

‘If you’re a bit of a risk-taker you don’t see the dangers’:
Exploring Gender Differences in Leisure Sport Risk-
taking.

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Abstract

The popular leisure sports of skiing, horseriding and motorcycling carry considerable risks to health, or even life, to those engaging in these activities; consequently, they have been largely dominated by men whom our culture encourages to take risks. The risky leisure sports of skiing, horseriding and motorcycling have attracted little prior research attention from social scientists. Evidence suggesting that women dominate in the participation of statistically much riskier leisure horse riding has motivated a sociological study. A mixed methods design, based on semi-structured interviews and a self completion questionnaire survey with adult male and female British skiers, horse riders and motorcyclists, provide analysis of three themes. Belonging, risk and wellbeing are examined phenomenologically through a realist social constructionist lens to determine what and how personal needs are fulfilled through practising their particular sport. The research questions running throughout the thesis are: What factors explain the participation and engagement of participants in risky leisure sports? Does gender account for any different experiences between male and female participants? Why do people engage in risky leisure sports and what do they get out of it?

Findings indicate that, contrary to its inherently risky nature, men and particularly women within and across all three sports feel increased self-confidence and enhanced global self-esteem when performing their sport, which often positively influences their everyday lives. Furthermore, participants attain similar feelings of 'being-in-the-moment' a state usually attributable to much riskier so-called 'adrenaline' sports and a central feature of mindfulness and positive mental health.

Finally, I include a brief analysis into the impact of COVID-19 as a new risk factor for the participants of these sports.

Key words: risk sports, motorcycling, horseriding, skiing, belonging, wellbeing

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Introduction

Motorcycling, horseriding and skiing all carry a considerable risk to health, or even life, to those engaging in these recreational sports¹ activities. Readiness to take risks has been customarily associated with the male gender: those brave men ever ready to conquer the world regardless of the costs. These heroic, often ‘hyper-masculine’ men (Martin et al, 2006, p. 172), can evoke popular images of the easy-riding bad-boy motorcycle outlaw, the chivalrous horse riding knights of old, or the Norse God Ullr whose ski-tips magically transform into shields during heroic battle. However, the actual gender composition of the participants in the above three risky sports activities differs very considerably. Whilst ninety percent of motorcycle journeys in the United Kingdom are performed by men (Department for Transport, 2016b), nearly seventy-five percent of British leisure horse riders are women (British Equestrian Trade Association, 2015). In comparison, skiing, although being less gender polarised, is dominated by men accounting for sixty-four to thirty-six percent of, respectively, men and women (Ski Club of Great Britain, 2019). This research attempts to understand how individuals choose their sport, why they expose themselves to risk and lastly, to provide possible strategies for future gender inclusiveness within these leisure² sports.

¹ Throughout this research “sport” is used in the context of Old French where sport meant “activity”, “pleasure” or “pastime” rather than with modern connotations synonymous with competition in which there are winners and losers.

² Torkildsen (2011) considers leisure activities provide fun and relaxation which provide personal development or freedom from their routine work.

Research questions.

This research aims to seek answers to the following four research questions:

1. What factors influence the individuals' interest/engagements in risky undertakings in general?
2. What factors influence the individuals' continuing engagement in risky leisure sport activities such as motorcycling, skiing and horse riding?
3. Why is there a gender disparity in the pursuits of recreational motorcycling, skiing and horse riding?
4. Can an identification of Schutz's (1967, p. 185) 'ideal types' be established in leisure motorcycling, snowsports and horseriding?

Chapter one

Review of the Literature

This literature review examines the available studies concerned with how gender influences engagement with three risky leisure sports: motorcycling, snowsports and horse riding. Following a brief presentation outlining the historical conceptualisation of risk, the review then addresses five themes reflecting the research questions informing my study:

1. Objective risk, perceived risk and unrealistic optimism.
2. How is risk quantified and genderised in the featured leisure sports?
3. Risk as route to liberation, empowerment and psychological wellbeing.
4. The risk thermostat and risk compensation models.
5. Socialisation, gender and social class.

