'attitudes'). In marked contrast, more social constructionist views of identity are characterised by the deconstruction of the essentialist notion of the unified agent who possesses a fixed identity. Instead, anti-essentialist conceptions of identity stress the decentred subject as the self made up of variable and changeable identities; *"The multiplicity and fragmentation of selfhood, its changeability, and its cultural and historical dependence are at the heart of social constructionist accounts of person." (Burr 1995 p. 30).*

This suggests that forms of identity are changeable, related to specific social situations and cultural contexts. As described by Berger (1963), while identity used to be seen as something stable, a fluid notion of the self is now embraced. 'Identities', writes Berger, are 'socially bestowed, socially maintained, and socially transformed' p. 98. This means the centre of gravity of study has moved from within the person to a position which considers the role of the social world.

2.6 Social Identity

Given that identities are social constructions this means 'the self' cannot exist outside of cultural representations. Shibutani (1961) describes the constructed nature of society as a succession of continual events, or 'a flow of gestural interchanges amongst people' p. 174. Here society is conceptualised in the dynamic sense, as

individuals in interaction with one another, continually define and alter the direction of one another's acts, emphasising the ever-changing nature of the social world.

This position also stands in contrast to theorists, such as Marx (1961), who emphasised the influence of social structure upon the individual, where society as a set of forces exerts itself on people in the form of institutions, stratification systems, and cultural patterns. Given this perspective, society is seen to have a permanence which shapes each individual. However, this rather deterministic perspective leaves little room for the active agent who plays a role in defining and changing society. This dynamic view is similar to that of Mead's earlier work (1934) which defined the human being as a process, 'always in the state of becoming, unfolding and acting', rather than stable or fixed.

As pointed out by Mead (1934), people are constantly undergoing change in interaction. What people do in any given situation then, is primarily a result of what is going on in that situation, not of what the individual had brought to that situation from the past. The past however, according to Mead, does enter into action but only as it is recalled in the present and applied to the situation at hand. Consequently, a more dynamic actor is perceived. Instead of describing the human being as a stable personality, the human being is emergent, always changing as he or she deals with situations encountered.

2.7 Sites of Interaction

Furthermore, Giddens (1990) argues that the fragmentation of the self is not the outcome of shifting meanings alone but are also the consequence of the proliferation

and diversification of social relationships, contexts and sites of interaction constituted in and through discourses. Modern persons are believed to have a much wider scope of social relationships, spaces and places in which to interact, such as work and the family but also global resources of TV, email and travel. Hence, characteristic of life in modern mass societies, individuals are now able to shift across subject positions, participating successively in a number of unrelated activities (Giddens 1990).

Earlier, Shibutani (1955) found that modern mass society is characterised by a multitude of social worlds, each one sharing a perspective/culture and each one held together through some form of interaction/communication; *"The dynamics of modern society are especially complex…each (society) is very different. Their existence suggests that we live a segmented or segregated existence, and that the overarching culture plays a far more limited role in our lives than in simpler societies." (Shibutani 1955 p. 180).*

These social worlds or cultures are dynamic, argues Shibutani, defined through interaction, a production of communication. Shibutani called culture a group's perspective, or frame of reference it takes toward reality. Culture is therefore seen as a shared perspective through which individuals in interaction define reality.

2.8 Symbolic Communication

Shibutani (1955) also states that it is through symbolic communication that individuals come to share culture, where culture is learned through symbols, and is symbolic itself. The shared ideas, rules, goals, values, are all seen to be symbolic,

allowing individuals to co-operatively interact with others. Human society therefore, depends on ongoing symbolic communication. Each interaction situation however, writes Shibutani, (1955) is not a brand-new society, but is influenced by interaction that has gone on before. Given this, cultures are ever changing, continuously being redefined in symbolic interaction. Indeed, Shibutani points out that almost all social interaction is symbolic, as the social world is made up of people interacting and communicating with symbols, where, 'we see, think, share, and act symbolically' p. 56.

Whenever there is interaction between persons, there is meaning shared, and according to Shibutani (1955), this meaning is symbolic in nature. Therefore, it is through symbols that individuals come to understand their roles in relation to others, responding not to a physical reality but a symbolic one. That is, since the world is interpreted according to social definitions, objects are considered to be social objects pointed out and defined in interaction, not established in nature. Hence as social objects, objects are constantly being changed, defined and redefined in interaction.

Further, Shibutani (1955) contends that some social objects are symbols, where symbols as social objects are used for representation and communication, to stand in for, or take the place of, whatever people agree they shall represent. A symbol according to Shibutani, is any object, mode of conduct, or word toward which people act as if it were something else, for example, 'a coloured piece of cloth, called a flag, represents patriotic sentiments'.

Moreover, symbols are said to be important for communication between people, for the purpose of giving off meaning. Indeed, Burke (1966) takes the position that most human action is symbolic, representing something more than what is immediately perceived, *"Our reality in the world at this split moment is nothing other than what we have learned from a cluster of symbols about the past combined with whatever things we know mainly through maps, magazines, newspapers, and the like about the present." (Burke 1966 p.5)*

Similarly many other studies have expressed the importance of cultural goods as symbolic resources for the construction of identity. McCraken (1988), Belk (1988), Dittmar (1992), Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1995), Gabriel and Lang (1995), Thompson et al (1995) and Oswald (1999) and Woodruffe-Burton (2005) all explore the manner by which objects as symbols arise in and are transformed through social interaction.

2.9 Sacred Consumption

Moreover, according to Charon (1992), as goods are now seen as consumed symbolically, many products take on a sacred value for consumers. As such, these products are set apart from normal activities and treated by participants with respect or awe. Such sacred objects, argues Charon, are gazed at, dreamt about, talked about, photographed, and handled in various ways which produce a great deal of satisfaction. Indeed, according to Belk (1998) sacred objects, as those used in ritual, become particularly symbolically charged. As such, these items, Belk contents, tend to be excluded from exchange as their professed sacred status and denial of the profane

market as well as their lack of availability raises their value and desirability. For example, this point was illustrated by Willis (1978) in an earlier study, who demonstrated how the 'bike boys' made their original 78 records of Buddy Holly and Elvis Presley sacred; *"The motor-bike boys' preference for the 78s over 45s can be understood in this light. Although their technical quality was demonstrably inferior to the more recent 45s they had a bulk, brittleness, a distinctive tactile presence that all spoke of genuine origins in the golden age. The scratchiness of the reproduction, far from detracting from this total effect, as it would for a neutral observer, enhanced the 'soul' of the song for them simply because it was over-riding evidence of the music's authentic origins." (Willis 1978 p. 65).*

2.10 The Presentation of Self

Given the position that contemporary individuals do not possess fixed identities, this construction depicts consumers as having many selves, each related to the specific interaction he or she is involved with, and each constantly being changed in the process of interaction. Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective is particularly important here in theorising about a fragile notion of self, which is described by Goffman as 'collaboratively built up on every occasion of social interaction'. Goffman's interactionist perspective is called dramaturgical because he viewed social life as like a staged drama, the attempts by actors to act out roles on a stage. To Goffman, when individuals act around others, they attempt to present themselves according to the identities they claim for themselves, this is what Goffman calls 'my presentation of self to others'. Hence, Charon (1992), quoting Goffman, argues that individuals attempt to manage situations according to a role they play. That is, by

giving performances, playing for audiences in settings and using the appropriate props for the situation, individuals try to fashion their action according to an image that they wish to present; *"Our appearance and manner are our personal front, and other people become not only our audience, but stage directors, authors, commentators, and critics. In our performance our goal remains to present ourselves in a way that we choose to act in ways so as to influence the judgements and actions of others." (Goffman as cited in Charon 1992 p. 155).*

According to Goffman, in interaction, individuals are not only performers but also an audience for others' performances as well, where each participant in social interaction expresses a self and forms an impression of each other, based on their appearance and manner, and the setting of the interaction and arrives at a working consensus about the definition of the situation. Like stage actors, Goffman argues, social actors also enact roles, assume characters, and play through scenes when engaged in interaction with one another. Further, Goffman (1959) points out that both kinds of drama, theatrical and real life involve use of the same techniques, where social actors, like theatrical actors rely on costume, makeup, body carriage, dialect, props, and other dramatic devices to produce a shared experience and sense of reality. (Goffman 1959 p.254-55).

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Given that selves are cooperatively constructed in interaction, the individual must rely on others to complete the picture of self that his or her performance outlines. So, for Goffman (1959), how the individual presents him or herself will influence how others respond to their performance. In other words, individuals must 'show proper demeanour to warrant respect or regard'.

2.10.1 Interaction Ritual

Goffman (1963, 1967, 1971) also viewed interactions like religious ceremonies filled with ritual observances. According to Goffman, drama and ritual are complementary, and both are implicated in the collaborative manufacture of selves. The self is both the product of the drama of interaction and the object of the interpersonal rituals that Goffman analyses. Further, Goffman (1967) points out, that our routine observance of such interpersonal rituals or common courtesies demonstrates our commitment to a vast array of shared rules of interpersonal conduct. For example, etiquette is a complex code of ceremonial or ritual prescriptions governing interactions.

2.10.2 Multiple Social Roles

Goffman also recognised that individuals do not always embrace their formal roles in situations. He describes numerous instances of individuals expressing distance from social roles and the images of self they imply. Thus, according to Goffman, individuals sometimes free themselves from social roles and projected definitions of self. For instance, a teacher may announce their identity as a motorcyclist by telling of a recent road trip, proudly claiming a different identity. As Charon (1992) quoting Goffman points out, such expressive acts of social identification of dramatic footing can be taken for evidence that individuals use multiple social identifications to manage their competing commitments.

Given this perspective, self is intimately linked to interaction. However, for Goffman interaction never exists in a vacuum, as performances take place in social

environments that further influence them. For example, they occur in restaurants, where waiters try to foster an impression of personal concern for each customer. 'Performances occur in social establishments where a great deal of importance is placed on the control of audience's definitions of the situation' (Charon 1992). These three themes then; drama, self, and ritual form the core of Goffman's perspective. Overall, Goffman's view shows how fragile society, interaction and self are, where individuals cooperatively construct selves, definitions of reality, and the surrounding social environment.

2.11 Identity and Consumption

For Goffman, (1959) social life consists of ritualised theatrical performances. However, self-presentation situated within the context of modern society is now seen to focus around amusement and consumption. Goffman's view of social actors like theatrical actors who rely on costume, makeup, props, and other dramatic devices to produce a shared experience is particularly applicable to theories of postmodern consumer culture. Hence, the recent economic conditions which has created the consumer market through modern production methods has vastly increased the diversity of goods available to the consumer for identity play. As Goffman argues, individuals now play for audiences in settings using mass commodified objects which provide them with the appropriate equipment for the situation.

Featherstone (1991) suggests that the objects consumers surround themselves with are now central for self-presentation. That is people's cars, ritual objects, and clothes are used as communicators in telling others what they want them to know. Thus, argues

Featherstone, modern consumer society has provided a multiplicity of goods which people now use in creating social bonds or distinctions, where identity is no longer a given, but a construction, 'a game of style and choice'. As described by Lunt (1992), identity projects are linked in contemporary society through the creation of lifestyles centred on the consumption of aesthetic objects and signs constructed out of materials furnished by advertising and mass culture. Self consequently, in this light is viewed as the result of self-images provided by mass mediated imagery.

With an increased supply of symbolic resources for people's creative work then, consumerism is depicted as an active rather than a passive process. Audiences as active creators of meaning therefore, bring previously acquired cultural competencies to bear on cultural texts. That is, meaning is not believed to be inherent in the commodities themselves, but consumers produce the meaning of goods through actual usage. For example, Willis (1978) who previously looked at the consuming practices of young people found that they have active, creative and symbolically productive relationship to their commodities. In a homological analysis, Willis (1978) looked at the social group of the bike boys and their preferred cultural items in order to explore how their relationship with which their social structure, social values and cultural symbols fit together. (Homology is the means by which symbolic objects are held to be expressions of the underlying concerns and structural positions of a group). Willis found that sacred objects, which lie at the heart of the bike boys culture, provide a coded value-system of a coherent subculture; *"The strength of the motorcycle matched the concrete, secure nature of the bike boys' world. The motorcycle with its fierce acceleration, the aggressive thumping of the unbaffled exhaust, matches and*

symbolizes the masculine assertiveness, the rough camaraderie, the muscularity of language, of their style of social interaction." (Willis 1978 p. 53).

However, in Hall and Jefferson's (1976) later study of youth culture, they argue that homology crossed with bricolage plays a significant part in identity play. Where bricolage is the means by which unconnected symbols are re-ordered and re-contextualised in order to communicate fresh meanings. That is, objects which already carry sedimented symbolic meanings are re-signified in relation to other artefacts in new contexts. Consequently, in studying the skinheads subculture, Hall and Jefferson (1976) demonstrate how the groups' particular style, involved a bricolage of symbols which together constituted a coherent and meaningful expression of their values. In other words, the skinhead's culture was said to represent a reaction to the decline of traditional British working-class values, who sought to reinvent, through stylistic, symbolic bricolage, the lost community and values of the working class. 'Their cropped hair, boots, and braces were used as an imaginary recapturing of working-class male hardness. Thus, the expressive and symbolic work of the skinheads can be read as a form of semiotic resistance to the dominant social order, a collective identity outside class'. (Hall and Jefferson 1976).

However, Hebdige (1979) argues that the problem with homology is that it is reductionist in explaining style in terms of class structures. So in contrast, Hebdige investigates style on the level of autonomous or independent play of signifiers. Where consumer goods are used as cultural signs in a free association manner by individuals to produce an expressive effect without being mapped into class structure. For Hebdige, style is a signifying practice which is an obviously fabricated display of

codes of meaning. Through the signification of difference, argues Hebdige, style constitutes a group identity. Hebdige, who explored British punk culture, indicates that punk was not just a response to the crisis of British decline, but that it actually dramatised it.

Punk, for Hebdige (1979), was an ironic mode of signification which reproduced an entire sartorial history of post-war working class in 'cut up' form by combining elements which originally belonged to different epochs. As described by Hebdige, Punk was a 'revolting style', which created an ensemble of the perverse and abnormal. Through disordered dancing, offensive language and anarchic clothing of safety bins, bin liners, and dyed hair, 'Punk did more than upset the wardrobe, it undermined every relevant discourse' p. 108.

2.11.1 Postmodern Style

Hebdige (1979) in particular explored the way in which commodities form the basis of identity construction, emphasizing the meaning-oriented activity of consumers who act as bricoleurs selecting and arranging elements of material commodities and meaningful signs into a personal style; *"Hollywood films, advertising images, packaging, clothes and music - offers a rich iconography, a set of symbols, objects, and artefacts which can be assembled and re-assembled by different groups in a literally limitless number of combinations." (Hebdige 1979, p. 55).*

However, as argued by Muggleton (1997), style in postmodern society is said to involve bricolage without reference to the meanings of the originals. In other words,

style no longer displays some underlying message; it's just style for style itself, the look and only the look, merely another mode of fashion. For Muggleton (1997) this cannibalisation of styles from the past and present represents a loss of artistic depth in favour of a superficial pastiche, the fashion for nostalgia in which history is the object not of representation but of stylistic connotation; *"Postmodern bricolage includes the eclectic ransacking of history for items of dress involving the creative recombination of existing items to forge new meanings. Here, post-subculturalists can revel in the availability of subcultural choice." (Muggleton 1997. p. 198).*

Or as Stuart explains, using the case of the 1960s 'rockers', 'the traditional working-class identity of the bike boy has faded, eaten away by affluence and consequently, class as a social phenomenon has become less obvious'. Therefore, homological analysis, explaining style in terms of class structures and structural positions of groups, such as Willis' (1978) analysis of the bike boys, no longer today articulates the playful potential of the contemporary motorcyclist; "*By 1962 class as a social phenomena was less obvious…The working class hero was to become a thing of the past. "Already he was something of a Brylcreem embarrassment: brash, fast and raw with loud music, loud bikes." (Stuart 1987 p. 53).*

This is further supported by Thornton (1995), who points out that in a postmodern world, style is no longer formed outside or opposed to media but formed within and through the media. This contrasts to previous studies which have tried to look behind the media in order to discover the real 'authentic' subgroup style, apparently distorted by media stereotypes. As according to Barker (2000), such an analysis is no longer appropriate for analysing the 'surfaces of the postmodern world', in which individuals

now look to media images for clues. Similarly, recent studies in consumer behaviour such as Penaloza (2000), Kozinets (2001) and Kates (2002) have emphasised the media's role in consumption communities as providing flexible guidelines for which modern identities are forged.

TV then for many theorists, is said to be at the heart of image production and the circulation of a collage of stitched-together images core to postmodern cultural style. This is what Barker has described as 'the blurring of the boundaries of genre, style and history, where old hierarchies of fashion have been broken up in favour of tolerant acceptance of differences', and 'the right of individuals to enjoy whatever popular pleasures they desire.' (Barker 2000).

Furthermore, Barker points out that it is unclear what resistance actually now means in a postmodern, post-authentic world. For example, this was argued earlier by Hebdige (1979), that style is neither an affirmation nor a refusal to the dominant order. It is rather, he contends, a declaration of independence and of alien intent, 'a play for attention and a refusal to be read transparently'. Postmodern style, as Hebdige contends, is best understood as marked by a distinct clustering of fashion found inside mass mediated consumer capitalism, marked by internal distinctions of taste rather than coherent expressions of resistance or opposition.

This is also echoed by Collins (1992), who points out that there is now less interest in constructing a coherent style than in playing with and expanding the range of familiar styles. Postmodernsim, he maintains, acknowledges multiple subject positions and identities while actively encouraging a conscious moving in and out of subject

positions. Thus, some twentieth-century commentators argue that in our age of 'no style', there is more emphasis upon pastiche, retro, the collapse of symbolic hierarchies, and playback of cultures (Barker 2000).

2.12 Personhood as Problematic

Postmodern conceptualisations of identity therefore emphasize the self as changeable and fragmented, as a phenomenon to explore. Where, according to Goffman (1959), self is only a situational reality that emerges in interactional rituals. As a result, Goffman states that individuals are more likely to have clusters of identities available for specific situations rather than an enduring sense of self.

The postmodern subject, as described earlier by Lasch (1984), now lacks a firm sense of self and must therefore seek out constant affirmation. Moreover, Lasch goes onto state that postmodern consumer society is blamed because it fosters a weak sense of self in order to create consumer demand, where 'marketing strategies are used to educate the masses in consumption'. Advertisements which promote feelings of restlessness and dissatisfaction, argues Lasch, have fabricated consumer needs through image and appearance. Thus, postmodern subject is left to construct a superficial identity out of insubstantial images and symbols provided by the mass media. 'Contemporary consumers now overwhelmed by choice, experience persistent feelings of discontent'.

Individuals consequently, argues Lasch (1984), have a preoccupation with appearance because they are deeply uncertain of themselves. That is, according to Lasch, society

creates narcissism to sell products and because of this individuals have adopted a theatrical view of their own performances, increasingly concerned with superficial impressions and images. This is what Riesman (1950) previously called the 'other-directed' postmodern subject, who in paying close attention to the signals of other's, needs constant approval and direction. Hence, contemporaries are now the source of the 'other-directed' individuals' sense of direction, those who are indirectly acquainted through the mass media.

Such theorising is also prevalent in theories of compensatory consumption. As Woodruffe-Burton (2005) citing Gronmo 1988 explains, *"Compensatory consumer behaviour means that consumption is heavily emphasized as a reaction to and as an attempt to make up for a general lack of esteem or self-actualisation." p. 461.*

2.13 A Fantasy World of Commodified Goods

Moreover, as described by Riesman (1950), individuals have lost their meaning in modern society since they no longer inhabit a world that exists independently of themselves. Instead, he contends, individuals today inhabit the public world of the media, where mass produced images have shaped people's perceptions of the world and blurred the boundaries between self and surround. This was later supported by Caughey (1984) who argues that conditions of everyday social intercourse in societies based on mass consumption encourage an unprecedented attention to superficial impressions and images, to the point where the self becomes almost indistinguishable from its surface.

Because commodity production is said to have altered individual's perception of themselves and the world, some theorists have argued that individuals are no longer surrounded by things, but by fantasies. According to early work by Debord (1970), production, marketing and commercial practices operate to create a fantasy world for consumers, providing the materials for which desires and identities are constructed. In creating a world of mirrors and illusions, reality has therefore, increasingly become more indistinguishable from fantasy. The consumer now lives by fantasies, insists Debord, where in a world with no objective or independent existence, the failure to distinguish between self/not self is intensified by the replacement of a reliable world of durable objects by a world of flickering images that make it harder and harder to distinguish reality from fantasy (Debord 1970).

Lasch (1984) describes contemporary society as a commercially produced fantasy world of commodified goods and images, in which consumers' complete dependence on externally provided goods and services recreates infantile feelings of helplessness. The postmodern subject, consequently, finds it hard to conceive the world except in connection with his/her fantasies, experiencing an ever-greater multiplicity of feelings, gratifications and self-images provided by mass mediated imagery (Lash 1984). Where according to Segal (1985), consumers live much of their lives in imaginary worlds, engaging in social experiences, imagined relations with others, and imagined other selves; *"Our heads are full of phantasies. Not just fantasies, by which I mean stories we make up to amuse ourselves – but "stories" we are deeply involved in and convinced by and which go on independently of our conscious awareness or intention…" (Segal 1985 p. 22).*

2.14 Consumer Culture as Hedonistic

According to a number of theorists Bell (1976) (1980), Lasch, (1984) and Lunt (1992), due to the rise of mass consumption, contemporary culture has become hedonistic, concerned with how to spend and enjoy. Described as a cultural crisis, consumer society is now associated with the collapse of traditional values and the emergence of a new morality of self-gratification, what Bell (1976) describes as of the spirit of self-seeking and the pursuit of things, self absorption and self fulfilment.

According to Bell (1976), the Protestant Ethic has been replaced by materialistic consumption, in Bell's words, 'an ethic of hedonism' p. 63. Contemporary consumer society for Bell therefore, is concerned with hedonism, the desire for fun, play and display, to consume and experience pleasure. Described earlier by Riesman (1950), due to the expansion of the service industry and ever increasing images from the mass media, society has migrated from a scarcity psychology to an abundance psychology, of wasteful luxury, consumption and leisure. Or as more recently argued by Bauman (2001), consumers guided by desire must now be 'produced,' ever anew.

2.15 The Carnivalesque

So far it has been argued by a variety of theorists, that consumer culture uses images, signs, and symbolic goods to encourage a narcissistic pleasing of oneself, instead of the interests of others. As described clearly by Lasch (1984), 'postmodern subjects increasingly open themselves up to a wide range of sensations and emotional experiences, with a strong emphasis upon sensory overload, aesthetic immersion and

dreamlike perceptions.' Along the same lines, Featherstone (1991) asserts that contemporary consumer culture seems to be widening the range of contexts and situations in which such behaviour is deemed appropriate and acceptable by nurturing particular consumption activities which generate direct bodily excitement and aesthetic pleasures. According to Bataille (1988), capitalism produces and overproduces images and sites of consumption which endorse the pleasures of excess; *"Economic production should not be linked to scarcity, but to excess. In effect the aim of production becomes destruction and the key problem becomes what to do with the la part maudite (excess of products and goods)…To control growth effectively and manage the surplus, the only solution is to destroy or squander the excess…This is carried through gifts, potlatch, consumption tournaments, carnivals and conspicuous consumption." (Bataille 1988 as cited in Featherstone 1991 p. 21)*

Such consumption activities have also been described by Baudrillard (1988), as the 'aestheticisation of everyday life', where the boundary between art and everyday life, have been blurred. This is exemplified by Urry's (1990) significant account of the postmodern tourist industry. Urry describes that in a simulated postmodern world, tourists no longer consume 'authentic' experiences, but rather just the surface images of things and places. Tourists, argues Urry, do not go to the country anymore to get a real view of the countryside, but rather the post tourist goes knowing that they are getting a second hand experience, that they are merely, playing at the game; *"The post tourist…knows that they will have to queue time and time again, that there will be hassles over foreign exchange, that the glossy brochure is a piece of pop culture, that the apparently authentic local entertainment is as socially contrived as the ethnic bar,*

and that the traditional fishing village could not survive without the income from tourism." (Urry 1990 p.100).

In tracing the evolution of fantastic consumption experiences, Easton et al (1988) have looked at how elements of the pre-industrial carnivalesque tradition has been transformed and displaced in contemporary consumer culture. The popular pre-industrial tradition of carnivals, fairs and festivals, argues Easton, have provided symbolic inversions and transgressions of the official civilised culture. Moreover, Stallybrass and White (1986) who support this, give an example of the pre-industrial fair. According to them, the fair was not only a local market, but also a site of pleasure, where exotic and strange commodities from various parts of the world were displayed in a festive atmosphere that favoured excitement, offering spectacular imagery, bizarre juxtapositions and a melee of strange sounds and images.

In addition, Featherstone (1991), likens fantastic consumption sites to liminal spaces, in which the everyday world is turned upside down, where the 'tabooed and fantastic are possible' p.22. As supported by Chambers (1986), fairs as 'enclaved liminal moments' were treated as such because they were not integrated by the state or the emerging consumer culture industries in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain. Hence, as sites of cultural disorder, Chambers contends, fairs, the city and the seaside resort, became the source of fascination, longing and nostalgia for the middle classes who were developing bodily and emotional controls as part of the civilizing processes (Chambers 1986, 1987).

Hence, as Benjamin (1982) describes, in contemporary consumer culture institutions which currently govern the urban market-place, such as the huge department stores, international exhibitions, as well as theme parks, are said to be modern day settings which possess elements of the carnivalesque tradition. 'In their displays, imagery, simulations and lavish spectacles, contemporary fantastic consumer sites which emerged from the mid nineteenth century onwards are effectively dream worlds'. As described by Benjamin, the people who stroll through these spaces are fed by the ever changing landscape in which objects appear divorced from their context and subject to mysterious connections which are read on the surface of things.

Hence according to Langman (1992), with the growth of the mass media and the proliferation of photographic images and signs, the everyday life of big cities has become aestheticized, where 'art and reality have switched places in an aesthetic hallucination of the real'. Contemporary society then, as cited by Langman, has become a 'depthless' consumer culture, where the routines of everyday life now depend on commodified mass marketing of goods and images to provide emotional gratification to all consumers.

However, taking a positive position, Benjamin (1982) (1989) speaks of the aesthetic potential of mass culture, the liberating and creative possibilities which mass produced consumer commodities afford. Postmodernity therefore, does not have to lead into black hole of insignificance, Benajmin challenges, but rather the creative usage of commodities can be used to achieve a postmodern cut and mix by active, productive consumers. Similarly, Maffesoli (1988) has emphasized the playful potential of the postmodern consumer; *"Within these 'postmodern cities' …the*

contemporary urban flaneurs, or strollers, play with and celebrate the artificiality, randomness, and superficiality of the fantastic melange of fictions and strange values which are to be found in the fashions and popular cultures of cities…a new aesthetic paradigm in which masses of people come together temporarily in fluid postmodern tribes." (Maffesoli 1988 as cited in Featherstone 1991 p.24)

Given the position that contemporary consumers are increasingly fascinated by an ever-widening range of sensations and emotional experiences, several theorists such as Shields (1992), Langman (1992), Hetherington (1992) and more recently Clarke (2003) and Stanley (2005), have been particularly interested in exploring the emergence of these new forms of subjectivity and social practices in specific places such as Las Vegas, luxury hotels, and seaside resorts.

As Shields (1992) indicates, the significance of these new consumption settings is not that their context of characteristic such social activities and spatial practices are new, but that it is the combination of practices and behaviours kept apart according to classic portraits of modernity. In their totality, Sheilds argues, postmodern consumption sites are characterised by a new spatial form, involving a synthesis of leisure and consumption. Earlier, Weber (1968) described this phenomenon as the segmentation of culture and the separation of life into separate value spheres, culture differentiated from economy and both separated from religion.

However, as pointed out by Shields (1992), in the shopping mall, this new cultural form results from two sets of practices and understandings; practices which characterise the spatial performance typical of leisure spaces and spatial practices

which characterise the performance of commercial sites. In these sites, Shields argues, it is the new combination of those consumption activities long thought to be ordinary, mixed with leisure that marks a new phase in the recent history of urban centres and consumerism. *'Everyday shopping activities are foregrounded as if on a stage to be observed by passers-by who may vicariously participate in the bustle and lively activity of consumption without necessarily spending money' (Shields1992 p.7).*

Hence, consumption, which once was regarded as merely part of the reproduction of labour now shares its space with leisure activities, a new marking of interdependence between spaces of subjectivity, media, and commodity consumption (Shields 1992).

2.15.1 Specific Practices Encouraged

Further, changes in the built environment, contends Sheilds, stress various forms of flanerie and leisure, as contemporary buildings are designed to accommodate and host both the combination of leisure and consumption, which is a marked shift from the purposive behaviour which comprised the old consumption sites, such as in the first malls. In explaining this, Shields (1992) gives the example of West Edmonton Mall. As an indoor fantasyland, Shields insists, Edmonton promotes a new representation of space and encourages the elaboration of the corresponding spatial practice of flanerie by copying famous sites and pieces of architecture. As such, Shields (1992) states, shoppers at Edmonton, embrace not only the literal forms of consumption, which involves purchase and economic exchange, but also elaborated practices of browsing, looking, and consuming the purpose-built consumption space.

Further, Shields (1992) maintains that the mall as a kind of play space, has become a fantastic magnet for tourists in which the social imagery opens new visions to consumers and by adopting the malls alternative cosmology users can indulge in a collective fantasy, *"Discrepancies arising from economic class differences are met with compensating cultural inventions, lack of political power is displaced by superior 'performance' in a site which endorses a certain theatricality…A spectacle, then, which is marked by the exchange of looks and gazes, complements the theatrical display of goods and commodities." (Debord, 1970 as cited in Shields1992 p. 7).*

Langman (1992), Hetherington (1992) and more recently Stanley (2005) also support this, that consumption spaces have become host to unique cultural configurations by combining economic and leisure forms which demand new practices and representations and the emergence of new identities. That is, according to Langman, consumption, which might have once been considered merely part of the reproduction of labour, now shares its spaces with leisure activities.

As pointed out previously by Zurcher (1977) individuals, have become more mask-like with mutable selves. Hence, within such settings of social experimentation, consumers experiment with, browse through and 'try on' various identities through the appropriation of symbolic commodities. Likewise, Maffesoli (1988) argues that the multiple identifications of a person in a series of site-specific tribes are the multiple masks of a postmodern persona who wears many hats in different groups and surroundings. This is echoed by Shields (1992) who contends that multi-faceted subjectivity is supported by easy public access to a multiplicity of sites which are

appropriated and become socially important for ‘schmoozing spaces’ which support personal and group identifications.

2.15.2 The Tribalism of Consumption

Moreover, consumption settings which have been described as hosts to unique cultural configurations, are further described by Simmel (1950) as sociations, which ‘emerge through the medium of shared symbolic codes of stylised behaviour, adornment, taste and habitus’. Sociations, however, are not a new sense of community, as 60 years ago Schmalenbach (1977), in observing the German Youth Movement, developed the concept of Bund. According to Schmalenback, a Bund is an intense form of sociation that is inherently unstable and liable to break down very rapidly unless it is consciously maintained through the symbolically mediated interactions of members. Unfixed by institutional parameters, such sociations are achieved rather than ascribed and maintained through the active monitoring of group solidarity (Schmalenbach 1977).

As also pointed out by Shields (1992), postmodern tribes bear similarities to the anthropological use of tribes, involving the elevation of symbolic practices of rituals of initiation and renewal, and a conservative closure against outsiders. But in contrast to primitive tribes, Shields argues, Bundes, are short-lived flashes of sociality whose only sanction against their members is exclusion if interests change from those in the group. ‘Bundes involve creating a medium of symbolic practice through which a particular lifestyle emerges, they are innovative, transgressive and often involve a re-skilling or empowering of the life-worlds of their members’. Thus Bundes, founded

mainly on shared symbols create an intense but transient community. Similarly, Belk (1998) in his study of mountain men found that the buck-skinning community does not achieve a true 'gemeinschaft,' but rather involves a search for solidarity through common fantasy engagement.

2.16 Liminality

Bundes or tribes have also been associated by Zukin (1991) with sites of transition of liminality. As Zukin argues, as thresholds of controlled and legitimated breaks from 'proper behaviour' liminal zones (such as modern day pilgrimages and some forms of contemporary tourism), provide the dramaturgical stage for liminal practices, offering breaks from the routines of everyday life.

Originally, though liminality can be traced by to Van Gennep's (1960) pioneering study of Rites de Passage, which according to Van Gennep, are designated moments of discontinuity in the 'social fabric and in history'. Moreover, as described by Durkheim and Mauss (1963), these moments of 'inbetween-ness', are generally associated with religious experience, when people are in transition from one station of life to another, or from one culturally defined state in the life cycle to another.

Or as Bakhtin (1984) contends, the carnival is the occasion for the enactment of alternative, social arrangements, characterized by a marketplace style of expression, which involves a special form of marketplace speech and gesture, 'frank and free, liberating from norms and decency imposed at other times'. This results, states

Bakhtin, in a temporary suspension of hierarchical rank created during carnival time, of a special type of communication impossible in everyday life.

Underscoring the sense of the liminal then, is the perception of unmediated encounter with other individuals also momentarily stripped of their social status, in the breaking down of individual difference and rank. This experience, argues Bakhtin, fosters a sense of relatively undifferentiated community or even communion, a bonded community against outsiders. Thus, Bakhtin indicates, carnival forms as liminal spaces offer a second world and a second life outside 'officialdom' in which all people are reduced to the common denominator of participants.

Additionally, Percy and Taylor (1997) have more recently observed this special communion at football matches, where football fans typically experience feelings of communion with one another due to the enjoyment of participating in the suspended reality of the match. This levelling tendency was also pointed out by Belk (1998) in his study of contemporary mountain men, *"You might be, you know, dead broke. But when he puts on his buckskins, he's just the same as anybody else. And he may be a doctor or a lawyer or something; when he gets there he doesn't want to be anybody but a buckskinner." (Belk 1998 p.223)*

2.17 Summary

So far some major conceptual developments associated with 'postmodern' theorising have been highlighted and in particular, the notion that contemporary consumers construct their identities with the use of symbolic goods in a variety of leisure

settings. Hence, as it is believed that the evolution of contemporary high-risk pursuits have coincided with broader changes in an 'advanced industrial society.' Thus, a consideration of the above perspectives have sought to provide a useful framework for reviewing studies on contemporary communities formed around liminal or marginal activities and particularly those formed around deliberate risk-taking. However, before exploring what can perhaps be described as phenomenological studies into high-risk behaviour, it is useful to review macro-sociological risk theories as a useful background for later understanding how riders position themselves between their immediate communities and more socially encompassing perspectives.

Chapter 3: The Social Construction of Risk

3.1 Historical Risk Constructions

Societal discourses of risk have changed significantly over the centuries. Hence, theorists interested in risk, such as Lupton, have charted changes in the understanding of risk since its emergence in pre-modern Europe. As described by Lupton (1999), in early pre-modern or rural, pre-industrial society, risk was associated with the possibility of an objective danger. At this time, Lupton argues, risks were incalculable threats attributed to external, supernatural causes, such as storms or floods. Risks were viewed as occurring in nature as an act of God, hence phenomena such as storms were uncontrollable to human intervention.

However, by the seventeenth-century, notions of risk began to change. For example, Lupton (1999) argues, that with the emergence of the enlightenment project the meanings and uses of risk became open to 'scientific scrutiny'. Statistics and probabilities were adopted to measure and predict risk and threats, they therefore became transformed into calculable risks. Risk in this period, argues Lupton, became defined as the probability of an event occurring combined with an accounting for the losses and gains that the event would represent if came to pass. Approaches to risk emerging from fields like engineering, statistics, and economics were concerned with identifying or calculating risks. Hence at this time, the notion that responsibility is associated with risk began to dominate (Hacking 1990).

Also in the nineteenth century, risk was given a positive viewing, which, according to Lupton followed on from the 'Western theme' of man's conquest to measure, predict and control the forces of nature. Having acquired such cultural prominence, theories of risk became justifications for the profits of the successful entrepreneur (Douglas 1985). Here risk was defined as an opportunity cost for the creation of wealth, hence risk-taking was encouraged as necessary for success in business ventures.

Now in contemporary western societies, Lupton states, the concept of risk has become used so commonly in both popular and expert discourses, it can be found in as far-reaching disciplines as medicine, public health, finance, the law, and business and industry. For example, as described by Lupton (1999), there are at least six major categories of risk that predominate the concerns of individuals and institutions in contemporary society. They are environmental risks, lifestyle risks, medical risks, interpersonal risks, economic risks, and criminal risks.

Further, the main exponents to theorise about contemporary risk perceptions as identified by Lupton (1999) include; Mary Douglas, Ulrick Beck/Anthony Giddens and followers of Foucault. Lupton groups these theories according to their common depiction of risk. That is, they more or less agree that risk in contemporary western society has become a central cultural and political concept by which individuals, social groups and institutions are monitored and regulated. However, Douglas as well as Beck and Giddens, who could be characterised as structuralists, appear to take a weak social constructionist approach to risk, taking the position that real risks exist, but risks are also framed within cultural and political contexts, where certain dangers are selected out from others for attention by society and entitled risks.

Poststructuralists on the other hand, such as Foucault's followers, appear to take a strong social constructionist position to risk, where nothing is seen as a risk in itself, but rather risk concepts are always open to change and fluctuation. An exploration of these theories are considered below.

3.2 Mary Douglas: Cultural/Symbolic Perspective

Douglas (1985) (1992), who is a cultural anthropologist, is a pivotal figure in the sociocultural analysis of risk. As the primary influence in the cultural/symbolic perspectives on risk, Douglas demonstrates how social groups and organisations or societies use notions of risk to establish and maintain conceptual boundaries between self and others in order to deal with social deviance and achieve social order. Despite her emphasis on the importance on culture however, Douglas demonstrates a weak rather than strong constructionist approach to risk, that dangers or risks exist in the real world but they are politicised. Thus much of her work on risk seeks to explain why it is that some dangers are identified as risks and others are not (Lupton 1999).

In contrast to purely psychological approaches to understanding risk, Douglas argues that the social influences which influence the selection of particular risks must be taken into consideration, where each type of society has its own custom-built ethical/moral system. So according to Douglas, when people decide to engage in activities they know to be labelled risky, they do so, not because of weakness of understanding but because their values are formed within particular cultural contexts. Therefore, for Douglas, culture helps people to understand risks and calculate their consequences "*A community sets up the actors' model of the world and its scale of*

values by which different consequences are reckoned grave or trivial." (Douglas 1985 P.69)

Douglas takes risk to be a contemporary western strategy for dealing with danger, hence emphasising the political use of the concept of risk. Douglas (1992) argues that risk is intimately related to notions of politics, particularly in relation to accountability, responsibility and blame. That any particular risk given attention in a culture at any time are those which are connected with legitimating moral principles, where 'every death, accident and every misfortune is chargeable to someone's account'. In other words, risks or disasters are turned to political accounts where someone unpopular must be found to be blamed. Risk for Douglas then, is a modern day concept replacing older ideas about the causes of misfortune "*Concepts such as sin, were once used to provide explanations for misfortune, are now discredited. In their place is the modern, sanitised discourse of risk." (Douglas 1992 p. 24)*

Risk and other related words like impurity, argues Douglas, is used as a means of maintaining the moral and social order, a way of dealing with polluting people who are culturally positioned as on the margins of society. This positioning occurs not just with organisations but also with social groups and individuals. Certain classes of people are singled out as likely hazards or being at risk and therefore require control to bring them back to conforming to moral values.

Further to Douglas (1992) work on risk, is a discussion of western societies' preoccupation with technological and environmental hazards. According to Douglas, the reason why has risk become prominent at this point in history is due to scientific

claims but also because there is a heightened sensitivity to issues of danger. The current concern with risk is a product of globalisations, which has resulted in a new sense of vulnerability in being a part of a world system.

Overall, Douglas's work is an important approach to more realist perspectives of risk. Her cultural/symbolic approach emphasises that risk judgements are political and morally constructed through cultural frameworks of understanding, demonstrating a fundamentally shared, cultural and symbolic approach to risk.

3.3 Ulrich Beck / Anthony Giddens: Risk Society Perspective

Beck (1992) and also Giddens (1990) (1991) have been widely recognised for their 'risk society' perspective. The focus of their work is on how 'risk' is generated and dealt with at the macro-structural level of society, the political implications of this and the social conflicts that arise. Both see the concept of risk as a central concern in the contemporary era, emerging from the processes of modernisation. According to Beck (1992) and similarly Giddens (1990), risks have changed in their character in late modern society, having greater consequences in their impact. As a result, individuals in contemporary western societies are depicted to live in a 'risk society', where the production of wealth has been accompanied by risks, which have multiplied as an outcome of modernisation. Hence, due to the proliferation of risks, both Beck and Gidden's argue, western societies have become preoccupied with the prevention or minimisation of risks, where debates and conflicts over risks have begun to dominate many spheres of society including public, political and private arenas. Hence,

individuals living in these societies, they contend, have a greater awareness of risk and are forced to deal with risks on an everyday basis.

Beck and Giddens' approach could therefore be characterised as a weak social constructionist position to risk, where real risks exist, but the nature and causes of risks are conceptualised and dealt with differently in contemporary western societies compared with previous eras. So although they take a realist approach to risk, the social and cultural processes by which understandings and perceptions of risk are mediated are also acknowledged.

For example, Beck (1995) points out there is a difference between a risk itself and a public perception of it, where risks are social constructs which are strategically defined, covered up or dramatised in the public sphere with the help of scientific material supplied for the purpose "*Natural-scientific objectivism is useful because it identifies risks using technical powers of observation, measurement and calculation: hazards require natural-scientific categories and measuring instruments in order to be perceivable at all. The weakness of objectivism, however, is that in its quest for neutral objectivity it fails to recognize the ways in which scientific facts, like other views on risk, are situated and interpreted in cultural and political contexts." (Beck 1995 p. 91, 162)*

Beck's analysis compares contemporary risks to that of risks in early industrialisation, where risks as understood in early modernity were determinable and calculable. However, Beck argues, the processes of modernist risk calculation fails in contemporary risk society because the risks of late modern society are not easily

calculable due to their non-localised nature and potential long-term effects. As a consequence precise risk calculations are impossible but rather only various scenarios of risk can be developed with varying degrees of plausibility, such as global warming, which is subject to expert dispute (Beck 1995).

Moreover, Beck (1992) and similarly Gidden's (1990) point out that the dangers in contemporary societies are principally environmental problems such as air and water pollution, which they say differs significantly from previous eras. The magnitude and global nature of risks is such that risks are becoming more and more difficult to quantify, prevent and avoid. Beck (1992) argues that science itself fails in response to the large-scale nature of contemporary hazards, as events now have far more wide-reaching potentially disastrous effects than in previous eras, such as a malfunction in a nuclear power plant may kill or harm millions *"In early days of industrialisation, risks and hazards were evident to the senses, they could be smelt, touched, tasted or served with the naked eye. In contrast, many of the major risks today escape perception; they are localised in the sphere of physical and chemical formulas. These risks exist in scientific knowledge rather than every day experience." (Beck 1992 p.21)*

Due to the changes in risks themselves in late modernity, Beck believes that scientists have lost their authority in relation to risk assessments and lay people have become sceptical about science because they are aware that scientific knowledge about risk is incomplete and often contradictory.

Giddens (1994) in particular, theorises about the uncertainty with which individuals approach life in contemporary western societies. According to Giddens, uncertainty

springs from the realisation that the claims of modernity for human progress have been shown to be not as utopian as once was thought. As a result, Giddens argues, people have become increasingly cynical about the claims to progress offered by traditional modernity "*Late-modernity is characterised by doubt about the validity of knowledge, acknowledging that all knowledge is open to revision. Greater knowledge has led to greater uncertainty, the fact that experts frequently disagree becomes familiar terrain for almost everyone." (Giddens 1994 p.186).*

In summary, although they developed their ideas separately, Beck and Giddens have much in common in their risk society perspective (Lupton 1999). Both theorists demonstrate that concerns about risk pervade modern society creating new forms of relating to each other, including experts and institutions. They identify a greater awareness on the part of lay people that the clams of experts about risk are often uncertain or clash with each other, and the willingness on lay people's part to challenge experts, governments and industry in relation to risk concerns.

3.4 Michel Foucault: Governmentality Perspective

According to Lupton (1999), Foucault did not discuss risk at any length in his writings, but his ideas have been applied to the analysis of risk by a number of his followers who are interested in the ways in which risk operates in late modern society (such as Ewald, 1991 and Gordon, 1991). Similar to Beck and Giddens, those who have adopted Foucault's ideas see risk as a sociocultural phenomena in which the intensification of the discussion of risk is an outcome of the social changes occurring due to modernisation.

Foucault, who takes a strong social constructionist approach in his writings, places a particular emphasis on the ways in which discourses, strategies, practices, and institutions around a concept such as risk, serve to bring it into being. Risk in this sense is characterised as purely a construct rather than as a thing in itself.

Therefore, as pointed out by Lupton (1999), an important insight offered by Foucauldian theory and its relation understanding risk, is Foucault's governmentality perspective. Governmentality, according to Foucault (1984), is a form of social regulation and control. Traced by Foucault to sixteenth century Europe, governmentality came into being due to breakdown in the feudal system and the development of administrative states in its place. By the eighteenth century, argues Foucault, the European states began to think of their citizens in terms of populations, or a social body requiring intervention, management and protection so as to maximise wealth, welfare and productivity. *"Such features of populations as demographic estimates, marriage and fertility statistics, life expectation tables and mortality rates became central to the project of a technology of population." (Foucault 1984 p. 279).*

Foucault, emphasizes the role of expert knowledge as central to governmentality, providing the guidelines and advice by which populations are surveyed, compared against norms, trained to conform with these norms and rendered productive. Risk from this perspective is viewed as a governmental strategy of regulatory power by which populations and individuals are monitored and managed and it is through these efforts that particular social groups or populations are identified as 'at risk' requiring intervention (Ewald 1991).

Moreover, Foucault indicates that fundamental to the strategies of governmentality are individuals' compliance with the interests of the state. So rather than being externally policed by agents of the state, individuals are believed to police themselves in pursuit of their own best interests. Interested in self-improvement, the self-governing individual seeks out and adopts advice from institutional governmental agencies and from experts who have problematised areas of life as pervaded by risk (Gordon 1991). Therefore, in adopting Foucault's position, in late modern society, risk avoiding behaviour can be viewed as a moral enterprise relating to issues of self-control and self-improvement, 'a form of self-government, involving the acceptance and internalisation of the objectives of institutional government'. In essence then, Foucault's governmentality perspective demonstrates how risk discourses contribute to the constitution of a particular type of subject, the self-regulating moral agent who voluntarily takes up governmental imperatives.

3.5 Summary

Much theorising about risk has been published in recent years. For example, Douglas, Beck and Giddens, and followers of Foucault have been particularly influential in examining the concept. Such views on risk have adopted a broadly macro-sociological approach emphasizing the nature of risk at a political and structural level. However, as noted by Lupton and Tulloch (2002), such 'grand theories' have sought to generalise about risk but have not sought to test them out empirically at a more phenomenological level; *"Broad tendential speculations are advanced about infrastructural and organisational processes that have little grounded in the actual processes of institutional and everyday life." (Lupton and Tulloch p.319).*

Therefore the discussion in the next chapter seeks to understand how lay persons respond to ‘risk’ in their everyday lives, with a particular emphasis on those who participate in ‘voluntary risk-taking behaviour’.

Chapter 4: Phenomenological Studies into Deliberate Risk-Taking

4.1 'Risk' in Everyday Lives

The perspectives reviewed thus far, have looked at how risk is used by those in powerful positions as a means of monitoring and regulating its members. Although these insights have helped theorise about contemporary views on risk, they neglect the diverse ways in which individual people respond to risk within their everyday lives. Thus, understanding the meanings ascribed to dangerous activities by those who participate in them remains under-examined in much of the literature. However, there is a growing body of research that has sought to investigate the ways in which lay people make sense of, and respond to, specific risks. As argued by Lupton and Tullock (2002), lay knowledge of risk tend to be highly contextual, localised and individualised and reflexively aware of diversity and change.