1.1 Historical conceptualisation of risk.

According to Deborah Lupton (1999), risk and humanity cannot be, and have never been, separated. Risk, in the form of natural catastrophes, dangers to life and fear of the supernatural were, according to Lupton (1999), acts of an omnipotent God or a spiteful Devil and were ever present in medieval society. The only viable defence available to ameliorate the effects of medieval calamity consisted of the elaborate use of superstitious offerings. The wearing of religious symbols and pilgrimage to holy shrines; avoiding the obviously diseased such as lepers, while assiduously observing the many cultural taboos, allowed the medieval individual a modicum of

risk management by appeasing an omnipotent all seeing God or by expelling evil demons (Douglas, 2003a; Lupton, 1999).

However, Lupton (1999) proposes that the fatalistic view of risk underwent a fundamental revision during the European Enlightenment where, according to influential early scholars such as Francis Bacon's (1561-1626) proposition, that nature could be subdued by the will of man through the application of empirically scientific, rather than superstitious principles (Jordanova, 1980). Meanwhile, God's omnipotence was being questioned by René Descartes' (1596-1650) famous injunction, *Cogito ergo sum* 'I think therefore I am' (Descartes, 1968, p. 53) which posited humanity's individuality of rational thought and action independent of an all powerful God.

A consequence of Enlightenment scientific thinking on the post industrial modern world means that an understanding of risk can now be quantified, controlled, measured and statistically calculated (Davidson, 2008). Systemised Risk therefore, becomes 'known or knowable' Lupton (1999, p. 7). Ulrich Beck's (1992) influential work *Risk Society* introduced a deeper understanding of risk by identifying its relationship between the increasing trajectory of individualism, characterised by modernity, with its corresponding weakening of traditional social and religious bonds. Consequently, younger members of society feel less of the comfortable dependability of a traditional family, instead now having to rely more on themselves in an uncertain, insecure and increasingly diverse and risky, social world. Frank Furedi (2006) proposes that concepts of risk have developed from their earlier neutrality of being seen as both good and bad, to now being seen as a problem 'where only danger enters into the equation' (Furedi, 2006, p.26). Furedi (2006) argues this is why contemporary society has become risk averse. Individuals

voluntarily engaged in risk-taking often suffer social criticism, due to risk becoming '*politically reflexive*' (Beck, 1992, p. 21 original emphasis). However, as Giulianotti suggests, sociology, and thinkers such as Beck and Furedi in particular, have situated risk as essentially bad and thus largely fail to identify risk as a potentially transcendental and cathartic therapeutic necessity enabling individuals to negotiate a risk averse, late modern Western world (Giulianotti, 2009). Moreover, the potential for sporting risk as a vehicle for psychological wellbeing is especially prescient during the current social restrictions necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2 Objective risk, perceived risk and unrealistic optimism.

Influenced by modernity, an individual's understanding of what constitutes risk-taking has evolved (Furedi, 2006). John Adams (2001, p. 7 original emphasis) points out that the Royal Society's 1983 report *Risk assessment* differentiated between '*objective risk*', (those risks that are as Lupton (1999) argues, known or knowable by scholars of risk) and '*perceived risk*', considered to be a subjective judgement of what constitutes risk by non-experts which, according to Adams (2001), are often at odds with expert risk analysis. Adams (2001) further notes that a later, 1992, debate addressing concepts of risk by the Royal Society, attempted to close the earlier distinction between the scientific (objective) measurement of risk and how ordinary members of society identify (subjectively perceived) risk in their everyday decision making processes. However, Adams (2001, p. 9) proposes that the Royal Society failed in its attempt, and therefore 'the gap remains unbridged' between objective and perceived risk.

Risk, whether objective or perceived, has been discussed up until this point, as being something to be managed and avoided. However, Ken Roberts (2016)

proposes that the combination of modern industrialisation and constantly advancing technology has allowed for more individual leisure time which we are then extolled to spend in leisure activities, thereby making us feel better by doing more. This presents a paradox; if individuals are being encouraged to spend more of their leisure time on activities to feel better then why, in a risk averse society, are some individuals voluntarily motivated to pursue risky leisure sports? This is a question Lyng (2005b, p. 18) suggests has 'been largely off-limits for most sociologists of risk'. This becomes increasingly problematic when gender is considered as, for example, when compared to males, females are considered more risk averse (J. P. Byrnes, D. C. Miller, & W. D. Schafer, 1999; C. Harris, Jenkins, & Glaser, 2006; Lupton, 1999; Sapienza, Zingales, & Maestripieri, 2009).