Hence those more interested in phenomenological approaches have explored the previously overlooked situated meanings given to risk. A variety of studies have therefore turned their attention towards the 'lived experience' of high-risk performers, of how specific actors or subgroups within certain sociocultural settings construct their risk understandings as part of their interactions with others, albeit within the broader frame of social structures. So rather than focusing on macro-structures organising and constraining meanings of risk, these studies explore the diverse ways in which lay actors draw upon their own situated knowledge in constructing risk understandings "*People's perceptions and understandings of risk are established over a lifetime of personal experiences as well as their location within social milieu and*

networks of communication, these include their use of the mass media and conversations with others as well as expert knowledges." (Wynne 1989 as cited in Lupton and Tullock 2002 p. 319).

Through use of research methods such as ethnography, qualitative inquiries have sought to highlight the embeddedness of risk perceptions in people's everyday lives (Haigh and Crowther 2001). Interested in understanding the 'lived experiences' of risk-takers, these approaches encompass a wide variety of perspectives and disciplines; varying from those which focus solely on sociocultural factors to those which incorporate the more psychological, emotive or embodied aspects which are believed to contribute to high-risk consumption.

Indeed this is also the position taken in the current study. That risk-taking involves a complex interplay between sensual or emotional apprehending but also a reflexive understanding of the discursive notions associated with high-risk activities. Hence, the researcher adopts what Ussher (1997) describes as a 'material-discursive-intrapsychic perspective.' That is, the high-risk experience is explored both at the level of the material body, such as through the physical act of motorcycling, through the associated emotive states, but also at the level of discourse (that the meanings which surround the experience are dependent on and constructed within the social and discursive context in which the person is situated). By considering both aspects, the thesis moves towards to a more comprehensive level of analysis and one which hopes to provide a more meaningful reflection of the experiences of those who take up the high-risk activity.

The following review of literature then explores findings from various studies into adventurous leisure activities, incorporating studies which have focused mainly on sociocultural factors to those which have also sought to incorporate the more psychological, emotive or embodied aspects.

4.2 Escape

One of the key features highlighted with much research into adventurous activities is the notion that the high-risk pursuit affords an escape from the rules which govern the 'profane' world of everyday life. Theorists Duerden (1978), Ewen (1988), Cushman (1990), Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and Giddens (1991) assert that the high value placed on high-risk experiences is a reaction against the commercialisation of meaning, segmentation and specialisation of roles in the work place. Similarly, Arnould and Price (1993) discovered that the intense, positive experience of white water rafting, provides meaning and perspective for individual's lives, themes which they say participants see as deeply frustrated values in the everyday work place. Indeed, Schouten and McAlexander (1995) have additionally observed in their study of new bike riders, that liberation and escape are core values of motorcycling. This includes liberation from confinement, cars, offices, schedules and relationships. More recently, Edsenor (2000) found that fell walkers enjoy their activity as it avoids the rules, contraptions, and stresses of daily life in the city. That fell walking is the '*perfect tonic for a jaded mind and a cure for urban depression.' (Wainwright 1969 as cited in Edsenor 2000 p. 84).*

Providing an ‘out’ from everyday patterns of thought and actions that are felt to be limiting or oppressive, risk-taking can help to negate the stresses of daily life. As Sheibe (1986) contends, sport provides an ‘euphoric release from the drudgery, tedium, and gracelessness in ordinary domestic life’.

Similarly, Celsi et al (1993) found within the culture of skydiving, that participants seek not only the freedom to traverse the sky to fly but also freedom from everyday cares. Where in the case of skydiving, this sense of freedom derives from the intensity of involvement required to carry out complex manoeuvres, or for novices, simply through achieving stability in the air. Celsi describes how jumpers at all experience levels report a loss of self consciousness gained through free fall, as participants no longer think about any problems; *“Freedom, I think of that more than the thrill. You get a lot of fun out of it, but there is something fast-paced. You’re thinking in split seconds. Everything seems to be in a time warp. Everything slows down. It’s total concentration. To me it’s completely relaxed because everything else is off your mind.” (Celsi et al 1993 p. 7).*

4.3 Flow

According to Celsi (1993), high-risk sports such as skydiving, involve total absorption, providing participants with not only thrill and excitement but also a sense of involvement that transcends mundane experience, where skydivers experience their activity as involving no sense of time, just a ‘holistic oneness’ that makes them feel good and somehow changed. This experience, when a situation demands total participation from the individual is described by Celsi (1993) as ‘flow’, a transcendent

state where self, self-awareness, behaviour, and context form a united singular experience. This state of total involvement or 'flow', occurs when one moment flows holistically into the next without conscious intervention (Mitchell 1983 and Celsi et al 1993). In this sense flow is transcendent and typically recognised by the experiencing individual as such only when the state is diminished. Earlier, Maslow (1961) and Csikszentmihalyi (1975) found that the flow experience is the manifestation of a person's 'true self', unconstrained temporally of convention or by self-awareness.

Similarly Robinson (1989) and also Jarvis (1997) argue that the activity of walking detaches the individual from their place in the social structure, that the 'inauthentic self can be case off and the 'primitive', more 'natural', childish sensibilities buried under the over-socialised urban individual is allowed to emerge (Robson 1989) p. 17. Therefore, for those who participate in adventurous activities, flow is said to provide a sense of heightened sensory awareness, a restoration of 'authentic' being, a higher state of consciousness or intellectual focus (Edsenor 2000).

As Csikszentmihalyi (1975) argues, the flow experience is different from awareness in everyday reality because it offers the participant ordered rules which make action and the evaluation of action automatic and hence unproblematic. This is because in flow the actor does not stop to evaluate the feedback; action and reaction have been so well practiced as to be automatic, that is during flow, the person is too involved with the experience to reflect on it. However, when contradictory actions are made, the 'self' reappears to negotiate between the conflicting definitions of what needs to be done and flow is interrupted. Because the flow activity has clear and non-

contradictory rules, people who perform in it can temporarily forget their identity and its problems. As a result, the individual finds the activity 'intrinsically' rewarding.

4.4 Self Actualisation

Similarly, in describing the edgework experience, Lyng (1990), borrowing from Mead (1934), argues that the person's true self the 'I,' the continually emerging spontaneous, impulsive and unpredictable part of the self is heightened in the high-risk pursuit, whereas the 'me', the persons social, reflective self, is momentarily silenced. Thus, according to Lyng, the high-risk experience produces a sense of self-actualisation where participants experience themselves as instinctively acting entities which leaves them with a purified and magnified sense of self, alive and pure. People feel self-actualised subsequently, when their behaviour is not coerced by the normative or structural constraints of their social environment, untouched by socialising influences. Feelings of personal authorship for their actions, individual's experience flow as a unifying flowing from one moment to the next where and there is little distinction between self and environment, between stimulus and response. *"The process of "imaginative rehearsal", which under normal circumstances serves as the basis of reflective consciousness, is disrupted by the inability of people to focus on specific respondents to their actions. As ongoing interaction between self and other breaks down, the "me" recedes and leaves in its absence a residual, non-social self." (Lyng 1990 p. 877).*

Thus, as Lyng argues, individuals typically find it difficult to describe the high-risk activity because the reflective self is simply not present at the height of the experience.

Hence, for flow to happen, Celsi et al (1993) indicates, the context and person must interact in a balanced recursive fashion. That is, flow is most likely to occur when a context exists that pushes the individual to near their physical and mental limits, but without overwhelming them. As exemplified by Csikszentmihalyi (1975), individuals at any given moment are aware of a finite number of opportunities which challenge them to act and at the same time they are also aware of their skills or their ability to cope with the demands of the context. Therefore, when a person is bombarded with demands they feel they cannot meet, anxiety occurs. Likewise if skills are greater then boredom will follow. For flow to occur consequently, individuals perceived opportunities for action must be seen as being evenly matched to their capabilities. Therefore, an unchallenging context will not motivate total involvement; *'a pace too slow in a flow activity begets sluggishness of mind and at once makes an end of all your fine susceptibilities.' (Barron 1875 p. 10).* Likewise, an overwhelming context will break down the individual and produce anxiety, in this sense the components of flow are relative and are treated as such by participants in dramatic high-risk activities.

4.5 An Addiction

It also appears, that high-risk activities may contain addictive properties, what Ogilvie (1973) describes as stimulus addiction; the 'cyclical need to extend oneself to the

absolute physical, emotional and even intellectual limits as quest to escape the bland, tensionless feelings associated with everyday living.' Similarly, as Brannigan et al (1983) discovered with hang-gliders and Celsi et al (1993) with sky-diving, due to the repetitive concentrated effort in such activities this produces a high or elation which can become habit forming. Brannigan, for example, found that hang-gliders experience a rush from the activity, a moment in another dimension, a different reality, heightened perception, or a hyper-reality; *"When I fly I get very high. It's all that concentration, all that concentration on flying plus the adrenaline." (Brannigan et al 1983 p.43).*

4.6 Flow Interruptions

Due to the fragile nature of flow, theorists such as Csikszentmihalyi (1975) and Edsenor (2000) have pointed out that flow is difficult to maintain for any length of time without at least some momentary interruptions. For example, Edsenor (2000) in exploring the activity of walking, discovered that bodily interruptions such as hunger, stomach cramps, limbs that 'go to sleep,' and muscle fatigue may foreground an overwhelming awareness of the body that can dominate consciousness and intrude flow. Further, Edsenor also found that the environment can interrupt flow, such as rocky terrain or poor climate which sometimes impose itself upon the body *'climbing over an unstable and swaying fence, the walker may become suddenly aware of the body's mass and weight' p. 101*. This was also noted by Jarivs (1997) who, in exploring fell-walking, made the point that twelve hours is a long time not to be distracted by various entertainments or strenuous demands.

However, it has been noted by a variety of theorists, that the difficulties present in adventurous leisure activities are essential to the experience. According to Sennett (1994), the body comes to life when coping with difficulty and is roused by the resistance which it experiences. *'Moments of confrontation, of self-displacement, are vital to preserve openness to stimuli, to awaken the senses, and an acceptance of impurity, difficulty, and obstruction is part of the very experience of liberty.' (Sennett 1994 p. 309-310).*

4.7 A Balance of Control and Risk

A key aspect of the high-risk experience then, is control over the relationship between the individual's abilities and the demands of the context. For example, Dember (1960) found that climbing offers a high complexity of values with what he describes as 'graduated pacers.' Similarly, Celsi et al (1993) argues that skydivers purposely plan jumps that will test their skills by setting tasks that will force them to perform to the utmost of their abilities, with the idea of performing within a range of optimal tension. A 'set piece' that is enacted on a specified stage with a clearly defined beginning, middle, and end. As a 'set piece,' the time, location and players are carefully selected. Goals and outcomes are defined and agreed on and the script is rehearsed, but with the tacit understanding that there is room for 'ad-libbing' when necessary.

Certain necessary risks are accepted, continues Celsi, but participants aim to limit the uncertainties by jumping in good weather and by ritualistically checking their equipment. Skydivers therefore, carefully create a context of controlled uncertainty

as a stage within which they can act. This is believed to result in the flow experience as the flow state occurs within a stimulus field that is limited and scripted by the individual (Celsi et al 1993).

Given that control is central to the high-risk pursuit, the context must afford the participant some degree of creative control in order to attain mastery, self-efficacy and flow. Hence, what participants seek are controllable risk contexts where their abilities can be challenged. Accordingly, an important feature uniting participants in high-risk activities is the use of specific individual capacities and in particular the opportunity to exercise control and for the development and use of skills.

As Walle (1997) and more recently Weber (2001) argue, it is the quest for insight, skill and knowledge (rather than risk) that underlines adventure. Indeed, in Lyng's (1990) earlier study into skydiving, he found that skydivers are particularly preoccupied with their own and others' skills to the extent that status hierarchy within the group tends to centre on this characteristic.

4.8 Edgework

However, according to Lyng (1990) (2005), many participants like performing on the edge of their abilities, to explore the limits of both the context and their ability to control it. Described as 'edgework' by Lyng (1990), he proposes the concept as an alternative framework to account for participation in high-risk activities, where the archetypical edgework experience is one in which the individual's failure to meet the challenge at hand will result in death or, at the very least, debilitating injury.

Lyng is not the first to use the concept of edgework though. Originally, the idea came from the journalist Hunter S. Thompson, in his journalistic account of drug experimentation. Thompson applies the term edgework to a variety of risky human activities. The essential nature of edgework, described by Thompson, is negotiating the boundaries between life and death, consciousness and unconsciousness, and sanity and insanity. (Thompson 1971, 1979). Essentially, as described by Lyng (1990), all activities that come under the edgework concept have one feature in common; they all involve a clearly observable threat to one's physical and mental wellbeing or one's sense of ordered existence. It is this ability which Lyng believes that edgeworkers value most, a chance for the development and use of skills in negotiating the edge, where the intent is to see how far one can go and still successfully negotiate life-and-death situations.

4.9 Illusion of Control

Edgeworkers therefore, typically seek to define the limits of human performance and to master a situation which verges on complete chaos (Lyng 1990). Accordingly, edgework is believed to create more powerful feelings of competence than other types of skilful activities because it offers the opportunity to control the seemingly uncontrollable. Hence, the degree of danger involved in edgework is seemingly managed due to feelings of control and the resultant absence of worry. This can be attributed to the illusion of control as described by Langer (1975) which occurs when factors from skill situations such as competition, choice, familiarity or involvement are introduced into chance settings, making people feel inappropriately confident.

However, in the case of skydivers, Celsi et al (1993) found, that experienced skydivers have a fairly accurate idea of their ability level and what is required of a particular jump and they are therefore, under no illusion regarding the risk of injury or death. According to Celsi, the illusion of control does not apply to high-risk activities but rather, death and injury are part of the risk that participants knowingly take. Injuries in this light occur as a result of a calculated risk rather than the illusion of control. However, Celsi does acknowledge that perhaps if this illusion does occur, it would probably happen with moderately experienced jumpers who have earned autonomy, but unlike the expert hasn't experienced the full variance of external conditions and may be surprised by their severity.

4.10 Omnipotence

Lyng and Snow (1986) also believe the edgework experience produces a heightened state within the individual. Where due to having an altered perception and consciousness, participants experience themselves as instinctively acting entities which leaves them with a purified and magnified sense of self, 'alive and pure'. Typically participants may feel fear in anticipatory phases, but then this fear gives way to a sense of exhilaration and omnipotence, of 'all powerful, mastery' p. 860. This is also what Cloke and Perkins (1998) found with long-distance and competitive walking, that like with adventure sports, the achievement of the activity results in feelings of self satisfaction and personal growth which is highly rewarding.

Further, Lyng points out that the focused perception in edgework also correlates with a sense of cognitive control over the essential objects in the environment or a feeling

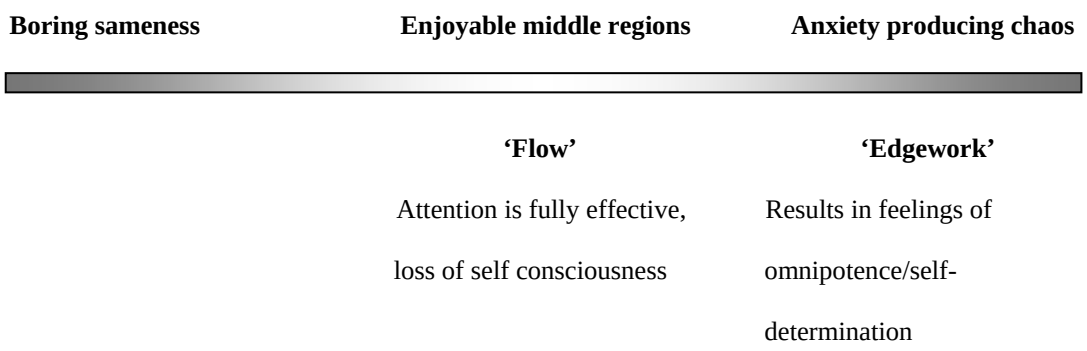
of identity with these objects. For an example of this within motorcycling, Pierson (1997) reports to feeling as one with her Moto Guzzi Lario; *"As often as not, the fear would glide effortlessly from my body to that of my motorcycle. Then it was not I who had a terminal condition, but the Lario…On some especially grand occasion, I would be riding along…pressed by the heavy certainty that both of us were dying at once." (Pierson 1997 p. 180).*

4.11 Edgework Compared with Flow

This state of focused concentration on a limited set of stimuli accompanied by a feeling of personal transcendence and the merging of the individual with the objects at hand obviously bears resemblance to Celsi et al's previous description of the flow experience. However, Lyng (1990) argues that flow differs. Every conscious experience lies on a continuum, describes Lyng, from boring sameness at one end to enjoyable diversity in the middle to anxiety producing chaos at the other end and it is in the enjoyable middle regions of experience that one's attention is fully effective.

This optimal state of involvement with the experience or 'flow' is in contrast to the other extremes. As Lyng points out, if the flow experience is in the middle regions of the continuum, this cannot be edgework, as edgework involves the extreme state and anxiety producing chaos. Flow, according to Lyng, produces loss of self-consciousness whereas edgework stimulates a heightened sense of self and a feeling of omnipotence. Therefore, as Lyng describes, the difference between the two might refer to different dimensions of the same phenomenon (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Conscious Experience Continuum



4.12 Edgework Status

As noted by Lyng (1990) it is held within the sky-diving community, that those who skydive best, are those who come as close to the edge as possible without going over it. The specific aptitudes required for this type of competence involves the ability to avoid being paralysed by fear and the capacity to focus one's attention and actions on what is most crucial for survival (Lyng 1990).

However, according to Lyng, many participants regard this special survival capacity as an innate ability, which is held only by an elite few. Therefore, due to this elite status, edgeworkers find a communal spirit with one another, of 'a like-mindedness based on skill and mental toughness'. (Lyng 1990). As described by Lyng and Snow (1986), the special skill required of people who engage in this kind of activity is having the finesse to get as close to the edge as possible without actually going over it. Wolfe (1979) earlier expressed this theme in his book 'The Right Stuff', where the most important criterion of status among test pilots is the ability to maintain control of a situation in which an aircraft of unknown flight characteristics is pushed to its aerodynamic limit. Therefore, according to Wolfe, an individual's membership in the

elite cadre of hot pilots depends on repeated demonstrations that one possesses 'the right stuff'; *"…the experience of pushing a high performance aircraft to its limits…(is) an opportunity to exercise an extremely subtle, finely honed ability, to control a situation that is very nearly uncontrollable... an ability that is innate and therefore, the basis of an elite designation." (Lyng and Snow 1986 p.170).*

In a wider context then, participation in 'edgework' can afford status among like-minded practitioners. This phenomenon has been described by Lyng and Snow (1986) as an intense communal spirit produced from surviving a difficult or dangerous activity. For example, such circumstances as working a craft through dangerous rapids is said to create a heightened sense of emotional intensity that links participants, which has been described by Turner (1972) as a sense of communitas. This is also what Arnould and Price (1993) found with river rafting, that participants reported a particular type of bonding due to surviving a frightening experience. Communitas is therefore heightened in exposure to hardship and discomfort, bonding participants through emotional intensity and heightened sensuality.

Furthermore, communitas is believed to constitute a sharing of transcendent information. For example, while flow is believed to be transcendent at the individual level of experience, common knowledge of the flow experience, argues Turner (1972), creates a particular type of bond between members. As such, Turner describes communitas as 'shared flow' or what Dewey (1934) has previously described as a 'brief ecstatic state and sense of union'. The sense of shared flow in communitas is illustrated clearly by Schouten and McAlexander's (1995) study of new bikers; *"…the most sublime manifestation of brotherhood lies in the shared*

experience of riding…with a large group of other bikers; the formation moves like a single organism, the sound of a single motorcycle is caught up in a symphony of pipes, and individual identity is subsumed by the group." (Schouten and McAlexander 1995 p. 51).

Similarly Edsensor (2000) found with the walking activity of 'rambling', that the synchronised pace of the walk constitutes a communality amongst participants; *'rambling retains these values of companionship and shared experiences above the development of individualistic sensibilities and is a manifestation of a collective corporeality, a body which draws the disdainful comments exemplified above but is considered a source of collective strength by ramblers." p. 90.*

This experience of equal individuals bonded together by their activity and suspended from 'outside reality', appears similar therefore to the previous discussion on 'liminality'. As Turner (1972) points out, the experience of liminality is a socially unifying one. This is further, supported by Stewart (1986) who argues that a key aspect of liminality is that it increases the emotional intensity of links among persons widely scattered and dissimilar in ordinary life but who share a common orientation.

4.13 Phatic Communion

Another element which ties together the high-risk community is a sharing of technical language. For example, Celsi et al (1993), found that within the skydiving community, comprehension of the skydiving language itself is held in high esteem and is a sign of cultural membership, understood by insiders, giving the group fluidity

and cohesion. This was found previously by Douglas and Isherwood (1979), that naming and labelling are fundamental cultural processes, where terminology provides cultural categories that 'stabilise the flux inherent in brute experience'.

This kind of 'insiders' language, or phatic communion, as first noted by Fishman (1960), is most likely to occur among groups who share intimate and heightened experiences. Thus the concept of phatic communion appears to capture the special communication between members of liminal groups who, in particular share ritualistic experiences. Hence, Fishman's notion of language glorification suggests the transcendence of the special communication to the realm of the sacred. That is, the communication both verbal and non-verbal that constitutes phatic communion is not only a means by which individuals communicate the cabala of the group but is in itself is an aspect of communitas. Phatic communion is therefore seen as transcendent itself as it provides a special language that describes the subculture and binds its members; *"There is a magic indeed in a language whose differential codifiability makes it peculiarly suitable for the expression of an individual's most central personal and cultural experiences." (Fishman 1960 p. 329).*

4.14 Edgework Rituals

Several commentators have also indicated that high-risk activities require a variety of ritualised, symbolic practices for group maintenance and a sense of communitas. In particular, as noted by Lyng, edgework involves rituals of planning. For example, Lyng (1990) indicates that planning is a particularly important part of skydiving, in which participants actually spend more time preparing for a jump than making it,

where in the case of skydiving, besides packing their canopies and checking their equipment, participants also spend a great deal of time working out the exact sequence of formations. Therefore, Lyng argues, the methodical almost ritualistic character of these preparatory activities suggest that they are not merely ancillary to the essential experience of free fall but rather they are integral parts of the total experience. The ritualistic aspects of motorcycling can be seen in Pierson's description of her pre-trip preparation; *"…before a ride, all talisman must be ordered: my watch on my right wrist, my mother's gold 1952 class ring…on my right little finger, the same tube of lipstick and crumpled dollar bill always zipped into the pocket of my jacket. There is no god who guides the universe, alas, so I know this is useless, but it has worked so far. And what is not broken should not be fixed, or even breathed on." (Pierson 1997 p. 220).*

Rituals can also play a transformative potential in edgework, such as rites of passage as demonstrated by Lyng and Snow (1986) and Celsi et al (1993). Acceptance, into the sky diving community, as described by Lyng and Snow, are marked by rites of passage, which require that participants pass a number of important milestones in the transition from novice to expert, and each milestone is celebrated in ritual fashion. For example, in the skydiving community, Lyng and Snow found that each milestone was marked by a formal symbolic acknowledgement of the occasion. Whenever a jump had been completed, the participant had to purchase a case of beer and return it to the drop zone at the end of the day. Further, for the more significant events the beer was used as a sanctifying liquid in a formal ceremony; *"In this ceremony the initiate has to kneel facing westward towards California, where the most significant events in skydiving has taken place, while an experienced jumper proclaims the*

significance of the accomplishment. Then the initiate is doused with the case of beer they have just purchased. Only those jumpers who already possess the designation can act as beer sprayers." (Lyng and Snow1986 p. 165).

Similarly, transforming rituals act as rites of passage for other high-risk communities, where symbolically, rituals enhance the transformative potential for participants. Further, rites of passage may also involve pilgrimages to sacred sites which offer ritualistic life-changing experiences, mark the symbolic death of one type of person to the rebirth of a new person of another rank and type. This is also what Noy (2004) found with backpackers, that religious-pilgrimage tourists experiences were central to their narratives of self-change.

A classic example of a sacred site within motorcycling is the T.T. races. Held on the Isle of Man since 1907, over 40,000 fans travel to the island for two weeks in order to take part in a festival of motorcycling racing. Open to the general public on 'Mad Sunday', pilgrims have described the experience as 'pure magic', recognising some of the world's greatest motorcycling legends such as Joey Dunlop and Mike Hailwood have also ridden on the historic mountain course.

4.15 High-Risk Identity Construction

With sustained participation in high-risk activities, Celsi et al (1993) believes that this affords the individual the opportunity to construct a new high-risk identity. Sarbin (1986) argues that high-risk activities in particular, provide a well-defined context for personal change as well as clear-cut means to organise a new and sometimes central

identity. For example, according to Celsi, rites of passage are evident within skydiving, marked by specific guidelines and requirements for their attainment. Hence, rewards to privilege and status are direct and attainable with effort, where one becomes recognised solely for their overall achievement and mastery of the sport. This is clearly exemplified in early work by Cantor et al (1986) who argues that high-risk identity construction requires commitment to 'sets of strategies', where the path to achievement is carefully scripted with well-understood benchmarks for evaluation of performance.

Further, Celsi et al (1993) contends that maintaining a high-risk identity is less problematic than other kinds of identity constructions because the criteria that participants are judged on are not only visible but well defined, involving steps of achievement which act as reference points for participants to assess their position within the culture. As previously observed by Brannigan et al (1983), for hang-gliders, performance within the sport is the most important type of social interaction that takes place between participants. Accordingly, increasing expertise is rewarded with respect and admiration, as the more one participates in the high-risk activity the more one accumulates information regarding the ways and means of the culture. Important to developing a high-risk identity then, is the development of technical skill for both personal satisfaction as well as social status within the community; *"You get axed off (excluded) a load because you don't have enough jumps."(Celsi et al 1993 p. 11).*

High-risk performers, concerned with skill development and with the perceptions others have of their abilities, desire social recognition for technical skill and for

competence. Further, Brannigan et al (1983) argue that attaining mastery not only differentiates the individual from novices but also from non-participants. This gives the participant a measure of status and attention within the high-risk community as well as establishing a clear boundary between actor and non-participating audiences; *"The neoteric hang-glider discovers a new high-risk status attributed by those outside the subculture, and perpetuated by the media. For many hang-gliders this status brings with it ego-gratifying attention." (Brannigan et al 1983 p.41).*

Moreover, Celsi et al (1993) found that skill development and achievement are key aspects of self-efficacy, where learning to create and manage risk contexts is inherently empowering, as it builds self-confidence and contributes to the construction of a new high-risk identity based on the high-risk subculture. More recently, this is supported by Tulloch and Lupton (2003) who argue that risk-takers use their activity as a means to prove their self worth.

4.16 Risk Acculturation

Brannigan et al (1983) and later Celsi et al (1993) additionally propose that the development of a high-risk identity requires 'deviance neutralisation'. In this transformation, the participant goes through a habituation period where the high-risk activity once seen as extraordinary or deviant is gradually perceived as the norm. This process produces a corresponding change in the individual's self-concept as well as a change in their interaction with outsiders. For example, Celsi, who tracks this process of deviance neutralisation, found that skydivers, in the beginning of their involvement, rationalise their behaviour to outsiders due to their changing self-

concept. However, as the high-risk identity develops, the participant gradually assumes the ideology of the subculture which places the properties of the behaviour within the realm of the normal. The result of this process produces an immunisation toward high-risk consumption, as the participant moves from outsider to insider. Thus with full acculturation, Celsi explains, the participant manages the high-risk context and attains insider status and the risk experience becomes normalised, fear recedes and they view skydiving as a sport to be enjoyed just like another sport.

Brannigan et al (1983) notes this process of deviance neutralisation with hang-gliders, where the process minimises the gliders sense of danger in the sport as they permeate the subcultural barrier. Hence, the high-glider supported by the other sport enthusiasts becomes to take the sport for granted so that the uniqueness of the activity becomes less apparent; *"As the newcomer associates increasingly with other hang-gliders, the alternative value orientation of non-flyers recedes in importance. The newcomer finds their aspirations reflected and substantiated by others. The hang-gliding subculture minimizes the value conflicts generated by engaging in a high-risk activity." (Brannigan et al 1983 p.43)*

According to Brannigan et al (1983) and Celsi et al (1933), the process of risk-normalisation/neutralisation is essential before one can incorporate semi-deviant behaviour into one's identity. However, Brannigan et al (1983) point out, that this is an ongoing normalisation process, as participants must continually endorse and promote their sport to outsiders placing it within the realm of normal, the acceptable and the viable. So for Brannigan, if one is to maintain participation in an activity which is so disagreeable to outsiders, a process of deviance neutralisation must occur

to maintain a positive self-image. This was noted in an earlier study by Sykes and Matza (1957), who describe this phenomenon as an 'ego defence system' whereby the high-risk performers strive to maintain a positive self-concept while acting in an objectionable way. So for example, the denial of responsibility, the denial of harm, exceptionalising, and excusing are all instances of deviance rationalisations whereby the high-risk performer manages the tensions and semi-deviant qualities associated with the sport.

4.17 Celebration of Transient Lifestyle

As argued by Lupton (1999), self-containment and self-regulation are highly valued and encouraged in today's society, therefore, to take unnecessary risks is seen by many as deviant, irresponsible and foolhardy. However, Holyfield et al (2005) argue that for individuals who partake in risky endeavours, such encounters with danger are viewed in a positive light, as the risk involved is accepted, acculturated and even utilised as part of the experience (also see Clisby 2006).

For example, in exploring communities formed around deliberate risk-taking, Hetherington (1992) studied the carnivalesque celebrations at the Stonehenge festival. He found that participants deliberately accept their adoption of a high-risk identity and even celebrate it. Like the transient nature of traditional festivals, Hetherington argues, the social activities of the Stonehenge festival rests upon the open realisation that the consequences might be unpleasant and even associated with death. Thus participants celebrate their marginal lifestyle through the inversions and rituals of festival; *"In the past natural disasters and disruptions were hazards expected with*

fatalism and celebrated through the carnivalesque practices of grotesque imagery and death. The contemporary festival lifestyle reintroduces this into the modern life-world, with all its disorder and the fact of uncertainty in our lives through processes of consumption." (Hetherington 1992 p. 87).

As thresholds of controlled and legitimated breaks from 'proper behaviour' then, contemporary liminal zones, such as Stonehenge festival, argues Hetherington, provide the dramaturgical stage for liminal practices. Moreover, as sites of contested meanings, these form the basis for which the particular lifestyle emerges. As Hetherington (1992) insists, many contemporary leisure sites are contested with meaning, and as such, they are monitored, both literally in the form of being policed, and symbolically through the way meanings have been attached to such spaces *"Such modern site provides us with a good example of a topos of insecurity that symbolically articulates the consequences of conflicts surrounding the ambiguity of lifeworld experiences of place as detached from the duree of everyday life." (Hetherington 1992 p.90).*

Further, as Hetherington discovered in his study on Stonehenge, that any space where the activity is in any doubt is subjected to policing and surveillance. As a consequence, spaces centred around risk-taking are sites of conflict between differing perspectives and interests. Subsequently, those who celebrate festival at these spaces, argues Hetherington, are treated as 'at risk' because they adopt a lifestyle that transgresses the routines of everyday life. This argument as previously mentioned was developed by Douglas (1992) who found that societies use notions of risk to establish and maintain conceptual boundaries between self and other in order to deal

with social deviance and achieve social order. Similarly, as described earlier, Foucault points to the same process whereby government agencies identify certain social groups or populations as 'deviant' requiring control to bring them back to conforming moral values.

However, Stebbins (1980) contends, that while high-risk activities are clearly viewed negatively, society does not expend much energy to sanction them, and they are therefore considered as 'tolerable deviance', which he says also includes such things as nudism, drunkenness and gambling. This was also pointed out earlier by Etzioni-Halevy (1975) that high-risk activities are only viewed negatively by society if the suicidal or risk-taking behaviour associated with the sport is pursued as an end in itself.

4.18 Consumption as Symbolic Cement

Moreover, as contemporary risk-taking takes place within an 'advanced industrialised society', it is argued by some theorists that symbolic practices and commercial activities now influence the interactions of these groups. As described by Lunt (1992), 'the ritualised, symbolically mediated, nature of contemporary tribe-like sociations finds in their practices of consumption, an ideal vehicle and mode of symbolic expression.'

This is similar to what Schouten and McAlexander (1995) demonstrated in their study of new bikers; that participants organise their lives and identities around products or brands which serve as the basis for interaction and social cohesion, what they describe

as ‘cultures of consumption’. A distinctive subgroup of society that self selects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular product, class, brand or consumption activity, with its unique ethos, shared beliefs and values, unique jargon, rituals, and modes of symbolic expression. According to Schouten and McAlexander (1995), Woodruffe-Burton (1998) and more recently Muniz and O’Guinn (2001), people no longer conform neatly to ascribed analytic categories such as gender or social class, but rather contemporary high-risk participants take part in the creation of their own categories through consumption choices.

For several theorists then, consumption is said to provide the props for participation in high-risk activities. As observed by Lupton (1999), there are now a plethora of advertisements, selling products such as sporting goods, four-wheel drive cars, alcohol or soft drinks, which use images of risk-taking. For example, cars are often pictured in rugged outdoors settings in market campaigns, appealing to the target audience’s desire to be different in their willingness to face danger. Additionally, which was noted by Celsi et al (1993), that props, such as those used in high-risk sport, are now consumed symbolically. Where meaning is not inherent in the commodity, but is produced through actual usage, transforming and recoding the meanings of objects and equipment; *“Parachutes, climbing harnesses, cross-country skis, and ice axes have become props in dramatic plays enacted in the theatre of our mountains, skies, or minds.” (Celsi et al 1993p. 4).*

Further, some goods used for adventure take on sacred value, becoming particularly symbolically charged. *“Nowhere is clothing more fetishized than in the case of boots, often accorded magical properties in their ability to assist the walker to cover more*

ground, a fetishization that is accompanied by ritualistic dubbing." (Edsenor 2000 p.99).

This is also demonstrated in Schouten and McAlexander's (1995) study of new bikers. The sacredness of the bike is observed in elaborate rituals for motorcycle cleaning and maintenance and biker's adoration of their machines is also manifest in the creation of shrines for housing and administering to them; *"The shed, bedecked with Harley posters, calendars, and memorabilia, has become a temple open only to fellow bikers for the purpose of sharing sacramental beer along with Harley-related goals, lore and experiences." (Schouten and McAlexander 1995 p.51).*

4.19 Edgework Fantasy

According to Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), Dake (1992) and Celsi et al (1993), images provided by mass mediated imagery influence the consumption practices of individuals. In studying skydiving, Celsi found that participants who engage in such activities are influenced by media representations, where dramatic story lines such as those depicted in novels, film and television, feed into high-risk participants perceptions of their activity.

Reinforcing this view, during the time of Celsi's study there was a dramatic increase in the number of TV shows, like the extreme edge and MTV segments, as well as numerous ads that depict and glorify high-risk consumption. Moreover, Brannigan et al (1983) earlier discovered that hang-gliders engage in their activity because they are fulfilling long-standing fantasies and imaginary experiences of flight. This view is

further supported by Scheibe (1986), who indicates that in enacting dramatic adventure stories, life is more richly experienced for participants, 'allowing their life story constructions to be more full and complete'.

Participants are, therefore, drawn to edgework because they approach the sport with what Celsi describes as a dramatic worldview, offering the opportunity for a more heroic life, drawing on a rich cultural heritage, of stories where heroes are admired for courage, strength, and of willingness to face danger (Celsi 1993). Indeed as Harry (1995) argues, adopting sports ideology and activities is a means by which many participants 'validate their manhood'.

Similarly Wainwright (1969) previously found that the enduring physical and mental exhaustion of fell walking promises a more confident self and 'a return to a masculine bodily essence, replete with fantasies about getting back in touch with one's nature' p. 93. Indeed Wainwright argues that such activities have traditionally been male preoccupations, where the supposedly delicate bodies of (middle-class) women were deemed unsuited to the sturdy demands of walking. Hence, according to Wainwright and later Jarvis (1997), the drifter or risk-taker traveller, is more of a 'man' than others. As former adventurers were usually seen as men who 'penetrated virgin lands' and risked their lives in the process; *"Although such ideas may seem outdated, a masculinist aesthetic persists, partly drawing on archaic notions about male exploration and conquest of a passive, feminised nature" (Jarivs 1997 p. 58).*

Similarly, Elsrud (2001) contends, today's adventure stories are still burdened with predominately masculine overtones. According to Elsrud, this is not surprising

considering how deeply rooted stereotypical images of masculinity and femininity often are, where the latter is equated with nurturing, immobility, passivity, while to the former is ascribed aggressiveness, mobility, activity and change. Risk and adventure therefore appear as the 'very essence of masculinity.' Or as argued earlier by Goffman (1967); *"A strong character is not generated through facing the risk with whining, shivering and crying. It is demonstrated through displaying courage, gameness, integrity and composure." p. 229.*

Additionally, the use of equipment and clothing specially designed for high-risk consumption may also play an important function in fantasy identity construction. For, example Schouten and McAlexander (1995) found that several informants reported that the Harley-Davidson motorcycle and leather clothing seemed to impart a sense of power, fearsomeness and invulnerability to the rider. Or as Belk (1998) discovered, for mountain men, dressing in costume also includes tactile behavioural aspects, such as walking in leathers necessitates a certain gait. Thus, with the use of symbolic goods and costumes, mountain men engage in temporary identity transformation in fantastic roles; *"As with costumes and masks in general, we can transform our identity through clothing." (Kuper 1973cited in Belk 1998 p.227)*

4.20 Edgework Expectation

The symbolic use of leisure goods and equipment therefore, play an integral part of modern day consumption communities. This is evident in Belk's study on modern mountain men's consumption enclaves, where such spaces are nostalgically rendered with heroic archetypes and a focus on simpler times. A fascination with a heroic past

still pervades contemporary sites and is an intrinsic part of the consumption experience, where folk stories, tales, and things deemed Indian, were shown to play a key role in modern rendezvous re-enactments. As described earlier by Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983), consumption enclaves are created through processes of inventing and mythologizing tradition, whereby drawing on a nostalgic and mythical past help to convey a fantastic reality; *"Many tequilas described his thrill at being able to watch part of the filming of Grizzly Adams and said that images from watching the film sometimes flash before him when he is in the mountains." (Belk et al 1998 p. 222).*

Previously, Thompson and Hirschman (1995) also found that traditional images or what they describe as 'traditional cultural narratives' influence consumers' self images. According to Thompson and Hirschman these images are enduring and are woven into consumers' self-perceptions. However, according to Belk, such images are not stable but rather act as the cultural backdrop against which modern communities are formed and experienced. Because contemporary sites involve both heritage as well as a host of modern definitions, Belk (1998) argues, there are contested meanings over old and new interpretations.

This was also found by Schouten and McAlexander's (1995) study of new bikers, that the culture was comprised of a complex mix of participants. For example, some participants expressed a full time commitment to the styles and values while others only delve in superficially. Thus, the hard core bikers who consider themselves defenders of the faith often will not acknowledge rich urban bikers (RUBies) whom they regard as inauthentic pretenders or 'weekend warriors'; *"The logic of this across-group hierarchy is based on judgements of authenticity; however, there exists some*

disagreement as to what constitutes a real or authentic biker." (Schouten and McAlexander 1995 p.49).

Although there maybe disagreement as to what 'authentic' means within these spaces, edgework participants are nevertheless united by their common commitment level to mastery of the high-risk experience (Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Status is therefore sought through participation and by proving expertise. Unsurprisingly within such communities, it is important not to be found as a masquerader, dabbler, or pretender. For example, Schouten and McAlexander's found that visible indicators such as tattoos, motorcycle customization, club-specific clothing, sew on patches and pins proclaiming various accomplishments and participation in rider events are important in demonstrating commitment to the culture.

Moreover, Elsrud (2001) found with the activity of walking, that status-conscious decisions are made by 'seasoned walkers' when buying adventure clothing, equipment and gear; *"A good way to remain within the respected category from an adventurous point of view seems to be to dress properly, meaning to dress down rather than up. Worn, ripped clothes tell a story of rough living and adventure." (Elsrud 2001 p.14).*

With credibility and skill of paramount importance within edgework communities, Belk (1998) points out there are many stories told as well as proof of knowledge, of skill and technical ability. Knowledge is both shared and tested in these settings, where newcomers stock of historical and practical knowledge places him or her on a scale from novice to expert. As in the case of Belk's mountain men, their biographies

contained adventurous accounts of heroic survival. Thus, heroic feats and general exaggeration of both danger and accomplishments were common elements of historic mountain man tales. Mountain man rendezvous participation is therefore seen as a form of identity work aimed at creating a more significant noble, exciting and confident self. Where according to Belk, fantasy has the potential to open a special world of play, however, such play is not only a realm of fun and enjoyment, but it is also a world of possibility, of character development, of challenge and performance. As Cohen and Taylor (1992) have observed, *'the world of fairy tales, adventure stories, romances, pop heroes gives fantasy a richer quality: we can deliberately act as if we are someone quite different' pp. 92-93.*

Further, it is the senior members in such communities that function as the purveyors and guardians of not only techniques, but also the history and traditions and they socialise new members passing on rituals and lore. This can be observed in Shields study of Brighton beach (1991). The social and the medical rituals were presided over by powerful amateurs who conducted the ceremonies and acted as intermediaries, as in the case of the social functions this was the master of ceremonies, while in the case of the bathing rituals it was the 'dippers'. According to Shields (1991), the dippers were like priests, or mediaries between the two worlds of the 'civilised land and the undisciplined waves'. They were also considered to be technicians of the ritual process. As on-site masters of the sea-bathing treatment, they judged the waves, the state of their clients, and their daily requirements.

4.21 Summary

Overall, phenomenological approaches have explored the previously overlooked situated meanings given to risk. Interested in understandings the 'lived experiences' of risk-takers, these approaches encompass a wide variety of perspectives and disciplines; varying from those which focus solely on sociocultural factors to those which incorporate the more psychological, emotive or embodied aspects which are believed to contribute to high-risk consumption.

Indeed as this is also the position taken in the current study; that risk-taking involves a complex interplay between sensual or emotional apprehending but also a reflexive understanding of the discursive notions associated with high-risk activities. The following methodological approach therefore aims to move the thesis towards a more comprehensive level of analysis, by incorporating both the social and embodied aspects of the high-risk experience, a more meaningful reflection of the experiences of those who take up the high-risk activity is sought.

Chapter 5: Methodology

5.1 Introduction

The concept of 'risk' is an important construct in a variety of disciplines. For example, within psychology, a number of studies have explained risk-taking in terms of people's psychological makeup (Freud, 1925, Kretschmer, 1936, Balint, 1959). Indeed within consumer research, 'risks' have also been identified and measured, including financial risks, health risks, as well as product purchase risks. (Kaplan, Szybillo and Jocoby 1974).

Such studies utilising 'rational' approaches to risk commonly focus on intra-psychic forces to explain risk-taking behaviour, such as by exploring individual's motivations, feelings or drives, for example Fishbein's (1983) study of attitudes. However, the problem with many traditional studies into risk-taking, is that they reduce the meanings associated with risk assessment solely to stable/internal criteria, not taking into account the symbolic meanings which are created through the social world.

5.2 Traditional Ethnographic Research

Since the 1950s however, studies such as those utilising qualitative research methods have started to become more popular in exploring the much overlooked social and cultural contexts for which risks are understood and negotiated. With methods such as ethnography, qualitative studies began to consider the social context of individuals' lives. Nevertheless, although these traditional ethnographic methods incorporated

first-person accounts, there was an assumption that 'proper' scientific research should adhere to 'positivist' principles and therefore, 'accurate' or 'true' descriptions of communities were sought (Guba 1990). Shaped by positivistic and postpositivist traditions in the physical and natural sciences, early ethnographic studies, holding to realist positions concerning reality, maintained that there is a reality out there to be studied, captured, and understood. Further, within these traditions, positivist evaluation criteria were utilised, such as internal and external validity, as well as the use of qualitative procedures that lend themselves to structured and sometimes statistical analysis (Becker et al 1961).

For example, traditional ethnographers (working within early 1900 until WWII), wrote objective accounts of field experiences that were reflective of the positivist scientist paradigm. Concerned with offering valid, reliable, and objective interpretations in their writings, the "other" who was studied was alien and foreign. The field worker in this period was made into a larger than life figure who went into the field and then returned with stories about strange people. Rosaldo (1989), described this period of the 'Lone Ethnographer', the story of the man scientist who went off in search of his native in a distant land. *"Once upon a time, the Lone Ethnographer rode off into the sunset in search of his "native". After undergoing a series of trials, he encountered the object of his quest in a distant land. There he underwent his rite of passage by enduring the ultimate ordeal of "fieldwork". After collecting "the data", the Lone Ethnographer returned home and wrote a "true" account of "the culture". (Rosaldo 1989 as cited in Denzin et al 1998 p.313).*

Therefore, as pointed out by Denzin et al (2000), many early ethnographic studies holding to positivist canons, were organised in terms of commitments to objectivism and imperialism and beliefs in monumentalism (create a museum picture of the culture studied) and timelessness (that what was studied would never change) also see Malinowski (1967) and Bateson (1972).

5.3 Contemporary Ethnographic Research

However, due to rapid social change and the resulting diversification of social contexts in what has been described by some theorists as a 'postmodern' culture (Adorno, 1977, Jameson, 1984 and Featherstone, 1991), much contemporary research has cast doubt on realist ethnographic projects. As argued by Denzin (2001) and more recently Haigh and Crowther (2003), contemporary ethnographies contend for a new set of criteria to be constructed, divorced from the positivist and postpositivist traditions.

5.4 Biographical Work and 'New' Ethnography

Hence, interpretivist researchers, such as Riessman (1993), Gubrium and Holstein (1995), Josselson and Lieblich (1995) and more recently Pitts (2003), are particularly concerned with capturing the individual's point of view through detailed interviewing and observation and argue that positivist researchers are seldom able do this as they have to rely on more remote, inferential empirical methods. *"If we aggregate people, treating diversity as error variance, in search for what is common to all, we often learn about what is true of no one in particular." (Josselson and Lieblich 1995 p.32).*

From an interpretivist perspective then, every human situation is seen as novel, emergent, and filled with multiple often conflicting meanings and interpretations (Denzin 2001). Interpretivists, rather than trying to capture 'a true' or real picture of a social group instead, attempt to capture individuals' perspectives and in doing this the language of ordinary people is used to explain their experiences. Thus, unlike positivits, who separate themselves from the worlds they study, interpretivists such as Denzin (2001), treat subjects as active interpreters who construct the realities of their worlds through talk and interaction, stories and narrative. As Gubrium and Holstein (1995) argue, contemporary ethnography is no longer merely about sifting through findings and writing systematic and objective descriptions, but is rather concerned with listening to what participants have to say, in which they have their own authoritative stories to tell. *"New ethnography has come a long way. We no longer limit our analytic concerns to issues of objective or naturalistic representation. Indeed, much 'new' ethnography is concerned with multivocality, centring on the question of how to deal with participant's own representations of their worlds." (Gubrium and Holstein 1995 p.46).*

Consequently, where traditional ethnography cast its subjects as mere components of social settings, 'new ethnography' treats respondents' accounts and descriptions as actively constituting rather than just reflecting the realities of their worlds. What's new about this, is the sense that participants are ethnographers in their own right. Concerned with capturing the individuals' point of view, contemporary ethnographic work such as Uriely (2005), Noy (2004) Wickens (2002) Elsrud (2001) aim to gather the stories people tell about their experiences, thus the lives of ordinary men and women play a central role in the research. As Fetterman (1998) argues, narrative

approaches can provide ethnographers with 'rich, detailed descriptions' delivering a distinctive and informed picture of the social group. More recently Roberts (2002) and Haigh and Crowther (2005) (2007) support this, arguing that narrative approaches are beginning to take a more central place, where previously, participants' accounts and interpretations of their own lives have been missing from many realist perspectives. As previously described by Denzin (2001); *"The subject matter of interpretive research is biographical experience. It is carved out of the lives of ordinary men and women." (p. 58).*

5.5 Interpretive Heritage

Interpretive philosophies, rather than presenting realistic descriptions of the social world, look at the way that people construct meanings around their experiences and the world in which they live out. Overall, interpretivist theories cannot be traced back to a single source, but have evolved from the German intellectual tradition of hermeneutics, the Verstehen tradition in sociology, the phenomenology of Schutz (1970), the social psychological sub discipline of ethnomethodology, pragmatism and critiques of scientism and positivism in the social sciences. At its heart, interpretivists argue for the uniqueness of human inquiry, contesting the naturalistic interpretation of the social sciences, particularly the view that the aims and methods of the social sciences are identical to those of natural sciences. Schutz (1970) in particular, held that cultural sciences were different than natural sciences, where the goal of the latter is scientific explanation, the goal of the former is the grasping, or understanding the meaning of social phenomena.

5.6 Phenomenology

The interpretivist approach was first derived from Schutz (1962) (1964) (1970) who developed a social phenomenology by bridging sociology with Husserl's (1970) more philosophical phenomenology. The basic assumption of Husserl's perspective was that the relation between perception and its objects was not passive, but rather human consciousness actively constitutes the objects of experience. Schutz, taking up Husserl's interest in the ways in which ordinary members of society constitute and reconstitute the world of everyday life, introduced a set of tenets that provide the basis for subsequent phenomenological, ethnomethodological, and constructionist theorizing (Holstein and Gubrium 1994). Schutz's work stresses the constitutive nature of interaction, arguing that social sciences should focus on the ways that the taken for granted everyday world is produced and experienced by individuals. Hence Schutz's methodology stands in opposition to experiential assumptions that take the world to be principally separate and distinct from any act of perception or interpretation. This approach was also taken earlier by Merleau-Ponty (1945), who found that the meanings of the world and of existence are not given in advance but are rather interpreted by social actors who impose meaning upon it. *"The meaning of a poem is not to be discovered but is there in raw form to stimulate the reader to interpret it and make it meaningful. Hence the meaning of life is not already there to be discovered, but rather life presents itself as a raw indication that needs to be finished by interpretation to make it meaningful." (Merleau-Ponty as cited in Polkinghorne 1988 p30).*

Therefore, in order to understand the everyday 'life world', Schutz's recommendation was to set aside or 'bracket' one's taken for granted orientation to it in order to focus on the ways in which members interpretively produce the forms they treat as real. He suggested that individuals approach the life world with stocks of knowledge, composed of commonsense constructs and categories that are social in origin. These images, theories, ideas and values are therefore applied to different aspects of experience, making them meaningful. As Denzin et al (1994) describes, stocks of knowledge are resources with which persons interpret experience, grasp the intentions and motivations of others, and achieve intersubjective understandings, and coordinate actions.

According to Schutz, the reason why stocks of knowledge produce a familiar world is due to the typified manner by which knowledge is articulated. Further, he theorised that the countless phenomena of everyday life are included under more limited numbers of superficially shared constructs and categories or typifications. Typifications as general and flexible guidelines for understanding and interpreting experience therefore, make it possible to account for experience, rendering things recognisable as being of a particular type of realm. However, at the same time, as Schutz indicated, typifications are also indeterminate, adaptable, and modifiable. Stock of knowledge are consequently always seen as incomplete, open-ended where meaning requires the interpretive application of a category to the concrete particulars of a situation. As Gubrium and Holstein (1994) point out, everyday reality is an intersubjective ongoing accomplishment, a set of understandings sustained from moment to moment by participants in interaction.

Clearly, this is a contrasting perspective compared to the traditional relationship between language and objects, in which the essential task of language is to describe reality. Viewed as a 'system of typifications,' however, words become the constitutive building blocks of everyday reality. Overall, Schutz's social phenomenology, focused on everyday subjective meaning and experience, the goal of which was to explicate how objects and experience are meaningfully constituted and communicated in the world of everyday life.

5.7 Ethnomethodology

Continuing to trace the history of interpretive perspectives, ethnomethodology takes over where Schutz left off. Ethnomethodology, the invention of Garfinkel (1967), seeks to understand how the taken for granted character of everyday life is accomplished. So instead of assuming consensual, structural meanings for constructs such as family or organisation, ethnomethodologists go to the things themselves, in their natural contexts to account for their existence. Hence ethnomethodologist's topic is members' practical everyday procedures for creating, sustaining, and managing a sense of objective reality. The aim is not to provide causal explanations of patterned behaviour but to describe how members recognise, describe, explain, and account for the order of their everyday lives. According to Garfinkel and Sacks (1970), the analyst therefore, suspends all commitments to a privileged version of social structure, focusing instead on how members accomplish, manage, and reproduce a sense of social order.

Given this perspective, the practical production of reality relies upon the interpretive capacities of co-participants in interaction to assemble a locally visible sense of order. Social structures are therefore locally produced, sustained, and experienced as normal, routine, environments. Hence all social life and its meaning have no indeterminate meanings without a visible context. It is only through situated talk and interaction that objects and events become meaningful. Likewise, Garfinkel (1967) indicates that the circumstances that provide the context for meaning are themselves self-generating. That is, interpretive activities are simultaneously in and about the settings to which they orient and that they describe. As Lindorf (1995) argues, socially accomplished realities are reflexive; descriptive accounts of settings which give shape to those settings while simultaneously being shaped by the settings they constitute.

Thus studying situated interpretive practice necessarily requires close attention to the fine details of social settings. The practical reasoning, in which people engage therefore, depends upon their use of situational resources in specific situations. This is clearly exemplified by Lindorf (1995) in his description of joke telling. The meaning of most utterances, argues Lindorf (1995), would be unfathomable if we did not know the contexts in which they were spoken. As a ribald joke told among co-workers around the grill at a company cookout engages many situational resources; the spacing and posture of the actors, the joke teller's gestures, the nods, chuckles, and comments as the joke is being told. However, what makes this communicate event joke telling is not a synopsis of the joke, but rather its timing, placement, sequence, and relative emphasis of resources. Hence, as Lindorf contends, the same joke at a pastor's house would engage a very different set of contextual resources to achieve any conventional meaning at all (Lindorf 1995). Consequently,

ethnomethodology perspectives focus on the processes by which these meanings are created, negotiated, sustained and modified within a specific context of human action.

In contrast to traditional ethnographies, which have assumed that language is a neutral conduit for description, the ethnomethodology approach treats reality as an interactional accomplishment; descriptions, accounts, or reports are not merely about some social world as much as they are constitute of that world. So rather than attempting to generate information about interaction through for example, questionnaires, interpretive research relies upon naturally occurring talk to reveal the ways ordinary interaction produces social order. As Gubrium and Holstein (1994) point out, when subjects talk their utterances are not taken as more or less accurate reports about circumstances, conduct, states or mind. Instead talk is considered as the very action through which local realities are accomplished. Therefore, as local interpretive resources are crafted to the demands of specific occasions meaning is never completely predetermined. However, within this perspective, subjects are not viewed to build reality from scratch on each and every occasion, but rather interpretive work is conditioned by local interpretive resources, recognisable categories and familiar vocabularies (Garfinkel 1967, Heritage 1984).

5.8 Symbolic Interactionism

Perhaps one of the most influential strands of interpretivist perspective comes from the pragmatist school of thought and particularly from Mead (1934) who sixty years ago, founded symbolic interactionism. Overall, symbolic interactionism is the study of how the self and the social environment mutually define and shape each other

through symbolic communication. Symbolic interactionism rests on the following seven key assumptions; first, human beings act towards things based on meanings they have for them. Second, the meanings of things arise out of the process of social interaction and communication between and among individuals. Communication is symbolic because individuals communicate via languages and other symbols, further, in communicating people create and produce significant symbols. Third, meanings are modified through an interpretative process which involves self-reflective individuals symbolically interacting with one another. Fourth, human beings create the worlds of experience in which they live. Fifth, the meanings of these worlds come from interaction, and are the shaped self-reflections of the person being in their situations. Sixth, such self-interaction is 'interwoven with social interaction and influences that social interaction'. (Blumer 1981 p.153). Seventh joint acts, the formation dissolution, conflict and merger, constitute the social life of a human society, where a society consists of joint or social acts 'which are formed and carried out by the members.' (Blumer 1981 p. 153). Hence, the joint act, according to Blumer (1981) is produced through a consensual line of action by individuals who share a community of symbols, organised by relational and cultural rules of conduct that define the solidarity of group life. Such rules and codes then determine acceptable types and ranges of conduct. As Denzin (1995) describes, these meanings are defined, in part, by the systems of ideology and power in a particular social order. They circulate through specific communication systems (oral, print, electronic).

Hence, symbolic interactionism resists theories that reduce action to environmentally determined conduct. Rather, individuals are seen as acting organisms who construct social action and re-fashion culture. This requires that the inquirer actively enter the

worlds of people being studied in order to see the situation as it is seen by the actor, observing what the actor takes into account, observing how he interprets what is taken into account.

5.9 Constructivism

The more recent vintage of interpretivist thinking, constructionism, emphasises the world of experience as it is lived, felt and undergone by social actors. Yet their emphasis is on notions of objectivism, empirical realism, objective truth and essentialism. Constructivists, such as Gergen and Gergen (1984), Potter and Whetherall (1987), and Harre (1989) particularly emphasise the pluralistic and plastic character of reality. Plural in the sense that reality is expressible in a variety of symbol and language systems and plastic in the sense that reality is stretched and shaped to fit purposeful acts of intentional agents. Some 'extreme' social constructionists endorse the claim that contrary to common sense, there is no unique world that pre-exists and is independent of human mental activity and human symbolic language.

Gergen and Gergen (1984) in particular, challenge the basis of objective knowledge claims and examine the process of knowledge construction. Instead of focusing on the matter of individual minds and cognitive processes, they focus outward to the world of intersubjectively shared, social constructions of meaning and knowledge.

5.10 Saussure's Structural Linguistics

Many constructionists have drawn their ideas from the French philosophical traditions of structuralism and poststructuralism, where language itself is seen as providing individuals with ways of structuring experience. The structure of language therefore determines the lines along which individual's divide up experience, referred to as structuralism. Within Saussure's (1974) study of structural linguistics, the key concept is the sign, which refers to anything that populates mental life. There are two domains, as Saussure claims; the thing referred to and actual the word, or the spoken sound. (The spoken sound is the signifier and the thing it refers to is the signified.) The signified is not a concrete object but a concept, thus the link between the signifier and the signified concept is an arbitrary link.

Therefore, as Saussure argues, with the aid of language, the world has been divided up into arbitrary categories, where language does not reflect a pre-existing social reality, but constitutes reality. It is the structure of language, the system of signifiers and signified and their meanings as constituted in the differences between them which carves up conceptual space. Structuralists believe that once attached this relationship became fixed. However, post-structuralists argue that this fixed relationship does not take into account why meanings of words can change over time and how words can carry numerous meanings, depending on who is speaking and to whom and for what purposes. Post-structuralists argue meanings carried by language are never fixed, but always open to question, always contestable. Consequently, every time there are exchanges among people, individuals are in the process of constructing and reconstructing themselves and the situation.

Further, the structure of language forms systems of statements, referred to by Parker (1992) as discourses. A discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories and statements that together produce a particular version of events, a particular way of representing things in a certain light. Thus a multitude of alternative versions of events is potentially available through language. However, as argued by Foucault (1972) and more recently Burr (1995), with numerous constructions of the world, the versions of events which receive the stamp of truth (whether they are true or not) is only ideological to the extent that it is used by relatively powerful groups in society to sustain their position. These ideologies are not coherent, unified systems of thought, but rather always in a contestable position as individuals are constantly, actively making decisions about the strengths and weaknesses of society's values. As Burr (1995) argues, social constructionist theory has moved the centre of attention out of the person and into the social realm. *'It embeds the person in a historical, social and political fabric from which it cannot be teased out and studied independently' p.111-112.*

5.11 Narrative as an Interpretive Tool of Human Inquiry

Essentially what much of the above 'interpretive' perspectives have in common is a concern with the way in which people construct meanings about their experiences in the world they live out. Hence, the goal of interpretive work according to Denzin (2001) is to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. Similarly, researchers working in the narrative tradition place a great deal of emphasis on the importance of understanding how individuals tell others about their unique experiences (for example, Gubrium and Holstein, 1995, Josselson

and Lieblich, 1995, Denzin, 2001 and Pitts, 2003). The study of narratives has broadened from its origin in literary and related areas of study to cut across a number of disciplines (Roberts 2002). Hence, the narrative approach to understanding human experience now encompasses many schools of thought such as; sociology (Jacobs 2000), philosophy (MacIntyre 1981), anthropology (Geertz 1973), sociolinguistics (Labov 1967), education (Mishler 1986) and of particular interest, psychology (Schank and Abelson 1995).

5.12 Narrative Psychology Perspectives

Given its complexity, the field of narrative psychology is best understood as involving a continuum ranging from cognitive approaches, which position narrative as the 'expression' of an underlying identity, related to cognitive plans such as Schank and Abelson (1995), to more social constructionist accounts which prefer to emphasise the active nature of narrative in identity construction (for example, Gergen and Gergen, 1984, Sarbin, 1986, and Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

In reality however, as pointed out by Milnes (2003), most theorists rather than locating themselves at one of the extreme ends of the continuum, fall somewhere in the middle. This is also the view with the current research which, similar to Milnes, takes the position that narratives can be seen as both representative of the way in which people make sense of their experiences but also as co-constructions which are produced within particular cultural, historical and interactional contexts. As argued by Jackson (1998), this is perhaps the major benefit of narrative approaches, that unlike many strictly postmodern approaches, a great deal of narrative research does

not dismiss the existence of an autonomous self, capable of making informed decisions. Rather, such a position sees the construction of self and of individual experience as a socially and culturally mediated process.

5.13 What is a narrative?

A key issue discussed by many narrative theorists, is what actually constitutes a narrative. Overall, many theorists believe that 'narrative' is synonymous with 'story', and this includes not only the individual accounts that people give of their experiences but also the process by which stories are linked together to form an individual's life story. For example, theorists working within the life story narrative approach, such as Riessman (1993) and Gergen (1994), argue that narratives enable human beings to 'organise' their experiences into coherent wholes. Similarly, Sarbin (1986) who argues for the persuasiveness of narrative explains, as an acquired ability, individuals gradually adopt plot structures in storytelling in order to represent themselves to others. As an organising principle of our psychology, narrative is present in all manner of facets of individual's daily lives. *"It is present in our dreams and daydreams, in our rememberings, in our plans for the future or for the day ahead, and in our accounts that we tell to others. When we remember a dream, we do not recount a list of unconnected events and images, we see it and recount it as a story that has a beginning, middle and an end." (Burr1995 p. 134).*

Narrative, for Sarbin then, is a fundamental 'given' of what it means to be a human, or as Gergen points out, rather than seeing one's life as simply "one damned thing after another", the individual attempts to understand life-events as systematically

related. They are rendered intelligible by locating them in a sequence or 'unfolding process' (Harre 1989). Further, other theorists, such as Sartre (1963) and Denzin (1989), believe that individuals' lives are shaped by key turning-point moments, what Denzin describes as 'epiphanies.' Denzin employs making sense of an individual's life using a 'progressive-regressive' method whereby the biographer begins with a key event in the subject's life and then works forward and backward from that event. Therefore, according to Denzin, understanding these key 'transformations' are a central part of understanding an individual's life story.

Thus, a primary focus in the discussion of narrative is on the structure or 'typical characteristics' that the narrative takes and specifically this involves the concepts of 'plot', 'temporality', 'sequentiality' and 'connectivity'. For example, Sarbin (1986) and Polkinghorne (1988), suggest that all narratives having a beginning, middle and ending, are held together by recognisable patterns of events called plots. Similarly, Polkinghorne (1998), who is also interested in how individuals 'organise episodes', explores the way that individuals link diverse happenings along a temporal dimension by identifying the effect that one event has on another.

However, the precise sequencing of events in narrative accounts is highly contested amongst scholars. For example, Labov and Waletzky (1967) argue that stories follow a chronological sequence, where as Young (1987) argues for consequential sequencing, (of one event leading to or causing another), and still others, such as Michael's (1981), argue for thematic sequence (of episodes stitched together by theme rather than time).

Such theorists could therefore be referred to as ‘structuralists’, in their pursuit to propose definitions of well-formed narratives (see also Burke, 1966 and Stein and Policastro 1984). However, it has been recently argued by Milnes (2003), it is not necessary to define narratives rigidly in terms of structure, but rather any account of action with a temporal dimension and some form of evaluation can sufficiently constitute a narrative or a storied account. Thus in terms of sequencing, as Miles points out, narratives can be chronologically, thematically, and consequentially sequenced with a view to create a certain impression. Therefore, approaches such as that of Hollway (1984), Davies and Harre (1990) and more recently Bamberg (1997) and Miles (2003), explore sequencing, but only how sequencing appears to be related to the functionality of narrative accounts. That is, how sequencing is used to ‘position’ certain actors and events in relation to other actors and events and to ‘perform’ the self in certain ways.

5.14 Narrative Functions

Narratives can serve a variety of functions. For example, Crossely (1996) argues that narratives can give individuals a coherent sense of identity, where people represent themselves is through using the terms, ‘I’ and ‘me’. As a divided way of thinking of subjectivity, the ‘I’ is the authentic, private self and the ‘me’ is seen as the superficial social self. This was earlier suggested by Mead (1934), who found that individuals have dual concepts when thinking or talking about the self. For Mead the ‘I’ is the immediate self, when a person, situated in the present moment, feels, perceives and acts, where as the ‘me’ on the other hand, is the reflective self that looks back and recounts past experiences.

Further, as Crossley (2000) points out, the way an individual perceives the variety of potential 'me's' is a major determinant of how they decide to act. Earlier, Mead (1967) referred to this phenomena as the 'generalised other' where an individual acts based upon the imagined responses of others in their wider communities or cultures. A narrative, best put by Sarbin (1995), the moral actor always asks, *"What am I in relation to the Good?" p. 219.* This is further defined by Milnes (2003) who points out that narratives, by providing individuals with the likely consequences of the reactions from significant and generalised others, can function to transmit morals and cultural values.

5.15 The Performance of Narratives

Apart from transmitting moral codes of conduct, narrative can also play a part in determining, justifying and explaining behaviour. That is, in telling a story, the narrator is often trying to make a particular point. For example, Austin (1962), Potter and Whetherall (1987), and Harre (1989), have particularly focused on the performative qualities of narratives, of how accounts are constructed to bring about certain effects for the speaker. Associated with 'speech act' theory and ethnomethodology, Austin (1962) points out that some sentences are important not because they describe things but because of what they do. Rather than viewing things that individuals say as simple descriptions of reality, Austin looks at the functions that people's talk has within interaction and the effects it achieves for them. The things that people say consequently are the object of study rather than being taken as a route to discovering some aspect of an assumed underlying reality. Thus, according to

Austin, individuals draw upon linguistic devices in order to bring about a particular desired representation of an event.

This is similar to what Potter and Wetherell (1987) argue that respondents continuously position themselves with respect to the moral rules and expectations of culture. Within this perspective, the person is seen as an actor or performer in a moral sphere, whose prime aim is to position themselves and their actions as morally justifiable. Similarly, Brunner (1990) and later Milnes (2003) indicate how narratives can serve to resolve conflicts and divergence from cultural norms. More specifically, stories can provide reasons or justifications for what otherwise maybe perceived as transgressions. This is also what Harre and Davies (1990) stress that language plays a performative role for the individual, where the goal of such performances are to account for actions and conduct within a moral framework of one's local culture. That is, culture provides the individual with various 'subject positions' which can be taken up in discourse.

In addition, Billig (1991) focuses upon the deconstruction of accounts by analysing their rhetorical nature, to reveal how they contain hidden internal contradictions. He argues that individuals continually attempt to persuade each other of the power of their arguments, presenting their accounts as reasonable by giving justifications for their position and countering objections with criticisms. Accounts are simultaneously arguing for one position and against other positions, although what is being rejected may not be explicitly stated in the account. Thus, in adopting a 'performative' approach to understanding narratives enable an exploration of how individuals explain and justify perceived transgressions by placing them within 'alternative narrative

frameworks'. As Bamberg (1997) indicates *"constructions of a textual reality are always co-constructed in concert with a local moral order for the purpose of 'becoming understood". p. 318.*

More recently, Riessman (2004) has explored the 'strategic uses of narratives' and argues that interviewees structure their stories for tactical reasons. Hence, Riessman in exploring narratives, treat accounts as reconstructions performed for strategic purposes. However, as pointed out by Milnes (2003), not all narrative scholars agree on this issue. Some theorists such as Ricoeur (1984) and later Polkinghorne (1988) suggests that individuals can either accurately reflect their actual experience or they can select certain representations of these experiences. Perhaps more in line with the latter view, the current study aims to see experience and narratives as more fragmentary and therefore 'constructed'. For example, McAdams (1993) argues that that individual's accounts are not reflective of some objective reality but rather subjects actively construct their accounts. Therefore, as subjects actively construct their accounts, stories will vary according to who it is being told to and how the experiences that the storyteller has encountered since the event has impacted their current perception of it.

Indeed in the case of adventure narratives, Sheibe (1986) makes the case that these events they are often elaborated and embroidered in their successive retellings. For example, when an unpleasant episode is suffered, it is converted into a diverting tale, selectively revised and burnished up for self and others. Thus in crafting narratives, individuals engage in much smoothing. For example, individuals don't recount their entire experiences but rather selectively tell about what is included in the story and

what is left out, as described by McAdams (1993), *"Stories are less about facts and more about meanings. In the subjective and embellished telling of the past, the past is constructed – history is made." (p .28).*

Narrative researchers who hold this view of the relationship between narrative and experience often see experience constrained by the cultural and linguistic resources available to each individual (Milnes 2003). They argue that theoretically an identical experience can be experienced and interpreted differently by different individuals or even by the same individual in different contexts. Or as Gergen and Gergen (1986) point out, two individuals who have lived through the same experience may narratively configure their lives very differently by fitting them into different plots. Gergen and Gergen say there are three prototypical narrative forms that can be used to make up plots (where narrative is defined as a sequence of events as they pertain to achievement of a particular goal state). Those which move the protagonist closer to the goal, are referred to as progressive narratives and those which move the protagonist further away from the goal are called regressive, and those to which the protagonist's relation to the goal remains constant are referred to as stability narratives.

Further Gergen and Gergen explain, these prototypical narratives are also combined to make up complex themes, which have been referred to by McAdams (1993) as narrative tones. As McAdams explains, despite the diversity of story lines narratives may take, there are a limited number of basic story forms which individuals adopt in constructing their tales. McAdams discriminates between four forms of narrative; comedy, romance, tragedy and irony. Hence, comedy and romance provide an

optimistic narrative tone, while tragedy and irony suggest a pessimistic tone. So for example, does the individual portray in their tale that their life has been an adventure, comedy or tragedy? This is what Bamberg (1997) has similarly noted, that versions of events are produced for particular purposes. "*The particular purposes can be manifold such as to attribute blame to others, or to elicit empathy. How the speaker wants to be understood vis-a-vis the audience results in the particular construction design that is given to the world of actors and events." p. 335.*

The consistency of people's narratives therefore, demands that they engage in much choosing and moulding of events to fit the theme or tone of their life story (Burr 1990). If the theme is negative, events which could be seen as positive might be smoothed over to fit into the theme or left out altogether. Thus as Polkinghorne (1988) suggests, if an individual has recently experienced a series of unfortunate or unlucky events that had the effect of moving them away from their goals (a regressive narrative type), then the implications for fitting this experience into a particular kind of plot will be of profound.

In addition, importantly for some narrative theorists, such as Mishler (1986) and Riessman (1993), stories are not a private matter but depend on the willingness of others in the construction of tales. As Burr (1995) notes, stories are subject to 'social sanctioning and negotiation.' Hence, writing 'reflexively', the interviewer's role must be included in the understandings of narratives, showing how meanings are interactionally accomplished (Jackson 1998). From this perspective, stories are viewed as a storytelling performance where the teller crafts tales in collaboration with

a listener, where according to Burr (1995), people's accounts of themselves are heavily dependent upon the co-operation of others.

5.16 The Social Constructionist View of Narratives

Taking an approach similar to that of Denzin (2000), stories are seen as negotiated accounts which emerge from social interaction (an 'outside-in' approach). That is, people's psychology is not solely structured by intra-psychic forces but rather individuals hold accounts and theories, in which their sense of self is given shape by their ability to think of things in terms of stories or narrative. Furthermore, stories are not seen to mirror reality but are used to actively construct compelling accounts which are multi-layered involving cultural and historical resources. As Denzin (2001) argues, each culture provides its members with a vast but finite catalogue of images, narratives and discourses which individuals draw upon when crafting their tales. *"(culture) provide(s) the languages, emotions, ideologies, taken-for-granted understandings, and shared experiences from which stories flow". (Denzin 1989 p. 73).*

Hence, according to Denzin (1989), understanding the 'cultural locus' of stories is important in interpreting individual's experiences. Similarly Gergen and Gergen (1984) argue, *"The individual is limited at the outset to a vocabulary of action that possesses currency within the culture. One cannot compose an autobiography of cultural nonsense." p. 185*

Often, allied to the social constructionist study of narrative then, is the idea of 'discourse' (Roberts 2002). Indeed the terms are sometimes used interchangeably. However, the current study takes a stance that accepts the existence of both discourse and narratives. As Kirkman et al (1998) and later Milnes (2003) argues, narrative is just one form of discourse but is one which is characterised by its temporal dimension and includes the importance of characteristics such as 'plot,' 'character,' 'time,' 'connectivity' and 'sequence'.

Moreover, as argued by Milnes, narratives may be highly individualised (as in the case of personal narratives), common to the members of a given group (locally accessible by members of a particular community) or shared at a societal level (reflecting larger societal views, such as with the Foucauldian notion of dominant discourses).

Indeed, Salzer (1998) drawing upon Rappaport (1990), previously made a similar observation and examines narrative accounts as having three levels. The first level of narration is dominant cultural narratives. These are societal level narratives (or discourse), widely held beliefs in culture which are transmitted through myths, stories in the media and conversations. The second level of narration is 'community narratives', which are common to members of any given community and can have a powerful influence on the behaviour of individuals within that community. The third level is 'personal narratives' which are most often investigated in the field of narratives, and these are the unique and idiosyncratic storied accounts that the individual gives of their own life and experiences. Hence, to understand the interactions between society, communities and individual experience, Salzer (1998)

argues, that a stance must be adopted which investigates different levels of narration. Moreover, Milnes (2003) argues that such a position, recognises 'autonomy' and 'personal agency' as well as the structural constraints within which individuals live out and make sense of their lives.

Further Milnes (2003) indicates that this position is also in line with that of Gergen (1973) who suggests that individuals in striving to make sense of their cultures and their past are characterised by two universals. The first of these universal characteristics is 'reflexivity', which refers to the observation that the way in which people perceive things in the present is likely to have been affected by what they have experienced in the past, as well as the acknowledgement that the way in which past experience is perceived may be altered by what is currently being experienced in the present. The second universal characteristic that Milnes identifies, drawing upon Gergen (1973), is an ability to 'envision alternatives'. That is to imagine other ways of living or being in the social world. This point has also been made by Bruner (1990), *"We are…creatures of history, yet at the same time are autonomous agents…and the self stands both as a guardian of permanence and as a barometer responding to local cultural weather." (p.110).*

This position is also in line with some aspects of feminist philosophy, which sees self, identity and experience influenced by culture and language yet not fully determined by these factors (Squire 1998). Exploring narrative at three levels therefore, enables the 'voice' of the participant to be heard but without ignoring the social and cultural context with which knowledge is constructed (Jackson, 1998 and Willott, 1998).

In addition, such a stance appears to complement an analysis which seeks to understand the 'cultural locus' of stories yet at the same time embrace the role of the physical and intrapsychic aspects of human experience as well. As Lupton (1998) argues, the recent interest in the 'sociology of the emotions' has sought to resolve the tension between socio-cultural meaning and representation, social interaction and bodily experience. *"Like the body itself, emotional states serve to bring together nature and culture in a seamless intermingling in which it is difficult to argue where one ends and the other begins." (Lupton 1998 p.).*

Similarly, Lyon (1995) contends, it is through feeling/sentiment/affect, that the links between the body and the social world can be clearly drawn. He then goes on to describe emotion as 'embodied sociality'. Given this perspective identity is not only constituted through discursive and conscious processes, but importantly it is also constructed through elements that go beyond language and visual representation, such as spatial, embodied and sensual experiences of smell, touch, taste as well as inchoate memories of infancy and early childhood. As Chodorow (1995) insists, although language and culture are important to the construction of subjectivity, the emotional self, the self who has a personal biography, also plays a part in the shaping and reshaping meaning for each individual.

Hence, rather than drawing a distinction between physical and the discursive aspects of experience, the current study takes the position that emotions, feelings, moods and sensations are always experienced and understood via social and cultural processes. As Bamberg (1997) points out, emotions are embedded in our constructions of events and therefore never 'stand on their own'.

Consequently, in analysing edgework narratives, the study aims to embrace a more complex picture of the high-risk activity by exploring the various personal, social and material factors that might impact riders' lives. This includes exploring the unique individual accounts that the riders give of their past experiences but also it explores the kinds of local community expectations which respondents draw on in making sense of their motorcycling as well as those more socially encompassing cultural understandings (discourses prevalent in society write large) which participants may either comply with or resist. In addition, the study also seeks to appreciate the reciprocal relationship between the social/discursive and the more physical/intrapsychic aspects involved in motorcyclists' experiences.

5.17 Developing a Narrative Analytic Framework

Overall, the criteria in adopting a narrative analytical framework seeks an approach that will enable the researcher to identify local community understandings but also to explore how these standpoints might impact the personal biographies of the riders' experiences (to explore individual agency yet critically examine the structural/cultural factors that perpetuate riders' understandings of their activity). In developing such an approach, the study utilises the voice-centred relational method developed by the Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, often called the 'Listening Guide' (Brown and Gillian, 1991, 1992, 1993). Based on the assumption of storytelling, the Listening Guide sees interactions and relationships as fundamental aspects of human lived experience (Gillian, 1992, 1988). It *'explores individual's narrative accounts in terms of their*

relationships to the broader social, structural and cultural contexts within which they live.' p. 126.

Others who have utilised variants of the Listening Guide for doctoral theses include Mauthner and Doucet (1998) and more recently Milnes (2003), who argues, that as a useful narrative tool, the Listening Guide assists in examining how dominant cultural and community understandings may impact the personal accounts that individual's give of their experiences.

Brown, who helped develop the Listening Guide, explored how women 'appropriate' the words and voices of others around them in their attempts to understand themselves and others. In utilising the Listening Guide, Brown revisited each of her transcripts five times with each reading having a different focus. The first reading explored the overall shape of the narrative, examining the overall structure, form, content of the narrative, such as previously mentioned structural approaches. This reading also involved exploring the impact of the research relationship on the way that the narratives were constructed and interpreted. The second reading explored how the women described themselves, what Brown refers to as 'attending to the girl's first person voices, or listening for the 'I'. The third reading was tailored to Brown's own specific research interest which was examining when young women expressed anger. The fourth and fifth readings were designed to explore a phenomenon of what Brown refers to as 'ventriloquism.' That is, by exploring the 'ventriloquised' voices that young women used in relating to their experiences, this enabled Brown to hear what the women said about their own particular experiences but also it aided in

understanding the normalising views within the women's communities to which they either resisted or complied.

The fourth reading involved exploring the qualities of feminine behaviour idealised or denigrated by the women's culture. And the fifth reading investigated how the appropriation of other voices, often those of their immediate communities enabled the women to resist dominant cultural notions of femininity and gender-appropriate behaviour (for further explanation of this see Milnes 2003).

Overall, the Listening Guide is exactly what it describes, it is 'a guide' and therefore varies with different research projects. Hence, although the first two readings are seen as fundamental the other readings are tailored to fit with researchers' specific needs. For example, Mauther and Doucet (1998) and more recently Milnes (2003), basing their PhD's on the Listening Guide tailored the project to their own research interests. In adapting the guide for the current project then, five readings were conducted.

5.17.1 Reading One: Structural Analysis/Critical Junctures

The first reading involved a general structural and thematic analysis of the rider's accounts. This stage focused on the overall plot of the narratives, such as key characters, events and outcomes and in particular how key incidents as described by the riders, may have impacted their accounts. By focusing on biographically meaningful events or turning points in subjects' lives (Denzin 2001), this approach to

narratives aimed to understand the extent to which past experience as well as critical junctures may have impacted riders' accounts of their experiences.

5.17.2 Reading Two: A Joint Construction

Next, reading two, involved an exploration of how narrative are jointly constructed between listener and teller or what Riessman (1993) refers to as an 'interactional/dialogic' analysis. Thus, how the researchers own position affected the research relationship, hence the story told. This reading considered whether the participant saw me as an outsider, therefore trying to teach me about their life or as one sharing similarities with the community therefore, negating the need for them to inform me in this way. Further, the role of the interview context was considered, such as where the story was told as well as who was listening or participating in the conversation. This reading is also in line with Roberts (2002) who argues that *"Ethnographic texts are now seen as complex documents containing a variety of voices as the author often takes part in conversations with him or herself as well as places his/her voice in relation to the various ones taken from interviews." p. 163.*

5.17.3 Reading Three: Physical and Intrapsychic Aspects

The third reading was tailored to the specific needs of the current project which aims to examine the material/physical and intrapsychic characteristics which may contribute to motorcycling practice. To explore in the riders' accounts descriptions of thrill, pleasure, feelings of empowerment and/or anxiety which are arguably highly interrelated to the high-risk experience.

5.17.4 Reading Four: Positioning

The fourth reading was similar to that of Brown's reading for the first person, for the voice of the 'I.' Also informed by Bamberg (1997), this reading focused on narrative performance or the way the riders use language to achieve different accounting ends. As argued by Bamberg (1997) and more recently Milnes (2003), this involves looking at how people position themselves. The first level explores how the narrator positions characters in their accounts. That is, how the actors in the stories are framed and morally evaluated p.337.

The second level of analysis as suggested by Bamberg (1997) and also Milnes (2003) is to explore how the speaker positions him or herself to the audience p. 337. As Bamberg (1997) points out, *it's not just what is said that's important, but why it is said.* Therefore, by attending to how the teller talks about themselves, this consequently, sheds light on who they think they are not. As Campbell (1987) earlier found, most of individual's sense of who they are, their 'identity claims', arise from who they believe they are not. So in deconstructing riders' accounts, what is being said is considered, but also what is being rejected is explored. Indeed 'revealing contradictions' is also the position adopted by Billig (1991). Finally, the third level of analysis which Bamberg and Milnes suggest is to explore how narrators position 'themselves to themselves' p. 337. This reveals how the narrator constructs and maintains a 'sense of self'. Overall, these three readings are very similar to Milnes (2003) adaptation of the Listening Guide, who drawing on Bamberg (1997), explores the positioning of accounts at three levels.

5.17.5 Reading Five: Appropriation

Additionally, since accounts are taken here to be socially located, the final reading explored the 'cultural locus' of riders' stories. Specifically, the extent to which local community standards are reflected in the personal narrative accounts that riders give of their experiences. This reading was therefore similar to Brown's (1998) notion of 'ventriloquism' exploring what norms are idealised or denigrated by the participant's local communities.

This final reading also involved an exploration of those more wider or societal expectations which respondents might either comply with or resist. That is, do riders appropriate normalising views or do they resist being narrowly contained by conventional categories (such as those expressed in the media or wider institutions). Such an approach is valuable in exploring edgework narratives as Brannigan et al (1983) suggest, in order to maintain participation in an activity which is often considered as disagreeable to outsiders, a process of deviance neutralisation must occur in order to maintain a positive self image. Again, this reading is similar to Brown's (1998) final reading which explores how participants appropriate the voices of their local community in order to resist dominant cultural notions.

Overall, by conducting five readings the framework adopted explores how risk is storied at different levels. Both at a social level, through exploring the shared understandings prevalent in the riders' communities but also at a personal level through the personal narratives that riders give of their past experiences. In this way the study, similar to some feminist philosophies, stresses both diversity and

autonomy. In addition, it seeks to reconcile the commonly drawn dichotomy between body processes and the ways in which these are constructed in the realm of the symbolic. That is, in line with Ussher (1997), the study seeks to address this divide by combining a critical sociolinguistic analysis with an appreciation of the reciprocal relationship between discourse and its material context.

5.18 The Formulation of the Research Project

The interest in risk-taking came from previous road safety research conducted for the MCI which explored motorcycling rider development. This study relied on a survey methodology in order to produce generalisable information about the average tendencies of risk-takers. However, the current project sought to take a more qualitative approach to understanding risk-taking, interested in gaining an in-depth insight into motorcyclists' lives. In adopting a narrative methodology then, the study aims to enable participants to tell their stories in their own words in order to gain an understanding of the social, cultural and material contexts within which these experiences are lived. Also, the story basis for research seemed particularly apt for research into risk-taking, as understanding such experiences may escape more standardised questionnaires or quantitative assessments. Similarly, Squire (1989) found that a focus on narrative was helpful for women when they are discussing topics like aggression which are hard to speak about directly and denotatively.

Perhaps in line with more 'postmodern' perspectives then, the ultimate decision to focus on people's accounts of their own experiences came from an interest in Denzin's (2001) work which argues that in a complex human era, full of conflicting

and multiple interpretations, researchers should seek to look at the way that people construct meanings around their experiences and the world in which they live out. In order to develop an appropriate approach to narrative, much time was spent in the Department of Behavioural Sciences at the University of Huddersfield and the researcher attended a variety of Narrative Psychology Conferences. In addition, having a done a first degree in Behavioural Sciences, also at the University of Huddersfield, this guided an interest in postmodern views of identity and the role that consumer culture and the media play in these conceptualisations.

5.19 The Data Collection Phases

Overall, with regards to the process of data collection, the study utilised three phases. This included a semi-structured interviewing phase with those who deliver the experience alongside a participant observation phase in order to 'contextualise' the narratives, a review of popular special magazines and press, and the bulk of the research which was an in-depth narrative interviewing phase, conducted by phone with thirty-three motorcyclists.

5.19.1 Phase One: Conversations with Experience Providers and Participant Observation

A series of casual conversations took place with those who deliver motorcycling experience such as motorcycle shop owners and track day tutors. These conversations took place in three motorcycle shops with the managers/owners and further, with regards to track day access; observation was arranged via phone calls to the

tutors/organisers previous to participation. Time was spent in the field with the tutors during the track days, listening to and participating in their conversations. My presence as a researcher was made known to all those who participated in the study previous to the onset of data gathering. Overall, the conversations assisted in attending to the collective cultural codes available for adoption and consumption by motorcycling participants.

As far as gathering respondents for the study, the idea was to attend a variety of motorcyclist venues such as track days, races, motorcycle cafes and shows to meet and interact with possible respondents. An extended period was spent in these settings which enabled an understanding of the context in which riders spend much of their time doing the activity. Details about the settings where gathered such as the history and customs associated with the sites, when the sites were established, and how the sites related to other sites Denzin (2001), see Appendix A. Also, a list of all field work venues are presented in Appendix B.

This stage also enabled an understanding of the ways in which riders talk about their activity with other riders within their naturally occurring social groups. Approximately forty motorcyclists were gathered by snowball method where a representative individual from the population was selected randomly from each venue and provided referrals to other participants within the field settings. A further aim of this stage was to establish relationships with the riders who would take part in phase four of the study, to assist in establishment of rapport to build close relationships with riders which would help in the later in-depth phone interviews which were vital to the project.

By participation in the field, the researcher aimed to gain first-hand how motorcyclists' meanings emerge through talk and collective action, to learn local expectations for appropriate speech and behaviour. This was done by listening closely to understand the significance members attribute to incidents and objects that make up their world and to explore how members become socialised (Emerson et al 1995 p. 115).

In this stage, data was collected in the form of field notes that were written up after each session of participant observation. It was not feasible to make tape recordings due to the fact that motorcycling venues are typically noisy environments (particularly track days). In writing context-sensitive locally informed field notes then, accounts were written of what happened during face to face encounters with others in the field, noting the terms or phrases that the participants used to characterise people and events. As advised by Emerson et al (1995), close attention was paid to any occasion upon which people explicitly talked about or acted toward each other on the basis of a specific ideology or meaning, as the major aim of this phase was to explore whether dominant cultural and or community understandings were evident in the informal conversations of riders.

The researcher was not trying to attribute motives or try to depict what the participants were thinking rather, the writer simply reported in field notes what was observed, what the researcher heard and saw the participants do. This was done through verbal quoting and sometimes through accompanying gestures and facial expressions as a means of portraying the participants' views.

In participating, the researcher also documented her own opinions, recognising that the findings are not absolute but contingent upon the circumstances of their discovery. The accounts which were gathered are not taken as factual, but rather as expressions of the speaker's experiences and views at a particular moment in time, to a specific audience in order to accomplish a particular purpose. Thus the record is taken to be just one account made at a particular time and place. This is similar to Geertz view that all anthropological writings are interpretations of interpretations; therefore the observer has no privileged voice in the interpretations that are written. Hence, the central task became to make sense out of a local situation (Denzin 2001).

Living in the north of England the motorcycling café of Sherburn was an obvious choice. It was also decided to attend a variety of motorcycle track days due to the growing interest amongst motorcyclists in this activity. In addition, a variety of other venues were visited during the study including the popular motorcyclist venue Matlock Bath, the Annual Bike Show at the NEC, Birmingham and a mixture of motorcycle races (British Grand Prix, Cock O' the North National Road Races at Oliver's Mount, Scarborough and Club 66 races at Elvington Air Field in York). Some photographs taken during the fieldwork phase have been included in the thesis, however, these are not intended for any formal method of analysis.

5.19.2 Phase Two: Review of Specialist Motorcycle Press

Alongside participant observation, it was decided to conduct an examination into the kind of materials to which motorcyclists are exposed. Hence, the review of texts such as specialist motorcyclist magazines, newspapers, books and websites allowed the

study of the collective understandings as they are expressed in the texts in which motorcyclists frequently read and to which they often subscribe. As argued by Denzin (2001), participants accounts should be connected to the larger institutional, group and cultural context, including written texts and other systems of discourse (cinema, music, folklore, media) as such experiences occur within the larger historical, institutional and cultural arenas that surround an individuals life.

The texts were consistently gathered to coincide with the time scale of the study. A number of key specialist magazines were reviewed including; Fast Bike, Performance Bikes, Motorcycle Racer, Superbike, Two Wheel's Only, Northern Biker, Bike and MCN. The MCN (Motorcycle News) paper in particular was an important choice as it is read by a great variety of motorcyclists.

A number of leaflets/programmes were also collected at venues which were either purchased or were handed out for free. These include Scarborough Bike Week, the British Grand Prix, Cock o'the North Road Races, the National Bikes Show at the NEC, as well as specialist venue magazines such as Torque (Sherburn's magazine) and Clubman's News (Club 66 National racing news magazine).

All the text has different promotional purposes. Some were to advertise events, particular places or attractions. The bike magazines in particular played a large role in the review of various motorcycles but also featured various articles on racing professionals, riding techniques or places to go. In addition, various independent adverts are featured in the back of these sources such as bikes or gear for sale as well as track days, promotions or touring holidays. A number of additional visual text

were also considered such as popular motorcycling cult movies such as ‘The Wild One’ and ‘Rebel Without a Cause’, as it is believed such iconic rocker images still circulate today.

5.19.3 Phase Three: Narrative Interviews

Out of a total of forty riders who were met in the field and were involved in the participant observation phase of the study, thirty-three motorcyclists were further followed up by telephone. These motorcyclists were interviewed according to a highly flexible narrative interviewing schedule with a small number of very open questions. All accounts were written up in shorthand and immediately transcribed. To a large extent, the participants were able to direct the interviews, resulting in long stretches of narrative talk. As argued by Mishler (1986) and later Denzin (2001), it is preferable to ask questions that open up topics and allow respondents to construct answers in the ways they find meaningful. Hence, participants were able to describe specific events or speak generally. Although the same topics were always raised, participants could concentrate the interview on their own concerns. Thus, this semi-structured method claims accessibility, flexibility and unobtrusiveness (Henwood and Pidgeon 1995) that might lead to participants’ own experiences being heard. Also, due to having feminist ethics regarding the motorcycling community, the researcher wanted to be careful not exploit the riders in anyway. Respondents were told that the purpose of the study was to gather insight into motorcyclist biographies and stories and that the study was particularly interested in rider development for developing more sustainable motorcycling.

With regards to the interview schedule, the first question focused on the participant's first motorcycling experiences. This question was designed to ease the riders into the interview experience and allow them feel comfortable (Mishler 1986 a p. 69, as cited in Milnes 2003). Overall, the narrative interview schedule only consisted of three broad questions (see Appendix C). The first, as already mentioned focused on the participants' first riding experiences. The seconded focused on participants' particular riding experience which they were free to choose and the third question focused on riders' accidents or violations, seeking to understand how past experiences may have impacted riders' current motorcycling engagement. However, due to the unstructured nature of the interviews, the length of time in which each rider talked about their experiences varied with some participants more able to articulate than others. As a result the interviews varied in focus. The wide range of responses was reflective of the diversity of riders' experiences, of how they understood their experiences**.**

5.20 Research Ethics

Further, researchers in the interpretive project such as Gubrium and Holstein (1995), Denzin (1997) (2001) and Pitts (2003) acknowledge that their own interpretation flows from their own personal understandings. Indeed as Atkinson (1995) points out, age, race, gender and ethnic identification may shape relationships with people under study in important ways. Thus, how the interviewer is perceived by participants is important to the research process. The researcher decided to be very open with the participants but at the same time there was a danger of becoming to close to the riders due to being a woman researching predominantly men. For example, in a few

instances riders offered to meet up again and invites to ‘go pillion’ were also suggested on a few occasions. Nevertheless, being female appears to have had a positive impact on the data gathering. This has also been suggested by other female researchers who point out that women in research settings are traditionally seen as less threatening (Smart (1984), as listeners, as powerless (Easterday et al 1977) and as more emotional than men (Williams and Heikes 1993). Easterday et al (1977) recognised for example, that female researchers may find advantageous trade-offs as being commonly seen as unthreatening, they may gain access to information with relative ease.

In addition, as an educated, white female the researcher introduced herself to participants as a student from the University of Huddersfield, who was interested in gathering motorcyclists’ stories. This approach helped the researcher not come across as too academic or powerful and therefore perhaps more approachable to the community. A careful decision was made not use any academic terminology with the riders, but rather focusing on their everyday experiences.

Also, with the intention of glimpsing the insider’s perspective, the researcher positioned herself as a motorcycle enthusiast but did not participate in the activity due to the constraints of being a single parent with a dependent disabled child. Indeed maintaining a sympathetic yet professional role is further suggested by Powdermaker (1966), Freilich (1970) and Everhart (1977) who suggest that the researchers should take the role as a ‘marginal native’. Maintaining a more or less marginal position, thereby providing access to participant perspectives but at the same time minimizing the dangers of over-rapport.

Due to the law breaking nature of the activity, the researcher was also aware that this aspect of the project may affect the nature of the stories told by the riders. It was found that some participants were enthusiastic to share information regarding law breaking and fast riding experiences and even run-ins with the police. In addition, other riders were open to disclose perhaps quite sensitive information about their experience because they felt they were helping the motorcycling community in some way. As previously explained, the goal of the current research project was not to exploit the riders but gain an in-depth understanding into motorcyclist experiences in order to help rider development programmes to develop more effective schemes.

Overall, taking responsibility to produce a moral or ethical interpretation, the researcher asked herself critical questions regarding the purpose and outcomes of the research. This was felt to be particularly important because of the high degree of trust generated between the researcher and subjects and because of the power of the researcher to make an interpretation of the lives and experiences of others. Hence adapting Mason's (2002) suggestions the following questions guided the research process; p. 201

> *'Am I producing good quality research?'*
>
> *'Am I being careful in my analysis, avoiding false or inappropriate interpretations?'*
>
> *'Am I considering my subjects' rights and protecting those directly and indirectly involved in the research?'*
>
> *'How might others use this research and explanations in the future?'*

Chapter 6: Research Findings from Motorcycle Enclaves

6.1 'Squires' Motorcycle Café in Sherburn

Although the participant observation was conducted at a variety of motorcyclists' venues, due to convenience the researcher spent most of the time at the sports motorcyclist café 'Squires' in Sherburn, Yorkshire. It was also felt that Sherburn was a good choice as its patrons are predominantly supersports riders, reflecting the currently dominant trend in UK motorcycling (see Figure 6.1).