Being cognisant of the risks to personal injury, why are risky leisure sports so popular? Bellaby and Lawrenson (2001, p. 375) contend that the motorcyclists in their study 'are neither ignorant of the risks that the statistics purport to represent, nor deliberate risk takers'. Furthermore, Elke Weber et al's (2002) more general study on attitudes to risk indicated that 'perceived risk seeking is very rare' adding:

[T]hat most individuals who reported that they were likely to engage in risky behaviors) must have done so with the belief that these behaviors were not very risky or, alternatively, carried high benefits. Very few of our respondents indicated willingness to engage in behaviors that they considered to be risky (Weber et al, 2002, p.277).

The psychological concept of '*unrealistic optimism*' first formulated and then elaborated on by Neil Weinstein (1980, p. 806 original emphasis) and Weinstein and Nicolich (1993) propose that their experimental participants, when tested, 'rated their own chances to be above average for positive events and below average for negative events' (Weinstein, 1980, p. 806). This tendency, renamed 'Optimism Bias'

(O'Sullivan, 2015, p. 12) is described as being 'widely considered as one of the most reproducible, prevalent and robust cognitive biases observed in psychology and behavioural economics' (O'Sullivan, 2015, p. 12). Furthermore, O'Sullivan posits that Optimism Bias, popularised as "always looking on the bright side", is a pan-human phenomena which as well as being acultural 'transcends gender, race, nationality and age' (2015, p. 12). According to O'Sullivan, Optimism Bias occurs as a result of an individual's self-deluded lower *perceived* risk of their activity to culminate in a positive experience so that 'in visualising an uncomplicated future, we rise above the myriad of possible outcomes to focus on a simplified positive endpoint (2015, p. 14). This perception of risk may though be antagonistic with the objective risk assessment arrived at by professional risk assessors (Adams, 2001). Unlike O'Sullivan's (2015) analysis which discounted the effect of age, Weinstein (1980) proposed that increased age may dilute the effect of Unrealistic Optimism. This possibly accounts for the statistically higher incidence of personal injury seen in younger people, especially males, when engaging in risky activities (Department-for-Transport, 2015; Falconer & Kingham, 2007; Turner & McClure, 2003). Unrealistic Optimism or Optimism Bias provides, at least, a plausible explanation for why an activity could have a lower perceived risk, and may, therefore, be a contributory factor in why individuals voluntarily choose the risky leisure sports my research examines.

1.3 Risk and gender.

Given that the concept of Optimism Bias appears to transcend gender, why is there such pronounced gender inequality among participants of the risky leisure sports examined in this research and what potentially causes it? The subject of gendered risk aversion has been the subject of much psychological, usually

quantitative, experimental research. Byrnes et al's (1999) meta-analysis of one-hundred-and-fifty of such studies concluded that, generally, male participants were more likely to take risks than female participants. Weber et al (2002) reported that a difference in gendered risk *perception* paralleled risk-taking behaviour with females generally being less likely to engage in risky pursuits. Byrnes et al's (1999) study also indicated that irrespective of gender, as age increased, as predicted by Weinstein (1980), willingness to participate in more risky behaviours reduced. The distinction between *perceived* risk and *objectified* risk appears to be important to individuals engaged in risky leisure activities. The *perception* of the activities' benefits versus the risk taken to achieve them appears to outweigh any negative attitude towards the risk (McDonald-Walker, 2000; Weber et al., 2002). This is illustrated by Bellaby and Lawrenson's (2001) mainly male British motorcyclists arguing that:

Motorcycling is not a risky activity per se the risks involved in motorcycling are in a large part imposed from outside for example by car drivers and other road users (2001, p. 375).