According to Clark (1995), supersports motorcycles have been associated with Sherburn since the early 1980s. Sherburn, which first opened in 1954, has a long tradition for being part of the North's motorcycling folklore. However, as Clark points out, through the 1960s Sherburn's patrons were not the sports motorcyclists it draws today, but was host to the bike boys or 'rockers' as they were called then. It was not until the sports bike's rise to popularity in the early 1980s, and the consequent rise of motorcycling as a leisure activity, that supersports motorcycles became a frequent sight at the café.

Figure 6.1 Sports bikes parked in one of Sherburn's car parks.

The popularity of Sherburn was further established in the spring of 2003, where, due to lack of space, Sherburn's owners bought a new property and moved out of the village to larger premises of over five and a half acres. The café is now possibly the biggest motorcycle orientated meeting place in the country, with its own purpose-built sweet shop, coffee shop, bar, fish and chip and gear shop. Outside there is even enough land for camping and three car parks.

Currently, Sherburn attracts motorcyclists with supersports bikes and these riders are further catered for by Sherburn's owners who are clearly supportive of this style of motorcycling. Outside the café on picnic benches, old issues of MCN and other sports motorcycle magazines are provided as reading material for patrons, whereas inside the café there is a large open area where motorcycle racing is shown on two big screens at either side of the room. In addition, the gear shop pays tribute to sports motorcycling with mainly brightly coloured race replica gear on sale as well as posters depicting

professional racers and models wearing professional race clothing and accessories as the following reflexive notes describe;

We walked over to where the bikes were standing and started looking at some shiny metallic helmets which were on a rack under a poster of foggy's new bike. Sherburn, July 19.

I noticed that there were posters on the wall of male models wearing race replica leathers. Sherburn, Aug 17.

In contrasting the gear shop at Sherburn to other motorcycling clothing and accessory retailers, the extent to which performance motorcycling is upheld at Sherburn becomes apparent. For example, another motorcycle shop which was visited during the study, sold virtually no race replica motorcycling gear. In the following conversation with the female shop assistant, her resistance towards sports motorcycling is evident; describing sports bike riders as 'plastics';

"What kind of biking are you into?" she asked.
"I'm not bothered really, any." I answered, thinking, I daren't say fast plastics.
"Oh, I don't do plastics." She commented, although I already knew that looking at her classic bike parked out front. Jolie, bike shop, August 1.

Thus, as a contemporary motorcycling enclave, Sherburn offers a festive atmosphere where the consumption of goods is clearly an important part of the leisure setting, as the following field note reflects; *The sports bikes with bright colours lined out with the proud owners sitting or standing near by was almost like a car show room, for everyone to wander around admiring each other's bike, and chat about equipment and gear. Sherburn, July 19.*

Standing in contrast to the torn denim jeans and the black leather jackets worn by the 1960s working class bike boys, today many motorcyclists at Sherburn wear bright coloured, costly race replica leathers and paraphernalia championing popular racers or national race meets, such as the Grand Prix or British Superbikes as the following field notes describe;

Someone on the hill had a bright yellow Rossi 'The Doctor' t-shirt on from the GP. Sherburn, August 3.

I also noticed that there was another man at the table getting up to leave and he was wearing a British GP t-shirt in light blue. Sherburn, August 17.

On a bench next to us there was a man wearing one piece race replica leathers with the signatures of famous racers on the back. Sherburn, June 14.

In relating the café to other motorcyclist venues, places such as Matlock or Scarborough, which are also tourist attractions, appear to attract a wider variety of motorcyclists compared to that of Sherburn. Particularly popular in such enclaves are touring motorcycles which have large engines, ideal for long-distance riding; *There weren't many people there in race replica leathers like at Sherburn. The scene reminded me of Matlock Bath with a more diverse mix of bikers and people just on a day out. Scarborough Bike Week, September 14.*

Consequently, it appears that motorcyclists' gather in such settings depending on bike style. This was also found with Schouten and McAlexander's (1995), study on Harley-Davidson owners, that riders congregate around the Harley-Davidson brand, where the bike itself serves as a means of interaction, or what Schouten and McAlexander describe as 'a sense of community achieved through consumption of a brand'. Further demonstrating this point, the motorcyclists in the following field notes taken at Sherburn, make a clear 'us' and 'them' distinction between sports motorcyclists and the 'other', more safety conscious riders; *"This place is mainly for sports biking, that's the most popular kind of biking in Britain."*

"Yeah," said the other biker, "it's mainly rice rockets here not Harley's, Harley riders call us motorcyclists not bikers, because they think we are in a different class." Just then a man walked up to the bench of bikers who were sitting next to us, looking very angry he threw his gloves abruptly onto the table. Standing next to the bench, he started telling the group of how a 'blasted' Volvo driver had just cut him off. He then sat down with the

rest of the men continuing the story. Obviously overhearing, the older of the two men we were sitting with then added;

"I can't stand it when that happens. It happened to us not long since, we were out biking and came across a group of IAM's (Institute of Advanced Motorists) and they purposely wouldn't let us pass." I asked them if they had done any advanced rider training. The younger of the two men said,

"We would never do advanced rider training, it's for a certain type of rider, the 'yellow sashes.'"

"Yeah, we do our own thing to increase skill." The other biker added. Sherburn, June 14.

In the above excerpt, the participants paint a clear 'us' and 'them' distinction between sports riders and 'other' motorcyclists. The sports rider who is seen as the insider, doesn't need training, whereas the 'other', the safety conscious rider, is constructed in a negative light, associated with the 'safety first' bikers or the 'yellow sashes'.

As noticed on a variety of occasions, it appears that legitimacy within the sports motorcycling enclave is important for participation. This is similar to what Celsi (1993) found with the sky-diving community, that maintenance of a high-risk identity is attained through mastery of the sport. Perhaps this explains therefore, why participants at Sherburn commonly demonstrate technical calibre through performance of excessive speed, noise and stunting exhibition, or at least describe such achievements. For example, the following female rider describes accomplishing speeds of up to 120 mph; *Just then an eye catching bright yellow Buell road up and parked right outside the café in*

front of everyone. When the rider took off their helmet it was a dark haired woman. She was fairly tall and was wearing all black leathers and on the back of her leather jacket, it said 'Harley Davidson'. She was an attractive woman and as soon as she got off her bike she got out her mobile phone. She started talking to someone on it and obviously realising she had a few on lookers she walked past everyone and said into the phone, "Yeah, I was going 120 mph." Female respondent, Sherburn, August 24.

Similarly another rider met at Sherburn, 'Dan', shared a variety of fast riding stories; "*I have a friend," he continued, "well it's a friend of a friend and he goes 100-120 on the road but when he comes to a bend he only goes 70. Well when we got back here, (to Sherburn) I walked up to him at his bike and said, what's wrong with your bike that you have to go 70 round corners and that was it, he left and went home, and didn't stay. He doesn't really talk to me now after that." Dan, Sherburn, July 5.*

"…then I realised there was a sharp bend so I ended up taking this bend at 120, when I should have taken it at 80. I didn't use my brakes though; I just let my back end slide out like the racers do." Dan, Sherburn, July 5.

6.1.2 Specialist Leisure Equipment

Moreover, based on performance and sports riding, race replica goods and clothing are also regularly seen at Sherburn. Hence, participants within the enclave frequently discuss and exhibit physically demarcated motorcycle clothing and equipment, as the

motorcycling in the following field notes describe; *"The white lines are already gone from my tyres" he laughed. Ewan, Sherburn, August 3.*

Further, an advertisement for used leathers for sale from Sherburn's notice board exemplifies this point; *'Mint condition but with slightly worn knee sliders.' Sherburn, August 17.*

With the use of modern equipment, participants at Sherburn commonly customise their motorcycles and purchase the appropriate clothing and accessories to match. This is supported by Featherstone (1991), who argues that in contemporary society, consumer possessions are no longer solely valued for their usefulness but are often used for wasteful luxury and pleasure. This following Sherburn participant for example, comments on the excess of leisure goods now available for consumption;

"Do you ever do any off roading?" I inquired further.
"No, but I'd like to," he replied, "but the problem is then you've got to get everything that goes with it, the bike and all the gear. It's not cheap, particularly the kind of stuff they sell here. It's like kids with these BMX's, they've got to have all the gear and the clothes, that's how the world is today." Robert, Sherburn, August 17.

"I suppose for some it's more about meeting people and being around bikers, posing, a lot of that goes on. It's just a fashion though, like those that join a cycling club, everyone goes out in Lycra. It's a way of life leathers. They're great until you go into a café, then

you feel out of place. I don't mean places like Sherburn that encourage bikers, but the average place, it's not right somehow." Robert, Sherburn, August 17.

The variety of brightly coloured gear and motorcycles which are now available for motorcycling participants identity play can be related therefore to the previous discussion on modern cultural groupings use of 'style'. As pointed out earlier, Hebdige (1979) argues that style in contemporary society involves 'bricolage' without reference to the meanings of the originals. Accordingly, it appears that contemporary motorcyclists' race replica style no longer represents a clear working class identity, but rather reflects just another mode of fashion. This can be compared to the activities legendary past where in case of the rocker, it was through codes of dress that the working-class bike boy found the means to articulate his rocker lifestyle; "*There is potency, an epic simplicity about bikes, leathers and rock'n'roll during this period. Stylistically they are clean to the point of being classic, even timeless; nothing can ever be that simple again. Raw rock'n'roll music, cafe racers, quiffs, the rocker style an authentic thoroughbred." (Stuart 1987 p.6)*

Thus, as Jameson (1984) has noted, in contemporary society, style no longer displays some underlying message, but rather consumers create a cannibalisation of styles from the past and present, representing a loss of artistic depth in favour of a superficial pastiche (Jameson 1984). Therefore, it appears that explaining style in terms of class structures and structural positions of groups, such as Willis' (1978) analysis of the bike boys, may no longer be appropriate for understanding the playful potential of contemporary leisure lifestyles.

Therefore, it could be argued, that the playful race replica style of the contemporary motorcyclist stands in contrast to the original rocker identity which was forged as a symbolic resistance to the structural problems of the working class. For example, playful appendages which can be stuck to motorcycle helmets as well as cartoon images painted on bikes and on gear are now frequently seen at the café, as depicted in the following field notes;

Then turning to talk to the teenager, I noticed that one of the helmets on the table next to him had a Magic Roundabout scene painted on it. Sherburn, August 24.

As we walked across the car park to the café a woman on a motorcycle pulled into the car park and drove past us wearing a helmet with devil horns and a tail stuck to it. Sherburn, August 17.

"Noticing the woman with horns on her helmet, the Kawasaki biker said, "Who would have thought them things would have taken off." Shane, Sherburn, August 24.

We then started looking at the tails and ears and things that you stick to your helmet.
"My son doesn't like them things," he said looking at the rubber ears. "He already complains about me wearing this Tweetie Bird necker chief." Robert, Sherburn, August 17.

6.1.3 Sherburn's Motorcycling Folklore

Although Sherburn is mainly a sports motorcycling enclave today, general knowledge regarding the cafés historic past was found to pervade conversations amongst contemporary participations. As Lupton (1998) found, memories and the myths associated with historic places play an important role in their cultural heritage. For instance, in exploring people's experiences of living in northern English cites, Lupton discovered that the residents' perception of their local environment emerged from a combination of factors, including their relationships with others as well as with the physical layout, the objects, but also the memories and the myths associated with the broader historical dimensions of the city (Lupton 1998 p. 155). This was similarly found by Belk (1998) in his study on contemporary mountain men enclaves; *"By becoming a modern mountain man, it may be possible to reclaim this mythical heritage. Modern rendezvous offer a chance to live in mythical times and to experience a fantastic return to the primitive. These beliefs about mountain men and Native Americans are the critical backdrop against which the modern rendezvous consumption enclave is formed and experienced." (Belk et al 1998 p.223).*

Thus, heroic images shaped by mass mediated films, folkloric stories such as the café racer add to the romance. Like pilgrimages, such spaces have become special to those who go there, the ambience of the site, the myths and legends associated with it, all contribute to the performance of the experience, such as Stuart (1987) found in the case of 'the Ace', a popular rocker's pilgrimage in London; *"…the strongest and most*

impelling myths and legends were always associated with the Ace on London's north circular…A well known pastime at the Ace was to time a burn-up by spinning a record on the juke box. After a coin had been flipped into the slot, you kicked your bike over, belted under the arches, down to the roundabout and got back before the record stopped." (pp.58-59).

As Sherburn has an extensive history with motorcycling, participants were found to commonly discuss the history and traditions long associated with the café. For example, the following motorcyclist discusses the 'rocker era' in a conversation written from field notes at the café; *"This place has been here since the rocker era, but then it was just a cheap mode of transport. The greasers got their names from having to fix their bikes all the time. It's not like nowadays where your bike goes for miles with out a problem. You didn't go any long distance in those days without your tools. But that's all changed now. I started biking in the rocker era and the culture has changed now, it's no longer like that, you get all different sorts. It's a second mode of transport now and it's not cheap." Male respondent, Sherburn, June 14.*

Even outside the café is a statue of James Dean paying tribute to one of motorcycles most iconic folklore. Dean, like his predecessor Marlin Brando, were romanticised in the rocker era and have become motorcycling icons for their willingness to flee civilisation and domesticity in pursuit of danger, thrill and sensual pleasure. Images shaped during the rocker era therefore, may stand as a cultural reminder to which contemporary motorcycling is experienced within enclaves; *A statue of James Dean overlooking the*

parking lot, someone had put a cheap pair of children's sunglasses on it. Perhaps the statue outside somehow stood as a reminder to the cultural heritage of the café. Sherburn, June 14.

Such images shaped during the rocker era therefore are experienced anew within such venues (suggesting that homology is perhaps crossed with bricolage in such settings). For example, at bike shows and motorcycle celebrations such as Scarborough Bike Week, classic bikes are often displayed as a reminder of the cultural heritage of motorcycling. (see Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2 The classic bikes at Scarborough Bike Week.

6.1.4 Enclaves as Motorcycling Communities

Although a complexity of riders now congregate at Sherburn, ranging from veterans of the early days to riders new to the pastime, it appears that participants find a commonality due to sharing the same leisure interest. For example, the following sign at the gear shop

at Sherburn gives the impression that the owners know how to service their customer's needs; *'A gear shop owned by bikers for bikers,' Sherburn, June 14.*

Or as the following Sherburn participant suggests in the below field note; *'only bikers truly understand one another;' His facial expression then changed, as he started a new story. "It's great though when you get talking to someone who appreciates it (biking), like the lady down my street, when we moved in with all our bikes she was real friendly. She's bout 80 now but she used to be a biker. She's all into it and told us what roads to go on," the biker with a great look of satisfaction on his face repeated again, "yeah it's great when that happens." Male respondent, Sherburn, June 14.*

Further exemplifying this point, participants at Sherburn compare the 'special bonding' in motorcycling as something which simply does not occur with car ownership;

"Actually, I only just met this guy this morning," he said. *"I ran into him and told him I was going to Sherburn so he said he'd come too. That's the thing with bikers they do that sort of stuff, that would never happen in a car, 'Oh yeah, let's meet up somewhere in our cars.' Chuck, Sherburn, July 19*

"If a biker breaks down other bikers will always stop, they will look after you." Ewan, Sherburn, August 3.

The sense of 'communitas' shared amongst bikers is also physically perpetuated as motorcycle owners commonly 'sit on each other's bikes.' As Fishman (1960), Katriel (1987) and Collison (1996) argue, both verbal and non-verbal communication provides a special communion which binds communities and its members. Additionally, Belk (1998) found that the modern mountain man's physical re-enactment of the contemporary rendezvous helps to proliferate the communities socially shared beliefs. 'Sitting on another's bike' was observed in a variety of motorcyclist gatherings including Sherburn, Matlock, bike shops and even track days, as exemplified in the below field notes ;

"Jolie let her sit on your bike and try it," instructed Natasha. Natasha, bike shop, August 1.

"It is a woman's bike and she's probably about your height," she said. "She'll be here in a minute and I'm sure she'll let you sit on it, in fact, go ahead." I thought it was funny how she volunteered me to sit on her friend's bike to see if I'd fit. Thinking what a friendly woman she was I thought OK, I'll have a quick sit on it. Female respondent, Matlock Bath, June 15.

"Is that this years SV650?" I asked them, striking up conversation.
"I think so," said the one sitting next to me.
"I use to fit on last years model," I continued, "but it's too big for me now."
"Oh then you should have a go on my bike," the older one said, laughing.

"Ok," I agreed, "I'll have a sit on it in a bit." Ewan, Sherburn, August 3.

"Go ahead sit on it," she said excitedly. I got onto the bike, it looked well used. My feet just touched the ground on tiptoes. Female respondent, Sherburn, August 3.

"You could probably ride my bike, you can sit on it if you like." Dan, Sherburn, July 5.

"Is that your yellow Ducati?" I asked her.
"Yeah," she replied.
"It's gorgeous," I said complimenting her.
"Go have a sit on it," she suggested. Female respondent, track day, August 4.

The strength of this 'insider status' found amongst bikers is surprising considering the temporary nature of contemporary motorcycle gatherings. At Sherburn, and in other similar biking enclaves, many friendships are but mere acquaintances, as the following Sherburn participant describes; *"Actually, I only just met this guy this morning," he said. "I ran into him at a bike dealer and told him I was going to Sherburn so he said he'd come to. That's the thing with bikers, they do that sort of stuff." Chuck, Sherburn, July 19.*

In order to protect the norms and moral meanings that serve to distinguish the motorcycling community from outsiders, the following participant even claims to take physical steps to preserve the group's accepted codes. As Lupton (1998) describes,

'emotions can be evoked in response to the violation of group norms, serving to separate one's group from others and at the same time to reinforce social bonds'. (Lupton 1998 p. 35); *"The great thing with bikers though," continued the older of the two men, "is that you never get trouble with em. Except I was in a fight once," he continued laughing, "I punched someone in the face, but they deserved it because they pushed a bike over." Male respondent, Sherburn, July 14*

6.1.5 Enclaves as Social Infringements

The sense of communitas or 'insider status' gained through motorcycling participation may also be reinforced by the transgressive nature of the activity. For example, Clark (1995) argues that Sherburn has long been associated with the performance of fast riding and stunting display, offering for many participants an exciting inversion to society writ large; *"Things have been recorded in these pages such as excess speed, excess noise, wheelies and the like…because this is the true story of the coffee bar and these things did occur." (Clark 1995 p.55).*

Thus, as Roper (1994) points out, in a society which self-containment and self-regulation are highly valued and encouraged, the impositions of rules themselves produce the possibilities for lack of conformity and for transgressive possibilities. Participants at Sherburn and in other enclaves accordingly, were found to commonly discuss cultural definitions of 'appropriate behaviour', as the following participant describes; *"I was*

watching on Men and Motors how they portray us bikers as crazy men." Ewan, Sherburn, August 3.

However, as Williams (2001) points out, no behaviour is actually deviant or criminal until it is so defined and thereby labelled by a section or by the whole of society. To call something a 'crime' according to Williams, is just a means by which society marks out a certain group's behaviour as unacceptable. Moreover, large cultural changes in motorcycling have taken place since the 'mods' and 'rocker' days, however, despite this the following motorcyclists' at Sherburn argue that motorcyclists are still commonly associated with 'working class boys' getting into trouble. As Phoenix (1996) comments, the fact that these types of dominant ideologies persist even when people's own experiences contradict them is a powerful indicator of how deeply ingrained they become, as exemplified in the following conversation with two male Sherburn participants;

"Did you go to the old milk bar site too then?" I asked them.
"Yeah," replied the older biker, "and all the town people complained about all the bikers but it brought them a lot of business. I think bikers still have a reputation for being hooligans. It's because in the old days, bikers were only seventeen and biking was a cheap mode of transportation associated with trouble."
"Yeah some places are just not biker friendly at all," added the younger biker.

"There's this pub in Scarborough that even has a sign outside that says 'no bikers'. The idea of greasers getting into trouble still holds today." Male respondent, Sherburn, August 3.

However, although discourses of 'wrongdoing' and 'offence' appear to be associated with motorcycling and specifically with activities at venues such as Sherburn, the motorcyclists encountered at the café appeared to deliberately accept their adoption of a high-risk identity and even celebrate it. As Giddens (1991) and Lupton (1999) argue, individuals who engage in more physically risky activities may derive pleasure from their status as dangerous or prohibited, 'from flouting the rules of self-deportment to which most people adhere'. In support of this, the following Sherburn participants describe finding amusement in the transgressive nature of fast riding and stunting display which often takes place at the café;

"Well he had only just got his licence and he's got a small licence plate and the cops love those around here." Dan, Sherburn, July 5.

While I was still sitting down a yellow Ducati just leaving Sherburn did a stoppie on the way out. I noticed both the men were watching.
"Do you do wheelies?" I asked the men.
"He does 'em all the time," the older one said about his mate, "and stoppies."
"Would you do a wheelie or stoppie school?" I asked them both.

"Oh yeah I'd do that," the younger one said, "just so you learn how to do one properly." Patrick and Ewan, Sherburn, August 3.

"The best thing to do," he remarked excitedly, "is sit on that hill, but lots of people sit over there on the wall (and he pointed to the wall which ran alongside the road next to the café). The problem is that a lot of bikers on Wednesday do wheelies along there. So it's only a matter of time before someone comes off and falls on someone sitting on the wall and does some damage. It's great here on Wednesday, I come every Wednesday. Dale, Sherburn, August 17.

This can be compared to Hebdige's (1979) study on the working class punks. The youth's transformed their position as passive objects of authoritarian surveillance into one of creative rebellious expression, of 'pleasure on display'. Bakhtin's (1984) historical analysis of the grotesque body in the medieval carnival also points to a similar expression, where the grotesque operates through juxtaposition and irony, representing a refusal of orderliness and social control.

Elias and Dunning (1986) further contend that the opportunity to experience emotion in mimetic contexts is especially sought in contemporary society as the public arousal of excitement is usually severely controlled in everyday life; "*One can vicariously experience hatred and the desire to kill, defeating opponents and humiliating enemies…the anxieties of threatened defeat and the open triumph of victory." (Elias and Dunning 1986 p.195).*

These mimic aspects of enclaves were also found by Belk (1998) in his study on modern mountain men gatherings; *"Characteristics of the carnivalesque pervade the rendezvous, including humour, display of preposterous self, identity-transforming costumes, excess of alcohol, aversion to formal authority, pretence and a sense of camaraderie." (Belk 1998 p.89).*

Additionally, like Sherburn, the following racers at Elvington describe their amusement in 'getting into trouble' with security at the British Grand Prix;

"What's a good day out biking?" I asked him.

"Oh last weekend was good, at the grand prix," he laughed amusingly. "We went Friday and camped out and the security kept checking on us every hour. We kept getting in trouble with they security. They kept coming over to our camp and telling us off. We tied a settee to the back of a car and were giving people rides. The highlight was when we light the portaloo on the hill on fire, it was all light up like a beacon on the hill." He was laughing profusely by now. Sam, Elvington Club 66 race, July 20.

Or as the following track day participant also describes;

I told him that I had spoken to someone who had gone to the GP that hadn't got much sleep. Researcher

"Oh yeah," replied excitedly, "we woke up in the morning and all the portaloo's were burnt out." Male respondent, track day, August 27.

Surprisingly, although participants admit to 'giving people rides on settees' and 'burning out the portaloos,' the media coverage of the event describes the crowd as 'exceptionally well behaved'; *Donington boss Robert Fearnall told MCN "This is definitely the largest crowd in the 17 years that the British GP has run at Donington Park…but even though we had a huge crowd, everyone was exceptionally well behaved. There were no incidents on the campsite and our fans were a credit to racing. (Fearnall 2003 p. 3 supplement).*

Perhaps the media's acceptance of the events at the GP can be attributed to the fact that extreme sports are not considered a serious threat to society but are rather seen as 'tolerable deviance', like drunkenness or gambling (Brannigan et al 1983). The sanctioning of motorcycling as only a minor infringement to the social order may therefore explain the playfulness encountered at these venues.

6.2 Motorcycle Track Days

Perhaps the ultimate construction of fast performance motorcycling is best exemplified by the motorcycle track day. Track days which first became popular in 1988, are a relatively recent trend in biking. As commercially organised events, track days facilitate the construction of motorcycling as a fast, competitive activity and currently, anyone with a motorcycle licence can participate in a track day, riding on the finest racetracks in the country.

However, unlike Sherburn's playful festival like atmosphere, the motorcycle track day demands a more convincing performance of its participants as they must 'step up to the challenge' of the high-risk context, as the following participant at a track day describes; (see Figure 6.3). *"… on the track you hear other bikers talking and they say 'I'm going to do this but then you're out there and they dawdle about and you're thinking, I thought I was going to really struggle against him. It's the quiet ones you have to be careful about, they're the ones in control."*

Figure 6.3 Track day participants line up at the start line.

Moreover, the track day setting with its visual display and surrounding discourse, depicts a scene similar to that of a professional race meet. Participants congregate in small groups in the paddock wearing full race replica leathers, wind arches and body armour (see figure 6.4).

Figure 6.4 Track day participants get suited up for the next session.

Unsurprisingly, high spec racing bikes are a popular choice amongst participants, such as Ducati's, Aprilia's and R1's as the following field notes suggest;

I noticed that there were loads of Ducati's there that day. I wondered if doing track days had anything in common with owning a Ducati. In that owning a Ducati is like the fulfilment of a dream and perhaps doing a track day was also. Track day, August 4.

Everyone had brightly coloured leathers and sports bikes, it seemed as though I was at a real race with everyone looking so professional with their gear and sports bikes. Track day, August 4.

I decided to have a walk over to the starting line. The riders, with their brightly coloured leathers and sports bikes looked like professional racers. Track day, August 4.

When I got down to the starting line. It was fun to watch the bikers starting out, it was exciting seeing the marshal waving the flag. Track day, August 4.

Some participants even prepare their 'skinnies' or racing tyres with warmers in-between group sessions (see Figure 6.5).

Figure 6.5 Track bikes with tyre warmers.

Further exemplifying the manner by which racing ideals are upheld at the Donington Park circuit, signed photographs of professional racers cover the walls at the 'Pit Stop Café', where many track day participants are encouraged to dine on their lunch break (see Figure 6.6).

Figure 6.6 Signed photographs of famous racers on the walls of the 'Pit Stop Café'.

After I got my food I went and sat down and I noticed that on the wall there were lots of photographs of famous racers that were signed, like Rossi and Hodgson. Track day, August 4.

Thus, in further 'authenticating' the racing experience, participants can even purchase photographs of themselves riding in action on the track; *Walking through the paddock I noticed that there was a photographer selling photo's of the track day participants while they were out on the track. Some of the participants' photos looked like photographs of professional racers. Track day, August 4.*

Indeed track days have become increasingly popular due to the commonly cited frustration of many motorcyclists that fast riding on the roads has become both too difficult and dangerous with the growing number of speed restrictions such as speed cameras, police and traffic congestion, such as described by the following participant at a

track day; *"It's because the old bill will get ya," he added, "that people are doing track days more now and supermoto." Barry, track day, August 4.*

Moreover, many track day participants have even altered their road bikes for use only on track days. In response to this trend, motorcycle manufacturers such as Aprilia, in November of 2003, launched the world's first range of stripped-down road bikes dedicated for use on the racetrack, such as described in the specialist motorcycle press; *"Aprilia's decision to launch a track day ready range of bikes follows a growing trend for riders having track-only bikes." (Purvis 2003a p.2).*

With regards to the role of the tutors in delivering the experience, it appears that due to the fact that track days transcend more 'usual' service encounters, this makes the tutor-customer relationship interdependence particularly high. For example, similar to Arnould and Price's (1993) river rafting guides, it was found that the track day tutors, highly regarded by participants for their expertise regarding track riding technique, play a key role in advising less experienced riders. Moreover, the image of the 'tutor as expert' is reinforced by the fact that the tutors commonly used technical language amongst themselves in the paddock in front of the participants, what Fishman (1960) has described as 'phatic communication', as the following reflexive note suggests; *"What's with that bike?" I asked curiously.*

"Oh it's a RW," he answered, assuming that I'd know what it stood for. So I asked him what RW stood for risking my ignorance, (I felt particularly pressured that I should know what all their terms meant). He explained that it was a rental bike for people to rent

rather than using their own bikes on the track. Then he continued to chat to the other bikers about some other bikes they were looking at. I noticed that they were using a lot of technical terms and found some of it hard to follow. Track day tutor, track day, August 4.

Thus, similar to Wolf's (1985) elite group of fighter pilots, the track day tutors maintain their elite image through demonstration of expertise and well as technical instruction. In addition, it appears that track day tutors may even seek to maintain their expert image amongst one another, as the following tutor Adam admits that he would never ask his track day superiors for pointers; *"I'm happy with the level I'm at, or perhaps I just don't want to ask…I guess it's just that thing where you don't want to ask someone like that."*

6.3 Women Motorcyclist's Encountered within Enclaves

Finally, at the time of the study, there was a particular emergence in the growing number of female motorcyclists. According to Bennett's insurance, (www.bennetts.co.uk) a quarter of motorcyclists are now women and similarly increasing figures are also reflected in women's participation with other dangerous activities. However, as traditionally motorcycling has been dominated by male participants, women are still very much in the minority. Moreover, Koivula (1999) argues that women who take part in masculine coded sports must confront cultural stereotypes of women as being weaker, more emotional and submissive to men. This was also found to be true of some of the female participants in the current study, for example, bike shop assistant Jolie comments

on the possible treatment of women by their male counterparts; *"…One time I was at Devil's Bridge, I couldn't lift my bike so I shouted to some men to help me and I wasn't that embarrassed really."*

"They probably liked helping you." I said.

"Well, they probably thought, dumb girl shouldn't own a bike, but who cares." She replied laughing a bit. Jolie, bike shop, August 1.

Participating in a predominantly male culture may therefore be particularly challenging for many women, as at many of the motorcycle shows, exhibitions as well as in media representations, women are often portrayed as objects for men's enjoyment as the following descriptions taken from a variety of enclaves suggest (also see Figure 6.7);

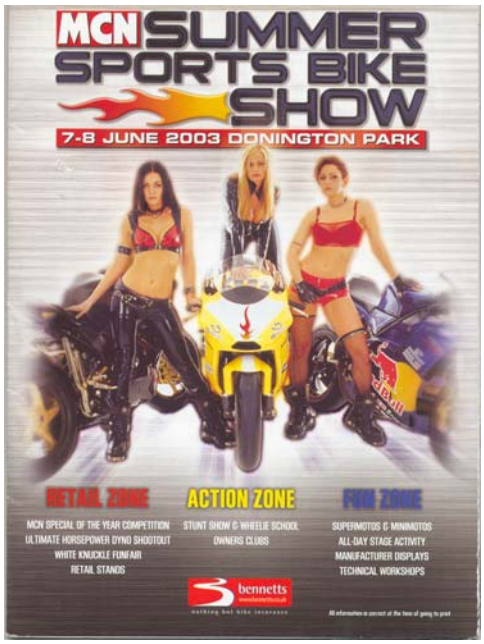


Figure 6.7 Programme given out at the MCN Summer Sports Bike Show.

As soon as we walked in (to the MCN Summer Bike Show), there were women in bikini's handing out folded programmes. MCN Summer Sports Bike Show, June 7.

When we came across the stage show, two men were on the stage introducing the 'Babe Squad' fashion show. The man holding the microphone said, "You can get the gear for a reasonable price but the women are expensive, the one I had last night cost a fortune." (He laughed). MCN Summer Sports Bike Show, June 7.

In between the BMW and Suzuki stand there was a man on a podium, I think he was an ex-racer, but I didn't quite catch his name. He was standing up holding a microphone and there was a woman in a bikini sitting on a bike next to him, I think he was advertising MCN or some other publication. NEC Bike Show, November 23.

Indeed one female motorcycle shop owner encountered during the study clearly demonstrates her determination to retain her femininity within the culture; *"My nails are painted to match my bike." And she held out her hand to show me that her nails were painted black with sparkles to match the tank of her bike. "It's a bit of fun," she continued, "I'm quite girlie actually, I like a bit of girlie stuff. I've got Kawasaki green polish too for a change which matches the trim."*
"I like your trousers", I added in admiration, "I noticed that you sell them in the shop."
"Yeah, we all have them, they're good for the summer, but sometimes I bring my dress in my bag to change into, I still like to look feminine." Natasha, bike shop, August 1.

However, other female participants encountered, rather than struggling with notions of femininity appeared to use their 'femaleness' as a means of challenging archetypes of feminine passivity. Lupton (1999) also found this with women boxers, that female participants engaging in a sport which carries with it an excess of masculine meanings often enjoy the additional challenge. The following female motorcycling participants, for example, appear somewhat empowered by their willingness to take on their male counter parts;

"How fast have you taken it on this bike?" I asked her.
"I've taken it 170," she replied.
"Do you go fast on your own or in group riding?" I questioned her further.
"Mainly in group riding. It's a great feeling taking men on." Female respondent, Sherburn, August 3.

"Yeah, it's great when you get back to Sherburn and they realize they've been beat by a girl." Clara

Or as participant Perry describes, his motorcyclist girlfriend frequently shows off; *"Girls in particular are a nightmare with bikes…My girlfriend and her mates all have bikes as well…The only reason they are into bikes is how they look on them. When they pull up and take off their helmets they are like, 'look at us'."*

Further, as Lupton (1999) argues, woman and men have different pressures participating in challenging activities. For example, Lupton points out that in the activity of chess playing, for a man chess is relaxing, competitive and problem solving, whereas for women chess is seen as the least friendly activity, because under pressure in all male tournaments woman are often patronised or condescended to. Therefore, according to Lupton, women perceive the activity of chess as more risky than men. Similarly, this was found with the activity of motorcycling, as the following male participant argues that women often turn out to be better riders than men because they have more to prove;

"…Actually, there are lots of women instructors now too and they're really good."
"Why are the women particularly good?" I asked him curiously.
"I think it's because women feel like they have more to prove," he said still reflecting on the question. Henry

6.4 Enclaves Summary

Overall, since the rise in popularity of fast, performance style motorcycling in the early 1980s, the sports motorcycle has defined a new era and rider in British motorcycling. Indeed, due to the performance of modern machinery, many motorcyclists now wear full leathers, either one or two piece or even race suits. Further, the scenario of the supersports motorcyclist is regularly represented and practiced within a variety of motorcyclist enclaves such as the motorcyclist café and the popular motorcycle track day. It follows that many participants currently subscribe to the view that appropriate

motorcycling technique encompasses fast, competitive riding and stunting display. However, with more females now participating in the sport, more diversified patterns of interests may continue to emerge in the near future.

Chapter 7: Findings from the Specialist Motorcycle Press

7.1 Fast, Performance Motorcycling

Besides venues such as Sherburn and motorcycle track days which support fast, performance motorcycling, the specialist motorcycle press also play a role in constructing the activity. Indeed the specialist press pay a great deal of attention to promoting the performance aspects of motorcycling and there are a plethora of magazines (such as Fast Bike, Performance Biking, Bike and MCN) which feature fast, performance riding as the following article describes; *"Admit it, you've admired your reflection as you ride past a shop window, sniggered at someone trying too hard and wished you could style it like a racer. Yep us too. It's all about style." (Westlake 2003a p. 69).*

The following quote from an article by Michael Scott in MCN in June 2003, entitled 'Putting Speed First', further demonstrates this point. Scott argues that motorcycles are indeed much too fast…but that's how they are supposed to be; *"Thank God they are too fast, because there is nothing else that proves just how talented the riders really are, and just how much they really mean it when they roll out of pit lane. And just how basically insane the whole 'I can go faster than you game really is. Let's face it, it's not just MotoGP machines that are too fast. All bikes are too fast, all good ones anyway. They are supposed to be…" (Scott 2003 p. 51).*

7.2 Press Promotes Professional Racers

Additionally, upholding motorcycling as a fast, performance activity, the specialist press often pay tribute to professional racers for their amazing riding abilities, such as Mick Doohan, Giacomo Agostini and the late Barry Sheene. Indeed, much time is spent in the press talking about and tracking the success of current GP racing champion Valentino Rossi. Probably one of the most influential racers of all time, Rossi, who at the age of twenty-five has secured four successive premier class world championships and is only the second rider in history to win consecutive world titles with different manufacturers (since switching from Honda to Yamaha), has appropriately been nicknamed 'the doctor' by the motorcycling press for his outstanding skill and precision on the racetrack; *"Rossi is having fun as he rewrites the record books and fans the world over have responded to that. He's probably the most popular bike racer of all times." (Westlake 2002 p. 60).*

Due to his amazing, almost supernatural abilities Rossi has been elevated to 'god like' status by the press, as Two Wheel Only magazine in their Sept 2003 issue portrays Rossi sitting next to Christ with the caption; (see Figure 7.1).

'As he talked with them, behold the champion.' (Anon. 2003 p. 174).

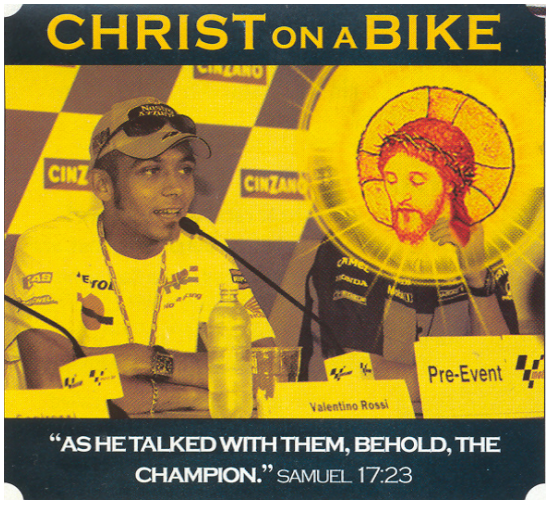


Figure 7.1.

Increased media coverage acclaiming Rossi as a racing 'phenomena' and accordingly his rise to celebrity status has therefore, helped to bolster the image of motorcycle racing in Britain, as Bike magazine reports, 'motorcycling has never been so popular.' *'It isn't all down to Rossi, the four-strokes and more publicity have helped too, but the organisers are certain Rossi is the main factor.' (Westlake 2002 p. 62).*

7.3 Sports Bike Promotion

In addition to racing hero's, the press commonly promote the ownership of powerful, performance style race replica bikes, as the following article in Bike magazine suggests, 'is biggest really best?' *"…Sports 600s might be as very fast from point to point, but really a 600 is just a middleweight. Give me the real thing. Then you get one. It's*

expensive, crippling to run and the subconscious pressure is always having to perform." (Wilkins 2003 p. 61-62).

Other motorcycle advertisements dare riders to 'step up to the challenge' of the high-risk context. For example, an advertisement for the Suzuki super bike GSX-R1000 in Performance Bikes in April 2002, sets a deliberate challenge to the reader (see Figure 7.2). Shown from a camera angle which looks up at the bike from below, an almost threatening stance is suggested as the caption reads;

"Be afraid, be very afraid." (Anon 2002 p. 34).

Figure 7.2.

7.4 Articles on Stunting Display

Further, with the high performance aspects of motorcycling strongly reflected in the specialist press, an abundance of articles accordingly encourage readers on how to successfully achieve a variety of motorcycle stunts. Step by step accounts commonly

instruct riders on ‘how to get a knee down’ or how to do ‘the perfect wheelie’ (also see Figure 7.3) *“Go on admit it, getting your knee down is cool and you want to do it. Find a quiet roundabout to practise, says Gary Baldwin, instructor at Rapid Training. Then, with the balls of your feel on the pegs, slide your backside right off the seat. ‘Just put your knee out naturally and it should touch down.” (Farrell, S. (2004) Just Do It. MCN May 12 p. 39).*

“…become a wheelie genius. ‘Doing wheelies is dangerous and stupid,’ said Andy Burnett of the Stunt and Wheelie school. “It’s also fun.” (Farrell, S. (2004) Just Do It. MCN May 12 p. 39).

Figure 7.3 Motorcycle racer ‘pulling a wheelie.’

Source: www.monsterplates.com

Many articles therefore, liken the performance and mastery of motorcycling stunts, such as ‘hanging off’, doing ‘wheelies’ and ‘stoppies’ as well as ‘getting a knee down’ to rites

of passage, marking out novices from experts; *"In theory a lightly scraping knee acts as an invaluable guide to a swift rider…on the racetrack maybe but on the road it's almost always just a gimmick, a visual display that says 'I'm, a quick rider'. Getting your knee down is certainly a rite of passage for many." (Westlake 2003b p. 71).*

"Knee sliding virgins spend hours circulating roundabouts, wishing they had longer legs, daring themselves to lean further while hanging off the mid-bend to gauge the kneecap to the blacktop gap. A gouged, grazed and scored slider has become the biker's new badge of honour. Knee down, head held high." (Ash 2003 p. 13).

Moreover, in an article in the specialist press, the late David Jefferies reflects on the first time he was able to 'get his knee down';

Q: "When was the first time you got your knee down and how did you know you were competent enough to do so?"
A: "I know exactly where it was, it was at the end of Snetterton, that tight right-hander…My dad was sat watching and I was riding past I kept pointing at my knee and pointing at the floor and giving him the thumbs up. I was 17 or 18." (Jefferies 2003 p. 52).

However, alongside the presses influence on the activity, it might also be the power of the high-spec modern sports bike which may influence many riders' perceptions. Indeed, the high performance aspects of motorcycling is reflected in the sales of supersports

motorcycles as recent figures from the Motorcycle Industry Association suggest that the supersport motorcycle class has grown by 7% since September 2004. Even race replica versions of professional race bikes can now be purchased such as Neil Hodgson's Ducati 999R world super bike replica or the current GP champion Valentino Rossi's RCV Fireblade. Consequently, the specialist motorcycle press in a variety of articles describe and promote the ease by which modern sports bikes contribute to fast riding experiences; (see Figure 7.4).

Figure 7.4 The Ducati naturally pulls the rider into a hunched position.

"The GSX-R is a very good handling machine, but until now it has never had to try that hard. With so much power on tap you have always been able to amble through the corners and then blast out in a frenzy of tyre shredding aggression and still keep up with your mates." (Neeves 2003 p. 2).

"The GSX-R1000 handles like an extremely powerful, slightly oversized 750…This is mental. It's so fast without having to try. I want one just because it's the most you can

buy…it's too easy to go fast and too easy to want one, for all the wrong reasons." (Wilkins 2003 p. 640).

"The superfast Suzuki is one of the quickest things out there in a straight line. In the right place you can see over 200 mph on the clock, and getting up to 150 mph takes literally just a few seconds. The fact is anytime you get aggressive with the Suzuki's throttle you run the risk of running at jail-baiting pace. And that's the controversial bit…not giving a Hayabusa some gyp is like sharing a bed with Kylie and not getting thoroughly acquainted. It can be done though only with masses of discipline." (Moss 2003 p.140).

However, alongside the highly dominant presence of performance aspects of biking in the UK, there has also been a recent trend for new 'hybrid' machines. This can be largely attributed to the fact that technology has developed so far, while speed enforcement on the roads has increased. Manufacturers have consequently started to broaden their ranges, giving consumers a wider variety of models to choose from as exemplified in the following article; *"Last week I worked out that there were around 16% more models of motorcycle available in UK showrooms than just five years ago. The new Moto Guzzi as well as being a really exciting motorcycle with gorgeous looks, it also illustrates perfectly the way manufacturers are broadening their ranges and several reasons why consumers are more ready than ever to buy them." (Ash 2003 p. 13).*

Moreover, with production technology allowing modern manufacturers more flexibility, companies such as KTM are delivering a broader range of motorcycles, such as the

newest trend for trail bikes which can also be used on the roads, as these following various articles describe; *"The shift in the motorcycling market has induced a return to nostalgically rendered archetypes, more upright and 'naked', with the fairing stripped. Off roading and road biking is mixed with a new array of motorcycles specifically designed for this new hybrid activity." (Anon. 2003a p. 8).*

They (KTM) have won more world motocross and enduro titles than anyone else and have forged the popularity of supermoto and the re-emergence of trail riding as a major recreational activity. (Duckworth 2003a p. 11).

Indeed, the emergence of KTM and supermoto machines was also noticed at the NEC Bike Show in Birmingham (also see Figure 7.5).

Figure 7.5. The growing popularity of KTM was evident at the Birmingham Bike Show.

7.5 Summary

Overall, despite a diversifying market, the scenario of the supersports motorcyclist is overwhelmingly at the centre of the specialist British motorcycling press. With the promotion of motorcycling racing, track days and stunt and performance riding, the specialist press play a key role as opinion formers, socialising new as well as existing riders about current motorcycling trends. It is believed though, that such texts are not transparent and unproblematic medians, but the point is to understand how the language and themes used by the specialist press may be interpreted and adopted by the motorcyclists who commonly read and consume them.

Chapter 8: 'Themes' in the Motorcyclists' Personal Narrative Accounts

8.1 Presentation of Data

The next section reveals the findings collected in phase three of the study. However, phase one and two are drawn upon in this discussion, comparing the larger collective cultural codes with those revealed in the riders' personal narrative accounts. With regards to the in-depth interviews, each transcript was read using the five reading strategies as identified in Section 5.17. The interviews were then counted in terms of narratives, each narrative being identified as a chronological and or causal chain in the interview that centred on an incident (Milnes 2003) and in analysing the narratives, a storied account was written of each of the participants' lived experiences.

In presenting the accounts, according to King (2006), there are three possible approaches for presenting qualitative research and the choice depends upon the projects constraints as well as word limit considerations. The first approach identified by King (2006) is to present individual cases, followed by a discussion of differences and similarities between them. This enables the reader to get a good grasp of the individual participants' experiences but at the same time ensures that the discussion of themes does not become too abstracted from the participants' perspectives. However, according to King, this approach is difficult to use if word limits are tight and the reader may also get 'bogged down' in too much of the individual detail to see the wider picture.

The second approach King (2006) identifies, is a report structured around the main themes identified, which is done by drawing illustrative examples from each transcript (including other text). According to King, this is a good way to produce a clear and succinct overview of the most salient findings from the thematic analysis and is particularly useful when word limits are tight. However, King also warns, that such an approach can encourage over-generalisation, losing sight of the individual experiences from which the themes are drawn.

The final approach pointed out by King, involves a thematic presentation of the findings with a small number of full cases to illustrate key themes and, according to King, it is this approach that provides a very useful synthesis of the previous two approaches.

Therefore, since it would be impossible to present all thirty-three of the motorcyclists 'storied accounts', it was decided that the most logical way to present the analysis would be to choose the third approach as identified by King; to present a thematic presentation of the findings followed by a small number of accounts to illustrate key themes. Hence a sample of nine accounts were carefully chosen, focusing in particular on the key turning points in the motorcyclists' careers with the overall aim to demonstrate variety in participants' experiences (see chapter 9).

With regards to the analysis of the narrative themes, while such an approach can be referred to as a narrative thematic analysis, it is not the type of reductive analysis that might typically be referred to as 'thematic analysis' (Milnes 2003). Thus, although the

analysis, similar to Riessman and more recently Milnes (2003), did involve some comparison across the interviews and did identify themes, notes were made of the narratives themes in each case independently of the others.

Whilst the narrative thematic analysis is presented under broad headings, the approach aims to show diversity but at the same time give an overall impression of the kinds of understandings and 'cultural resources' that riders draw upon in constructing their accounts. Essentially, what separates this kind of thematic analysis, similar to that of Milnes (2003), is that much attention is been paid to the differences across accounts as the similarities among them.

Also, in keeping consistence with the feminist aim of 'giving voice' to the participant, not only is the interview format itself consistent with the aims of feminist research, but also in the reporting the findings, the research is detailed using extensive quotes and themes written in the dialect and natural language of the participants (King 2006). Furthermore, as advised by Denzin (2001), the use of direct quotes purposely shatters the realist illusion of objective description as participants are seen to take a larger role in their own descriptions, becoming historically situated persons, rather than quaint or exotic items. The report therefore includes some shorter quotes to clarify points and longer descriptions that give the reader a flavour of original accounts. Therefore, with the goal of representing the 'voices' of those studied, the final interpretive report as proposed by Denzin (2001) is 'simply articulates what is implicit in those interpretations'. p. 120. *"I*

favour an approach that involves minimal theory, seeks to show rather than tell and is based on a belief that less is more." (p. 1).