Liz Jansen's (2011) interview respondents, all Canadian women motorcyclists, take a similar view. One respondent states 'it's a simple risk/rewards equation and the risks [of motorcycling] don't come anywhere near outweighing the rewards' (2011, p. 77). A female respondent in Catherine Rosters study of American women Harley-Davidson riders acknowledges the risky nature of motorcycling which had claimed her male friend, killed when riding, by another road user. She confides:

It's a risky thing. But he loved it so much, and he wouldn't have wanted me to feel that way just because of what happened to him. He would have wanted me to get back on a bike, enjoy it, but be safe, as safe as I could be (Roster, 2007, p. 451).

The positive psychological benefits felt through riding motorcycles appear to have had the effect of lowering individual perception of risk. Certainly for the respondents quoted above, the rewards from engaging in their activity outweigh any risk.

Reporting the statistical, objective risk of personal injury, particularly from horseriding, appears to be an historically enduring focus of the medical profession (Ball et al., 2007; Barber, 1973; Chitnavis et al., 1996; Firth, 1984; Paix, 1999; Papachristos et al., 2014; Silver, 2002; Srinivasan et al., 2014). However, despite an extensive search of horse riders' narratives, the notion that horseriding is particularly risky remains unarticulated. Birke and Brandt (2009, p. 195) provide an oblique acknowledgement of perceived risk when they describe a horse as 'a big, potentially dangerous animal'. Reference to the size of a horse and, therefore, its potential to do harm was also featured in the personal narrative of a horse rider in Susan Keaveney's (2008) study³, however, this was not expressed as a specific risk to personal injury but rather as an awareness to ensure the rider has the respect of the horse. Consequently, and while also acknowledging horseriding's reputation for being risky, Thompson and Adelman (2013) call for more research into a rider's perception and knowledge of risk and for riders to include this knowledge into their riding activity.

Although the objective risks to personal injury in snowsports are prominent in medical texts, once again perceived risk remains largely absent from the very few available snowsports narratives. This lack of risk perception was highlighted in Cazenave et al's (2007) comparative study of women who participate in extreme sports. Cazenave et al (2007) found significant differences between women who snowboard for leisure versus those who snowboard professionally. Both groups were

³ Sample was 80% female, justified as reflecting the USA equestrian population

measured against a control group who did not participate in any risky sport. While, according to Cazenave et al (2007), professional snowboarders meticulously planned for their dangerous activity, thereby illustrating an astute perception of risk, leisure snowboarders were motivated to escape from the monotony of their everyday lives. Cazenave et al (2007) propose, therefore, that due to a general lack of risk perception, required by participants in risky leisure activities, 'these women's attitude to risk may be more dangerous for themselves and possibly for others engaging in risk-taking sports' (Cazenave et al, 2007, p. 430). With the exception of Cazenave et al's (2007) professional female snowboarders, the above could be considered examples of O'Sullivan's (2015) self-denial thesis whereby an individual's perception of the risks involved in motorcycling, horseriding or snowboarding are lowered in anticipation of positive outcomes emanating from escaping their everyday life.

1.4 How is risk quantified and genderised in the featured leisure sports?

Many writers have specified which leisure activities attract the label of being risky. Research into equestrian injury by Ball et al (2007) considers that motorcycle riding and skiing are risky but that 'equestrian riding also is considered to have the highest mortality of all sports' (Ball et al., 2007, p. 636).

How have the risks involved with participating in these leisure sports been quantified and how is gender represented in them? This literature review now examines the available literature surrounding the three risky leisure sports which are the focus of my research.

According to the British government's Department for Transport (DfT), despite representing less than one percent of British road users, motorcycle riders carry a risk of being killed or seriously injured fifty-seven times greater than car drivers and

account for nineteen percent of all road user fatalities (Department for Transport, 2015). Motorcycling is considered so risky that Bellaby and Lawrenson (2001, p. 368) note that safety experts proclaim it an 'extremely risky venture and imply that only the foolhardy would engage in it'. Although no figures are currently available to accurately describe the gender division found within British motorcyclists⁴, it is considered by the Department for Transport (2016b), to be overwhelmingly male dominated by as much as ninety percent. Supporting the British estimate, a 2015 survey of 48,000 active motorcyclists carried out by the United States Motorcycle Industry Council (2016) indicates that, overall, female motorcycle ownership has grown from eight percent in 1998 to fourteen percent in 2015. Younger women account for seventeen percent, the largest growth of all respondents.