Moreover, the adoption of narrative technique alongside a feminist commitment to empowerment and 'giving voice', is consistent with a feminist social constructionist position which seeks to comprehend how structural factors can construct and reproduce inequalities (Squire 1998). Hence, much feminist research is characterised by a commitment to achieving transformatory goals, as Foucault, cited in Denzin (2001) insists, that researchers should look at *"cultural forms and practices not in terms of their meanings but in terms of their effects both on those to whom they are addressed and on the world in which they circulate." (p. 50).*

Thus, a narrative approach can bring about change at a societal, cultural and/or institutional level by deconstructing dominant ideologies and focusing instead on marginalised groups' concerns. This is similar to what Milnes (2003) has pointed out, that feminist researchers should locate stories which challenge the taken for granted acceptance of the way things are, but at the same time resonate with participants' everyday understandings of their experiences. Therefore, with a heightened concern for transformative consumer research (or TCR), such an approach is taken here in the reporting and dissemination of the research as it aims to improve road safety practices and the overall quality of the riders' lives.

Having gone to a variety of venues, having read a variety of specialist motorcycle texts, as well as having conducted in-depth interviews with riders has therefore provided the researcher with the kind of understandings that motorcyclists might hold. Again, although themes are gathered and presented, this does not mean that the motorcyclists are seen as a homogeneous group, but rather they greatly varied in terms of their past experiences, their family situations, their ages, and a multitude of other characteristics.

What follows then is a brief introduction of the riders who took part in the narrative interviewing phase. The information is not intended to encapsulate who they are but to provide some contextual information about the riders' lives which will help the reader get a feel for the social, cultural, relational and material backdrop to make their own judgements and conclusions about the actions and motivations of the respondents.

8.2 Overview of Participants

James

I met James at a bike show when he was manning a stand advertising advanced rider training. James aged fifty-two, first got into motorcycling as a teenager when he used to ride an off-road Triumph Tiger Cub 200cc in fields with a couple of his friends. When James turned seventeen however, he got a car and it wasn't until he was twenty-two that he got back into off-road biking when he went into the army. Then at thirty-two, James past his road test and bought a Yamaha XJ900. James now lives in Nottingham with his

wife and daughter and currently owns two bikes, a Pan-European Tourer (Police bike) and Yamaha Fazer 600 (Street).

Eddy

I met Eddy on a sunny Sunday in Matlock Bath. I was just admiring his red Ducati 999 when Eddy arrived wearing a one-piece race replica leathers. Eddy, a self-employed plumber, currently forty-six has been biking since he was six years old. His dad was a biker and his mum marshalled him when he competed as a kid in trials. The only break Eddy had from biking was when he got married at twenty-eight and had two kids (who are now eight and six), he took two years out and got back into motorcycling at thirty-one and bought a Fireblade K reg. Eddy, now separated, lives alone near Ashbourne, Derby and currently owns a Ducati 999, which he says is now getting a bit dated.

Garry

I met Garry at the Cock o' the North Road Races in Scarborough. He looked to be in his early fifties and came to sit with us while he was waiting for the races to begin. Altogether, Garry has been biking for forty years but had a ten year break after having children. Gary is married and lives with his wife (who often rides pillion with him) in Sheffield. His has two sons who are now grown up and one of them is also a biker. When Garry first got back into biking after having a break, he bought an Aprilia 750 field

bike. However, his current motorcycle is a TDM which he bought because it has a comfortable pillion seat for his wife.

Rubin

I met Rubin at the Grand Prix races over the summer. He was wearing race replica leathers and a baseball cap. I found out later that he was thirty-nine and works as a mechanical engineer in Luton (the Midlands). Rubin grew up in the Midlands and started biking when he was seventeen as a cheap mode of transport. Back then he owned an RV125 DX racing twin bike which was painted 'Barry Sheen racing colours'. Rubin first got into motorcycling as a form of rebellion as his parents 'didn't approve'. Rubin then had a long break from biking when he got married, but ever since his divorce (two years ago) he has owned a motorcycle. The first bike he bought after the divorce was a Yamaha 650 DragStar, (a custom cruiser, like a Harley). However, after having an accident on the Yamaha has owned a series of sports bikes and currently owns a GSX-R750.

Ted

I met Ted with Rubin at the Grand Prix, unlike Rubin who was wearing race replica leathers; Ted was wearing a black leather jacket. Ted, aged forty, is married and his wife is also a biker. They have one child who is twelve. Overall, Ted has been riding on and off for over twenty years. He first got into motorcycling as a lad when he owned a

moped. He then got his first ‘big bike’ at eighteen which was a 400. Ted currently owns a Honda Fireblade (super sports 1000cc) and has recently incorporated his leisure activity into his career by becoming a riding instructor.

Ray

I also met Ray at the Grand Prix. He was on his own on the grass verge watching Rossi race through binoculars. He was wearing worn leathers and had curly greying hair. Ray, aged forty-six, is a mechanical engineer and lives with his partner and stepson who is twenty-two. Ray has been motorcycling for thirty years. He first got into motorcycling as a young lad when he owned a moped and ‘worked his way up’ to bigger and bigger bikes. Having always been motorcyclist, Ray has been all over Europe on his bike and has met a variety of motorcyclist celebrities such as Barry Sheene and Augustinie. Ray’s most recent bike is a 1997 Honda Blackbird. However, Ray has recently become ‘fed up’ with road riding with the increase in road traffic, speed cameras and hazards on the roads. He now limits his motorcycling to special occasions such as attending the Grand Prix.

Chuck

Chuck is thirty-three, is single and has never been married. Chuck, who is an air conditioning engineer, lives in Leeds and owns four bikes. However, his most recent purchase is a Kawasaki ZX750 (supersports), which he describes as the ‘ideal bike’. Chuck’s Kawasaki is similar to Chris Walker (the racers) bike. As a race fan, Chuck says

that he particularly likes to go to race meets, such as the British Superbikes, the GP and the World Superbikes. I met Chuck on a sunny day in Sherburn. He was sitting with another biker on a bench overlooking the Sherburn parking lot. He was quiet compared with the other biker, who did most of the talking. I found out later that they had just met earlier that day in a bike shop in Bradford and decided to ride to Sherburn together. Chuck first got into motorcycling because his dad, also a biker, gave him the choice between a car, a bike or a scooter and because he didn't want a car he decided to get a motorcycle. Chuck passed his test at seventeen and has always owned a bike since then.

Stewart

Stewart, aged thirty-nine is the other biker who I met with Chuck at Sherburn. A qualified electrician by trade, Steward lives in Hull and works for the council as an electrician. He is single and has no children of his own. Stewart first got into motorcycling when he used to ride trail bikes down rail road tracks with a school friend. Then at sixteen, Stewart got his first bike, a Suzuki X1 50cc. Similar to other riders' accounts, Stewart kept trading up his bikes for larger spec ones until he eventually took a break from biking for a few years. Stewart has recently been biking since 1996 and currently owns a Honda Fireblade, which is the same bike that several of his friends own who he goes touring with.

Clara

Clara, aged thirty-three, first got in to motorcycling four years ago because one of her friends at the time signed her up for it. However, outside biking, Clara says she has always been 'up' for trying anything risky. Her interest in risky sports first started in school where she tried abseiling. I met Clara in the gear shop in Sherburn where she was working as a sales assistant. Clara, who is also single with no children, was in the police force, but she recently left the force as she says the job had become too administrative. Clara currently owns a Kawasaki ZXR400 but had a CBR600 before but had to sell it because, at the time, she needed the money. She also does off road motorcycling and has recently done a motorcycle track day with one of her friends.

Fred

I met Fred at the Club 66 races at Elvington Airfield. He was standing with another biker, Sam, and both men were wearing worn looking one piece race replica leathers. Fred currently lives with his wife in Hull and has two children; a girl who is twelve and a son who is fifteen. He runs his owns subcontractor civil engineering business. Fred, aged forty-six, claim's that he was converted to motorcycling after his first ride and has ridden a motorcycle ever since. As a young man Fred competed in a variety of races, first at club level and then at national level. However, due to a bout of serious accidents Fred gave up racing until recently when his employee (Sam) talked him into club racing again. Apart from participating in the club races, Fred and Sam frequently participate in fast

road riding, racing each other on country/rural lanes and they have recently done a track day together. Fred currently owns two motorcycles, a Ducati 996 and a Suzuki GSX-R1000 which he uses for club racing.

Sam

Sam was the other rider that I met with Fred at Elvington. Sam, aged thirty-four, works for Fred as a civil engineer and lives in Hornsey on the north coast. He is married and has two children, a boy who is six and a daughter who is nine. Sam first got into motorcycling as a lad when he owned a trail bike which he used to take on disused railway lines near his house. Then at sixteen Sam bought a 50cc motorcycle but then had an accident on it a year later. After being out of motorcycling since his teens Sam finally got back into motorcycling ten years ago. The first bike he bought after his break was a 350cc, then he got a 600cc until he worked his way up to 900cc, owning a Honda Fireblade and now an R1. Sam is particularly enthusiastic about club racing and track days after recently doing a track day with Fred.

Arthur

I met Arthur, aged thirty-two, at Sherburn, he was sitting on the bench with his friend. They were both wearing race replica leathers. Arthur, who is single and has no children lives in North Yorkshire. Arthur first got an interest in motorcycling after seeing someone do a wheelie in the park when he was a child. He initially wanted to get a

scrambler, but his parents wouldn't allow it so it wasn't until he was old enough to own a road bike that he actually took up motorcycling. Arthur currently owns a Suzuki TL1000, which he's had for eight months. Previously he owned a Honda Thunder Cat 600, but traded it in for the TL because he had seen it advertised in the MCN. Alongside road biking, Arthur also owns a minimoto which he uses for wheelies and stunts.

Patrick

I met Patrick at Sherburn with his friend Ewan. They were sitting on the grassy hill overlooking the car park and were both wearing race replica leathers. Patrick aged twenty-eight, first got into motorcycling when as a teenager when he used to ride his friends 50cc off-road bike around in fields. Then at sixteen, Patrick started working and bought a 125 moped but then got out of motorcycling at seventeen when getting his car licence. It wasn't until some of his friends bought motorcycles that Patrick, at twenty-two, became interested in motorcycling again. Patrick, who works as a mechanical engineer in Scunthorpe is single and has no children. He has now been riding for six years and currently owns a Yamaha R6. Patrick is particularly enthusiastic about stunt and performance motorcycling and also participates in motorcycle track days.

Ewan

Ewan was the other biker that I met with Patrick at Sherburn. Ewan, aged thirty-eight, is married and has four children aged from six to sixteen; two boys and two girls. Working

in the petrol industry, Ewan lives with his family in Scunthorpe. Ewan first started riding when he was seventeen participating in both trials and motocross. However, it has only been recently that Ewan has been interested in road racing, having only taken it up just two years ago. Ewan describes himself now as a 'fast plastic man' as he only likes sports motorcycles. He currently owns a Honda Fireblade which is actually a larger spec bike than Patrick owns. Ewan also enjoys going to watch professional races and has recently signed up to do a motorcycle track day with Patrick.

Barry

I met Barry, aged fifty-nine, at a motorcycle track day where he was standing by his bike in the paddock. Barry, a civil servant, is divorced and has three daughters and two step children; one stepdaughter and one stepson. Barry initially past his test at sixteen but then quit motorcycling after having an accident. Also, at that time he met his wife and had children and therefore had both family and financial commitments. Altogether Barry was out of motorcycling for twenty-eight years. It wasn't until he got divorced that he took up motorcycling again, and he has now been riding for twelve years. When Barry first got back into biking he bought a touring style motorcycle, but since 1996 he has owned sports bikes. His current motorcycle is a Suzuki GSX-R750 super sport bike. Barry also follows motorcycle racing and has been participating in motorcycle track days since 1998. No longer interested in riding on the roads, Barry only does track days as he is he is fed up of being stopped by the police for speeding (which he says has happened five or six times in the last twelve years).

Adam

I met Adam, aged thirty-six, at a track day in which he was a tutor. Adam, who lives near Castle Donington, is single and has no children. Alongside tutoring at track days, Adam is a pilot for a major international airline. He first got into motorcycling at sixteen when he got a moped and since then he has progressively got more powerful bikes. Although as a teenager Adam started biking, he said that his parents didn't approve, and looking back he can see their worry. Following on from a near miss on a public road in France, Adam now only participates in track days on his most recent bike, an R1.

Jim

I met Jim, aged forty-three, at a track day where he was working as a tutor. Jim is single with no children and owns his own business selling signs in the Midlands. Jim first got into motorcycling at sixteen when he owned a moped. Then, as a natural progress, Jim bought larger bikes. Jim most recently owned two super sports bikes, a Honda Fireblade and a Ducati 996, but he sold them to buy an off-road bike for enduroing. Jim says that he now prefers enduroing to track riding because he's been doing track days since 1996 but also he believes the risks in enduroing are far less than on the track.

Perry

I met Perry at a motorcycle track day. He was standing in the paddock next to his bike, a Honda Fireblade. Perry, aged thirty-six, is single with no children and owns his own business in Brighton (a mechanical engineering company). Although Perry is not married he has a girlfriend, who is also a biker, who he says, owns a bike just to 'show off'. Perry first got into motorcycling at sixteen when he participated in motocross; however, Perry quickly dropped out of biking in order to get a car. It wasn't until six years ago that Perry got interested in motorcycling again after his friends bought bikes and started doing motorcycle track days. Consequently Perry now invests a lot of his money and leisure time into owning sports bikes (owning six in just six years) and participating in motorcycle track days.

Harry

I first met Harry with another biker, Doug, in a bike shop where they were both wearing race replica leathers and looking in the gear section. Harry, aged forty, is married but has no children. He first got into motorcycling as a teenager when he used to ride an off-road bike in the fields with friends and he has owned a motorcycle ever since. Harry met Doug through work, they both work in an office which deals with deeds in Manchester. After meeting Doug, Harry now goes out for rides at weekends with him and a group of touring motorcyclists. Although Harry currently owns a Yamaha YZF 750 with a full

racing system exhaust, he is considering selling it in order to get a Fazer 1000 sports tourer, which is also the same bike that Doug owns.

Doug

Doug was the other biker I met with Harry in the bike shop. Doug, the older of the two men is aged fifty and is divorced. He has two grown up step children; a stepson and a stepdaughter but he no longer sees them since his divorce four years ago. Doug has been interested in biking since his parents took him to the TT races in the Isle of Man as a child. Doug is an enthusiastic touring motorcyclist and has recently introduced Harry to his touring group of friends, which both men now go touring with at the weekends.

Robert

I met Robert at the gear shop in Sherburn. Robert, aged sixty-one, is now retired and lives with his wife in Sheffield. He has two grown up children; a son aged twenty-seven and a daughter who is aged twenty-five. Like several of the other respondents, Robert road off-road bikes at sixteen but then got out of biking at twenty-one when he started a family. It wasn't until Robert was thirty-one that he got back into biking. He is particularly keen about motorcycle racing and has been to watch the Isle of Man road races for fifteen years consecutively. However, Robert actually loves watching any kind of motorcycle racing including off roading as well. Robert currently owns a Honda Firestorm but he recently gave it to his son, who is also a biker, to use for participation in

motorcycle track days. Robert himself does not participate in track days as he prefers to ride on scenic roads to places such as Sherburn, Devil's Bridge, Elmsley and Scarborough.

Dale

I first met Dale at Sherburn. He was wearing blue and yellow leathers and had shaved hair. Dale first got into motorcycling when he was sixteen when he and his friends use to ride BSA's, Triumphs or used telegram bikes from auctions which they 'did up'. However, when Dale met his wife at seventeen he 'packed in' biking and only just took it up again when he passed his test just three years ago. Dale has three grown up children and works as a debt collector in North Yorkshire. Dale bought a variety of different style motorcycles since taking his test three years ago. He currently owns a Suzuki GSX-R750 on which he has spent over £4,000 customizing it.

Shane

I met Shane sitting on the tables outside of Sherburn. He was sitting on his own and was wearing a bright 'Kawasaki green' t-shirt. Shane, aged fifty-two, owns his own mechanic shop in North Yorkshire. He is not married and has been living with the same partner for many years but does not have any children. Shane first got into motorcycling when he used to go off roading at twelve years old. Shane has never had a break from biking and has owned a variety of motorcycles. However, Shane is particularly keen now on

Kawasaki bikes and trades his current Kawasaki in every year in order to get the most updated model. Shane no longer does motocross as he prefers road riding and often goes competitive group riding on sunny Sundays with friends.

Kyle

I met Kyle at a motorcycle track day. He was wearing race replica leathers in bright yellow which also matched his bike, an Aprilia RSV1000R super sports motorcycle. Kyle, aged forty-one, is married and has two children; eighteen and fifteen and lives in North Staffordshire. Kyle first went into motorcycling when his dad bought him a BSA Brampton when he was just thirteen years old. He then had a short break at eighteen when he owned his first car. Kyle has been doing track days on and off for five years now and in total has participated in over twenty and plans to do as many of them as possible in the upcoming season. Alongside track riding, Kyle also tried motocross during the winder months. Kyle also likes motorcycling on country roads, with his favourite road being the 'Cat and Fiddle' in Derbyshire.

Kent

I met Kent watching the other participants racing at a motorcycle track day. Kent, aged thirty-nine, is single but has a steady girlfriend who also has a son. Kent first got into motorcycling when he rode a Honda 90 'about in fields', then at seventeen he got his first road bike a 250cc model and has always owned a motorcycle since. Kent currently owns

a Honda Fireblade which he only rides in the summer. He has been doing track days for approximately eight years after being introduced to them by a friend. Kent also likes watching motorcycle racing and goes to watch motorcycle Grand Prix's overseas in places such as Holland and Valencia.

Del

I met Del at a track day. He was standing next to his red and black Aprilia RSV1000R and was wearing red and black one-piece race replica leathers to match his bike. Del, who is aged thirty-five, is divorced and has one child who is seven years old. He works as a tree surgeon in Birmingham but also does shift work at Cadbury. Del first got into motorcycling when he was seventeen when he participated in motocross with his brother. Del sometimes still participates in motocross, but his recent interest is in doing motorcycle track days. Del got into track days from watching racing on TV but also his friend at work suggested the idea. Del has never taken up riding on public roads due to the fact that several of his friends with motorcycles have been killed in road accidents.

Josh

I met Josh at the Scarborough bike week, he was wearing black leathers. Josh, aged forty-nine, is a civil servant and is married with two grown up children; a daughter aged twenty-six and a son aged eighteen. Josh first got into motorcycling at sixteen as it was a cheap mode of transport; he bought a Honda moped and then a Greave 5, 250 which was

a scramble bike. Growing up Josh's father was a biker, and owned an Indian and then a Bough Superior. Josh had a couple years' break from biking when he got married but then took it up again in the army when he was a dispatch rider. Josh is currently a part-time motorcycle instructor which he says has helped him to have more road sense. Josh previously owned a Kawasaki sports bike but traded it in for a Honda SLR650 (more of an off-road hybrid adventure style). By owning an SLR Josh says this helps him to slow down and ride sensibly, as owning a fast bike there is too much of a temptation to go fast. Josh would also like to try supermoto and eventually wants to get a Pan European when he retires.

Irwin

I met Irwin at Scarborough Bike Week. He was standing with his wife looking at the classic bikes. Irwin, aged fifty, owns a clothing shop with his wife in Lincoln. Irwin's parents were also bikers; hence Irwin had no resistance to wanting his own bike at age sixteen. After riding bikes for many years, Irwin has owned hundreds of different models. He currently owns two sports bikes, a Ducati and a Honda CBR600RR (Supersports). However, Irwin is also 'into the classic bike scene' and owns eight classics. In pursuit of this hobby Irwin attends the Manx Grand Prix on the Isle of Man every year. Irwin also enjoys touring with a group of sports bike riders every Sunday, as he says that 'he's into sports bikes' and wants to ride them as long as he can. As a group, they go somewhere different every week, such as Scarborough, Devil's Bridge or Market Raison.

Charles

I met Charles with his son at a motorcycle track day. I first started talking to his son first, who looked to be in his early twenties, when his father (Charles) walked up. Both men were wearing race replica leathers which matched their bikes. Charles, forty-eight is a Divisional Director of a financial services company in Warwickshire (south Midlands). Charles is married and has two children, a daughter seventeen and a son who is nineteen. Charles has only been riding for six years and owns a Honda VTR1000cc SP-1 Supersports motorcycle. Since Charles has got into motorcycling, his son has also shown an interest. However, it was his son's impetus that they both participated in the track day. Charles consequently finds common ground with his son based on biking as they spend a great deal of time together polishing their sports motorcycles in the garage.

Toby

I met Toby at a track day with another biker Miles. They were watching the tutors racing during the lunch break. Toby, aged fifty-two, is married and lives in Staffordshire with his wife; however, he never had any children. Toby first got into motorcycling when his dad bought him a field bike when he was just twelve. He then scrambled until he was thirty-one or thirty-two and then just decided to 'pack it in'. Tony then took his road test when he was thirty, as he 'just fancied one'. He bought a second hand Kawasaki 600 but then something went wrong with it so his wife went with him to buy a new bike, a Honda

600. However, since the track day Tony decided to give up biking completely after he had a near miss on the roads.

Miles

Miles was the other biker that I met with Toby at a track day. Miles, aged forty-eight, is married with one child and works for a bank subsidiary in Blackpool. Miles used to ride motorcycles as a teenager but quit riding when he got married and 'had responsibilities'. Miles developed an interest in biking again seven years ago when one of his friends got 'into it'. Currently, he likes to participate in motorcycle track days on his most recent motorcycle, an Aprilia RSV1000 (supersports). Miles has also done a track day school as well as an advanced rider training course as he believes that it's important to get as much training as possible. Sometimes he goes group riding but he insists that he and his friends never race each other on public roads as he always 'rides within his capabilities and the limits of the law'.

Len

I met Len at a motorcycle track day. He was very tall (6'6") and was wearing one piece race replica leathers. Len, aged forty, is married and has one child who is five years old. Len lives near Manchester and works as a perfusionist at his local hospital. He first got into motorcycling because both his dad and his friends were 'into bikes'. His bought his first bike at 17, a Honda 25 'Dream' and has owned a variety of motorcycles since. His

current bike is an 1100 Kawasaki (sports tourer). However, he actually prefers supersports bikes but is restricted due to his height. Len has been doing motorcycle track days for three years and recently has participated in at least two every month. Last winter he decided to turn his current road bike into a track bike as he is no longer interested in riding on the roads due to the lights, speed cameras and the police.

Ron

I met Ron at the supermoto stand at the NEC Bike Show in Birmingham. Ron, aged twenty-three, is single and does not have any children. He lives in York and works as a plumber installing swimming pools into 'posh houses'. Ron has been riding since he was twelve when his dad bought him his first 'dirt bike'. Growing up Ron's friends were also enthusiastic about off roading and owned trial bikes. As a highly skilled rider, Ron has also competed competitively in the sport since leaving school. Backed by his parents financially, Ron has competed in races in both the UK and in America. Ron has also competed in supermoto and currently owns a 250cc trail bike.

In asking riders about their recent or most memorable riding experiences as well as their near misses and accidents, motorcyclists' experiences seemed to be characterized by a number of common features. However, although themes have been identified in the participants' narrative accounts, the approach taken aims to show the diversity and complexity of factors which motorcyclists draw upon in explaining their riding experiences, which are believed to involve both intrinsic or emotive factors as well as

socio-cultural understandings. Overall, the themes extracted from the motorcyclists' biographies are compared with the specialist motorcycle press as well as insights from various motorcycling venues and to the previous literature on high-risk consumption. Once again, the main purpose of this chapter is to explore the diversity and complexity of factors which riders use to explain their experiences before examining these more closely in the individual riders' biographical accounts (Chapter 9).

8.3 Flow

A highly compelling aspect identified in much of the literature on high-risk consumption, is the notion of 'flow'. Flow, which involves total absorption, is said to provide participants with not only thrill and excitement but also a sense of involvement that transcends mundane experience. For example, Celsi et al (1993) found with sky-divers that they experience a loss of self-awareness gained through free fall, as they no longer think about their problems. This phenomenon has also been identified by ex-racer Mat Oxley, who describes the concentrated effort in motorcycle racing; *"I think that's another reason I started racing. It was the only thing that demanded everything of me, totally consumed me, gave my lazy ***** mind no room to wander uselessly." (Oxley 2002 p. 65).*

Several of the motorcycling participants have also expressed a similar experience, reporting to gain a particular state from their activity which is not accessible in their everyday lives. In the literature, this state or 'flow' is believed to occur because the

concentration involved in high-risk activities demands total participation from the individual. Moreover, as Csikszentmihalyi (1975) and Celsi et al (1993) have pointed out, achieving this state requires a careful balance; the experience cannot be boring but it also should not produce anxiety which intrudes on awareness, disrupting flow. Flow then, is believed to be a state poised somewhere between worry and boredom. A state of complete involvement as the high-risk performer's awareness is limited to a restricted field of possibilities.

8.3.1 Clear Feedback

Due to the artificially reduced reality of a flow episode, Csikszentmihalyi (1975) argues that the actor clearly knows 'what is good and what is bad' and what will be the results of various possible actions. Thus, a person in flow, as argued by Csikszentmihalyi, makes full use of whatever skills are required for that situation and receives clear feedback to his/her actions, where the actor belongs to a rational 'cause and effect system' in which actions have realistic and predictable consequences. This clear feedback was also described by some of the motorcycling participants, for example, track day participant Toby, indicates that motorcycling offers instant results to his actions; *"It's a kick biking, you don't have to win, you don't see that kick in golf for example, because you don't see the action as it happens the same, it's a time thing…That's what I like about biking, about racing, that you get instant results. I get disappointed if I don't get the answer straight away. Like if you ask a question at work, they say, 'oh, we'll get back to you on that.' But with biking you get the answer straight away."*

Further, as pointed out by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) the flow experience is different from awareness in everyday reality because it offers ordered rules which make action and the evaluation of action automatic and therefore unproblematic. That is, according to Csikszentmihalyi, during flow the actor is too involved in the experience to reflect on it. However, Csikszentmihalyi explains, if contradictory actions are made, flow is interrupted and 'the 'self' reappears to negotiate between the conflicting definitions of what needs to be done'.

This relates to the previous argument, that in flow the person's true self the 'I', the continually emerging spontaneous, impulsive and unpredictable part of the self is heightened in the high-risk pursuit, whereas the 'me', the person's social, reflective self, is momentarily silenced. As described by Lyng (1990), individuals typically find it difficult to describe the high-risk activity because the reflective self is simply not present at the height of the experience. Indeed, the struggle to ascribe social categories was found with some of the motorcycling participants, as explained by supersports bike owner, Robert; *"Some days it's just fantastic, but I don't know what it is"*.

This inability to reflect at the height of the high-risk experience is also described in the specialist motorcycle press, where in an interview British racer Troy Bayliss reports that it is only upon reflection of a race that he actually realizes if he has had any fun;

Q: Given the pressure associated with competing at the top level, do you still get moments when you think 'way-hey - that was fun?'

A: Yes, for sure. When you've had a good race or a good bike you think, I had a great time there… Sometimes we have some good fun at a test, but on the bike, when we are there it's not fun until the race day. Even then it's not fun until you're in the race. And once you're in the race you don't think, I'll have fun when I'm riding - but afterwards you think, that was good." (Bayliss, T. 2003 p. 30).

8.3.2 Escape

As also indicated in the literature, participants are said to enjoy high-risk activities because they involve feelings which they lack in their modern everyday routines. For example, Maslow (1961) argues that high-risk performers are able to discover their true, real selves in such experiences due to feelings of self-actualisation. Within motorcycling, the specialist motorcycle press have also highlighted this phenomena, where the degree of danger in motorcycling makes the individual 'feel alive'; *"I love it, it's partly the speed, but mainly the feeling of being alive you get on a motorbike. Men don't have wars now, so a degree of danger makes us feel more alive."* (*Law 2001 p. 24).*

Similarly, several of the motorcyclists reported to enjoying their activity because it offers an escape from everyday reality that is somehow 'liberating' or 'freeing', as pointed out by Robson (1989), adventurous activities, which detach the individual from the social structure allows 'childish sensibilities' to emerge. For example, participant Gary who owns a garage states; *"I have to be so serious all week with my customers, when I get to biking I can let myself misbehave, it's my chance to be childish."*

Accordingly, other participants have reported biking ‘keeps you young’;

“People always say to me, grow up, but it keeps me young, and you’re as young as you feel you are in your mind.” Barry, track day, August 4.

“Us men are kids at heart really, anything with an engine.” Sam

“People say to me when are you going to grow up and I say when are you going to get a life, they are so much fun.” Arthur

Moreover, as Sheibe (1986) argues, high-risk activities offer an escape from everyday reality which helps the performer to negate the stresses of daily life. Similarly, Eddy who recently went through a separation from his wife describes that when he rides his bike all his problems are forgotten; *“I’m lucky really, because I’ve got my bike… I’ve got my problems, but when I go out on my bike, I haven’t got a care.”*

Other riders, such as Doug, Toby, Irwin and Henry have also made a similar point;

“It’s escapism; it’s what it’s all about.” Doug

“It’s drab at work. When I used to go out on a Sunday, I’d polish my bike getting ready for it, I know that sounds corny but I’d really look forward to it.” Toby

"*I'd be a very sad person without biking. It breaks the boring sameness… You need to have an outlet." Irwin*

"You can't explain that sense of freedom… it sure beats staying at home with the wife nagging to mow the lawn. It's the only time that you can get away from all that talking, it's a two hour holiday." Henry, Sherburn, August 24.

8.4 Sensory Characteristics

Several motorcycling participants have therefore described enjoying their activity because it offers heightened emotional states such as freedom and escape. However, it appears that there are a variety of other sensory characteristics which may also contribute to flow, as Brannigan et al (1983) found, hang-gliders experience a rush from their activity, 'a moment in another dimension'. For example, club racer Jeff describes the 'nerves' in racing but also that these are part of the 'exhilaration'; "*The build up for racing almost makes me sick because my nerves are so bad. I think, why am I doing this (but)… it's part of the exhilaration I suppose, it's part of the tension."*

Emotional and sensory characteristics have also been mentioned in the specialist motorcycle press, as MCN journalist, Ben Miller describes a variety of senses present on an evening ride; *"The world has emptied… the air is creeping through my leathers, cool, fresh and fragrant… it seems cool summer air carries smells like nothing else. Every kind of smell from the fresh to the musty is out here, triggering a thousand lost memories*

of summer marquee parties and warm restless nights. It is a magical time… The sky's luminous backlit an impossibly deep blue, stained with pink on the western horizon… Then 30 miles from home, just before midnight on familiar territory, it's too hard to hold back. The VTEC utters its metallic roar and we're doing proper speeds. This feels fantastic, like I'm the only thing in this world." (Miller 2003 p. 92).

Linked to memories of previous rides, the sensory characteristic in flow therefore appears to vary between participants based on their past experiences. As argued by Lupton (1998), smells and tastes can construct emotional states, 'even the faintest whiff of a fragrance worn by a past lover may evoke vivid memories of that person'. For example, the following motorcyclist at the road races at Oliver's Mount describes how the sweet smell of Castrol R reminds him of racing*; "I love the smell of that." Male respondent describing the smell of Castrol R, Cock o' the North Road Races, Oliver's Mount, June 21.*

Besides smells, sounds have also been described by participants when discussing past riding experiences. As pointed out by Lupton (1998), sounds can profoundly evoke emotion, provoking soothing, exciting or ecstatic feelings p. 34. For example, hearing the rev of a bike's engine for the following bike shop assistant Jolie, fosters recollections of previous rides; *"It's OK, sit on it," she said. So I got on the bike and she put the key in and started it up. "Give it a rev," she insisted.*
"It sounds really great if you give it full throttle…" Jolie, local bike shop, August 1.

Further demonstrating the variety of sensory characteristics mentioned by participants, other riders have described the physical sensations associated with riding as an important part of the motorcycling activity, such as feeling the strength of the bike's performance, being thrust back into the seat during acceleration or going over the front-end under braking, as rider Chuck, who owns a supersports bike describes; *"I like the acceleration, it's awesome, the sensation it gives you, you can't get that without getting a Ferrari, and even then it's not the same, without the air pressure and the noise on your helmet."*

8.4.1 Hedonism

Furthermore, flow as a heightened emotive state, has been associated by high-risk theorists to other hedonistic, indulgent, or pleasure seeking activities. Lyng (1990), for example, found that skydivers designate skydiving as belonging to the same basic category as eating and intercourse, where skydiving is 'better than sex'. The following motorcyclists, Gary and also Clara similarly have likened their activity to sex;

"… if I don't take risks I'd just be bored… I'm sure my wife prefers that I went out on my bike rather than have an affair, it's all a risk but biking is the most exhilarating risk." Garry

"To get out on the bike in the countryside with long sweeping roads, you feel more alive, having sex is probably most similar." Garry

"I could live without sex but not my bike," she said laughing. Clara, Sherburn, July 19.

8.4.2 Addiction

Because of the various emotive characteristics involved in adventurous leisure activities, some theorists have argued that high-risk pursuits possess an addictive nature, described by Ogilvie (1973) as stimulus addiction or 'the need for repeated exposure to situations in which the balance between fear, danger and anxiety remains within the boundaries of personal control'. Indeed, the following motorcycling commentators have also described their activity as addictive;

"Motorcycling is a large part of my life, I go through withdrawal anytime I'm not riding." (Holland 2001).

"Riding was now a need, a creature that had to be fed." (Pierson 1997 p. 119).

Similarly, a great deal of the motorcycling participants, all from different backgrounds and with various riding interests have highlighted the 'addictive' nature of the activity, whereby once having experienced motorcycling, continued participation becomes inevitable or even inescapable, that it somehow becomes 'in the blood';

"Biking is a drug, once it's in there then that's it." Doug

"I think that once you're into it, then that's it, it's in your blood, I can't give it up." Male respondent, Sherburn, July 19.

"It hasn't put me off though (his accident)… She (his mum) knows it's in my blood, it's like a drug whatever." Chuck

"Nothing will ever change my biking, it's in my blood." Stewart

"I've told myself not to do it, but I do it anyway… I've had four friends die this year biking… You know you think about the risks and you think, is this all worth it when in one second that could be it. I've thought of getting out of it, but then you just regret it, if you're not doing it. Once it's in your blood, it's in your blood." Del, track day, August 27.

"You've either got it in your blood or you don't. It's in you, either you do or you don't, that's it." Male respondent, Sherburn, June 14.

"Once you get into biking, it's in your blood. I took my son to this festival recently and he was racing the quads and then he asked to race the bikes. So we let him have a go and he kept getting into trouble for going too fast, it must be in his blood too." Sam, Club 66 races Elvington, July 20.

Other motorcycling participants have further described this internal or addictive property as having ‘caught a bug’;

“…he’s caught the bug too, I didn’t push him, it’s probably just that he’s seen me with my bike.” Charles, track day, September 18.

“I have not been without the bike since I got the bug.” Patrick

“My brother used to ride bikes, I guess you get the bug. I used to go on the back with him.” Ted

The reasons why participants are drawn to their activity are therefore multifarious, including a variety of emotions, feelings and sensations. However, it appears that some participants who are particularly keen, have even made careers out of motorcycling, either working in the retail side or as motorcycle instructors. Brannigan et al (1983), also found this keen interest amongst hang-gliders, that for some the sport has evolved into an occupation where they have found their association with the activity so rewarding that they have extended their leisure-time lifestyle into a career. For example, participant Jolie, a full-time sales assistant in a motorcycle shop, not only earns her living from working amongst motorcycles but also takes her holidays around upcoming motorcycle events and rallies; *“We don’t have much time off, so we take our holidays around rallies. It’s in my contract, I go to the Angel one and Natasha goes to the Farmyard.” Jolie, bike shop, August 1*.

Or another example of this is participant Clara. Although she is currently a police officer, she wants to make a career from her involvement in motorcycling; *"I'm a police officer," she replied, "but I'm trying to get a job in the motorcycle industry." Clara*

Moreover, other dedicated motorcyclists, although not interested in working in the industry, have described that they continually think about their activity even when they are not physically participating in it;

"I'd get in and that would be it, I'd read Motorcycle News all night." Eddy

"I thought they'd be out of my system by now, but they aren't. I still get a buzz out of them, even if I'm just cleaning it off afterward." Del

"Have you ever had a break from biking?" I asked the taller man.
"Yeah, when I go to bed," he said laughing. Male respondent, track day, September 18.

"You see once you're a biker you're always a biker, even if you're not doing it you're still thinking about doing it." Male respondent, Sherburn, August 17.

8.5 Motorcycling Commitment

For many of the motorcycling participants then, whether it is actually an addiction or not, motorcycling has been described as an important aspect of their lives. Sayre (1964) also

found this commitment with mountaineers, that although mountaineering involves danger, expense, hard work, and family disruption, Sayer maintains that these negative aspects are more than offset by the benefits. Along the same lines Elsrud (2000) discovered that for backpackers, the health risks such as the pain of a severely injured leg, attacks of diarrhoea or the risk of catching something is the 'price you have to pay' for taking part in adventurous experiences.

Similarly, the following track day participant and long time motorcycle owner Doug describes that the benefits gained from motorcycling are worth the risk of injury or even death; *"… it's exciting biking, but it can be unforgiving. You wouldn't want your friends to give it up though if you were in an accident because the passion runs that deep. If I died biking I'd want my friends to carry on and not give up because of me, I'd like them to show up on their bikes to my funeral."*

Moreover, even Doug's recent motorcycling accident which left him with a severe leg injury, has not deterred him from his continued commitment to the sport; *"I did my leg in, but it didn't affect my riding though… I was in the hospital for four weeks… (but) the first thing I did when I got out was clean up my bike."*

Along the same lines, the following track day participant illustrates that he would rather be dead than not own a bike; *"When I was younger I had 15 bikes before my mum knew about it. Then, I wanted a supersports bike and she wouldn't sign for it. Well, we've*

never been close but she said she didn't want me dead. So I said I'd rather be dead than not have a bike." Male respondent, track day, September 18.

Other participants, with a wide diversity of health issues, accidents and or injuries have additionally expressed a strong commitment to riding their bikes;

"Yeah I was in an accident once; I fell on some farm muck and broke my leg and collar bone." He pulled his shirt aside to show me his scar. Male respondent, Sherburn, August 3.

"What happened in the accident?" I asked him.
"I broke my collar bone, my foot, and now I can't bend my leg all the way anymore, so I've had to get my bike adjusted so that I can ride it." Rubin, British Grand Prix, July 11.

"Sometimes my sister comes with me, she used to be a biker but she had an accident and suffered some head injuries so she's lost her co-ordination, but she'd love to get a bike if she could." Chuck, Sherburn, July 19.

"Actually, she said pointing to her husband, "he's had two heart attacks and one bypass and still rides. The doctor thinks he's out fishing." Female respondent, Sherburn, July 19.

Indeed even racing professional David Jefferies, only months before his fatal crash at the Isle of Man TT motorcycling road race in May 2003, acknowledged that although motorcycling was dangerous, nobody forced him to do it; *"… it's dangerous but nobody forces me to go. I go because I want to and that's it." (Jefferies 2003 p. 50).*

In addition, Jefferies friends in support of his devotion to racing argue, 'at least he died doing what he loved;' *"What can you say? He died doing what he loved. Bike racing was his life." (Blanchard 2003 p.12).*

"Head down, flat out, with a smile on his face. Life for DJ was for living." Fred Clarke, A personal friend of Jefferies. (Anon.200b3 p. 2).

Or as track day participant Barry who comments on Jefferies describes; *"Look at Jefferies, most of them know that, that could happen to them but they wouldn't want it stopped (the TT race), they are prepared to take those risks."*

8.6 Oneness with Essential Objects

Consequently, for many participants, motorcycling possesses strong drawing factors, and according to some theorists, such as Lyng (1990), this is related to the focused attention and concentrated effort needed in high-risk pursuits. Moreover, this concentration, according to Lyng, fosters feelings of oneness with the essential objects involved, that high-risk activities invoke feelings of 'cognitive control' or identity with these objects.

Within motorcycling, Stuart has also demonstrated this relationship in his account of the bike boys and their motorcycles, *"But always his dance with death had such skill and self assurance, such awesome dramatic style; rider and bike became one, testing each other to the limit." (Stuart 1987 p.70).*

Equally, the following participants, Ewan, Chuck and Len, describe a kind of bonding with their machines;

"Some days you just want to go for it, to get that adrenaline rush… you can't explain it really, you and your bike feel at one with the roads, it's hard to explain." Ewan

"It's different biking, you're all as one on the bike, man and machine together." Chuck

"I'm a Kawasaki man really, I've had a few (other type bikes), a Honda, Suzuki, but I feel an affinity, an understanding towards Kawasaki's, I follow them racing too." Len

Even Superbike racer Shane Byrne has described a sense of oneness with his bike during a race; *"Sometimes, racing, you slip into a trance, when there's nothing in your peripheral vision, just the view out of your helmet and clear track ahead. The silence is almost total and you feel like you could just close your eyes, lift yourself off the bike and it'll ride itself." (Byrne 2003 p. 13).*

Perhaps a good explanation of this phenomenon is put forward by Lupton (1998), who argues that people commonly develop emotional relationships with things that they possess. That people 'anthropomorphise' objects or animate them in some way as they become human like creatures. Lupton further gives the example that cars are readily anthropomorphised because they respond to the driver's bodily movements in what comes to be experienced as an almost synergistic relationship between self and machine. This is described clearly by Lario owner and writer Melissa Holbrook-Pierson (1997); *"Then it was not I who had a terminal condition, but the Lario. It would be breaking down any minute… and on some especially grand occasions, I would be riding along through the beauteous world pressed by the heavy certainty that both of us were dying at once." (p. 180).*

However, the sense of oneness which several participants have described with their bikes could also be attributed to the close proximity which contemporary motorcycling holds with professional racing in general, as illustrated by the specialist motorcycle press;

"It seems it's not the racing you like perse. Moreover, it's the close link between what you do and what the racers do. Fundamentally, we simple road riders understand just what is happening in the seat of a 220bhp works race bike far better than any car driver could understand what Schumacher goes through, and that's cool." (Anon. 2003c p.5).

"You've just been watching a race and you go for a blast on your own bike and pretend you're Rossi, giving it some, and winning at every roundabout. Even though you can't

get your knee down, or pull a wheelie, you feel like the best rider out there." (Korbey 2003 p. 6).

In support of the close link between road riding and racing, the following riders, Robert and Doug have reported that they actually ride faster after having attended professional race meets, as argued by Celsi et al (1993), high-risk performers are influenced by dramatic story lines when engaging in such experiences;

"…after a race meet or racing has been on TV I go quicker. Actually there are more accidents on the way back from race meets than on the way there because everyone sees the racers doing it and they think they can do that but it's way above their capabilities, they can't compare. Robert

"When I go to watch racing, I'll be going quicker then, on the way back from the race." Doug

What is more, according to some theorists, the feelings of identity with the essential objects are developed through the special planning rituals involved in the high-risk experience. As argued by Lyng (1990) planning rituals are particularly important for skydivers, in which participants actually spend more time preparing for a jump than making it. Thus, Lyng makes the case that these planning rituals are not just preparatory activities but integral parts of the total experience. Similarly, Schouten and McAlexander (1995) found that goods used for adventure become particularly symbolically charged.

Various motorcycling participants have also described the importance of spending time planning and looking after their machines, such as track day participant Charles who describes cleaning his bike with his son in the garage; *"…we tinker with them in the garage as well. Like today, we both had the day off so we spent half of the day in the garage together polishing our bikes."*

Or as supersports bike owner Chuck explains, he enjoys looking after his bikes because they are like 'children' to him; *"(My bikes are)…my children, although they don't give me a hassle but they still cost money. (He laughed). They are in mint condition all of my bikes… I polish them about once a month, I enjoy it just to chill out, it's relaxation time and tinker time."*

Indeed for some participants, these cleaning rituals go beyond the confines of the garage as bikes are often brought indoors, turning living rooms into motorcycle shrines, as the following track day tutor describes;

"Do your kids bike also?" I asked him.
"They don't really like it, they might do though if their house wasn't a shrine to bikes." he replied laughing. Track day tutor, track day, September 18.

Similarly, supersports bike owner and Club 66 racer Fred describes, that he's actually thinking about storing his Ducati in the house so that it is more visible; *"I've got a pool room with sliding glass doors and you can see it from the living room. Well no one plays*

pool any more in the room so I was thinking to put the Ducati (996) in there so you can look at it from the living room. It would look really nice with its white seat and red fairing, then I can say I keep mine in the house, (he laughed)."

In further exemplifying the closeness between some riders and their machines, the following participants Dale and Garry, have expressed more concern for their bikes in the event of an accident rather than for their own safety; *"You'll jump off to check if the bike is ok, I'll heal but the bike costs so much to repair. Everyone I talk to says that they're more worried about the bike when they come off and check the bike first." Dale*

"You'll find that the majority of people will tell you that they're not worried about hurting themselves but their bikes. It sounds a ridiculous statement but you think about the bike, you think 'oh I'll just break my arm.'" Garry

8.6.1 Specialist Equipment / Gear

Feelings of oneness or 'cognitive control' with the motorcycle may also extend to include other objects consumed in motorcycling practice, such as the use of specialist equipment and or gear. As Lupton (1998) argues, part of the pleasure that consumer objects evoke is the possibility for participants to place themselves within 'imagined scenarios thinking, fantasising or daydreaming about these objects or experiences.' p. 141. For example, this phenomena has been portrayed in the specialist motorcycle press, where, getting suited up for a ride fosters within riders 'a warrior spirit' or a 'gladiatorial feeling'; *"It's cool*

that you get a gladiatorial feeling when you are suiting up to go for a ride, putting on your leathers, boots, gloves and helmet. You aren't likely to get that putting on a set of driving gloves." (Anon. 2003c p.5).

Indeed, as Schouten and McAlexander (1995) found with Harley Davidson riders, dressing in motorcycling gear is not merely dress up for riders but occasions a transformation of attitude and experience. Moreover, Stuart (1987) discovered this with the 'rocker boys', that the ritual of dressing in leather's provided a transformative role in the experience; *"Leather is a bike boy's armour. Pulling it on can be a rite which not only protects but transforms the wearer. With something of the reverent deliberation of a bullfighter preparing to enter the ring, zips are adjusted, press studs secured, the collar flipped up against the weather." (Stuart 1987 p. 9)*

"The effects of 'road burn' can be seen on leathers like the dents on a suit of armour." (Stuart 1987p. 24).

The following motorcycling participants Doug and Len have also described the role that gear plays in their activity;

"Plus I spend a lot on gear so I'm protected… I know biking has its dangers but you can only make it as safe as you can, with the gear you wear and the way you ride." Doug

"As soon as you get your leathers on you get that buzz." Len

8.7 Context Presumed Manageable

However, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1975), not only do high-risk performers feel in potential control of essential objects involved, but due to acting within a limited stimulus field of the flow experience, people often feel in control of the context as a whole. This is also what Brannigan et al (1983) found in their study of hang-gliders, that the excitement of flying and the control that it offers are the two prime attractions of the enterprise, as Brannigan et al point out, the notion of risk might as well be displaced by the concept of control. Likewise, the following motorcycling participants have described feeling in control of their activity such as participant Robert and track day participant Miles describe;

"For me to get better means being more in control." Robert

"It's about controlled intelligence with smooth riding, to enjoy your capabilities of the bike on the day. It's about being in control." Miles

8.7.1 Flow Dependent on Perceived Skill and Ability

It appears therefore, that flow depends on the person's perceived skill level as well as the perceived demands of the context. However, as argued by Csikszentmihalyi (1975), because flow is dependent upon this perceived balance of risk and skill, high-risk performers do not always view the difficulties involved and their own capabilities

objectively. Similarly, 'the edge' appears relative to motorcyclists' subjective perception of their ability and skill level, as participant Robert describes, 'people perceive things differently'; *"… some have their ego's go in front, and those are the ones that you have to go back to pick them off the road. It's a state of mind biking… sometimes what you think is safe, isn't safe to another road user… people perceive things differently… They think they're doing it right until they get into the next corner and they're just mili-seconds away from disaster… It's what's in your mind, they think they're better than they are."*

It appears that the overestimation of abilities occurs at track days as well, as the following participants Barry, Toby and Del describe;

"I think it was a rude awakening for him, a wake up call, he thought he was captain invincible, that he didn't think it was going to happen to him." Barry (talking about how his son crashed on a track day).

"You get these lunatics out but they'll just end up crashing. If you go out with a sensible disposition you should be ok." Toby

"… some people think they're indestructible." Del

Hence, from the above descriptions, it appears that flow doesn't depend on the actual nature of the challenge or the actual skill level of the individual, but rather flow depends

entirely on one's perception of their own ability and the challenges of the context. Given this, it appears that a rider can feel in control and experience flow even if their skill level does not evenly match the specific demands of the situation, thus as Csikszentmihalyi (1975) argues, 'the edge' is relative to the actor's subjective perception of their own ability and skills.

8.7.2 Survival Capacity

Overall, it appears that participation in motorcycling involves the confidence to cope with the challenges at hand or what Lyng (1990) describes as the 'special survival capacity to negotiate the edge'. For example, supermoto rider Ron comments that participation in supermoto motorcycling is not just to do with physical fitness but also mental strength as well; *"That's a mental question… I suppose it does take both physical strength and fitness but look at some of the jumps on TV, it's not all strength but mental as well." Ron*

The following track day participants have additionally commented on the necessary positive and confident mental aptitude needed in order to participate in the activity, such as riders Ted, Len and Barry, and Patrick describe;

"It doesn't matter how old you are, it's as old as you feel." Ted

"It's half the battle though, if you think you can win, I know my limitations." Len

"It's all about confidence," he continued, "it's in your mind, that's what determines how you ride. If you think you can, then you can. Barry, track day, August 4.

Professional racers have also described the importance of mental strength. Racer Eric Bostrom, for example, who also mountain climbs, comments on the necessary mental ability needed for both climbing and racing; *"In so many ways climbing takes me to the same place that road racing does, mentally, physically and geographically. Struggling with the same mental roadblocks and finding ways not only to get around them but to make them go away completely… That's why in times of testing and practice, all that time leading up to the race count so much because it's this mental strength competition. Just like your body needs a workout to maintain physical strength, your mind needs the same to expand mental strength." (Bostrom 2003 p. 32).*

Moreover, for some theorists, the confidence needed to 'face the edge' is seen as a natural ability, held only by an elite few who naturally possess 'the right stuff'. Similarly, track day participant Barry in particular likens motorcycling to a natural ability, possessed only by left-handed people (unsurprisingly Barry himself is left-handed); *He's not left handed so he'll never do too well. All the best racers are left handed… Do you realise how many left handed racers there are? Foggy, Hislop, Hodges, Rossi, Parish and Bayliss to name a few." Barry, track day, August 4.*

"I've probably reached a plateau on riding ability… That's true across racing, there are fast and slow riders. Well, you can improve but not to be naturally fast. He's (Rossi) got

natural abilities, he's an extremely fast rider. But that's how it is we've all got unique abilities as human, some can do things better than others." Barry

Advertisements for motorcycles in the specialist press have also alluded to the innate competence needed for participation in motorcycling, as the following advertisement for Kawasaki suggests; *'Born Green' with Ninja blood racing in my veins. (Anon. April 2002 p. 61).*

It appears therefore that mental confidence is needed for motorcycling participation. However, because flow depends entirely on one's perception of ability and skills, it is argued that the manner that participants 'approach the edge' varies amongst individuals.

8.7.3 The Illusion of Control

Given that motorcyclists' perceptions of their abilities and of the 'edge' varies amongst participants it can be assumed therefore that motorcyclists can potentially experience feelings of control in situations where the dangers are quite real. This is also what Csikszentmihalyi (1975) and Celsi et al (1993) found that in flow, the illusion of control is operating. 'Flow occurs in activities where the individual believes they are able to cope with all the demands for action.' Indeed a wide variety of motorcyclists have maintained that they always ride within their own ability limits;

"…but I'm mature and sensible and I don't want to fall off or lose my licence either but everyone on the road does break the speed limit at some time, but I break the speed limit at the right time and place." Chuck

"…in the country I like to enjoy the performance of the bike. I'm not mad though, I'm sensible fast." Toby

Do you push it when you're riding alone?" Researcher
"Yeah, I do, I tend to, but I make sure it's safe." Irwin

"I always feel in control on the roads, I don't lose my head, other's might." Kent
"How fast do you go on the roads?" Researcher
"I'd say about 130-140 and I've tried it flat out before once, out towards Cadwell." Kent

"Are there any times you push it?" Researcher
"Yes, but I don't do something stupid, I go fast in the right places, where I'm safe… On motorways about 165-170 in good conditions… You feel safe doing it on a motorway, we all go fast, it's a case of picking that moment." Stewart

"I stick to local roads where there are no speed cameras. It's like most really, I don't want to ride mad but I get a buzz out of going fast, I just do it when I know I'm not at risk." Arthur

“I mean I do break the limit, but always in a safe environment.” Ewan

“I got my bike well leaned over and not at any point did I feel out of control.” Charles (talking about a track day).

8.7.4 Quick Riding on Familiar Roads

It appears that what has been described by some theorists as the illusion of control, participants ‘in flow’ may experience feelings of heightened confidence. Perhaps this explains why participants have commonly reported that they ‘always ride within their limits’, feeling that the context is within their ability to control it. In support of this, typical to the majority of riders interviewed, participants have reported riding their quickest on familiar stretches of road where they clearly feel most confident. However, these roads vary greatly, ranging from quite twisty country roads to those which are straight and long;

“In the countryside in Wales, there are no hazards, well they’re significantly reduced, no light etc, then your fair game to open it up.” Chuck

“There are very good roads that way, you can do 170 because it’s so straight and long. Everyone goes fast and it’s a popular run because you can go fast.” Dale

"I wouldn't go to the edge on a road I don't know, but I will if I know the road. Like one of my favourite rides is to Cadwell, I can tell you every bump on that road, I can push it as far as I want." Garry

"10% of the time I take it 100%. I go about 80-90mph on A or B roads, but I wouldn't do that coming up to a crossroad, only on deserted type roads." Doug

"At the Cat and Fiddle up near me. I know that road like the back of my hand, that's my sort of racetrack. We used to go early in the morning… it was relatively safe then and we know the road. It's very challenging because of all the bends." Kyle

Although riders often participate in fast riding experiences on familiar roads, sometimes unexpected hazards can occur such as other traffic pulling out or slow tractors on the road, amazingly though, this does not appear to deter the following participants, Kyle and Eddy;

"You can ride safe-fast but that's it, if someone pulls out on you. There are so many unexpected things that could happen… I knew this road like the back of my hand and this old woman started turning left in front of me… but it's just one of those unexpected things." Kyle

"When you're testing yourself, there are particular times, about 8:00 at night on country roads and there's not much traffic around, well there's a chance you might hit a tractor." Eddy

In support of the position that motorcyclists often participate in fast riding on familiar stretches of road, Andy Reed of the Dyfed Powys Police has pointed out that the majority of motorcycling road accidents and deaths in Wales in 2003, were due to motorcyclists speeding on open country roads where the rider was shown to be at fault; "*Over two thirds of motorcycle crashes occur on bends and the vast majority of fatal crashes occur at bends on open country roads where speed is an aggravating feature. In over 86% of these crashes, the rider is shown to be at fault." (Reed 2003 p. 12).*

8.8 Track Days as Context of Controlled Uncertainty

Experiencing feelings of heightened confidence, it appears that 'in flow' participants may experience an illusion of control. However, some theorists argue that certain context may exaggerate this illusion. For example, Celsi et al found in his study on skydiving, that participants most often experience flow in activities which have clearly established rules for action such as rituals or games. That skydivers prefer to jump in situations where there is control over the relationship between their ability and the demands of the context. 'A set piece that is enacted on a specific stage with a clearly defined script but with room for ad-libbing' (Celsi et al 1993 p. 12). Hence according to Celsi et al, as the goal of sky-

diving is to perform within a range of optimal tension, sky-divers purposely create a context of controlled uncertainty.

With regards to motorcycling then, perhaps the illusion of control maybe greater in situations where motorcyclists are performing within a seemingly controlled environment, for example, the motorcycle track day with clearly defined rules for performing, such as learning the track lines and using reference points, may provide such a context as Club 66 racer Sam describes; *"There are all sorts of things you have to concentrate on when racing, like your braking point… Also you've got to think what gear to be in for the next corner, you're going flat out on the straight away but then you have to get into second gear for a corner."*

The specialist press has also identified the manner by which riding on familiar race circuits can also foster quick, overconfident riding, as MCN editor and track day participant, Adam Duckworth describes; *"The problem was, I became over confident – especially on tracks I knew like Brands Hatch. I crashed there recently because I knew it almost too well. I'd pounded out lap after lap and knew my line exactly, how fast I should go, when to brake, precisely where to turn. Only thing is, it meant I was super-confident and let my guard down." (Duckworth 2003b p. 6).*

It appears that performing within a seemingly controlled environment with clear rules for action, such as a motorcycle track day, may actually increase the illusion of control, however, whether all participants are actually subject to the illusion of control despite

experience level, is another question and one which has provoked considerable theoretical discussion amongst researchers of high-risk activities.

For example, as noted previously, Celsi et al (1993) argues that experienced skydivers have fairly accurate idea of their ability level and what is required for a particular jump and are therefore, under no illusion regarding the risk of injury or death. Rather, according to Celsi et al, it is the moderately experienced jumpers who are more likely to be under the illusion, those that have earned autonomy but unlike the expert has not experienced the full variance of external conditions. Regardless, it is argued here that the illusion of control could operate with participants at all levels of expertise due to the fact that ability level and the conditions for which the participants operate in are constantly changing and unfixed, therefore always providing new challenges.

Thus the high-risk experience clearly involves multifarious opportunities for action. This can be attributed to the fact that such activities involve an endless moving up and striving towards unreachable ceilings of skill perfection. This is exemplified by Code and Lawson (1983) who advises that faster lap times on race tracks introduce new challenges; *"Remember, the barriers will change as you go faster. There is a twist to barriers. Don't overlook the possibility that the same problems can occur again, even in the same turn, as you increase your speed." (p. 57).*

8.8.1 Uncertainty of Skill Level

Due to the unreachable ceilings of skill development involved in high-risk activities, it appears difficult for participants to precisely judge their increasing skill level. Therefore, participants appear to gauge their skill progression through a variety of means, such as comparing themselves to others, monitoring lap times on track days or testing themselves on certain stretches of roads for improvement, such as road riding participant Robert and track riders Barry, Adam, Kyle and Kent describe;

"Perhaps it's that you sometimes go slow but you think you're going fast. You're thinking, I'm going really well here until others pass you. I'm going better this week than last week, I'm well in here and then you get passed. I think it's a mental thing, you can have bad experiences the same, when you can't do anything right." Robert

"I'm always looking to go faster and faster. When you do a track day you realise there are a lot of people faster than you, you realise how useless you are." Barry

"You think you're fast, but when that guy goes past you, you feel like your standing still." Adam (talking about James Whitham).

"When you club race, I guess it's an attraction because you can see how good you are." Kyle

"I wouldn't mind doing it (club racing), just to see how good I am." Kent

A good example of this fluidity in other high-risk sports is the activity of rock climbing. As pointed out by Csikszentmihalyi (1975), this fluidity is difficult to identify because no single individual can master all the hardest pitches in the world and because even the same climber can be rendered more challenged by weather conditions or self imposed handicaps. Motorcyclists have also indicated awareness of the variety of influences on riding context such as the road surface, the handling set up of the bike and even the presence of other riders. This is exemplified by the following track day participant, who compares the challenges of both road riding and track days; *"Skill on the road is about the road," he remarked, "the bike, even the weather conditions, everything is taken into account, you don't know what's going to happen. Skill on the track though, is different. How fast you go versus the others around you, how you brake and how you handle the bike." Male respondent, track day, August 27.*

In further support of the notion that increasing skill level is difficult to judge precisely, the following participants have indicated that there is always 'so much more to learn';

"But I get more out of it now, learning more skills, you're always learning, even the best come off. You improve your skills every time you go out on a bike." Arthur

"You will also get experience (from track day) as well, you can never say you know it all." Ewan

Even advanced riders such as track day tutor Adam, indicates that regardless of being a highly experienced rider, he is uncertain of his estimated performance limits and skill level; *"You always think that you are (going 100%), but then you realize that you can go that much faster."*

"I've hit the limits on the R1 once or twice, but it was probably lucky, or luck I didn't fall off. Or perhaps I just felt like I have but haven't." Adam

Important racing calculations such as deciding on gear changes and braking points may therefore contribute to the illusion of control as it allows the degree of danger to be seemingly managed. For example, several track day participants have described that motorcycling track days are safer than riding on the roads. Hence, track days are seen by some participants as a controlled and safe environment for which to use the performance of their machines, such as the following track day tutor, Adam describes; (see Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1 Track day participants lined up at the start line.

"That's why I like track days, it's less of a risk than riding on the road and I get a bigger kick out of it, it's not as risky, well the perceived risk, I'm more scared of the road than the track, also the natural self preservation kicks in more on the road." Adam

"I had a spill once on a track day, but as I've got quicker and more experienced I feel perfectly safe, although I have had some close ones." Adam

Other track day participants have also reported to feeling 'safer' on the track than on the roads, such as participants Charles, Len and Del;

"They are such good fun in a relatively safe environment, well, you could argue it's more dangerous but at least there are no hazards like on the roads." Charles

"I know track days are dangerous but I felt safer." Len

"I probably push it 85% on the track and 65% on the road. You learn to trust your bike and how good it is, if you push it. You've got to learn all about your bike, but I haven't had any big moments on the track, well, except I was nearly high sided once." Del

"Do you do a lot of track days?" I asked him.
"Yeah this is my sixth this year," he replied, "it's too dangerous on the roads now, that's why I do track days." Male respondent, track day, August 27.

However, although the 'illusion of control' may influence some participants' perceived safety at track days, in addition, it appears that the tutors who are often highly regarded by participants for their skill and expertise, may enforce the belief that 'track riding is safe'; for example, track day tutor Adam remarks; *"I'd worry, if I had kids letting them out on the roads with it. That's why I like track days, it's less of a risk than riding on the road and I get a bigger kick out of it, it's not as risky."*

"No, I don't ride on the road anymore, it's too dangerous… I'm more scared of the road than the track." Adam

8.8.2 Relative Safety of Track Days

On a more cautionary note, although track days are often casually endorsed by the tutors as 'safe' environments for fast, performance riding, it appears there are many uncertainties associated with circuit riding, such as the other riders on the track trying to find the correct lines as participants Toby, Patrick, Gary and Ted describe;

"I know the lines at Donington because I've been shown, but some people just go for a blast and don't know what lines to take, so that is awkward, like if you catch someone up, I felt it was risky getting past." Toby

"..the guy in front of me decided to go through the same corner as me at the same time. I mean, it's ok we're both amateurs on a track day, so no one blamed anyone. I ended up

with three weeks off work with my leg all bandaged up… It's the only time I've crashed on my bike and I'd rather have done it there than on the road." Patrick

"It is a problem then riding around with other people who aren't proper racers?" Researcher

"It can be a problem, I won't deny that. It's a problem if you get in the wrong group. The worst aspect is when the fast guys put themselves into the intermediate group." Garry

"Do you think it's more unpredictable on the road or track?" Researcher

Probably track, you've got people coming up from both sides on the track. The problem with track days, it's that it only takes one nutter out of control to come up on you, although I guess you can get that on the roads too." Ted

"… Except I don't like the other bikes on the track around me, you don't know what they're gonna do, what line they're going to take and your deciding as well, I like it when there's no one else around." Male respondent, track day, September 18.

"Here you have to decide what line yourself and it can be a bit daunting, although track days are safer generally with no other traffic about, but then I don't know given you go faster on the track." Male respondent, track day, September 18.

Indeed, professional GP racer Troy Bayliss after participating in a variety of track days questions their safety; *"I feel safer out in a Moto GP field than I would on a track day – they're pretty crazy. I've done a couple of track days at Donington, Brands and one year ago at Eastern Creek – but too many people get hurt, guys try to race people and go faster than they can." (Bayliss 2003 p. 30).*

In addition, it appears there are other issues with track days besides the diverse ability levels of other track participants, such as the physical safety of the tracks themselves. For example, race team boss officials in August 2003, questioned the safety of race circuits when Superbike rider Yukio Kagayama suffered serious injuries while racing at Cadwell Park. Indeed, many of the racers and team bosses insist there should be more run-off areas on circuits, especially at Cadwell Park, also a popular track day circuit and the scene of Kagayama's crash. Kagayama's Suzuki team mate John Reynolds comments on the dangers of the track; *"Cadwell Park is a dangerous place to race and I am always happy when the weekend is over." (Reynolds 2003 p. 40).*

Track day participants Kyle, Barry, Kent and Del, have also reported a variety of near misses, crashes and hazards which they have experienced on track days;

"I went on one of his (Jamie Whitham's) at Cadwell and I crashed so they took me away in an ambulance and they told me he (Jamie) rode my bike back to the pits. It was my GSX-R600." Kyle

"Yeah, (he laughed) my son crashed the first time out." (on a track day). Barry

"… but everyone keeps crashing in my group," he replied, "it really holds things up. I did an evening track day once and everyone was crashing in that as well." Kent, track day, September 18.

"I've come off five or six times on the track but there are no cars to run you over. It's true people get hurt on the track, but it's just a flip of the coin really." Kent, track day, September 18.

"At least five people on average crash on track days, it's probably because they don't know what they're doing." Del

Sometimes even death results from track day participation;

"Once they've done them a few times they think it's safe but quite a few get killed on track days actually, they're just accidents waiting to happen." Jeff

"The last time I went to Donington, I went to a funeral there… I was friends with that guy who died, I had done track days with him." Del

8.9 Self Imposed Challenges

The unreachable ceilings in high-risk activities therefore appears to be part of their appeal for many, as according to Csikszentmihalyi (1975), when participants feel as though they have come near experiencing the full range of conditions, they purposely introduce new challenges. For example, Csikszentmihalyi argues that mountain climbers purposely make climbing more difficult by leading others, making new goals, or increasing the dangers by solo climbing. In support of this, within motorcycling, even advanced riders such as professional Grand Prix (GP) racers impose new challenges upon themselves in order to increase the difficulty of racing. For example, GP champion Valentino Rossi after five consecutive GP wins with Honda decided to change to another manufacturer, Yamaha, in order to demonstrate his capabilities on a different, lesser motorcycle. The following motorcycling participants Shane and Ray comment on his decision to switch;

"He can't go to Ducati, so I think he's considering Yamaha. He said he wants a challenge, that's why he's going to Yamaha. I admire him for that because other riders like Doohan didn't have the nerve to do that." Shane

"I think he's young and like other young guys he needs the challenge. If you don't challenge yourself you can't get through life." Ray

In addition to Rossi's move to Yamaha in 2004, Superbike champion Neil Hodgson also made a significant career change and switched to GP racing from Superbikes; *"I want to be judged against the best rider in the world and that means Moto GP."*
(Birt 2003 p. 38).

Apart from self-imposing difficulties, some motorcyclists try other sorts of motorcycling in order to keep their activity challenging, such as Patrick, Irwin and Robert describe touring to different places;

"It's good to just get lost…Where we're going, I don't know. We're always finding new places and new roads." Patrick

"I like to go somewhere different every Sunday, Scarborough, Devil's Bridge, Helmsely." Irwin

"(Like) if you go skiing you'd want to keep going somewhere better." Robert

Still other motorcyclists in order to keep their activity challenging, such as participants Jim, Arthur and Ewan have indicated that they have also tried off roading or even shown an interest in the latest trend, supermoto;

"I prefer enduroing than track because on the track you can still hurt yourself but the risks are far less going over jumps. Also I've been doing track days so long now." Jim

"I love it, it's mental fun, it's another type of biking (motocross), something different." Arthur

"…We're thinking of doing supermoto," the older of the two men said.
"Why does that interest you?" I asked.
"It's something different," the older of the two replied. Ewan, Sherburn, August 3.

Further, demonstrating motorcyclists' interest in novelty, the following participants Patrick, Kent and Del have reported swapping their bikes for different makes or engine sizes;

"This is my third 600 I've got, so that's probably why (he wants to get a bigger bike). Maybe it's just time to do something else." Patrick

"I had already had an R1 before, so I wanted something different, so I thought I'd try a Fireblade." Kent

"I also wanted to try a V twin." Del

"I hired a Harley once on holiday, it was awful. I just thought I'd try something different." Del

The position that the unreachable ceilings are integral to the motorcycling experience is further supported by Hebb (1955) who argues, that novelty is one of the main attractions for the high-risk pursuit. As Hebb indicates, high-risk activities to be worthwhile must always contain novelty in order to be continually enjoyable, hence for flow to occur (Hebb 1955 p. 25). The following road riding participants Robert, Kyle and Clara have also described the importance of novelty in their activity;

"Doing lots of track days just doesn't appeal to me, doing the same thing everyday. I like experiencing different road conditions…I like the challenges that the road possesses, scenery and all the places you go to have different ambiences." Robert

"I always want to learn a new skill. To do something different and new. I want to try a helicopter next." Clara

"There is one road in particular I just love to go out on, I save it for once a week though so I don't get to use to it." Male respondent, Sherburn, June 14

8.10 Gaining Mastery

It appears therefore that the development of skills are important for participation in high-risk activities such as motorcycling, as it allows the individual the opportunity to refine his or her abilities in a particular area, increasing control of a given aspect of the environment. Thus, setting goals and making progress are seemingly key attractions for

many and due to the unreachable ceilings and the search for novelty; such factors appear conducive to the flow experience. As Lyng argues, skill achievement and mastery of the high-risk activity offers powerful 'intrinsic' rewards, such as the self-satisfaction of negotiating a challenge or performing a job well done. Similarly, Csikszentmihalyi (1975) argues that satisfaction which participants reportedly experience in high-risk activities in measuring themselves up against their own ideal is more pleasurable than extrinsic factors, such as competition or as Walle (1997) and Weber (2001) contend, it is the quest for insight, skill and knowledge rather than risk that underlines adventure.

Within motorcycling, the motorcycle press also give high priority to the development and use of skills with many articles describing the thrill of executing manoeuvres successfully;

"Every corner allows you to balance your skill as a rider, your judgement and your bravery against the laws of physics. Get it right and it leaves you with a fast lap time or the warm feeling that comes from a job done well." (Wilson 2003 p. 93).

"High speed kinks are what it's all about, they're the real deal. They demand inch perfect accuracy more than any other kind of corner, so they show the difference between a good rider and a great rider." (Oxley 2003a p. 91).

"There are those who can, and they love it. There's an intense satisfaction from hauling your bike around a corner to the accompaniment of plastic slider scratching tarmac, the

black line it leaves confirms that bend's been done, you've got around it pretty damn quick and it's time for the next one." (Ash 2003 p.13).

Indeed, the following participants Toby, Stewart, Clara, Jim and Adam have also described that 'nothing replaces getting something right' whilst motorcycling;

"There's nothing to replace it, you can't replace it, getting something right on it… I get disappointed if I haven't enjoyed a corner. I'm always trying to do it better." Toby

"It's hard to explain, really, coming into a bend, getting it right, nothing compares with it." Stewart

"By challenge do you mean skill development?" Researcher
"Yes, that's what I meant the satisfaction of getting that much faster and better." Clara

"You're only in it for yourself, you're own pleasure. Self-satisfaction." Jim

"It's really enjoyable when you get the right line and improve on it. And executing a manoeuvre in a plane is similar in a way, it's a skill." Adam

"A lot of bikers aspire to pull them (wheelies) and to get a knee down… It's the best feeling in the world though the first time you get a knee down. Nine out of ten guys on

their first track day aspire to get a knee down, you see 'em at every corner..." Adam (Track day tutor).

"There's a route I use to go on to work and I used to try to go a bit faster everyday to try to push it. I challenged myself to go a bit faster each time. That's what it's about for me, to challenge myself." Male respondent, Sherburn, June 14.

8.10.1 Track day as Ideal for Skill Development

In a quest for skill perfection and expertise, some participants find the track an ideal environment for pushing against their ability limitations. For example, the goal of racing or a motorcycle track day is to improve on lap times, which means overcoming a variety of barriers to speed, such as lack of good reference points, problem areas which need improving or overcoming mistakes. Hence riders Charles, Kyle, Del, Arthur and Garry have reported that the 'safe' environment of the track day is the ideal place for ability testing and skill improvement;

"I've leaned over more on corners on the track then I ever have on the road…You can explore cornering speeds (on track days), I've discovered my limits a couple of times (he laughed)." Charles

"…like at Donington once I made a mistake and went down to second when I should have gone into third and my back wheel locked up and came round. I've never done that on the road, get the back end loose." Kyle

"It's safer on a track to push it… push it on the track all the time. You learn a lot more on the track, there are no kerbs or cars." Del

"They say doing one track day is equivalent to a year on the open roads, what you learn." Arthur

"I'd recommend them (track days) to anyone. It might make you faster but safer because you come to realize the bike's capabilities. It shows you the bike's limits. If you have done it similar on the track then you can use it on the road. It's good for your biking." Garry

As track days are seen as good places for ability testing, some participants such as Perry, Barry and Kent, have reported that they no longer feel the need to 'test their limits' on the road;

"On the track you just see how fast you can go, where as I don't push myself on the road, I used to, but track days have stopped me from doing that now." Perry

"You think differently about the roads (after doing track days), you tend not to go as fast as you used to." Barry

"I'm steadier on the roads now, I don't need to explore there, I can do that on the track." Kent

However, recent government research evaluating Scotland's Bikesafe training scheme found that the development of skills gained from fast riding experiences such as track days encourages faster riding on the roads. 'As an unintended risk compensation effect of the training scheme, participants reported riding at increased speed limits on roads in non-built up areas after participation in Bikesafe.' (Stradling et al 2003). Consequently, it appears that additional rider training may possibly have the effect of increasing rider's speeds. This argument is also supported by motorcycle shop owner and club racer Jeff, who says that the more experience and skill a rider accumulates, the faster they will ride; *"You do ride faster the more skilled you are."*

Interestingly track day participants Kent and Barry have also claimed to ride faster on the roads after having pushed their abilities on the track;

"I used to think I was pushing it, but now I've done track days I realise how much faster you can go and I realise I wasn't really pushing it or going as fast as you can go." Kent

"*…that's the problem with the track though you increase your skill and that enables you to go faster on the roads. You get used to going fast and then you go fast on the roads and get caught." Barry, track day, August 4.*

"…I then told him that some bikers who go on track days end up turning their bikes into track bikes and not using the roads anymore.
"Yeah, it's because they'd kill themselves on the road," he replied with assurance. Male respondent, Sherburn, August 17.

It appears that the consequences of ability testing on track days are multifarious then, increasing some riders' speeds and discouraging fast riding in others.

8.11 Edgework

As described by a wide variety of participants, ability testing, including overcoming barriers and discovering limits are important for skill improvement. Perhaps this is why Lyng et al (1986) and Lyng (1990) (2005) have argued, that some high-risk participants like to perform on the edge of their ability limits, as described by Thompson, 'negotiating the boundaries between life and death, consciousness and unconsciousness, and sanity and insanity. (Thompson 1971, 1979). *'The intent is to see how far one can go and still successfully negotiate life-and-death situations.' (Lyng et al 1986 p.169).*

However, in almost a contradiction to this definition, Lyng further acknowledges that although some participants like 'working on the edge' of their limits, they dislike placing themselves in threatening situations involving circumstances they cannot control. This is also what Celsi et (1993) found, that from the perspective of the high risk performer, they virtually all feel that they are capable of managing the context in which they perform, with most leaving what to them is a comfortable margin between their risk-taking behaviour and the edge. As Celsi et al point out, even within the extreme activity of B.A.S.E. jumping, participants cautiously plan their jumps right down to the escape routes and even where they park their cars. So although participants realise the dangers involved are genuine, Celsi argues, they are seen as foreseeable and hence predictable and even 'manageable', where a person can work up to mastering them.

Accordingly, it appears that rather than thrill seeking or gambling, what many motorcyclists seek is the chance to exercise skill in negotiating a challenge. As previously argued, a sense of control is for many riders, one of the most important components of the flow experience, whether or not an objective assessment justifies such feelings. Thus, while participants perform at the edge of what may appear to be the limit of human ability, the majority feel that these risk contexts are within their control, as the following track day participant Charles describes; "*The acceleration and being in control of the machine is awesome. When people see you go so quickly they think you can't be in control, but when you're on it you really do feel in control.*"

Further, supporting the notion that participants like to feel in control of the risk context, Csikszentmihalyi (1975) found with mountaineering that practically every mountain climber claims that driving a car is more dangerous than the incredible acrobatic feats on the rock. In support of this, motorcyclists Ray, Toby and Patrick have also reported a disliking for activities which appear beyond their control;

"I hate heights, I can't go on the roof of a house or up a ladder… It's funny really, I've got this friend of mine who hates boats. He'll go to the TT but he hates the ferry and even takes the shortest crossing." Ray

"I'm not a dare devil though, I'm not into bungy jumping or things like that, I'd die. I won't go on fairground rides either. I went on a kids' ride over the summer and it made me sick. Maybe I'm a control freak." Toby

"Yeah there's no control in a sidecar, that's not my idea of fun." Patrick

It appears therefore that the motorcycling participants are not interested in working within 'anxiety producing chaos' because under such conditions, they feel out of control, as previously explored, the majority of motorcyclists reported feeling that they are capable of managing their sport. Even professional motorcycle racers claim that they leave what to them is a comfortable margin between their risk taking behaviour and the edge. For example, the late David Jefferies who is also the fastest racer ever around the

Isle of Man TT racing circuit, when interviewed a few months before his death comments that he always rides within his limits;

Q: How many times on a TT lap do you think 'Oooooer', that was a bit close?
A: Not many because I ride within my limits and I don't tend to scare myself. If I'm a bit unsure of something I'll shut off and try it again the lap after." (Jefferies 2003 p. 50).

8.11.1 Edgework in Flow

Thus, while some participants appear to perform at the edge of their abilities, rather than purposely 'working within anxiety producing chaos,' the riders have reported to feeling that the context is within their control. Therefore, due to feeling in control and the resultant absence of worry, it appears that during flow is when participants are more likely to take it to the edge of their ability limits, as this is where they reportedly feel most confident and relaxed. As Rupert Paul, editor of Bike magazine describes, during flow, actions are seemingly taken with ease; *"The best times on a bike come when… you experience that keyed-up state which no amount of effort can produce automatically, when your nerves feel so fresh and taut and you know you're not going to crash… The worst times come when, for whatever reason, your mind is elsewhere, that's when your bike feels like a lump of metal and you can't even plan an overtake without messing it up. So if the flow goes with you next time you ride, cherish it." (Paul 2003 p. 45).*

Maslow (1961) also found this with mountaineers, that in flow actions are effortless, where as what takes straining and struggling at times is done in flow without any sense of striving, working or labouring, as everything seemingly 'works smooth'. A good example of flow encouraging edgework is the experience of motorcycling at night. At night, argues Ben Miller of Bike magazine, motorcyclists ride harder due to the darkness, as the reduced level of information is processed quicker, which also makes the rider feel more relaxed. Therefore, due to the lack of distractions at night this could further induce flow, influencing the motorcyclists' speed; *"It seems that lack of information (due to less visibility) could actually make you faster. 'In the daytime, you have an awful lot of information that needs processing.' reckons Benney. 'At night the reduced level of information can be processed quicker. Also, riders are more relaxed at night. You're alone, closer to being one with the bike and the track, the relationship enhanced by lack of distractions." (Miller 2003a p. 85).*

Many participants consequently, have reported that during the flow experience, they don't feel as though they are 'pushing the performance envelope.' This queries the very nature of what Lyng (1990) describes as edgework as the aim is to work within feelings of anxiety and borderline chaos. It appears that when participants take it to the edge of their abilities, this might appear as edgework, but for the participant themselves, they feel in control. Therefore, it is argued that perhaps participants are able to get closer to the edge of their abilities in such situations because they are flowing. For example, the following track day participant Len reports that his fastest days are when he is 'in the groove; *"My real fast days are on my own, if you're in the groove, then you feel fast and*

*you just go for it… A really good one was this summer, in June. It was really hot and I was just getting comfortable and the bike had a new set of tyres. You're not suppose to time yourself but I was getting quicker each lap, that was a really good time. Your not supposed to race, but that's a load of rubbish, everyone goes as quick as they **** well can." Len*

Or as track day tutor Adam, in particular describes, his quickest lap times are when he is in what he describes as a 'natural rhythm;'

"Are there any times you push it 100%" Researcher
"You always think you are (pushing it) but then you realize you can go that much faster. I would say when I was at Oulton last on my Fireblade, because I'm going to race next year I was really pushing it…I kept going faster and faster and faster it was great…Once I've had a few good laps and get into the natural rhythm, you just think about getting round quicker." Adam

The late racer David Jefferies also describes how his fastest races 'just happen'; *"I've never tried to set a lap record, just win races, so I think the biggest thing was the first TT win. The lap record I didn't try for, it just happened." (Jefferies 2003 p. 50.).*

Hence, it appears that when participants feel out of control, this may operate as a kind of paralysis, which cause participants to hold back rather than push their ability limits. Indeed, Csikszentmihalyi (1975) found with mountain climbers, that the arousal of fear

signals to the climber that adjustments must be made. For example, Csikszentmihalyi argues that during the course of the average climb a feedback loop is continually operating, regulated by differential control/fear signals of varying degrees. Csikszentmihalyi gives a clear description of this feedback loop as a fluid process of movement-balance-perceptions-decision, where each synchronic slice of the action is like a frame of that film. When the action is too easy or too difficult then the film stutters and the actor is very aware of the borders of each frame. When the difficulty is just right, Csikszentmihalyi explains, then action follows action in a fluid series and the actor has no need to adopt an outside perspective from which to consciously intervene as their moves become one.

Indeed this reflexivity was found with motorcyclists, as Supersports bike owner Chuck's describes of his thoughts on a given ride; *"Oh, I have silly moments, but most of a ride I'll go nice and steady… Sometimes though if I hit a main road, I might go faster, livening it up, go a bit quicker. I just sometimes feel like it, but I like my licence too much… Also I think having a pillion you learn to control your urges more because of having a pillion you need to keep it steady... When I had my girlfriend for a long time I had a pillion so that taught me to control my urges, to go steadier."*

Another participant, Rubin also reports on such feelings of fear or anxiety interrupting flow; *"I have a brother. He use to be a biker too, but… he's too frightened (now). I think something has spooked him, like the same sort of thing that happens to me from time to time. You're riding and realize your going too quick because you get over*

confident and you realize it and slow yourself. When you've been riding for a while you get this urge to go a bit quicker and a bit quicker and then something will happen and you realize I'm going too quickly… there is always something that reminds you to slow down."

Further, as described by Club 66 racer, sometimes during the height of a race he starts worrying about his health (Fig. 8.2); *"I'm not fit enough to push myself beyond my limits… You're looking for trouble with your health. I do silly things actually, like I'm in third place and then start worrying about myself, is my heartbeat going too fast."*

Figure 8.2 Source: Auto 66 Clubmans News, Summer Edition 2003

What's more, it appears that when there is a continuous interruption of flow this is characteristic of what several participants have described as a 'bad ride'. During a bad ride participants have reported to be continually anxious, reflecting on the ride and their performance and therefore unable to flow or 'get in the groove';

"Although some days you get on the bike and you feel like you can't ride it, you can't get in the groove, you feel like your gonna come off." Ewan

"I'll turn around if things aren't going well, someone is trying to tell me something. When you're out and it's not going well and you start to pick up the pace again, something else always happens. It's just a feeling that you get, you just don't feel right, maybe it's a voice in your head." Del

*"A good day is when it all comes together, cornering, braking. When it's a bad day, you think **** why did I do that, sometimes you have a bad ride." Chuck*
"What determines this?" Researcher
It's probably me, you set off and initially something sets it off, it's something unconscious that sets it off. It's not dangerous, it's just that things haven't gone to plan, while you riding your thinking, 'what are you doing', it's not going smoothly. On a good day, everything goes smoothly. It's not dangerous, dangerous, um, it's like erratic, no I can't explain. You misjudge your braking point and things like that, you brake too early. It's hit and miss when it happens. It only happens about 1-2% of the time, it's just not all sweetness and nice." Chuck

"I think it's a mental thing, you can have bad experiences the same, when you can't do anything right. The more nervous you are the more likely you are to have accidents, a string of slight mistakes. You're never going to have a good day if you get a bit tense, it definitely affects me. It can work either way. Going on your bike can wipe away your

problems or it can influence you so you're not concentrating very well, like if you go out stressed. It's the frame of mind you go in, if you just want the wind in your hair, it can relax you and take away pressures. It can also make you worse." Robert

Hence, although several participants have similarly described having 'a bad ride', because anxiety is based upon the actors' perception of the situation, what actually brings on 'the bad ride' varies amongst participants. Further exemplifying this, circumstances in the environment, such as wet road conditions can trigger a 'bad ride', as the following motorcyclist in Bike magazine describes his anxieties over riding in the rain; *"When the first hint of water splashes on my visor and the tarmac goes greasy shiny, all my ability to ride a bike leaves me. I wobble, I jerk, I look at the road just in front of my wheel and I slow to walking pace." Article the search for the perfect technique (Miller 2003 p. 93).*

8.11.2 Omnipotence in Flow

Overall then, it has been argued that during 'flow' is when participants are most likely to get near the edge of their ability limits. In addition, it appears that due to the heightened confidence, flow may foster a sense of 'enormous power' within individuals, which has previously been described by Lyng as 'omnipotence'. For example, motorcycle racer and mountain climber, Eric Bostrom, describes that sometimes during racing he feels 'all powerful,' as something just 'snaps upstairs'; *"You'll find yourself doing everything in your power to get though a particular corner faster, but you're slow there. The exact reason you're slow there you may never find out. But the important part is that you find*

your way past it and many times you can't quantify what you did. There's no explanation for how you picked up speed but something just snaps upstairs and the next thing you know you're going through there as quick as anyone and you really didn't do anything different." Bostrom 2003 p. 32).

Bostrom, also points out that the same 'enormous power' is present in rock climbing, where suddenly things once perceived as impossible suddenly become achievable;
"… the move itself is to reach the next hold, which is barely a hold at that, it just seems impossible and just completely out of the question. And then the next thing you know, your buddy that you're climbing with makes a move and it just opens up this whole world of awareness. Something is suddenly possible that mentally had you totally defeated just moments before." (Bostrom 2003 p. 32).

Similarly, supermoto racer, Christian Iddon reports on feeling unconquerable while racing, which he describes as a powerful 'inner force' or 'fire'; *"To go fast, faster than anyone else, you need the fire. The fire's an inner force that defies literary description, mood, circumstance or reason. It's a beautiful thing to see but hard to quantify. When you've got it, it feels like nobody is going to beat you, nobody will post the fastest lap but you." (Iddon 2003 p.31).*

8.11.3 Track Day as an Extraordinary Experience

Moreover, it appears that feelings of what Lyng describes as 'omnipotence' may be linked to competition. That is, due to the increased levels of emotional intensity or adrenaline in competitive riding experiences, this may influence the illusion of control. For example, in the intense experience of the motorcycle track day several participants particularly pushing their ability limits, have reported experiencing an extreme or heightened adrenaline rush as participants Dale, Kyle and Toby explain;

"He said you get as much adrenaline on one track day as a whole month of road biking." Dale

"On the track you get more of a buzz because you're pushing it." Kyle

"You just don't get that buzz on the road. It's the cornering and the thrill of going into a corner and doing it quick." Toby

In support of this, the heightened adrenaline rush particular to track days has also been described in the specialist press, as a 'buzz which participants can't adequately describe;'

"For someone who hasn't ridden on the track the pitfalls are obvious…but it's the buzz that isn't obvious. The buzz people can't adequately describe. The buzz that you remember from the minute you leave the circuit gates until the time you attend your next track day. The buzz that makes people keep coming back." (Inman 2002a p. 85).

8.11.4 Red Mist

Interestingly, this heightened adrenaline rush has been identified and labelled by track day participants as 'seeing the red mist'. Although the term is used multifariously, it is mainly used to describe situations in which participants push their performance abilities on the track, induced by the adrenaline rush of perceived competition. As track day participant Louise describes the 'red mist' as being 'caught up in the moment; *"I get what you call red mist sometimes. I get caught up in the moment and do things I probably shouldn't have done. I take it well beyond my limits on the bike, but not beyond the bike's limits, it's so powerful, they race these in the Superbikes you know." Female respondent, track day, August 4.*

Similarly, track day participant Perry, describes the red mist as 'being carried away'; *"I could have been squashed like a fly. It was wet and you think, I can take it and you get a bit carried away, you can't help it." Perry*

Seeing the 'red mist' therefore, appears to a be a heightened, or impassioned state seemingly induced by competition and similar to flow, participants push their performance abilities during such an episode as they no longer reflect on issues of safety as the following track day participants Patrick, Kent, Charles and Toby illustrate;

"I don't know, but I think it (red mist) means to lose your inhibitions, to go a bit wild, the wild side takes over." Patrick

"It's when you overcome the sensible part of the brain." Kent

"Some people see red mist and common sense goes out of the window." Charles

"I think it means when someone really pushes it." Toby

Moreover, during a 'red mist' episode, induced by the focused concentrated effort, participants have reported that they feel confident and in control during the experience. Many track day participants therefore, maintain that they have never experienced the 'red mist' but it is rather 'other' motorcyclists, whom are out of control, that are subject to these phenomena;

"I don't get that (red mist) at all really, I'm more in control, but I've seen it before… when this bloke really tried to keep up with me… and he was going much to fast… and he high sided himself." Perry

"… on the track when the red mist comes down, people become so focused on winning that they take risks, like overtaking when it's border line safe, going quicker than they're capable. All you see is the chequered flag but at the end of the race those are the blokes that will come a cropper." Len

"I don't suffer from that (red mist). The lads do, they think they're Rossi, I've seen it happen, they think they can beat everybody, then they highside out of corners. Their not

riding with their brain, they're riding out of their heart. Racers get it as well, but the more experienced you are, the more control you have, well they seem in control with it." Barry

"Have you heard of the red mist?" Researcher
"Yes, to forget yourself. I know a few like that but I'm a totally different rider… It's about skill, that's what holds my interest." Ron

"They all do that, there's the instructor, I've got to beat him. That's probably when the red mist comes down, then they crash at the point of overtaking me, it happens a lot." Adam

Acting in an impassioned, aggressive state, participants 'after seeing the red mist' commonly work on the edge of their abilities, as the following track day participants Kyle and Mike and road rider Del describe;

"(Red mist) is about anger, frustration. I've never had it a lot, only once or twice, its aggression. Everyone is still in control; you're just pushing it further." Kyle

"I take it to mean that it's when you have more adrenaline than normal, when you're angry your adrenaline boosts and then it gets you reacting in a different way than normal." Mike

"... it's a bit of road rage or it's to do with mates, racing them, but that's when accidents happen." Del

The manner by which aggression may work to influence edgework is exemplified by racer Valentino Rossi's win in the Australian 2003 GP. Acting fervently, Rossi won the final GP race of the season despite having ten seconds added to his lap time as a penalty for passing under a waved yellow flag. The reason for Rossi's extreme determination to win was influenced by the fact that he had already lost a race for the same offence at the British GP in July. However, unlike at Donington, where Rossi was punished hours after the race, in the Australian GP, he had time to do something about it. Rossi then reeled off a series of record laps that saw him turn around a six-second deficit into a five-second win. Later, Rossi said that it was the only race in his career in which he had tried 100 per cent from start to finish; *"I was thinking to have two victories taken away because of the yellow flag is too much... I didn't have to worry about points as the championship is already won, so I just closed my eyes and did the last 10 laps at an incredible pace." (Rossi 2003 p. 36).*

Similarly, club racer Jeff reportedly acting under aggression won a recent race after another racer nearly knocked him off his bike whilst overtaking dangerously; "… *we were doing 80 mph on a tricky part of the track and he overtook me dangerously on the inside on the corner and when he passed me he waved. Well he smashed into me… I don't know how I didn't lose it, thankfully I managed to stay on. Then when I got it back*

again the red mist came down, I got that angry that I went flat out and passed the lad in the lead on the last corner of the last lap and won.

Clearly, in Jeff's account, aggression influenced his performance as reflecting back upon the race, Jeff realised that before the incident occurred he was riding way below his potential;

"Is the red mist to do with anger then, like road rage?" Researcher

"No, not like road rage, its controlled anger… it made me realise that I should have been riding a lot harder than that." Jeff

Similarly, ex-motorcycle racer, Max Oxley, describes channelling aggression in motorcycle racing; *"… even if there is some bad **** going down, you just channel your aggression into the next race." (Oxley 2002 p. 65).*

It appears therefore that both so called 'intrinsic factors' as well as 'extrinsic factors' are present during the high-risk experience or in situations such as 'seeing the red mist'. That is, not only are participants affected by their emotions such as anger or frustration or even control/flow sensations, but also by the social norms which surround the activity such as the pressure for skill demonstration or the threat of competition. Hence it is argued here, that 'extrinsic' factors cannot be divided out from 'intrinsic' ones. Similarly, as Ussher (2000) discovered in her study on sexual desire, that desire and its relationship to sexual subjectivity is a complex process which she argues, must be understood at a material, discursive and intra-psychic level. "*We cannot separate out one of these levels of*

analysis from the others; they are all interrelated." P. 196. This is also what Edensor (2000) found with the activity of walking, that walkers simultaneously sensually apprehend the environment and their bodies whilst walking but they are also reflexively aware of enduring discursive notions about 'nature' which are embodied in their walking practices.

That is, within motorcycling, part of the enjoyment that perfecting stunts or in developing fast riding skills might bring, is not only to do with self satisfaction but also to do with social norms of what is considered as socially desirable or acceptable within the motorcycling community. For example, the pressure to compete with other riders clearly influences many participants' riding practice, as the following riders have described the need to 'push it beyond their abilities' in order to keep up with others;

"There's a fool in front and other fools following… If people would go by themselves every week there'd be hardly any accidents. They go to Devils Bridge to see what they do in front of a group of people, showing off to bystanders, deliberately doing wheelies to show off, then you see the ambulance." Robert

"We forget ourselves sometimes, but its part of the fun. People that go skiing do the same, they go down expert slopes, if you never test yourself, you never get any better. But you don't go over your skill level, it's easy to go over that trying to keep up, then that's the time to slow down." Robert

"The inexperienced biker ends up in the back of the group, which is the worst place for them because at the back you have to ride twice as fast and they end up crashing. When you go with other people you get sucked in." Barry

"I won't do it on my own though (go 170 mph), only if someone is with me… I've got nothing to prove to anyone on my own." Sam (talking about group riding).
"I'd say I go 100% with Simon, to keep up." Eddy

"When you're out with your mates you don't intend to go fast, but you just do it because you're showing off to each other." Ewan, Sherburn, August 3.

"No, I've stopped now, really, your just supposed to be going off roading, it's not suppose to be competitive, the point is just to go at your own pace. But as soon as the gun goes off, that's it." Jasper, bike shop, July 29.

However, although it appears that competitive riding may significantly influence motorcycling participation, what actually induces this competitiveness varies amongst participants. For example, for Supersports motorcyclist Patrick who is also interested in perfecting stunting, reportedly enjoys pulling 'stoppies' and 'wheelies' just to show off;
"Yeah I do stoppies and wheelies. I've mastered wheelies now, I've been practising them. Just coming to a junction I'd do one just to show off, really it's to show that I'm a bit better than you." Patrick

Other riders such as Harry, Jasper and Toby have reported the lure of overtaking in group riding;

"… If someone passes me, you have to (push it) if someone passes, or if the road is open it depends on what mood I'm in as well." Harry

"Also you ride in groups so that makes you do more mad things." Jasper

"Like I said before, when I go 30, I go 30 but someone passed me and like a red rag to a bull I went on chance and I overtook him on a bend going 130…and if something had been coming then that would have been it." Toby (talking about a near miss).

"The only time I really push it though, is in group riding because it encourages you into it." Male respondent, Cock o' the North Road Races, June 24.