The risk to personal injury or mortality through horseriding has been quantified by Firth (1984, p. 432) as being '20 times more dangerous than motorcycling'. This figure was then subsequently cited in later research by Silver (2002, p. 264) and later disseminated in the British motorcycle press (Newbigging, 2007) and later to the wider public by the British Broadcasting Corporation (Milne, 2014). However, being mindful of the requirement for scholastic rigour I examined the accuracy of knowledge claims found in the literature which have fundamental importance to my research. When measured against John Scott's (1990) four criterion to ascertain the veracity, or otherwise, of documents, I have been unable to identify the reference to risk of horse riding as being twenty-times higher than motorcycling cited by Firth (1984) in the primary source by Danielsson and Westlin (1973). This apparently erroneous figure was cited by Firth (1984) who was subsequently cited by J. R. Silver (2002). This could be considered an example of what Robert Merton (1968, p.

⁴ The Motorcycle Industry Association is, as of 2021, working on a comprehensive examination of gender in British motorcycling.

35) conceptualised as 'obliteration by incorporation' whereby, in this case, the original source (Danielsson and Westlin, 1973) has been serially misinterpreted by later scholars. Furthermore, an examination of the article by Danielsson and Westlin (1973, p. 600) states that 'The risk of accidents during [horse] riding is not greater than that in most other sports'. Lastly, the article fails to mention motorcycles at all. However, irrespective of their possible scholastic infelicities, the research by Firth (1984) and J. R. Silver (2002) provides compelling evidence that horseriding is more risky than either skiing or motorcycling. Later research by Ball et al. (2007), makes an entirely different quantification of equestrian risk by indicating that horseriding is three and a half times more dangerous than motorcycling. There is though, little room for doubt that the available evidence indicates equestrian pursuits attract the greatest risk. Interestingly, and in direct opposition to male dominated motorcycling, a survey carried out by the British Equestrian Trade Association (2015) indicates that the more risky leisure pursuit of horseriding is dominated by females, with a figure of seventy-four percent.

The Ski Club of Great Britain estimates that there are 1.2 million active skiers in Great Britain (Ski Club of Great Britain, 2019). These participation rates are generally similar to horseriding and motorcycling with 1.3 million (British Equestrian Trade Association, 2015) and 1.355 million (Department for Transport, 2016) respectively. Therefore, it was surprising to discover that although an extensive and systematic literature search was carried out, with the exception of medical journal articles devoted to quantitative discussions of typical snowsports injury, such a popular leisure pursuit appears under-represented in the qualitative literature. This being the case, rather than focusing on a particular skiing discipline such as Alpine,

Nordic or snowboard, due to a lack of available literature dedicated to British snowsports, I will examine snowsports collectively and globally.

Snowsports are considered to be risky pursuits which have killed or seriously injured many high profile celebrities, politicians and sportsmen and women. The 2017 British Independent Television show *The Jump* has been reported in the *Guardian* newspaper as being beset with injury. The *Guardian* reports that since 2014 and over four series, sixteen high profile personalities and Olympian athletes including Sir Steve Redgrave, Rebecca Adlington, Linford Christie, Beth Tweddle and its latest casualty Sir Bradley Wiggins have suffered injury, which for some could have been life/career changing but for their supreme physical fitness (The Guardian, 2017). The high risk nature of snowsports cannot be in doubt when world class athletes of this status, let alone amateur leisure snowsports participants, face significant injury. Troy Hawks (2012, p. 1) suggests that snowsports in the United States carry less risk than many everyday activities and are less dangerous than other 'high energy participation sports'. However, as Troy Hawks was communications manager for the National Ski Areas Association, a trade body which represents the commercial interests of the North American snowsports resorts, his assessment of snowsports risk may be commercially biased. A considerable volume of mainly statistical injury data attests to the risks of personal injury when engaging in snowsports. Perhaps conforming to popular ideas surrounding its less risky nature, although dominated by males, snowsports do not exhibit the same extremes of gender polarisation found in motorcycling or horseriding. The ski club of Great Britain's (2019) survey of 17,000 respondents reports that males accounted for sixty-four percent of active snowsports participants.

1.5 Risk providing liberating empowerment, psychological wellbeing and positive mental health.

Although contemporary Western society generally considers risk as negative and something to be avoided, there is considerable evidence supporting the notion that individuals, irrespective of gender, use risky leisure activities to instil in themselves personally liberating emotions such as empowerment, self control and self identity through a deep emotional attachment with their chosen sport (Bauman, 2000; Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Jansen, 2011; Lupton & Tulloch, 2002; Lyng, 1990, 2005a, 2005b; Messner, 2007). Moreover, individuals described as 'edgeworkers' (Lyng, 2005a, p. 855), whose extreme leisure activity of sky-diving, (for which the penalty for error sits on the boundary between life and death (Lyng, 1990)), offers them an almost spiritually transcendent experience and a greater, positive, understanding of self (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2012, 2017; Giulianotti, 2009). Consequently, sky-diving, allows edgeworkers an escape route from their perhaps otherwise stultifying social conditions which may otherwise offer few opportunities for personal development (Lyng, 1990). Cessford (1995) contends that it is the challenging situations, expressed through high speed with its corresponding risk, that provides New Zealand mountain bikers an exciting escape route from their everyday life. Other, less extreme, motivations for sporting participation such as self-actualisation, social-interaction and self-fulfilment have also been cited (see Page, Bentley, and Walker (2005); Shephard and Evans (2005)).

While Lyng's (1990) notion of edgework may be appropriate for activities bordering life/death, the concept of flow formulated by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990), is perhaps more applicable to the risky, but less extreme, leisure sports of my research. Flow is considered by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) to be:

[T]he state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it (1990, p. 4).

Further arguing that, 'the most important step in emancipating oneself from social controls is the ability to find rewards in the events of each moment' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 19).

The reward /cost relationship for athletes engaging in extreme sports was tested quantitatively by Eskiler, Yildiz, and Ayhan (2019). Although failing to operationalise what constituted extreme sports, they report an eighty-four percent positive correlation between sporting participation and leisure satisfaction. Moreover, they indicate that the effect is cumulative suggesting that 'the higher leisure satisfaction level the participants have, the more leisure benefit levels will increase' (Eskiler et al., 2019, p. 18). This translates into participants able to transcend everyday work stress and an otherwise mundane lifestyle whilst gaining 'psychological, physiological, social, educational and aesthetic benefits' (Eskiler et al., 2019, p. 18). Georgian and Lorand (2016, p. 3) describe similar effects in those performing the leisure sports of 'cross, hiking, jogging, mountain running, running through parks, sports games, fitness, cycling, swimming, ski etc'. Their questionnaire survey found 'that the persons who practice leisure sports activities on a regular basis, have a higher social health index, unlike the persons who do not participate in this type of dynamic activities' (Georgian & Lorand, 2016, p. 6). Leisure sports which allow participants to engage with, or participate in, the natural environment have been qualitatively shown by Hanna et al. (2019, p. 1367) to 'reconnect individuals with nature in a way that enables a deeper appreciation for nature, potentially providing healing for both the individuals wellbeing and the natural environment'.

Opportunities for social emancipation, personal and psychological reward through participation in less extreme, although risky, leisure sports motivated the women motorcyclists researched by Suzanne McDonald-Walker (2000). A female respondent justified riding her motorcycle describing it as 'personal mobility. A little bit more freedom. A bit more independence. I think there's a lot more confidence generally' (McDonald-Walker, 2000, p. 57). Alana Young's (2004) examination of Canadian snowboarding and skateboarding found that female snowboarders were also able to demonstrate empowerment. Female snowboarders were empowered to make personal choices involved with their participation against a background of a socially taken-for-granted, male dominated, leisure sport in what has been (re)conceptualised by Raewyn Connell as 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 2005, p. 77; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Their empowerment though is possibly an illusion as, according to Young (2004, p. 80), it relied on a paternalistic, hegemonic masculine acknowledgement by her male respondents, 'that women lack strength and are more graceful and artistic than men'. The male recognition of what constitutes acceptable femininity, therefore, rests on notions of a normative patriarchal Western gender identity, where women are considered as subordinate in an ideologically constructed gender hierarchy (Messner, 2002, 2007; Ortner, 1996; Said, 1979; Spivak, 1988). The notion of a subaltern and, consequently, less powerful female *Other* is articulated by Simone de Beauvoir (1989 [1949], p. 267) who famously stated that 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'. Gayatri Spivak's (1988) Marxist inference that subaltern women represent a gender-in-itself but have not yet formed a gender-for-itself and Michael Kimmel (2000, p. 1), who proposes that 'when we speak about gender we also speak about hierarchy, power,

and inequality, not simply difference' offer compelling supporting arguments for the constricting influence of the hegemonic masculinity thesis on female emancipation.