Still others, such as sports-tourer rider Gary, describes the challenges of competing with cars; *"You might as well give it up if you don't push it…I really like to push it when playing with cars, but when it happens, I think nah, I won't bother, but then they over take me and then I have to…Anyway he was pushing me from behind so I let him past, but then I thought, no I can't resist the challenge, so the next chance I got, I took him and unbelievably fast…It was a fun game and we were both playing. I push it in situations like that, I like taking cars." Garry, Cock o' the North Road Races, June 24.*

"I know it's very childish, all of us know that it's childish, but you don't ride a bike to behave yourself. It's a controlled game though, I'm in control, I've got all the power and speed…they (car drivers) always come to realise in the end that I'm faster." Garry

8.11.5 Track Day as Fast Competitive Activity

Moreover, the tendency for some motorcyclists to participate in fast, competitive riding particularly appears common within the highly competitive environment of the motorcycle track day. As bike shop owner Jeff points out, motorcyclists on track days often ride beyond their limits because they believe that they should emulate racers; *"A few get killed on track days actually, they're just accidents waiting to happen. They push it beyond their limits because they see the racers do it, but their tyres are different." Jeff*

Some participants accordingly, push their limits in group riding or at track days even though they may feel nervous or anxious (Fig. 8.3). As the late racer David Jefferies has observed, motorcyclists on the TT race circuit often ride way beyond their limits even when they feel scared; *"Having no speed restrictions (on the TT circuit) makes people ride beyond their limits. They think there's no limit, so I'll go as fast as I can. Even though I'm scared stupid and actually not in control of what I'm doing." (Jefferies 2003 p. 52.).*

In addition, track day tutor Adam admits to feeling pressurised to push through the 'no fear barrier' on track days in order to improve on lap times;

"You have it (the self-preservation instinct) on both the road and the track, but the purpose of the track is to go fast on your bike, to overcome that instinct, to break early to help you go quicker." Adam

"So this self-preservation is something you have to fight to order to go faster, because your instinct is to slow?" Researcher

"You have to yes. For example on a corner, your instinct is to slow down…every instinct is telling you not to, but you have to (not slow down), to get ahead. It's what they call 'no fear'. Those that have no fear are better at overcoming the self preservation instinct." Adam

Figure 8.3 Track day participants riding on the track.

8.12 'Doing Homework'

As it is believed by participants such as Adam, that overcoming the 'self preservation instinct' is crucial for participation in the high-risk activity, it follows that participants' appropriation of the currently dominant fast, performance riding style can sometimes lead to 'misjudgements' in riding technique. However, although Andy and other respondents believe that one must push through the 'no fear' barrier in order to attain mastery of the sport, it is pointed out in ex-racer Keith Code (1983), that pushing the performance envelope should not be done foolishly. Rather, Code advises, that if a rider should come up against a barrier, the rider should look back on the ride and analyse the problem in order to work out a new plan, what Code describe as a necessary part of track riding, 'doing homework'. This point was also made by the late David Jefferies that whenever he felt unsure of anything he slowed down; *"I tend to learn roads and circuits quite easy. If I was unsure of anything I slowed down." (Jefferies 2003 p. 50).*

Andy Ibbott, who writes weekly for MCN, similarly points out that 'even Valentino Rossi takes time to question his own riding and workout ways to improve on it.' Ibbott suggests that riders, in order to improve riding skills, should continually review what they are trying to achieve; *"Ask yourself some hard questions, when was the last time you really, really thought about what you were trying to achieve on a corner?…Understanding what and when you are or are not doing will reap much greater and longer term improvements in your riding no matter what your bike or its state of*

tune…it is this that makes the difference between confident, controlled cornering or frantic snatch and grab of the controls to survive a corner. We can't change what we don't know, so if you don't question your riding you will never know how to improve it." (Ibbott 2003a p.21).

8.12.1 Relying on Others' Judgements

Moreover, the fluidity in edgework which appears to make skill judgements open and contestable, may also contribute to participants' adoption of misinformed motorcycling practice, as explained by participant Barry, that track day participants often rely on others' skill judgements in 'negotiating the edge' before developing the skills necessary for participation; *"The worst problem is that you may decide it can be done because someone else is doing it, then you try to do it before you have the skill necessary."*

This is also acknowledged by ex-racer Keith Code (1983), who recognizes that a common problem at track days is participants copying other riders' lines or speeds before they have developed the required skill and ability level to cope with it themselves; *"Deal with your own decisions, your barriers, your products and reference points, your timing and attention, not someone else's…Sort it out for yourself. Another rider's line, even if he goes faster than you, might not be the correct one for you. Information can be valuable, but you have to watch where it's coming from and who's giving it. Other riders are often operating from their own false information." (p. 102).*

In addition, the track day tutors may also encourage overconfident riding at track days by enforcing the standards of fast, competitive riding. For example, the tutors sometimes race each other during lunch breaks, which breaks formal regulations that 'track day racing is not allowed' and the following tutor Adam, also admits to doing wheelies coming into the paddock just to 'cheer himself up'; *"Sometimes I do a little wheelie to cheer myself up."*

Overall, due to the fluidity and unreachable ceilings in edgework, it appears that participants commonly adopt second-hand information from sources such as track day tutors as well as opinions circulating within the motorcycling community in general, as Andy Ibbott writing in MCN advises, 'some riding is best left to racing professionals'; *"A top MotoGP rider might be able to use handlebar input to scrub speed mid-corner by pushing the inside handlebar and making the front tyre scrub across the tarmac. But mere mortals simply want to ensure the front wheel tracks the line we've set for the bike when turning in." (Ibbott 2003b p. 17).*

"Sliding intentionally is best left to the riding gods, but you should know how to save it if you get into a slide by mistake. Sliding the rear tyre on a bike driving hard out of a turn is the stuff of gods and legends… provoking a slide on the road is not advisable, but people often ask me how they can notice and control a slide." (Ibbott 2003 p. 17).

Similarly, former police instructor and ex-racer Westlake describes, that riding to the limits of the bike on the road, is simply riding too fast; *'My idea of a good road rider is*

one who rides quickly but never appears to be doing anything, flowing from one bend to another planning for the next… On the road I do move my backside a little, but it's not really hanging off… If you are literally going to the limits of the bike on the road, you're going too fast.' (Westlake 2003b p. 69).

Indeed the recent government research (Sexton et al 2004), also demonstrates the need that current motorcycling training should emphasise the idea of the 'safe rider' and should encourage motorcyclists to approve of this perspective, thereby teaching motorcyclists to value responsible riding behaviour with the ability to control the position and speed of the machine safely, systematically and smoothly; *"For every corner you ride around, you should be making judgements about the likelihood of an accident and the seriousness of the outcome, should it happen." (Code 2003 p. 91).*

8.31 Masculinity

Therefore, the need to compete within their local communities has been highlighted by a variety of motorcyclists. However, this pressure to participate in dangerous activities and 'remain brave' could also have attributed to wider cultural notions which link high-risk activities to the performance of masculine identities. Lyng (1990) for example, found this social pressure in skydiving, where skydivers seen as being brave enough to participate in edgework, without being paralysed by fear were considered by other participants to possess, 'the right stuff'. Or as Harry (1995) argues, adopting sports ideologies is a means by which many male participants 'validate their manhood'.

Accordingly, the following quotes from the specialist motorcycle press portray the machismo often associated with motorcycling;

"There's a lot of machismo involved. We often find it's the wives who buy (advanced rider) training gift vouchers, but the men are secretly relieved." (Law 2001 p. 25).

"Buried down behind layers of Kevlar-tough bluff and bravado, everyone's got a personal issue with cornering." (Wilson 2003 p. 93).

Amongst the motorcycling participants, Gary in particular describes the manner by which competition is a 'male preoccupation;' *"I've proved to him, I've played with him then I can let him go, it's funny you usually end up with a little wave. Bike on car finishes more amicably than car on car. It's usually never a woman, women are usually too sensible. In a car they've got to prove that they are as much of a man as the other one and to prove their car is as good".*

This theme is further reflected by the following track day participants who indicate that women are generally 'more sensible than men;'

"… some of the women are quite good on the track," he replied. "Women though are generally more sensible than men. Men are mad. A woman will come into a bend and be sensible, but a man will say I can take it and he'll do it. That's why women can't win at

racing because you have to be a bit mad. Women are logical, men are mad." Adam Track day, August 4.

"I doubt that women see red mist. It's down to ego and testosterone." Perry

Further exemplifying this point, other studies have found that high-risk performers minimise or down play risks. As observed by Jones (1993), phrases such as 'bottling it all up inside' and 'holding the tears in' are all metaphors for the masculine ideal. p. 89-90. Likewise, avoiding the discussion of anxiety was also discovered amongst a variety of motorcyclists' as several participants were found to reduce near misses or accidents to 'minor misfortunes,' 'mishaps' or 'hiccups';

"…the bike threw her off." Dale

"The bike high sided me." Kent

"Have you had any times when you thought, this is it?" Researcher
"Yeah, I've had a few brushes with lorries." Eddy

"Have you ever had any near misses?" Researcher
"No, but the bike's skidded a few times." Clara

"…I binned it on a track day at Cadwell." Sherburn, August 3.

Alongside the specific language or terms which participants have used to reduce the severity of accidents, other participants such as Neil, Doug, Gary, Len and Ewan have made light of their misfortunes and in some cases even have joked about them;

Then I asked them, "what's a good day out?"
"When I come back alive," the youngest one said laughing. Neil, British Grand Prix, July 11.

"How fast do you go then?" I said, still questioning him further.
"As fast as my guardian angel will fly," he replied laughing. Doug, Sherburn, August 24.

"He laughed, I'd started measuring myself up for a set of wings, I thought tomorrow I'll be playing a harp." Garry

"…My friend who's a nurse says we're all just organ donors, (he laughed in amusement). Len, Track day, August 27.

"They call us organ donors you know." (he laughed) Ewan, Sherburn, August 3.

Terms which 'minimise' the risks involved in motorcycling can also be routinely found in the specialist motorcycle press, where risks or serious accidents are down played to 'having a moment' or 'tasting the kitty litter';

"You push it harder and you don't see the pound signs in front of your eyes every time you have a moment." (Inman 2002 p. 78).

"It's a safe bet someone will taste the kitty litter at any track day you attend." (Inman 2002 p. 78).

"Most times I crashed I was trying to figure a way to go faster and it just snuck up and got me." (Schwantz 2003 p. 45).

"Correctly anticipating a high-speed kink is vital – you're going so fast that a last-second realization that you've judged things wrongly could end in the kind of get-off that'll cost you more than a new brake level and foot peg." (Oxley 2003 p. 91).

8.14 Rationalisation

It appears therefore, that local community norms of appropriate riding behaviour may influence participants' engagement with their activity. Likewise, wider cultural constructions also appear to influence some riders' expectations of the sport. However, it was found that motorcyclists' local community understandings may sometimes clash with wider cultural interests. Similarly, this is what Brannigan et al (1983) found with skydivers, that participants rationalise their activity to non-participating audiences, in order to convince themselves of the conventional nature of the sport. This also supports

Mead's early work (1934) and later McAdams (1993) theory, that as actors in a moral universe, individuals must continually create morally defensible positions for themselves. In reinforcing this, motorcycling participants were commonly found to use a variety of rationalizations in approaching the 'edge.' For example, to explain their participation in the sport, the following participants describe motorcycling as being just as risky as driving, walking or even smoking; *"I've lost a few mates to biking. But you can't think of it like that, at the end of the day how many die in cars and still drive, how many people die of lung cancer and still smoke." Sam*

"It's just what you perceive as a risk, a risk is actually anything you might do, any sort of transport is a risk. Some bikers have their own minds as well though and at the end of the day, it's down to the rider." Robert

"It happens all the time, hit and run, it happens to pedestrians too." Del

"Accidents aren't caused by speed, obviously some are but a lot more are caused by car drivers on their mobile phones." Chuck

8.14.1 Fate and Luck

Underscoring the notion that motorcyclists in some cases rationalize the risks involved in their activity, the following participants, Steward, Eddy, Ray and Ted, appear to adopt positions towards death;

"Have you been in any accidents?" I asked them both…

"I'm not saying… I'm not tempting fate," said the man in blue and black as he touched the table. Stewart, Sherburn, July 19.

"Did she ever have an accident?"

"No, but it's like anything, if it's up, then it's your time." Eddy

"…The thing is, if you're gonna get killed then your gonna get killed, you minimize the risk and that's all you can do." Ray

"There are always some risks in life anyway." Ted

Similarly the following track day participants Garry and Barry also appear to take up fatalist positions about near misses at track days;

"So I just let go of the gas and went onto the grass. It wasn't anything I did though, it wasn't anything to do with skill that I didn't crash, God just must have been looking over me." Garry, (talking about participating in a track day at Cock o' the North Road Races, June 24).

"I hit a car head on and went over the car but landed on the grass verge, it just wasn't my turn to die." Barry (talking about a near miss at a track day).

Still, other participants seemingly adopting pragmatic views towards accidents or near misses, position them as just 'unlucky' occurrences beyond individual control;

"…This car nicked my back end, but fortunately, for a change, the car coming towards me had enough sense to pull in, so I had some room. Nothing happened to me, only a nick on the back end of my bike, luck was good to me that day." Stewart, Sherburn, August 24.

"It's not speed that kills, it's just if you're unlucky." Fred

"Did you ever have a near miss where you thought this is it?" I said with interest.
"Yeah, a couple of times," he replied, "just going too fast or going into bends on the wrong side of the road. One time I went round a bend and that could have been it, it was just luck." Male respondent, Sherburn, August 17.

The specialist press also appear to rationalise the dangers involved in motorcycling, where motorcycling is shown to be a normal activity that is in no way deviant, comparing the dangers of motorcycling to that of getting sun burnt, burning yourself on a BBQ, or even getting a paper cut whilst reading, as this article in Two Wheels Magazine suggests; *"Reading books have now been recognized as a class 4 danger by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. Paper cuts now account for 2% of all accident and emergency admission." (Anon. 2003d p.174).*

Palmer (2004), also points to the media's role in down playing the risks involved in dangerous sports as her study on risky adventure sports in Australia demonstrates. Nevertheless it is argued that perhaps the media are not wholly to blame for risk rationalization as participants appear commonly down play the dangers involved in the sport.

8.15 Summary of Narrative Themes

Unlike most previous studies which have tended to draw a distinction between the 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' factors, it was found with motorcycling that this distinction is not so clearly defined. Rather, it was found that motorcycling involves a complex interplay between sensual or emotional apprehending but also a reflexive understanding of the discursive notions associated with high-risk activities. That is, alongside the compelling intrinsic aspects of the experience such as control and heightened emotive states, social reflection involving community and cultural understandings also appear to influence motorcycling participants' ongoing, reflexive engagement with their activity. It is suggested that all of these influences are active with various degrees within the motorcycling experience (Fig 8.4). By highlighting both the social and embodied aspects of the high-risk experience then, the thesis has aimed to present a comprehensive level of analysis, with a more meaningful reflection of the experiences of those who take up the high-risk activity. Next, in underscoring this complexity, motorcycling participants' biographies are explored in chapter nine. Specifically the biographies aim to show how

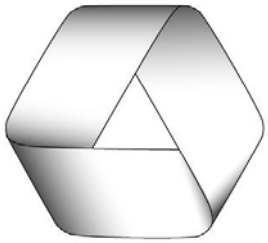
differences amongst participants appear to be related to their past riding experiences but also and importantly their social locations.

Figure 8.4 Conscious Experience Mobius

(Elements continually operate during the course of a given ride.)

The 'I', which is the flow experience, is the continually emerging, spontaneous and impulsive part of the self that is heightened in the high-risk pursuit. Participants tend to 'push their performance limits' in flow, feeling relaxed and in control.

The 'I' or Flow



The 'Me'
Fear/anxiety

The 'Me'
Social reflection

The 'Me' is the reflective self. When reflection occurs, flow fractures causing participants to feel the tendency to hold back, for example, when participants feel fearful or anxious. However, participants may still push their ability limits if they feel socially pressured to do so, such as in competitive group riding. Therefore, socially informed reflections may either inhibit edgework or encourage further participation.

Chapter 9: Motorcyclists' Life Story Narratives

9.1 Introduction

The aim of exploring participant profiles to gain an in-depth insight into the experience of motorcyclists to observe their shared cultural understandings. Although thirty-three respondents were initially interviewed it is impractical however, to present a comprehensive analysis of all thirty-three biographies. Therefore, nine accounts were carefully chosen with the aim of highlighting variety in motorcycling participants' biographies. In addition, as participants were met in the settings in which they naturally congregate, this enabled further indispensable contextual information which was collected enabling the understanding of participants' lives and experiences which are both contextually grounded as well as highly individualised.

Denzin's (1989) method for interpreting life stories was also utilised, focusing on key turning points in participants' motorcycling careers, as previously described as 'locating epiphanies'. The rationale for adopting this perspective comes from Celsi, Rose and Leigh's (1993) previous research on sky-diving, suggesting that researchers, rather than make overriding generalisations about risk-taking behaviour should, rather isolate key variables which contribute to high-risk performers various pathways, or what Schouten and McAlexander (1995) have described as motorcyclist career paths, however the position is taken here, that riders' pasts are not straightforwardly deterministic of their current experience

9.2 Appropriation of Riding Style

In exploring motorcyclists' engagement with their activity turning points in participants' motorcycling careers have been examined. Contrary to more rational perspectives which suggests that high-risk participants' behaviour is fixed and unchanging, close examination of motorcyclists' experiences suggest a less deterministic view of high-risk behaviour. Rather, it was found that motorcycling involves a complex interplay between sensual or emotional apprehending but also a reflexive understanding of the discursive notions associated with high-risk activities. That is in taking what Usser describes as a 'material-discursive-intrapsychic perspective', participants appear to adapt their motorcycling engagement according to physical sensations or emotive states, but also according to local community standards often enforced by the specialist motorcycle press (that is, the meanings which surround the experience are dependent on and constructed within the social and discursive context in which the person is situated).

Moreover, the research approach, by which riding engagement is understood over the participants' motorcycling careers, is through exploring appropriation of 'riding style'. Generally speaking, within the motorcycling community there are two major riding styles to which participants subscribe; the currently dominant 'performance riding style' demonstrated by professional racers, versus the 'minimum visual fuss, maximum smoothness approach' of the advanced riding motorcyclist. In exploring the riding style of motorcycling participants, Patrick, Arthur, Eddy, Dale and Fred who appear to aspire to the community standards associated with performance motorcycling and fast riding experiences are considered first, followed by those

whom currently have adopted a more responsible riding style, such as participants Harry, James and Clara. Finally, Toby's profile is considered exploring why some motorcycling participants may drop out or disassociate with their activity.

9.3 Patrick's Profile

Patrick, age twenty-eight, first got into motorcycling as a teenager when he used to ride his friends 50cc off-road bike locally in fields. Then at sixteen years, Patrick started working and bought a 125cc moped which he later sold when he got his car licence at seventeen. It was not until some of his friends bought motorcycles that Patrick, at the age of twenty-two became interested in motorcycling again. Patrick, who is unmarried, has now been riding for six years and currently owns a Yamaha R6 sports motorcycle. However, Patrick has recently considered getting a new Fireblade or an R1 like his friends' who own 1000cc super sports bikes; *"The next step is that I want one a bit bigger."*

I first met Patrick at the motorcycling café in Sherburn, he was discussing motorcycle stunts such as 'wheelies' and 'stoppies' with his friend Ewan. Unsurprisingly, both men were wearing colourful race replica leathers, however, I noticed that Patrick's knee sliders were particularly worn, which his friend Ewan was quick to point out; *"Just look at your knee sliders, you'll have to get steel plates on them,"* he added pointing to his friends worn down knee sliders.

Patrick is particularly enthusiastic about performance motorcycling and aspires to perfect motorcycle stunts as those frequently displayed by other bikers at Sherburn.

Patrick consequently, admits to reading articles on how to do ‘wheelies’ and ‘stoppies’ properly; *“I read articles in magazines on how easy it is to do it, but in real life it’s not that easy.”*

Participating in stunt riding, Patrick says that he commonly does wheelies coming up to junctions just to ‘show off,’ and particularly chases the edge around corners, in attempt to ‘get a knee down’. *“When I first got a knee down I did it all the time.”*

Patrick’s, concern with ability testing and skill improvement is further reflected in his recent participation in track days. Indeed, the first track day that Patrick participated in was an important event or turning point in Patrick’s motorcycling career. Patrick reportedly, really ‘pushing his ability limits,’ crashed at Cadwell breaking his ankle, where he had previously never had an accident on the road; *“I thought I’m going to show everybody how good I am, going as hard as I dare, as much as my mind would let me.”*

After the event, Patrick, says that he no longer pushes his performance limits on track days, but rather ‘saves’ his fast, performance riding for the roads; *“But ever since I’d come off that first track day, it was always in the back of my mind and it was the first time I had ever come off a big bike but it didn’t affect my road biking because that’s what I had done on the track, so I kept it to the track.”*

Therefore, it appears that Patrick, by rationalising his accident, ‘keeping it to the track’, is more able to manage his anxieties when participating in fast competitive group riding on the roads, where he says that he rides ‘100%’ to keep up with his

friends. This is similar to what Brannigan et al (1983) found that hang-gliders rationalise their activity as a means of managing their tension with the sport. Or as professional racers rationalise their activity by working out the cause of an accident so that it doesn't take away their confidence. However, although Patrick strives to rationalize his track day crash so that it doesn't affect his road riding, he admits later in his account, that ever since the accident, the crash has always been on the back of his mind; *"It's too dangerous on the roads really, you just got to think you could lose your life or your licence. You think about it all the time. You go a bit stupid then you go steady then faster then slow, its one of those things that happens on the bikes, it's freedom, you forget everything."*

Overall, Patrick, who is particularly enthusiastic about stunt and performance motorcycling appears to aspire to his local community standards associated with sports motorcycling and fast riding experiences. However, although performing stunts, group riding, as well as participating in track days are part of Patrick's motorcycling repertoire, nevertheless his ongoing participation in motorcycling involves reflexive thoughts about safety, particularly influenced by his track day accident.

9.4 Arthur's Profile

I first met Arthur, aged thirty-two, at Sherburn. He was sitting on the bench with another motorcyclist. Both men were wearing race replica leathers and I noticed that on the bench next to Arthur there was a helmet with a bright green mohawk stuck on

to it. Much of the conversation involved banter between the two men and sometimes comments were made about female passers by.

At one point during the conversation, Arthur mentioned that he had recently had a motorcycling accident and pulled aside his shirt to show me his scar. He told me that he had incurred the scar a result of breaking his collar bone; *"But I was only out of biking for five weeks while they fixed my bike." (he said laughing).*

With regards to Arthur's first introduction to motorcycling, Arthur claims he knew he wanted a motorcycle after seeing a motorcyclist pull a wheelie in the park as a child; *"My mum took me to the park and I saw this guy going past doing a wheelie so I said, 'mummy, I'm going to be a big boy with a big bike" and my mum said, (his voice went stern), "you'll never have one of them."*

As a pivotal moment or turning-point for Arthur, seeing a motorcyclist perform a wheelie was an impetus for his biking. After seeing the incident, Arthur wanted to get a scrambler (off road motorcycle), but his parents would not allow it. So it was not until Arthur was old enough to 'make his own mind up' that he was able to get a road bike.

Arthur, who is single with no children, currently owns a Suzuki TL1000, which he bought eight months ago. He previously had a Honda Thunder Cat 600, but traded it in for the 'TL' because he had seen the bike advertised in the MCN. Alongside road biking, Arthur also races minimoto's which he frequently does wheelies and stunt on;

*"Stunt wise we do all sorts of stuff, we get knee sliders and put steel spikes in them and then pour petrol along the ground and then light it up in flames. I'd say it's mild jack *** stuff, but it's as much fun as street biking, but you can injure yourself if you come off, but not the same because they are so small."*

However, although Arthur road bikes and admits to having done speeds of 170 mph on his motorcycle and performs various stunts on his minimoto, he says that he does not 'do' track days; *"… what puts me off is you tend to go a bit faster because there are no road hazards to look out for. Plus my friend crashed his bike on a track day and it cost him a lot to fix his bike."*

Although Arthur initially seemed indifferent when discussing his broken collarbone in front of his friend at Sherburn, it was actually this incident which Arthur said has most affected his motorcycling career. Arthur was out riding alone when the accident happened and was riding sixty miles per hour when he slid on harvesting debris; *"I skidded on debris from harvesting; my wheels went from under me. I was doing 60 at the time, and I went right in between two steel posts of a large sign, my feet only brushed the sign. Even though it's only a milli-second I remember thinking if I hit that sign, that's it. I broke my collarbone from the weight of landing."*

Even five years on from breaking his collarbone, Arthur explains that he is currently reminded of the accident whilst out riding, *"(Since) I broke my collar bone, though, when I make a right hand corner, very briefly it'll flash through your mind." Arthur*

"Has it influenced your biking then?" Researcher

"It just knocked my confidence a bit, the first couple years after it happened. It only happens now and again now, only on corners that are very similar. But that was five years ago." Arthur

As the accident happened when Arthur was riding alone, in order to cope with the anxiety from the incident, Arthur says that he no longer goes out by himself, but rather restricts his motorcycling to group riding; *"… I never go out on my own, maybe it's a ritual type thing. The one time I went out for a ride on my own I broke my collar bone. To me it would be like tempting fate to go out on my own now."*

As a 'risk reduction strategy', Arthur appears to restrict his riding to group riding, attempting to escape the threat of an accident by avoiding the kind of situation where he was previously injured, which was riding alone. This strategy is further supported by the fact that Arthur has reportedly not had any near misses since limiting his motorcycling to group riding, which perhaps has strengthened this rationalisation;

"Have you ever had any other times where you thought, this is it" Researcher

"I can honestly say, touch wood, that was my only near miss. I do drive with caution." Arthur

However, what is paradoxical about Arthur's decision not to ride alone, is that Arthur admits to riding faster in groups than he would alone;

"Do you ever explore your limits on your own?" Researcher

"No, only in a group. My friend goes out on his own but not me." Arthur

In a rather compelling example of how local community expectations may impact riding style, Arthur admits that he rides 'differently' with different groups of friends and it is particularly with his 'Russian roulette, speed freaks' friends that he group rides competitively;

"Are you saying that you ride differently with different sets of friends then?" Researcher

*"Yes, definitely. One group is the Russian roulette, speed freaks group, that don't give a **** about safety. I also think you ride differently depending on what background you have, like if you've got a wife and kids at home. It also depends on personalities, if you're a fruitcake, or a wheelie freak." Arthur*

Interestingly, although Arthur rides with the 'speed freaks' group, he maintains that he is able to manage the potential hazards involved and it is rather his friends who are at risk having a 'wheelie freak personality types'; *"Some of my friends that I go out with go over the line on blind corners and all sorts, but they'll just end up killing themselves. I'm sure they'll ring me one day and say they're dead. Bikers like that give the rest of us a bad name. I mean, I've done silly things like fast overtaking."*

Arthur then, appears to position himself as a safe rider versus the 'other' motorcyclists, such as the 'speed freaks' group are more at risk of danger.

"Do you think your friends that do that feel out of control?" Researcher

*"Yes, some have they're ****s out 24-7." Arthur*

"What about when you go 170 mph?" Researcher

"Well, in a straight line you minimalize your risk of accident." Arthur

Furthermore, Arthur, defends his participation in fast, competitive motorcycling against more broader, social norms such as those portrayed by the police whom Arthur says are criminalising motorcyclists by 'cracking down' on speed; *"It's with the bike fatalities on the increase, the police are cracking down. Do you remember hearing about the guys who got imprisoned for doing 158? Well, the police did that just to set an example, but this guy broke into my car recently and all he'll get is a slap on the wrist, I mean, who's the criminal here. It wasn't a dangerous speed to others, if they would have crashed, they would have only killed themselves."*

However, although Arthur enjoys fast, competitive riding with his 'Russian roulette, speed freak' friends, he recently participated in an advanced rider training course and therefore tries to ride more cautiously; *"I use to fly into corners, I look back now and there were many times I could have killed myself. But I get more out of it now,*

learning more skills, your always learning, even the best come off. You improve your skills every time you go out on a bike."

Since training then, Arthur believes he has improved his skills. However, Arthur, similar to Patrick, struggles with wanting to push the performance envelope versus riding sensibly and although he has recently done training, he still enjoys fast riding with the 'Russian roulette, speed freaks' group; "*We race and stuff and have a bit of fun… It's like most really, I don't want to ride mad but I get a buzz out of going fast, I just do it when I know I'm not at risk."*

Overall, Arthur is aware of the potential dangers but curbs these by avoiding threatening situations such as riding alone and doing track days which encourage you to go 'a bit faster'. Moreover, Arthur has recently participated in advanced rider training, which he says has raised his risk awareness. However, in a rather surprising contrast to this, Arthur says his future motorcycling goal is to try other kinds of motorcycling such as motocross but in particular, he says that he really wants to try 'speedway' even though he admits that it is a very dangerous form of motorcycling; *"Speedway is very dangerous though, you've got the 500cc bikes that can go 0-60 in three seconds and there are no gears and no brakes."*

9.5 Eddy's Profile

Eddy, aged forty-six, has been biking since he was six years old. Growing up, Eddy's parents owned motorcycles and Eddy's mother used to marshal when he was sponsored to compete in trials competitions. Eddy describes that during that time

period he was ‘winning everything that was going on’. Eddy also claims that he used to participate in motocross racing with the current British Super bike racer Chris Walker.

The only break in Eddy’s motorcycle career was when Eddy got married at twenty-eight and had two kids (who are now age eight and age six). After taking a few years out of motorcycling Eddy took it up again at thirty-one, in when he bought a Fireblade K reg, ‘the urban street one’. However, it wasn’t long before Eddy changed the Fireblade K reg for a ZXR because he says that his friends at that time were ‘raving on about them’.

I first met Eddy on a sunny Sunday in Matlock Bath. I was admiring his current motorcycle, a red Ducati 999 when Eddy arrived wearing one-piece race replica leathers, which he consequently says he enjoys the identity play which dressing in motorcycling clothing affords; *“The minute I put my leathers and my helmet on I change. People see me out with my leathers on and my hair all messy and they say… it can’t be you Eddy. I live two lives really, I’m a biker but I also dress smart with nice clothes, two totally different people… Being a biker and being a normal person.”*

Although Eddy is currently age forty-six, he says that since his recent separation from his wife he now rides ‘like he is 18 again;’

“Can you remember a particular time in your biking career?” Researcher

"Yeah when I was 15 doing trials and I won everything that was going and I was on TV. Also maybe when I was 17 and raced on the road anytime. One thing that stands out now is that I think I'm 18 again." Eddy

As a significant moment in Eddy's motorcycling career, his recent separation from his wife has lead to Eddy's renewed interest in fast, performance riding which he says has helped him to escape the pain of his separation; *"I'm lucky really, because I've got my bike. Sure, I was depressed and I've got my problems, but when I go out on my bike, I haven't go a care, until I come back and I think, yeah it has happened (the separation)… Biking is my first love, my wife was my second, but now I've lost her I've gone back to my first love. It's the way to get over it really, you have to do what you enjoy. When I've got a lot of pressure or if I've had a bad day I feel like blasting it out, it relaxes you. Once you're out you have no more stress of life."*

Since the separation, Eddy says that he now 'lives for today', and this has clearly impacted his riding style, as Eddy indicates that before his separation he didn't used to 'push it as much'; *"I did get out of it for two years, when I got married and had kids, but I've just got back into it again because I'm separated now. I didn't use to push it as much however, when I was married, but now I just have an empty house to go home to it doesn't matter. While I'm out riding now, I think it doesn't matter if I push it."*

Eddy's apparent indifference regarding his own wellbeing is further reflected in his description of a recent motorcycling accident. Eddy, having injured his leg in the crash, now reports that since the accident he can no longer move it effectively;

"Did it make a difference to your riding?" (his accident). Researcher

"No I just go back on, it made no difference. That's a biker; if you're a true biker it doesn't affect you. Since my wife has cleared off I've thought I'm indestructible." Eddy

Eddy appears to have developed a detached attitude towards not only his own motorcycling participation but also life in general, in which he explains that he has 'grown harder with time'. This could also be likened to what McAdams (1993) describes as a 'pessimistic narrative tone'. Exemplifying this point, Eddy even takes an unemotional stance regarding his best friend's motorcycling death; *"I've had several friends die, sure. My best mate died, he slammed his brakes on, came off and skidded and went under a Land Rover, and he caught fire, I heard him squealing but I couldn't do anything about it. It affected me for about 3-4 weeks, then like anything else, you're destroyed, but then you get back into it after time."*

Eddy's 'indestructible' riding style is further reinforced by his local community, as Eddy now commonly participates in competitive group riding and stunting displays with a group of motorcyclists he describes as 'wheelie boys';

"You should go to the MFN in Nottingham, that's a really popular venue," he replied.

"What does MFN stand for?" I asked him curiously.

*"Middle of ****ing nowhere," he said and they both laughed. "It's owned by that guy from the band Chomba Wamba… They all go there doing donuts and wheelies," he added, "and they all stand around talking about their bikes and kicking their tyres." Male respondents, track day, September 18.*

"I've been out with my mates, one of them is mad, he has an R1, and he does wheelies at 130 mph."

"You missed a gooden last Wednesday night… I was out with the wheelie boys. We did some wheelies at 120 mph along the Carsington reservoir."

"We were in Matlock Thursday night, with my friend, the mad one with an R1, and we wheelied down the straight, showing off."

Interestingly, although Eddy participates in fast, competitive group riding, claiming that it doesn't matter if he dies, as 'there is no one to go home to,' Eddy admittedly won't participate in motorcycle track days; *"I use to do track days when I was younger. My mates always ask me to go on 'em. There's one coming up at Mallory for only £25. I was in the pub and I ran into this lad I hadn't seen for ages, he's a lorry driver. But I don't do 'em no… I doesn't matter how good a rider you are; you always ride even harder on a track day. If you lose it there, then you've lost it, that's it."*

Track riding consequently, appears of marginal interest for Eddy as pushing it on the road with the 'wheelie boys' is more 'worth it' for him, as he enjoys the thrill of the

competitive riding and challenging more culturally dominant assumptions such as those put forward by the police. Overall Eddy, feels in control of his road riding, seeing himself a skilled rider and this is further supported by his negative attitude towards formal rider training; *"What good is that gonna do me? I been out with someone who is a top rider, a formal training instructor, and if they're top I give in."*

Eddy's separation and resultant association with the 'wheelie boys' has been a key turning point in Eddy's motorcycling career. Participating in fast, competitive group riding with his friends' offers an escape for Eddy, as he says that he is 'lucky to have his bike'. Without a family to go home to, it appears that Eddy seldom reflects on his own safety, but rather reportedly rides like 'he's eighteen again' describing himself as 'indestructible'; *"Yeah, I've had a few brushes with lorries. Out with the lads I just take it, if I see a bend, but when I went home to a family, I wouldn't have, but if I die now it doesn't matter."*

9.6 Dale's Profile

Dale, aged fifty, has recently been riding motorcycles for three years. However, Dale use to be a motorcyclist when he was sixteen, describing himself back then to be a 'rocker'. As 'rockers', Dale and his friends road BSA's and Triumphs and 'did up' old telegram bikes from auctions. Dale reportedly, never actually took his test in 'those days' as they 'just broke the law and road bikes illegally'; *"Despite the image, we never had any trouble when I was a rocker. I got chased now and again, but the police in those days were on push bikes so they were easy to get away from."*

It was when Dale met his wife at seventeen that he 'packed in' biking. Then, after not owning a motorcycle for over twenty years, a turning-point moment occurred when Dale saw a young lad with what he describes as a 'big gorgeous bike' parked outside of someone's house; *"…I got back into it because I saw this big gorgeous bike parked outside of this house one day. The sun was just setting and it looked lovely, it was all black. Then this little snotty kid came out from inside the house and got on this beautiful bike. I thought, 'you jammy little ***.' So I thought, that's it, if he can have one, I'm getting one. I'd never even thought about it before that. That happened on the Friday and I went out and bought a bike on the next Wednesday to do my CBT." phone*

The first bike that Dale bought after passing his test was a 125 Marauder which came with a free CBT. He then bought all the gear to go with it. However, looking back Dale questions his choice in bikes; *"That bike now I think about it, a Marauder." (he said laughing).*

Dale, as a newly 'born again biker', claims that the reason he bought a Marauder was because he was unsure of what bike to get. Much of Dale's account further demonstrates his continuous adjustments with his new found community identity, particularly positioning himself within the standards at the sports motorcycling café Sherburn, where he spends a great deal of time over the summer; "*Sherburn's the best place I've ever been. I've met better friends at Sherburn than friends I've had for years."*

It was at Sherburn, that I first met Dale. He was wearing one piece blue and yellow leathers and had shaved hair. He was very keen to show me his bike, a royal blue and bright yellow Suzuki GSX-R750, which he had recently had customized. Dale did not hesitate to point out that his bike was the same colours as his leathers. His helmet, which was also fastened to the bike, was also blue and yellow and it had eyeballs which read, *'catch me if you can'* painted on the back.

Dale's continual positioning to his new found communities standards is further demonstrated by his experimentation of a variety of 'suitable' bikes where he describes that he bought six bikes in just two years; *"I've had six bikes in two years," he added, "but I've had this one the longest."*

After Dale's Marauder, he then owned a Diversion 900cc with panniers for touring, then a Suzuki 600S, next was a BMW 1100S Sports, followed by a Triumph, and currently Dale owns a Suzuki GSX-R750. Further, Dale tried five different off road bikes while he was without his GSX-R750, having customisations done on it; *"… in the mean time, I had five bikes just to run about on. The first was a 125 trial bike, then I got another trial bike, but a bigger one, a 600cc. But I fell off it twice on grass because my legs were too short for it. Next I got another brand new trials bike, because people kept saying they were good, so I kept trying them thinking I hadn't got a good one… I finally got the bike back (Suzuki) but he (the mechanic) had it for five weeks over the summer."*

Dale's narrative clearly appears to be socially located, as he appropriates various viewpoints within his immediate motorcycling community, trying on pre-existing

definitions and categories in positioning himself within the group. Sherburn, predominantly a sports bike venue therefore, may have influenced Dale's final choice of bikes, his supersports Suzuki. Overall, Dale has spent £4,000 customising the Suzuki; adding adjustable pegs, a windshield, headlights and a customised paint job; *"I don't mind spending the money because people admire it. I didn't do the work, but they're all my ideas. It's nice for people to look at it and not just to ride it, you want people to look at it, you want that, a certain style of bike attracts a certain type of rider, sports bikes, off roading etc."*

Moreover, Dale also participates in the performance riding and stunting display which often takes place at the café, describing the thrill and excitement with the run-in's with the local police who often monitor and regulate the site; *"One time when we were group riding we all got pulled over for going 160, but when the cop checked, he hadn't clocked us properly so he couldn't nab us. The cop asked us to tell him 'off the record' how fast we were going, so we told him, about 160 mph. Well, the cop said that he thought we must have been doing something like that because he couldn't keep up with us in his car and he said he was going 120 mph. In the end, the cop wrote me a written warning that lasted for six months that if I was caught again I'd have to go to prison, so I just took it easy for six months until it ran out. There were stories going around here after that, Oh that Dale again got let off going 160," (and he grinned at this).*

"Another time," he continued, "when I was out biking on my own, I got chased by a cop but I managed to lose him. He was following me for a while, but when we came to this roundabout there were two other bikers there, so I got round them and lost him

on the roundabout because I turned off after the roundabout so he didn't get my license plate."

"This guy I know got pulled once for having a small licence plate, so he put this 3 foot wide and 18 inch long one on his bike and when he pulled up at Sherburn with it on, everyone said, well that's tellin the coppers to stick it. Mind you it was hard for him to ride with it on flapping all over the place."

Interestingly, although Dale positions the police as the 'other' in a variety of stories, there is one account in which Dale's friend got in an accident and he recalls that the police were 'absolutely brilliant'; *"The worst situation I've been in as a biker actually was when my female friend who had a brand new SV650 came off near Whitby. (This story was unprompted). Her bike went under a transit van and her head was wedged between the axle and the van and her helmet was half off. She was screaming get me out, get me out and we could see the bone of her leg stuck under the number plate. She went unconscious then. The police came and the air ambulance, I've got to say the police that came were absolutely brilliant. After it happened I couldn't get on my bike for a good half an hour because I was shaking that much. The police came to talk to me and pulled my bike aside for me. They asked if I was all right and told me to pull myself together, he really relaxed me… It just shows that at times they are human."*

Dale recalls that the accident happened when he was riding out with his two female friends on 'practice runs so they get used to their new bikes.' *"What happened was she thought a tractor was coming onto the road but it wasn't it was an illusion and*

the bike threw her off. Lots of accidents involve tractors because you just don't expect them, but that's where they are in the country, you just don't think there will be any."

Dale said that he initially felt responsible because if he had been in the front of the group the accident could have been avoided. Consequently, Dale says that when he now goes group riding, all of the motorcyclists ride convoy to prevent competition; *"If you overtake we say, go away, you can't come with us anymore."*

Perhaps the fact that Dale was out of motorcycling for twenty years has made him more susceptible to peer pressure from other riders. Further evidence for this, comes from Dale's measuring himself up to his friends' standards for doing track days, as though track day participation was a high level of achievement; *"She's done more than me on her bike though; she's done a track day."*

Dale is also very candid throughout his account of his endeavour to maintain a 'tough' image, within the motorcycling community, or as Harry (1995) describes 'validating ones manhood'. Perhaps Dale's frankness however, is due to his comfort in discussing such matter with a female researcher, as he openly admits to embarrassing himself within the motorcycling community on a number of occasions. For example, he describes in one incident, when his 'skinnies' weren't warmed up properly, that his bike took off spinning in the car park at Sherburn in front of all the onlookers; *"See these mushrooms," he continued, "these are extra long ones. People tease me about them. Sometimes I put my feet on them on long distances. Actually, when I first got this bike, I got these skinnies on them; do you know what those are? They're race*

tyres. Well, they weren't warmed up properly and I took off here in the parking lot (and he pointed to a spot right outside of the café), and bike took off and it was spinning in the car park. The only thing that happened to it though was this one mushroom got worn down (and he pointed to the mushroom that got damaged), so it protected the fairing."

In addition, in another story, Dale describes feeling embarrassed at Sherburn when he couldn't kick start one of his trial bikes and an older, more seasoned rider had to show him how to do it; *"I always get embarrassed starting my bike whenever I get a new one, I get nervous."*

Overall, Dale, a 'born again' biker appropriates himself within his immediate communities' standards but also within wider societal constructions. This is reflected in both his choice of motorcycles but also in his participation of fast, performance riding and finding pleasure in run-ins with the police. However, since his friend's accident, Dale is no longer interested in participating in biking as a competitive group sport but surprisingly is still interested in motorcycle track days as these appear to be the definitive activity for 'seasoned riders' within his local group.

9.7 Fred's Profile

Fred, aged forty-six, is an experienced rider. Fried has been riding motorcycles ever since he was thirteen years old, when he use to participate in off-road biking with friends on disused railway tracks. Fred claim's that he was 'converted' (to motorcycling) after his first ride' and has always ridden a motorcycle since. Fred also

used to ride horses when he was young because his mother owned them. Fred is now married with two children, and has recently bought his fifteen-year-old daughter two ponies.

I first met Fred at the Club 66 races at Elvington Airfield. He was wearing worn looking race replica leathers and had a racing identification tag on around his neck. He appeared relaxed and cheery and was standing next to his current motorcycle, a Suzuki GSX-R1000. Fred owns his own subcontractor civil engineering business leaving him with a sufficient amount of disposable income for his own and his family's leisure activities. Somewhat different to others' profiles, Fred has had a variety of accidents which have influenced his riding. However, perhaps Fred's major turning point in his motorcycling career was his first motorcycle accident which happened on the roads when he was just nineteen; *"I used to go around this corner where I could put my bike on its side and catch the exhaust, well one time I came off hands first. PC plod drove up and my hands had the skin off, on both hands."*

Proceeding from this accident, Fred, decided to give up road riding and tried racing instead; *"It started when I fell off on the road so I thought I'd try racing instead and I had always watched racing. I thought I'll put this to the track (his skills). I used to race in the National Championships 280 and 500 GP. I raced a GXR750 but that's when they were real circuits."*

For Fred then, taking up racing appeared to act as a risk reduction strategy, which enabled him to continue biking but within the confines of the racetrack, which he considered a 'safer' riding environment to the road at the time. However, Fred only

raced for eight years, quitting when he was just twenty-seven, after having crashed on three separate occasions; *"When I was racing in the R6 cup, which consists of Britain's top 15-20 riders, I was on a LC350 and fell off on TV. After that every little thing knocked my confidence, and then my sponsorship fell through so that was it."*

After dropping out of club racing, Fred didn't want to give up motorcycling altogether so he decided to start road riding again. It wasn't until just recently that Fred was actually reintroduced to fast, competitive riding after doing a track day with one of his employees, Sam, who I also met with him at Elvington; *"The thing is with track days you can actually use your bike for what it's designed for."*

Continuing on from the track day, Sam convinced Fred to participate in club racing again; *"After the track day, Sam got into racing, so he was my motivation really."* However, it was also the loss of his father within the same time period which further prompted Fred's re-introduction into racing; *"Plus I lost my father this year and I thought, ******, life's too short, so I thought I'd have a go."*

Fred won three club races altogether, two at Carnaby and one at Elvington and ended up fourth in the Championship overall; *"It really gave me a buzz winning, being double the age of some of these lads; I thought I can still mix it with 'em."*

Although Fred did well in club racing he has decided not to race next season, but instead plans to continue group riding with Sam on Wednesday nights; *"We're lucky actually," he eagerly replied, "because where we live you can go fast, in some places you get put in jail, but we go 150 all the time on small roads."*

Fred also says that he's not interested in any other type of motorcycling such as touring or off roading, as he reports, that he's 'a road racer at heart'; *"The farthest I go is 120 miles, I don't like touring, I like to ring its neck… If the roads are clear and there are no corners I go about 85% of my abilities."*

However, although Fred and Sam like to 'ring their bikes necks' they still believe that they are riding within their limits. As Fred reports, a good day out is going 'as fast as you can safely.' *"A good day is not too much traffic, to go about 120 miles and go as fast as you can safely…I avoid places that attract lots of bikers because it attracts the police and we all have noisy exhausts, false number plates and dark visors."*

However, on reflection Fred admits that if he had to stop suddenly it probably wouldn't be possible; *"We go about 180 on the roads, the element of traffic doesn't worry me but I do think about deer, I feel I can anticipate it or read what to do, like which cars are going to pull out. Like I'm coming up to a cross road, I'm watching the wheels of a car hoping they're not going to pull out, but to be honest, if they did drive out I wouldn't be able to stop."*

Further, due to participating in fast, performance riding as a club racer, this may explain why Fred feels confident to ride with Sam at such high speeds. For example, Fred justifies his riding style, positioning it within a normative framework while the police, the 'other' is at fault for criminalising the activity; *"If you get caught going 150 you're a criminal, they've got it all wrong, what's the problem on empty dual carriage ways, they try to make an example of bikers, what about others like drug addicts or burglers, that's who they should be targeting."*

Overall Fred, an experienced motorcyclist, has been motorcycling since he was just thirteen years old. Although Fred has intermittently participated in racing throughout his career, he seems to have always considered himself, a 'racer at heart.' Hence, although Fred will not be participating in club racing next season, he is still committed to road riding as a fast, competitive activity with his friend Sam who consequently shares the same interests.

9.8 Harry's Profile

I first met Harry with his friend Doug in a local bike shop. Both men were wearing race replica leathers and looking in the gear section. It was during this initial conversation that Harry mentioned that his riding style had recently changed since meeting Doug. In a later phone interview I asked Harry about this;

"I remember when I met you, you said that your riding style had changed when you met Doug, what did you mean?" Researcher

"Oh, I've gone from a complete idiot, bending the needle on the rev to the red line to going nice and steady… My wife still doesn't believe me because she's been on the back when I've been doing daft speeds. It's about having a good laugh now and nice scenery." Harry

Harry met Doug through work. Doug, who is part of a larger group of touring motorcyclists, introduced Harry to the group and since riding with them, Harry says he now rides 'much steadier;' *"It's good though because you know you're not going*

to get out there and push it so much that you take bends at 140 mph, thinking, am I going to make this."