However, according to Birke and Brandt (2009), notions of normative male sporting dominance, expressed through hegemonic masculinity, can be successfully subverted or modified via the corporeal relationships that female horse riders develop with their horses. Birke and Brandt (2009, p. 196) propose that this is accomplished by achieving 'oneness with the horse'. This bond allows the female rider to overcome the normative social constraints of femininity, therefore, vicariously empowering her to positively experience her femininity (Birke & Brandt, 2009). However, the attainment of oneness with the horse is asserted by Birke and Brandt (2009) rather than demonstrated.

1.6 Risk thermostat and risk compensation models.

1.6.1 Risk thermostat.

The literature examined so far suggests that although motorcycling, snowsports and horseriding are risky, individuals persist in their participation. John Adams (2001, p. ix) proposes that there resides in every individual 'risk thermostats' which mediate an individual's predisposition to engage, or not, in risky behaviour. Moreover Adams (2001), suggests that the calibration of risk thermostats depends on an individual's perception of rewards versus losses. The balance of reward/loss potentially accounts for Lyng's (2005a) high risk skydiving edgeworkers attaining their rewarding release from the mundane. Providing their parachute opens correctly, they win far more than they lose. To a lesser extent the risk thermostat also provides a route to empowerment, by escaping the banal, for motorcyclists, skiers and horse riders. Psychologists such as Richard Gross (1987) appears to refer to Adams' risk

thermostat in terms of an individual's level of arousal which is affected by their personality. According to Gross (1987), those who seek high levels of arousal, choose riskier occupations while those seeking less arousal choose less risky occupations. Furthermore, Gross (1987) and Adams (2001) propose that all individuals need some level of arousal in their daily lives. If as Gross and Adams propose, all individuals possess a greater or lesser proclivity to risk, what determines the setting on their individual risk thermostat? In *Dimensions of Personality*, Hans Eysenck (1998 [1947]) suggests an individual's personality can be mapped, at any point, along a continuum. At one extreme end of the continuum lies the introvert, characterised by 'a tendency to self-control', while at the other end lies the extrovert with a tendency to lack self-control (Eysenck, 1998 [1947], p. 58). What is important here is the realisation that all individuals' personalities reside somewhere along the continuum (Gross, 1987) and so potentially provides a psychological explanation for the calibration of any individual's risk thermostat.

1.6.2 Risk compensation.

An individual's psychological need for a level of risk appears established through Adams' (2001) risk thermostat model. Adams (2001) further proposes that individual risk thermostats are subject to modification. This modification, originally formulated in 1976 by Gerald Wilde as 'risk compensation' (cited in Adams, 2001, p. 14) and subsequently revised by Adams (2001), is a behavioural response triggered by the coercive intervention of safety legislation and professional risk assessors on an individual who feels that their homeostatic level of risk has been unbalanced (Adams, 2001). Therefore, an individual faced with increasing levels of externally imposed safety legislation may voluntarily engage in more risk in an attempt to re-balance their risk thermostat. Adams (2001) provides a plausible explanation for the