Touring with Doug and his friends has therefore, significantly impacted Harry's riding style as he recounts his first experience riding with the group;

"Can you think of a perfect ride?" Researcher

"Yes, the one in Wales. It was the first weekend I went out with the guys; I was like 'wow.' It was the first time I went from daft riding to sensible riding. I'll always remember that… I think I was in shock really. I was just getting to grips with going steady. When we first set off I was riding like an idiot, but then I couldn't go anywhere so I just had a whole change. Also, I know I'm going to come back in one piece." Harry

Harry, now age forty, is married but has no children. He first got into motorcycling when he was a teenager when he used to ride off-road bikes with his friends in fields. It wasn't until Harry turned sixteen that his dad took him to get his first road bike, a Yamaha 50. His brother, also a motorcyclist owns an 1150 Roadster, which Harry likes but says that he is not 'old enough yet' to become a BMW rider. "*BMW's are for old men, but since my brother's got one, a Roadster, I've been looking at them more. I do like them, but my friends would take the mickey something rotten if I got one."*

Although Harry, does not see himself owning a BMW, he is selling his current sports

bike, a Yamaha YZF 750 (with a full racing system exhaust), to get a Fazer 1000 sports tourer, the same motorcycle that Doug owns;

"Doesn't Doug have a Fazer?" Researcher

"Yeah. But because I have a 750 pure sports bike right now, going to a 600 sit up and beg wouldn't be right, so I've decided to get the Fazer 1000." Harry

Harry then, re-positioning himself within his current riding group's standards, says the Fazer will be better for touring as the 'Yamaha 750 is knackering his back.' However, there appears to be a tension, between Harry's adoption of his current touring group's riding style versus his liking for fast, performance riding; *"I used to ride mad, fully concentrating all the time, but where's the fun in that, you don't see anything. It's done me good meeting Doug. Sometimes though, if I'm on my own, I do go daft speeds."*

Harry therefore, sometimes struggles to stay within his new group's normative standards and is sometimes tempted to 'go daft speeds', of which he says Doug calls him a 'cowboy' for wanting to 'have the odd blast'. *"Before, I used to push it all the time, but if you think about it, it's dangerous and there aren't really many roads that you can do high speeds on, I was even doing it on small roads. I do it now sometimes… I told Doug when were last out, I might just be blasting off a few times."*

Harry's touring group, concerned with slower speeds and touring therefore, avoids fast, competitive riding which also includes motorcycle track days. Harry also

subscribes to this; however, although Harry does not actually participate in track days he sometimes takes time off work to experience them as a spectator; *"I'm not interested in track days really, but I love to go and watch them. Sometimes I take a day off work and just go and watch them at Oulton."*

Again Harry's account further reinforces the reflexive nature of motorcycle participation. As a turning point in Harry's motorcycling career, his first experience touring was a significant moment for Harry as it particularly impacted his riding outlook, which he describes as the first time that he went from 'daft' to 'sensible riding.' Therefore, although Harry's previous involvement in motorcycling was primarily based upon fast, performance riding, since meeting Doug and participating in touring, Harry currently aims to ride within his immediate touring group's standards, as even his new liking for touring motorcycles demonstrates this. Harry's introduction to Doug has therefore, opened up a 'whole new world' to him, realizing that he can now actually 'get home in one piece'.

9.9 James' Profile

I met James at a bike show where he was manning a stand advertising advanced rider training. James, age fifty-two, currently an advanced riding instructor, first got into motorcycling as a teenager when he used to own an off-road motorcycle, a Triumph Tiger Cub 200cc. When James turned seventeen years however, he got a car because he says that 'girls sat better in cars'. It wasn't until he was aged twenty though, that he got back into off-road motorcycling when he went into the army. Then, at the age of thirty-two, James past his road test and bought a Yamaha XJ900. It was also during

this time period that two of his friends died motorcycling and James decided to quit biking altogether, which was further reinforced by the fact that James had recently got married and had children.

After dropping out of biking after his friends' deaths for a few years, James was prompted to take up motorcycling again after seeing other motorcyclists out on the roads in the summer. However, in order to manage his anxieties over the safety of the activity due to his friends' deaths, James decided to participate in advanced rider training, which he claims has enabled him to ride safer and anticipate potential dangers and hazards; *"Most bikers claim that cars are to blame, but most of it is bad riding. Doing advanced car driving has really helped and even more doing advanced riding, then you're more able to anticipate things."*

Becoming a trained rider has consequently enabled James to continue biking despite of his underlying doubts over its safety; *"Yes once, I almost hit a car head on, after I pulled over and was physically sick. But that was before I took advanced rider training; I would be able to avoid that accident if it happened now."*

Accidents which occurred before training are seemingly rationalised by James, hence present risks are now seen as 'avoidable', attributing accidents to rider error, something which, with good training can be avoided. As a turning point in James' motorcycling career, his friends' deaths have been an impetus for James' participation in advanced rider training. This has resulted in James' current adoption of a safe and responsible riding style which is further demonstrated by his comparison between riders that treat biking 'as a sport' versus those who use it 'sensibly for transport'.

"That's the great confusion as people see it as a sport, but the emphasis should be on transport on public roads not sport and performance, all you have to do is read Bike magazine and it's all about performance and sports biking."

James positions himself as one who 'takes biking seriously', treating motorcycling as a mode of transport rather than a sport, 'just to get a buzz'. Interestingly, James' bi-polar view of motorcycling has physically manifested itself in his current ownership of two different style bikes 'the Pan which is good for carrying shopping' and the Fazer, which is 'just for fun'.

"Which bike do you like best?" Researcher

"Well, they've both got different functions. I can balance better on the Pan (Pan European) and it's good for carrying shopping. The Fazer is just for fun, the thing is a lot of people just have them for a ride out in a sunny afternoon, they treat them (bikes) as a sport, even mentally they are not in their right mind. You see these guys out, on a Sunday; it's just a sport to them. I get a buzz as well, but I don't treat it as a sport first and foremost. It's a balance in your mind, you have to balance it." James

However, although James is a strong advocate of advanced rider training, similar to both Patrick and Howard, James, also appears to struggle with wanting to be 'sensible' versus 'having fun.' *"It's the danger element that gives you a high out of it and you can't get that to the same degree if you're not pushing the parameters too far. For me now though, if my heart is beating too much it's not been a good ride. If you go on a bend too fast or you misjudge it you get anxious. You get a thrill though if*

you take a corner fast and really well, you've got to be careful of adrenaline."

Predominantly, though, James aims to put safety first, arguing that doing things sensibly and safely is a priority; *"The competitiveness for us (James and his friends) is about doing things quick but safe. Doing something stupid isn't anything to brag about. It's all about safety first and then speed. The emphasis is on safety first. Speed isn't the issue for us, it's about the positioning on the road, 'was I riding to the best standard?' We don't say 'oh did I squeeze through there well.' The competitiveness is, 'have I made the best progress?' We're very critical of each other; we're looking to improve standards all the time. People think we're old and staid but we enjoy speed as well. We like to go fast, but safe fast."*

For James and his immediate friends then, motorcycling is about skill acquisition and improving riding standards with a focus on going fast but safe as he describes, 'doing something stupid isn't anything to brag about. Or 'we don't say, oh did I squeeze through there well?' In addition, James says that for the purpose of improving skill he would also participate in a track day;

"Are there any times you really push yourself?" Researcher

*"Yes, I like to see how far I can go. You need to know your limits to drive safely, like on a bend or a roundabout, it helps you to ride within your abilities, so in order to do that you need to explore yourself and the bike. That's the thing that's brilliant about track days, you find out what you can do and what the bike can do. If you go out with good bikers you can learn from them. If you fall off it ****** hurts so you should*

push yourself, but build up to it sensibly, for example to learn the line to take." James

As a significant moment in James motorcycling career, the death of his two friends has contributed to James' participation in advanced rider training and an adoption of a safe, careful riding style. Measuring himself up to the IAM standards has therefore enabled James to manage his anxieties over participation, attributing accidents to 'rider error'. Although training has contributed to James safety conscious riding style, which is further reinforced by the fact that James has not had any accidents since participation in IAM, James, like Patrick and Harry, still battles with the lure of fast riding and 'adrenaline'. Indeed skill advancement is highly valued by James and his friends and for this reason motorcycle track days appeal to James. Nevertheless, James holds that safety comes before speed and therefore maintains that skill improvement should be done sensibly, by 'building up to it slowly'.

9.10 Clara's Profile

Clara, age thirty-three, first got in to motorcycling four years ago because her friend signed her up for a CBT (motorcycle riding test). However, outside biking, Clara says she has always been 'up for trying anything risky'. Her interest in risky sports first started in school where she tried abseiling *"I've got no fear of anything. I've done just about every dangerous sport you can think of, climbing, cliff jumping and parachuting."*

I first met Clara in a gear shop where she was working as a sales assistant. Clara, who is single with no children used to be in the police force. Clara has now left the police

though, because she says the job had become ‘too administrative’, and is seeking employment in the motorcycling industry which she says is her ‘ideal job’.

Clara currently owns a Kawasaki ZXR400 motorcycle. However, Clara bought the ZXR400 as a replacement for her previous bike a CBR600, which she sold in a hurry because she needed the money ‘right away’. Clara has also participated in off roading, having trained ‘with the lads’ in the police force and has tried supermoto at a variety of motorcycle shows and events.

As a significant turning point in Clara’s motorcycling career, Clara says that she now rides ‘much safer’ since having met a new riding friend, Janet. Previous to meeting Janet, Clara claims that she rarely used to think about her safety but would rather constantly ride dangerously, always ‘cutting the line’.

“I use to cut the line. Early on I use to go as fast as I could in a straight line.” Clara

“Did you ever have any close calls riding that way?” Researcher

“Yes, all the time. I knew I wasn’t in control of the bike and people said that followed me, you’ll come off riding that way. The thing is, I use to follow my boyfriend and always followed his line, until I followed him into a ditch and he wrote his bike off.” Clara

Meeting Janet has, therefore, clearly impacted Clara’s motorcycling. Janet, whom Clara respects as a more experienced rider, introduced Clara to advanced rider

training. Clara, has therefore not only adopted Janet's safety conscious outlook but also that of the police riding system, which she says is similar to what the IAM use.

"Are you saying, who you ride with influences your biking?" Researcher

"Yes, it definitely influences your riding. I ride with my friend Janet now, I like her riding style, the IAM style." Clara

Leading up to Clara meeting Janet and subsequent participation in advanced rider training, Clara was involved in a group riding accident in which one of her friends got badly injured following behind her. Clara, feeling responsible for her friend, says she no longer rides competitively in groups anymore. Consequently, if Clara does push the performance parameters now, she says it is only to challenge herself; *"That's what it's about for me, to challenge myself, I'm not into competitive group riding now."*

However, whist Clara often rides alone now, she also participates in road riding with Janet as Clara describes her as a 'better rider'; *"… if you go out in a group and some are inexperienced then you feel responsible for them. Like my friend's accident happened because she was following me. She said she wasn't but I don't know. I'll go out with Janet because I know if she's following me, she's better than me anyway."*

Following on from her group riding accident and meeting Janet, Clara no longer participants in fast competitive riding, but rather follows the more safety conscious riding standards of the IAM. Clara's trust in the police riding system has been further reinforced by the fact that Clara has not been involved in any motorcycling accidents

since having participated in advanced rider training. Clearly putting a great deal of trust in her more experienced friend Janet, Clara has embraced her friend's ideals and is even receptive to participating in motorcycle track days, which she says are 'OK' because Janet has 'done 'em'.

9.11 Toby's Profile

I met Toby at a track day with another participant Miles. Dressed accordingly both men were wearing race replica leathers and were watching the track day tutors racing during the lunch break. Interestingly, however, when I later spoke to Toby over the phone, he had reportedly sold his sports bike and had not ridden a motorcycle since that track day; *"I've been biking since I was twelve and I've always had a bike you see. But you can't get that kind of kick anymore on the road, so I wanted to end it on a high note."*

Toby, age fifty-two, is married but has no children. Toby, first got into motorcycling when his dad bought him a field bike when he was just twelve. However, it wasn't until Toby was thirty years old that he actually took his road test and bought a second-hand Kawasaki 600. Up until Toby's recent disassociation with the sport, Toby participated in a variety of track days on his latest bike, a Honda Fireblade as he says 'sports bikes are potentially wasted on the roads'. *"You don't buy them to do 30 mph."*

In total, Toby has done more than half a dozen track days including a track day school. Toby particularly enjoys track days because of the performance and ability

testing involved; *"You just don't get that buzz on the road. It's the cornering and the thrill of going into a corner and doing it quick."*

Throughout his motorcycling career, Toby has had little resistance to his involvement with motorcycling. First, his father bought him his initial off-road bike and then his wife encouraged him to get a sports bike. Toby's current decision to give up biking consequently came from his own impetus, which was brought about by a recent 'near miss'. The near miss appears to have significantly impacted Toby's riding, as following on from the incident; Toby's apprehension is prevalent; *"Last year I did a funny thing. Like I said before, when I go 30, I go 30 but someone passed me and like a red rag to a bull I went on chance and I overtook him on a bend going 130 mph and there was water running across the road so I went across the road and if something had been coming then that would have been it. I was really lucky, that really scared me. It's always on the back of my mind. You get sucked in sometimes, the bike has the potential to go fast, so I guess I can't trust myself anymore."*

As previously explored, since motorcycle participation depends upon the ability to rationalize anxieties associated with the sport, if one cannot rationalize a bad experience for example, then this may explain why some participants drop out and disassociate with their activity. This is similar to ex-GP racer, Wayne Gardener who

after having a particularly bad racing accident, quit motorcycle racing because the crash took away his confidence. It appears therefore, that since Toby's near miss he struggles with rationalizing the risks involved in motorcycling, as he reports the accident is 'on his mind a lot'; *"I wouldn't like to say it influenced me, but it's been*

on my mind a lot. Perhaps my subconscious is telling me to give it in, it's made me think… I think you just get sucked in."

Reinforcing the reflective nature of motorcycle participation however, amazingly at the end of the interview although Toby had previously sold his motorcycle, he reviews his current position on giving it up;

"… thank you Toby so much for your time." Researcher

"Yes, thank you, you've made me rethink things now about my biking. We'll see." Toby

Overall, for Toby, motorcycling is about fast performance riding, particularly on track days as the roads can no longer offer the same 'kick'. However, his love for fast riding experiences is overshadowed by his reflexive thoughts about his safety, particularly influenced by his recent 'near miss'. Toby's recent disassociation with motorcycling, therefore, further exemplifies the manner by which motorcycling participants continually reflect upon their ongoing engagement with their activity.

9.12 Profiles Summary

Exploring motorcyclists' narrative accounts demonstrates how motorcyclists, rather than having an obdurate or invariable approach to their activity, continually reflect on their ongoing riding engagement. For example, reflexive thoughts on safety issues brought on by a recent near miss or accident may significantly influence participation.

However, it appears that safety conscious thoughts do not influence the entirety of a ride but intrude on the experience intermittently as the rider experiences a tension between the thrill and acceleration experienced in 'pushing their performance limits' versus reflecting on issues of competence and safety. This reflexive process is similar to Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) theory of a 'feedback loop', which is regulated by differential control versus fear signals of varying intensities that continually operates throughout the high-risk experience.

Similarly, previous studies have pointed out the importance of examining risk-taking behaviour as a process of acquisition versus personality type. For example, Celsi, Rose and Leigh (1993) and Schouten and McAlexander (1995) have indicated the manner by which high-risk performers gradually assume the ideology of their immediate subculture. (More recently, Haigh and Crowther 2007 have used this technique to explore the behaviour of young car driving enthusiasts.)

Hence, rather then having fixed personalities as more rational or traditional studies have indicated, motorcyclists are believed to adopt the understandings of their local communities and/or wider societal expectations, as participants are seen as socially informed. That is, riding involves a complex interplay between sensual or emotional apprehending but also a reflexive understanding of the discursive notions associated with the sport.

Chapter 10 Conclusions

10.1 A 'Material-Discursive-Intrapsychic Perspective'

Despite the dangers involved, an increasing number of individuals now consume high-risk activities. However, much previous risk research typically utilising standardised approaches, have overlooked the complexities involved in adventurous leisure pursuits. That is, the current study moves away from seeking 'rational' explanations for risk-taking behaviour, towards an approach that seeks to understand the various personal, social and material factors that might impact participant's experiences.

The rationale for seeking the diverse and plural characteristics of risk-taking comes from a belief that high-risk performers are now living in new times of an 'advanced industrialised society'. The mass commodification of leisure activities combined with new technological advancements has made contemporary high-risk consumption unique modern phenomena, where high-risk performers are now free to subjectively negotiate the meanings of their experiences from the multiplicity of choices available.

In taking a narrative perspective, the study has taken the contemporary high-risk performer to be an active and productive agent with unique riding experiences, but at the same time has sought to explore the social and material contexts of riders' lives. This is similar to that of Milnes (2003), who takes a position between feminism and social constructionism of a notion that whilst self, identity and experience are influenced by culture and language they are not fully determined by these factors.

Consequently, the study seeks to acknowledge the specific 'storied accounts' that individual riders give of their unique experiences but also to explore the kinds of local community understandings which respondents draw on in making sense of their motorcycling practice as well as those more socially encompassing constructions (prevalent in society writ large) which participants may either comply with or resist.

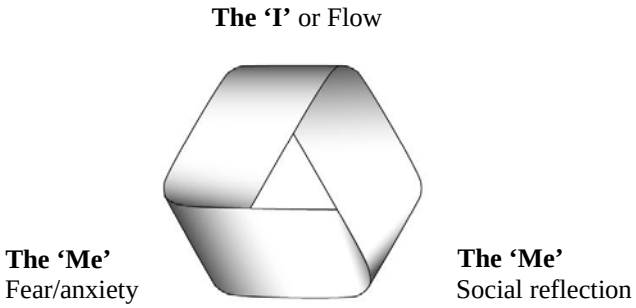
The researcher also adopts what Usher (1997) and more recently Ussher and Mooney-Somers (2000) describe as a 'material-discursive-intrapsychic perspective' which argues that the physical/intrapsychic aspects of individuals' experiences cannot be conceptualised outside of social constructions. That is, the high-risk experience is explored both at the level of the material body, such as through the physical act of motorcycling, through the associated emotive states, but also at the level of narrative or discourse (that the meanings which surround the experience are dependent on and constructed within the social and discursive context in which the person is situated).

Overall, it was found that motorcycling involves a complex interplay between sensual or emotional apprehending but also a reflexive understanding of the discursive notions associated with high-risk activities. That is the materiality of the body, its connections to thrill and to the performance of the activity are all intimately tied to the more discursive factors involved (Ussher 1997). By highlighting both the social and embodied aspects of the high-risk experience then, the thesis has aimed to present a comprehensive level of analysis, with a more meaningful reflection of the experiences of those who take up the high-risk activity as exemplified in Fig. 10.1.

Figure 10.1 Conscious Experience Mobius

(Elements continually operate during the course of a given ride.)

The 'I', which is the flow experience, is the continually emerging, spontaneous and impulsive part of the self that is heightened in the high-risk pursuit. Participants tend to 'push their performance limits' in flow feeling relaxed and in control.



The 'Me' is the reflective self. When reflection occurs, flow fractures causing participants to feel the tendency to hold back, for example, when participants feel fearful or anxious. However, participants may still push their ability limits if they feel socially pressured to do so, such as in competitive group riding. Therefore, socially informed reflections may either inhibit edgework or encourage further participation.

10.2 Addressing the Research Questions

Drawing upon narrative theory, the thesis has aimed to understand individual motorcyclists' riding experiences but also the more complex web of diverse meanings that riders ascribe to in explaining these experiences, including physical/intrapsychic aspects but also social and discursive factors. In achieving this, the answers to the following questions were sought (however due to the iterative nature of the research, rather than 'signposting' the findings in relation to each of the research questions the format will take on a general discussion as follows);

1. What physical/intrapsychic characteristics contribute to motorcycling participation? This objective aims to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the high-risk activity, to explore the relationship between the physical/intrapsychic and the discursive elements. For example, to explore thrill, pleasure, feelings of empowerment and/or anxiety which are arguably interrelated with the more social/discursive aspects of the experience.

2. To what extent do shared motorcycling community narratives impact the accounts that riders give of their experiences and how do these affect motorcyclists in negotiating their riding experiences? In addition, what is the role of the context in which motorcyclists commonly meet and interact as well as the role of the cultural mediators/ legitimisers, such as the specialist press and media? This objective recognises the social and material context which is likely to impact upon how riders make sense of their riding experiences.

3. How do motorcyclists manage their activity in face of conflicting dominant cultural constructions which may clash with their local community understandings? What risk reduction/coping strategies do participants use to rationalise their activity in order to prolong engagement with edgework? For example, blame attribution, fate and superstition. This objective in particular considers the positioning of accounts, where, it is argued that as actors in a moral universe, individuals must continually create morally defensible positions for themselves.

4. How do motorcyclists past experiences influence their current motorcycling practice? For example what key turning point moments or 'epiphanies' do riders identify in their accounts? Why do some participants reportedly change their motorcycling practice? Why do some engage in more 'risk-taking' behaviour while others drop out of motorcycling all together? Specifically, this objective explores the individual biography of the high-risk performer. How motorcyclists draw upon their unique past experiences in making sense of their current motorcycling practice but it also draws attention to the diversity of the riders' experiences.

10.3 Key Findings

10.3.1 Physical/'Intrapsychic' Characteristics

Key finding therefore, have identified a variety of key 'intrinsic factors' or what Usser (1997) describes as 'physical/intrapsychic characteristics,' and seemingly particularly important was the notion of 'flow'. As other high-risk commentators have mentioned, Flow is believed to involve total absorption, providing participants with not only thrill and excitement but also a sense of involvement that transcends mundane experience. Accordingly, several of the motorcyclists reported gaining a particular state from the experience that is not accessible in 'everyday life'. This state can therefore be likened to Lyng's (1990) argument of that the high-risk pursuit involves feelings of 'self actualisation'. That during the high-risk activity, the person's true self or the 'I', the continually emerging spontaneous, impulsive and unpredictable part of the self is heightened, where as the person's social, reflective self is momentarily silenced.

Several motorcycling participants have therefore described enjoying their activity because it offers heightened emotional states such as freedom and escape. However, it was found that there are a variety of other sensory characteristics which may also contribute to flow such as scents associated with previous rides or the sound of the engines rev, as such, these sensations appeared to vary between participants based on past riding experiences.

Moreover, according to Lyng (1990), the flow experience is said to foster a feeling of 'onenesses' with the essential objects involved. In support of this, motorcycling participants frequently described feeling both physically and psychologically bonded with their machines. However, the sense of oneness with their bikes which several participants described could also be attributed to the close proximity which contemporary motorcycling holds with professional racing, as riders Robert and Doug claimed that they actually ride faster after have attended professional race meets.

10.3.1.1 Illusion of Control

Importantly, as noted by several high-risk commentators, the limited stimulus field in a flow activity often results in participants feeling in potential control of the context for which they act, referred to as 'the illusion of control'. These phenomena also appeared to occur amongst motorcyclists, who, typical to the majority of riders interviewed, argued that they ride their quickest on familiar stretches of roads, feeling most confident. However, whether all participants are subject to the illusion of control regardless of experience level has been the subject of much debate.

Within motorcycling, it appears that it is not only the inexperienced riders who are subject to this illusion, but motorcycling participants of all experience levels appear to find increasing skill judgements difficult due to the unreachable ceilings involved. In addition, this perception may be further increased when within seemingly controlled environments, such as the motorcycle track day with clearly defined rules for action. This is similar to what Celsi et al (1993) found with sky-diving, that participants most often experience flow in situations with clearly established rules for action like games or rituals. Exemplifying this point within motorcycling, a common track day perception is that track days are safer than riding on the roads.

10.3.1.2 Skill Development

As high-risk activities continually provide participants with new challenges, the development of skills is therefore important for participation. Skill development allows the individual the opportunity to refine his or her abilities in a particular area, increasing control of a given aspect of the environment. Accordingly, it appears that skill and mastery are clear attractions for many motorcyclists, as participants have frequently reported that nothing replaces the self-satisfaction of negotiating a challenge or performing a job well done.

10.3.1.3 Edgework

Thus, setting goals and making progress draws many riders to the activity. As pointed out by Csikszentmihalyi (1975), skill achievement and mastery of the high-risk activity offers powerful ‘intrinsic’ rewards, such as the self-satisfaction of performing

a job well done. Indeed, it was found with many of the motorcycling participants that, rather than thrill seeking or gambling, what they seek is the chance to exercise skill in negotiating 'the edge'.

Thus, rather than working within what Lyng (1990), describes as 'feelings of anxiety and borderline chaos', it was found with the majority of motorcycling participants, that they are able to get close to the edge of their abilities in such situations because they are flowing, feeling relaxed and in control. In support of this, several participants reported that during flow, they don't feel as though they are 'pushing the performance envelope'. These findings are therefore more in line with Celsi et al's (1993) study of skydiving, where Celsi et al argue that high-risk performers prefer to leave to them what is a comfortable margin between their risk-taking behaviour and the edge.

10.3.1.4 Anxiety

Consequently, it appears that during a flow episode is when participants act uninhibited, likewise, when reflection occurs and flow fractures, participants appear to hold back. As Csikszentmihalyi (1975) points out, within the high-risk activity, control feelings are not always present and sometimes give way to anxiety. Hence, when there is a continuous interruption of flow this is characteristic of what several participants from a wide variety of backgrounds have described as a 'bad ride'. However, because anxiety is based upon the actors' perception of the situation, what actually brings on 'the bad ride' varies amongst participants. Overall though, during a bad ride participants have reported to be continually anxious, reflecting on the ride

and their performance and therefore unable to flow or ‘get in the groove.’ Indeed because participation in motorcycling depends upon perceived confidence, this may explain why some participants drop out and disassociate with the activity altogether.

10.3.1.5 Omnipotence

Moreover, according to Lyng (1990), the heightened experience of flow fosters a sense of ‘enormous power’ within individuals, what Lyng describes as ‘omnipotence’. Similarly, some participants described that during a flow episode they no longer worry about failure, feeling ‘all powerful’. However, it appears that feelings of what Lyng describes as ‘omnipotence’ may be linked to competition. That is, due to the increased levels of emotional intensity or adrenaline in competitive riding experiences, this may actually influence the illusion of control. For example, in the intense experience of the motorcycle track day several participants, particularly pushing their ability limits, have reported experiencing an extreme or heightened adrenaline rush, identified and labelled by track day participants as ‘seeing the red mist’. Although the term is used multifariously, it is mainly used to describe situations in which participants push their performance abilities on the track, induced by the adrenaline rush of perceived competition.

Seeing the ‘red mist’ therefore, appears to a be a heightened, or impassioned state seemingly induced by competition and similar to flow, participants push their performance abilities during such an episode as they no longer reflect on issues of safety. Acting in an impassioned, aggressive state, participants ‘after seeing the red mist’ commonly reported to working on the edge of their abilities.

10.3.2 Local Community Standards

Moreover, it was found that part of the enjoyment in developing riding skills appears not only to do with self satisfaction of performing a job well done, but it is also to do with social norms of what is considered as socially desirable or acceptable within motorcyclists' local communities (or what Salzer 1998 describes as 'community narratives'). However, the findings suggest that contemporary motorcyclists are not a homogeneous group, but rather participants vary in their approach to motorcycling engagement; some riders subscribe to the dominant community standards enforced in many aspects of the media and prefer to practice performance riding and stunting display where as other participants conversely opt for more careful and 'safe' riding standards. For those subscribing to the popular dominant sports motorcycling style, the pressure to perform various motorcycling feats and fast riding experiences is highly profound, as a number of riders have commonly described the community pressure to outperform others.

10.3.2.1 Motorcycling Enclaves

Moreover, it was found that community standards of fast, performance riding were enforced amongst the riders within their naturally occurring social groups such as at the popular sports motorcycling café Sherburn. For example, typical of a Sherburn patron is Patrick, who is particularly interested pulling 'wheelies', and reportedly, does them 'just to show off'. Indeed, other motorcycling participants encountered at Sherburn such at Dale and Austin were also found to appropriate technical calibre

through practise and discussion of important motorcycling milestones. Similarly Ducati owner Eddy, described a number of incidents in which he and his group of friends he calls the 'wheelie boys', perform competitive group riding and stunting displays at a similar sports motorcycling café, the MFN in Nottingham.

Moreover, the tendency for some motorcyclists to participate in fast, competitive riding particularly appears common within the highly competitive environment of the motorcycle track day. For instance, motorcyclists on track days were found to often ride beyond their limits because they believe that they should emulate professional racers. Also, due to track uncertainties, riders were found to take particular notice of the track day tutors, who often encourage overconfident riding by enforcing the standards of fast, competitive riding and sometimes race each other during lunch breaks, or do wheelies coming into the paddock. Even their enforcement that the 'track riding is safe' appears to have influenced participants' perception. Surprisingly though, although many of these riders have subscribed to this view, several participants have admitted to having experienced a variety of dangerous incidents themselves.

Moreover, the fluidity in edgework which appears to make skill judgements open and contestable may also contribute to participants' adoption of misinformed motorcycling practice at track days, as explained by participant Barry; track day participants often rely on other's skill judgements in 'negotiating the edge' before developing the skills necessary for participation.

10.3.2.2 Alternative Riding Standards

However, as previously mentioned not all riders subscribe to this dominant construction of sports and performance riding such as enforced commonly at Sherburn and motorcycle track days and commonly within the specialist motorcycle press. For example James, who is an advanced riding instructor, particularly enforces a more responsible riding style as he compares the differences between riders who treat biking 'as a sport' versus those who use it 'sensibly for transport'. For James and his immediate friends motorcycling is about skill acquisition and improving riding standards. Similarly, both Harry and Clara subscribe to much 'safer riding styles' participating in a touring riding style enforced within their local communities norms.

10.3.3 Dominant Sociocultural Constructions

Therefore, it was found that the need to conform to local community norms and expectations has a profound impact upon the riding experiences of motorcycling participants, as the need to compete within their local communities has been highlighted by a variety of motorcyclists. However, alongside local community standards of what constitutes 'appropriate' riding practice, wider, dominant sociocultural understandings also appear to impact upon riders' accounts of their behaviour (or what Salzer 1998 describes as 'dominant cultural narratives').

10.3.3.1 Gender 'Appropriate' Behaviour

For example, the pressure to participate in dangerous activities and 'remain brave' could also be attributed to previous theories which have linked high-risk activities to the performance of masculine identities. Lyng (1990) for example, identified this social pressure in skydiving, where skydivers are seen as being brave enough to participate in edgework, without being paralysed by fear were considered by other participants to possess, 'the right stuff'. Similarly, Elsrud (2001) and Holt and Thompson (2004) found masculine overtones to by highly related to the practice of high-risk sports. Indeed, the cultural notions of bravery and machismo were found to have important implications for motorcycling participation. For example, motorcycling participants have admitted to 'pushing the performance envelope' in group riding or at track days even when they feel scared. Moreover, a clear example of this machismo is rider Dale, who in his account was particularly candid of his endeavour to maintain a 'tough' image within his local motorcycling community of Sherburn, mentioning the embarrassment of 'getting it wrong' within the communities standards on a number of occasions.

10.3.3.2 Socially Transgressive Behaviour

Alongside wider, dominant social/cultural 'gender appropriate' standards shaping behaviour, it also appears that long standing cultural notions of 'wrongdoing' and 'offence' are still associated with motorcycling. As such, participating in exhibition of fast riding and stunting display, offers for some motorcycling participants 'marginal' high-risk identities. For example, Sherburn, having long been associated

with iconic motorcycling legends such as the ‘café racer’, offers for its current patrons an exciting collective inversion to society writ large. Participants, having shared knowledge of the rocker era, are therefore joined by their collective interest in motorcycling, being differentiated as ‘insiders’ from non-motorcycling ‘outsiders’. That is, a number of participants described a variety of playful activities with the local Sherburn police. Indeed other theorists such as Belk (1998) found in his study on contemporary mountain men, that historical and contemporary mass-mediated representations provide the raw materials for the fantasy enclaves construction; that a fascination with a heroic past pervades contemporary sites and is indeed utilised as part of the modern day consumption experience.

However, not all riders have found the transgressive nature of the activity an exciting, playful inversion to societies norms, other riders have opposed to being characterised by such constructions. For example, several riders such as Perry and Arthur have argued that motorcycling has moved on from the early ‘mods and rockers days’, and as described by Arthur; motorcycles are no longer a cheap mode of transport but are now rather ‘a rich man’s toy’.

10.3.4 Motorcycling as an Ongoing Reflexive Process as Demonstrated in Participants’ Life Story Narratives

Overall, it was found that motorcycling involves a complex interplay between sensual or emotional apprehending but also a reflexive understanding of the discursive notions associated with high-risk activities. It appears therefore that both so called

‘intrinsic factors’ as well as ‘extrinsic factors’ are present during the high-risk experience. That is, not only are participants affected by their emotions such as flow, anxiety or frustration, but also by the social norms which surround the activity such as the pressure for skill demonstration or the threat of competition. This contradicts Walle (1997) and Weber’s (2001), previous argument that the satisfaction which participants reportedly experience in high risk activities in measuring themselves up against their own ideal is more pleasurable than extrinsic factors, such as competition. Hence it is argued here, that ‘extrinsic’ factors cannot be divided out from ‘intrinsic’ ones.

Moreover, in underscoring this complexity, motorcycling participants’ biographies were explored. Specifically the biographies aimed to show a less deterministic view of the high risk performer, pointing out the importance of examining risk-taking behaviour as a process of acquisition. Specifically, the findings suggest that motorcyclists continually ‘reflect’ on their ongoing riding engagement (which relates to Gergen’s 1973 previously mentioned argument of ‘reflexivity’, which allows individuals to look into the past but also to ‘envision alternatives’). For example, reflexive thoughts on safety issues brought on by a recent near miss or accident may significantly influence participation. However, it appears that safety conscious thoughts do not influence the entirety of a ride but intrude on the experience intermittently as the rider experiences a tension between the thrill and acceleration experienced in ‘pushing their performance limits’ versus reflecting on issues of competence and safety. This reflexive process is similar to Csikszentmihalyi’s (1975) theory of a ‘feedback loop’, which is regulated by differential control versus fear

signals of varying intensities that continually operates throughout the high-risk experience.

Some participants, however, appear to think about safety more than others, such as riding instructor James or participant Clara, having participated in advanced rider training, prescribe to more careful and safe riding styles. Conversely, other riders such as Eddy, purposely push the performance parameters.

In addition, due to the reflexive ongoing nature of the activity, being able to rationalise the anxieties involved is important for motorcycling participation. Similarly, Brannigan et al (1983) and Celsi et al (1993) call this phenomena 'deviance neutralisation.' Motorcycling participants therefore, appear to rationalise their activity in a variety of ways. Patrick, for example, no longer pushes his performance abilities on track days since his recent accident but rather feels more confident to participate in fast competitive riding on the roads with his friends. Similarly Arthur, also participates in fast, competitive group riding, but since his accident will no longer ride his bike on his own. Further, James, rationalises his fears by having become a 'trained rider' and thereby attributes accidents to 'rider error', something which trained riders can avoid. Toby, however, due to a recent near miss, having lost confidence finds participation problematic.

Although past experiences contribute to motorcycling engagement, the past does not necessarily determine future participation, but is seen to enter the present situation with a new realisation and consideration. Local community expectations are therefore, fundamental to guiding motorcyclists' perspectives and riding style. For

example, Patrick, Eddy, Dale and Fred in positioning themselves within their local group's standards, participate in competitive group riding and stunting display. Harry on the other hand, has revised his riding style based on his current touring group's more responsible riding standards as does Clara and James focus on safety first, and then speed. Surprisingly, although Arthur says that he now has a more safety conscious outlook since participating in advanced riders training, this does not appear to have had a significant impact, he still enjoys competitive group riding with his 'Russian roulette, speed freak friends'.

10.3.5 Summary of Key Findings

Overall, unlike typical risk research which has utilised more standardised approaches, the current study found that motorcycling involves a complex interplay between sensual or emotional apprehending but also a reflexive understanding of the discursive notions associated with high-risk activities. That is, the materiality of the body, its connections to thrill and to the performance of the activity are all intimately tied to the more discursive factors involved (Ussher 1997). By highlighting both the social and embodied aspects of the high-risk experience then, the thesis has aimed to present a comprehensive level of analysis, with a more meaningful reflection of the experiences of those who take up the high-risk activity. In underscoring this complexity, motorcycling participants' biographies showed how differences amongst participants appear to be related to their past riding experiences as well as their local communities standards as well as by wider social/cultural locations.

However, perhaps of chief importance for road safety research, are the risk perceptions uncovered in the thesis. Significantly, it was found that the majority of riders involved in the study, regardless of their experience level, are subject to the illusion of control. In addition, this perception appeared to increase within seemingly controlled environments, such as at the motorcycle track day with clearly defined rules for action. Indeed, feelings of control were for many motorcyclists, of key importance. Hence, instead of thrill seeking or gambling, it appears that riders value the opportunity for the development of skill. Rather than working within what Lyng (1990), describes as 'feelings of anxiety and borderline chaos', more in line with Celsi et al's (1993) study of skydiving, the study found that motorcyclists are able to get close to the edge of their abilities in such situations because they are flowing, feeling relaxed and in control. Moreover, it was found that due to the increased levels of adrenaline in competitive riding experiences, this may actually heighten the illusion of control. For example, at motorcycle track days, several participants reported to working on the edge of their abilities, after seeing the 'red mist'.

These research findings are particularly significant therefore, with regards to appealing to motorcyclists' standpoints. That is, in approaching riders through advanced rider training programmes or through more effective communications, it is essential to understand their motivations. As it is suggested, riders appear to approach their activity with the intension of exercising skill and control rather than acting foolhardy, with an intentional desire to 'dice with danger' or 'flirt with the edge.'

10.4 Quality Issues, Limitations and Reflexivity

With regards to quality issues, questions of whether what has been produced here are 'truthful' interpretations of riders lives and experiences, are fraught ones. This is because some of the philosophical approaches informing qualitative research are explicitly anti-positivist or anti-realist. As a consequence, the established measures of 'validity,' 'generalisabiltiy' and 'reliability' for assessing the quality, rigour and wider potential of the research are seen as contrary to the qualitative endeavour (Denzin and Lincoln 1998).

Rather than relying upon standardisation of research then, Mason (2002) argues that qualitative researchers should think about the care they have taken in data gathering and interpretation. Hence, the researcher has aimed to be explicit and accountable with the research design and has sought to ensure the work is rigorous and of the highest quality.

Moreover, Seale (1999) argues that qualitative researchers should consider the quality of their methods in relation to their research questions and for the researcher to reflect on how well the tools produced the relevant data. However, Seale warns, this is not 'triangulation' as such (of using different methods to judge validity or accuracy of data), but rather the aim is to explore how different sources have shed light onto different aspects of the researched topic.

Thus, every attempt was made by the researcher to explore the key issues in a well-

rounded and multi-faceted way. The data gathered was multi-dimensional, as the study sought to explore several different approaches to the phenomena. Aiming to read the data from alternative interpretive perspectives, both similarities but also differences amongst participants' perspectives were compared.

In addition, according to Creswell (1998), one technique for enhancing/demonstrating quality of interpretation of data is to 'member check' the arguments; to present subjects with extracts of the analysis in order for them to judge or confirm the interpretation made. But as Skeggs (1994) argues, this can be problematic as a common response from research subjects to this practice is *'I can't understand a bloody word it says.'* p. 86. Moreover, Mason (2002) makes the point that going back to respondents can itself be problematic, as their interpretations will be judged in light of their recent ideas about what they meant to say in the interview. Hence, the practice taken in the current research was to clarify for understanding during the course of the interviews rather than approaching the riders a later date. For example, during the interviews respondents statements were readdressed and comments were rephrased, such as; *'so what your saying is…' or 'by that do you mean…'*

But for Spencer (2001), even member checking is not the whole solution to quality issues. For Spencer, taking responsibility for the data is the most appropriate approach, what he describes as 'strong reflexivity.' This means the researcher takes responsibility for the research, recognising complexity and difference rather than hiding beneath homogeneity and generalisations. In other words, to be open about limitations and to acknowledge the complexity of the researched subjects lives. Similarly, this is echoed by King (2006), who argues that qualitative researchers must

be transparent about the ways in which they have shaped the outcomes of the research.

Hence, adopting a narrative approach to interviewing, it is felt that this has enabled the researcher to gain a unique perspective into the experiences and lives of the riders involved in the study. This has lead to insights into the unique riding experiences of those studied and in some case their vulnerabilities. The research has also gained an understanding of how riders past experiences and their location within certain communities and cultures appear to have impacted in complex ways upon their accounts of their riding experiences.

However, it is not the researchers intention to suggest that what has been presented here is a definite final version of the riders' lives and experiences. But clearly what has been developed is related to my own analytical decisions and interpretation which has obvious research implications/limitations. It is acknowledged therefore, that a different researcher exploring different issues and concerns may produce a rather different picture from what has been presented here. Hence, the decision on what to focus on from the riders' lives has been guided by my own interest in demonstrating that motorcyclists are influenced by a wide range of factors and complexities, involving both physical/intrapsychic aspects but also social constructions. However, in aiming to show how riders are shaped by such factors, it is not the researchers intention to over-emphasise the powerlessness of the motorcycling community as 'self harming individuals'. Rather, I have hoped to show how an understanding of the reflexive nature of the activity could help the community in some way, by offering new insights for those delivering the experience. That is, in developing a deeper

understanding of riders and their experiences may ultimately assist in reducing road casualties by encouraging participants to focus on issues of competence, wisdom and safety rather than performance, excitement and speed. Moreover, by adopting a narrative perspective and particularly one which focuses on the 'positioning' of riders accounts, the thesis has sought to expand the use of narrative research within the field of Marketing and Consumer Behaviour, as such techniques are only just becoming more widely used and appreciated (see Haigh and Crowther 2005, 2007)

10.5 Re-Directing Motorcyclists' Aspirations

As already clarified then, the studies findings aim to go beyond a simple understanding of the consumption experiences of motorcyclists to bringing about better conditions for those studied or at least a greater public consciousness of existing conditions. Due to the manner by which participants engage with their activity in an ongoing reflexive manner, the opportunity exists for marketing campaigns/rider education schemes to function as a tool for changing motorcyclists' standpoints. Riders can be imparted with fresh meanings and re-directed with alternative aspirations for personal development and long term, sustainable motorcycling careers. Indeed, with a recent trend in motorcycle owners opting for machines with more upright riding positions, such as adventure/enduro motorcycles, a new breed of riders may now be attracted to taking part in advanced rider training and assessment schemes. In fact, the upsurge in the variety of motorcyclists participating in North Yorkshire's rider assessment scheme Anon. (2004), demonstrates the new diversity of motorcyclists now participating in advanced rider training.

Chapter 11: Further Studies into Motorcycling Edgework

11.1 Introduction

In taking an interpretivist view, it is argued that there is never a final, representation of what is meant or said by participants, but rather the study has set out to instantiate a cultural practice that happened in a particular time and place. As such, the cultural construction of motorcycling will continue to shift and emerge with conflicting cultural meanings. Therefore, a variety of useful supplementary research programmes are suggested in exploring further understandings of the engagement and consumption experiences of edgeworkers.

11.2 A Further Study into Motorcycling Edgework

Concerned with transformative consumer research (TCR), a further study into motorcycling edgework could explore the extent to which a more eclectic motorcycling market has influenced motorcyclists' riding behaviour. For example, to what media representations do participants now subscribe? Have participants adopted a more safety conscious and responsible riding style due to a more diversified market in motorcycle and clothing choice? How is advanced rider training currently perceived amongst the motorcycling community in general? Has the increased growth in the adventure sector of the motorcycling market influenced the practice and performance of motorcycling edgework?

11.3 A Gendered Performance

Additionally, with more women taking up motorcycling, the affect of a growing female population could be explored. For example, how does this affect both male and female participation? Will participants have less to prove in approaching the edge? Will a changing male to female ratio result in a more relaxed arena for the discussion of 'appropriate' riding techniques?

11.4 An Investigation of Other High-Risk Activities

An additional study could also be carried out into the kinds of behaviours or understandings which are enforced within enclaves other high-risk activities, similar to the manner by which sports motorcycling venues serve to perpetuate ideals associated with fast, performance motorcycling. For example, are other high-risk sites policed like Sherburn, offering participants the transgressive possibilities of engaging in risk-taking behaviour? Do other high-risk activities have a similar cultural heritage to which current constructions are added? Do particular enclaves sustain specific ideals such as the stunting performances which take place at motorcycle cafés versus the fast competitive riding encouraged at motorcycle track days? Additionally, do other high-risk sports have the equivalent media support in guiding risk-taking understandings, such as the role of the specialist motorcyclist press which often encourages a riding style similar to that of professional racers?

11.5 Exploring High-Risk Performers' Biographies

Alongside the exploration of high-risk enclaves, further future research could highlight the biographical accounts of participants of other risk-taking activities in taking a more respondent near or emic approach to understanding edgework. For example, what turning points influence other high-risk performers' experiences? What is the role of interpersonal influences or dominant community ideology on other high-risk behaviour? What kind of rationalisations do they engage in? Are certain activities/behaviours avoided in order to maintain a confident mental attitude when approaching the edge?

11.6 The Embodied Experiences of Edgeworkers

Finally, a study particularly focusing on the embodied or sensory aspects of risk-taking activities could also be undertaken. For example, within motorcycling, due to feeling the acceleration of the modern sports bike, participants are often lured into fast riding or additionally the motorcycle gear itself often invokes feelings of invulnerability within riders. Thus, a further study could examine the sensory experiences of high-risk performers such as Joy and Sherry (2003) who have explored the links between embodiment, movement and multi-sensory experience. Additionally, the circumstances in which the illusion of control operates in other high-risk activities could also be identified. Such as within motorcycling, participants feeling confident and relaxed most often pushing the performance envelope quick riding on familiar roads or during motorcycle track days after 'seeing the red mist'.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Motorcycling Enclave Protocol

Date:
Place:

Site History:

When was it established?

Are there any customs/traditions associated with the site?

How does it relate to other sites?

Interactions in the site:

Who comes to the site?

What happens, who is involved, what people/groups?

What interactions take place and at what times?

What experiences, rituals, performances take place?

What factors aide in the counter reality? (For e.g. leathers, gear, bikes)

What stories are told and to whom? (For e.g. legends or fantasies)

What language/key terms are used and who uses them?

What special rules govern the interactions? (For e.g. pressure to perform stunts)

Reflective notes:

Initial ideas

Reflections on activities

Reflections on people

Feelings, insights, hunches, reactions

Appendix B: Total Field Work Venues

Fieldwork venues June 2003 – November 2003

June

Sat 7th	MCN Summer Sports Show Donington
Tue 10th	Bike shop
Sat 14th	Sherburn Elmet
Sun 15th	Matlock Derbyshire
Sat 21st	Cock O'North Road Races Scarborough

July

Sat 5th	Sherburn Elmet
Fri 11th	British Motorcycle Grand Prix Donington
Sat 19th	Sherburn Elmet
Sun 20th	Elvington Races York
Tue 29th	Bike shop

August

Fri 1st	Bike shop
Sun 3rd	Sherburn Elmet
Mon 4th	Track Day Donington
Sat 9th	Bike shop
Sun 17th	Sherburn Elmet
Sun 24th	Sherburn Elmet
Wed 27th	Track Day Donington

September

Sun 14th	Scarborough Bike week
Thurs 18th	Track Day Donington

November

Sun 23rd	Bike Show NEC Birmingham

Appendix C: Motorcyclist Narrative Interview Format

The aim is to identify critical junctures (or turning points) in motorcyclists careers.

1. General background

   Where grew up, parents/family (brothers or sisters) Where you live now?

   Any early motorcycling memories?

   Age, occupation, marital status, children.

   Years of active biking/years with full licence

   Current bike, engine size, miles per year

2. Can you concentrate on a particular time biking that stands out to you, the perfect ride, not necessarily the destination but the actual ride?

   When did it happen?

   Did it influence you/biking?

   Alternatively, what is a good day biking?

3. Are there any times in particular when you 'push the performance envelope' or take it to the edge of your abilities?

4. Where you ever in a near miss situation where you thought 'this is it?'

   When did it happen?

   Did it influence you/biking?

5. Have you done any of the following after getting your license?

Race school	Stunt school	Track day/s	Racing	Super/minimoto
Motocross	Enduro	Trials	Holidays	Formal training

6. Are you a member of any groups or motorcycling clubs?

7. Do you have any plans/dreams for the future?

8. What particular motorcycle magazines do you read if any?