effect of risk compensation. Adams (2001) notes that the 1973 motorcycle helmet legislation in Great Britain compelled motorcyclists to wear crash helmets. This safety legislation appeared to reduce motorcycle fatalities by two percent. However, the following year motorcycle fatalities had increased by two percent (Adams, 2001). Individuals who had felt safer when wearing their crash helmets had reduced their perception of risk and *were* statistically safer. In attempting to regain their risk homeostasis while wearing a helmet, motorcyclists underestimated their perception of risk and consequently, motorcyclists' mortality increased. Conversely, research by Ruedl et al (2010, 2012) carried out on Austrian alpine skiers and snowboarders supported the earlier findings of Scott et al (2007) on American and Canadian alpine skiers and snowboarders. Both quantitative studies used *self reported* risk assessments and both studies concluded that risk compensation was not a factor in the risk perception of the participants. However, the speeds recorded by Ruedl et al (2010) were *higher* among helmeted skiers versus non-helmeted skiers. Although rejected by the quantitative studies, higher speeds for helmeted participants appear to fit the risk compensation model. Furthermore, helmeted participants, through increased speeds, also potentially exhibit Unrealistic Optimism Bias with regard to experiencing the positive outcomes described by Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) flow thesis. However, both the risk thermostat and risk compensation models possibly operate at the unconscious level. If this is the case these self reported, and, therefore, highly subjective, perceptions of risk may be affected by 'cognitive and situational factors' (Brenner et al, 2003, p. 454). The increased speed of the skiers, could be expressed as social desirability bias, which have implications on the reliability and internal validity⁵ of self reporting.

⁵ Is the research measuring what it believes it is measuring through the systematic elimination of potential

1.7 Socialisation, gender⁶, subculture and social class.

Although the quantitative studies presented so far in this review make valuable contributions that attempt an *explanation* of risk, a sociologically phenomenological approach is equally valuable as it attempts to *understand* the lived experience of why some individuals appear to embrace risk. Lupton (1999, p. 29) suggests that the concept and constitution of risk is considered by social constructionists to be bound up with 'pre existing knowledge's (sic) and discourses'. When viewed through an interpretive lens risk can, therefore, be understood as being socially constructed (Olofsson et al., 2014) though an individual's socialisation and multi-level (re)production of their understanding and the meanings they attach to their everyday social interactions; a process of human understanding Max Weber conceptualised as 'verstehen' (Morrison, 2006, p. 447).

1.7.1 Socialisation, gender and subculture.

Socialisation is defined by Scott and Marshall (2009, p. 714) as being 'the process by which we learn to become members of society'. Furthermore, the process of socialisation is dynamic and ongoing (Scott and Marshall, 2009). Unlike some other processes (such as language acquisition which requires a particular window or critical period of temporal opportunity (Smith & Allott, 2016)), socialisation is not restricted to a particular critical time in the individual's social development. Scott and Marshall (2009) further contend that socialisation is not a one way street; individuals do not passively absorb the specificities of cultural rules, norms and obligations, but construct, modify and (re)define them through their everyday interactions and

biases?

⁶ Gender and sex have, in Western culture, become interchangeable terms. However, biological sex differs from gender as the former is biologically ascribed from birth whereas the later is a modifiable identity chosen by either biological males or females. An individual's biological sex may, or may not, align with their chosen gender identity.

encounters (Elder-Vass, 2010, 2012; Giddens, 1984; Morawska, 2013a; Scott & Marshall, 2009; Stones, 2005). Like risk, gender is also considered as being socially constructed through the process of an individual's socialisation (Beauvoir, S. d. (1989 [1949]); Connell, 1987; Oakley, 2015) and was, according to Christine Delphy (1993), developed from anthropologist Margaret Mead's concept of gender roles; socially decided, *arbitrary* divisions of human attributes. Delphy (1993) therefore, considers the notion of gender to be grounded in culture. Gender's arbitrariness (rather than being based on intuitions of a universal, natural biological essentialism which consequently, 'fail to understand gender' (Sayer, 2000, p. 18)) thus renders gender amenable to cultural modification. Therefore, as culture does not live in a static vacuum, gender, being arbitrary and grounded in culture, can be freed from its biologically fixed constraints. Through successive human social interaction over time, culture, followed by gender can become plastic, malleable and, therefore, changeable. The resulting reformulations, can conceivably manifest themselves in, and be accountable, for example, many more female than male horse riders or many more male skiers and motorcyclists than female. However, these gendered differences, and more importantly gender inequality in risky leisure sports, can equally be reinforced, to the detriment of some (usually females). This is expressed through taken-for-granted shared social knowledge and discourses surrounding males sporting superiority over females due to notions of their natural aggression and competitiveness (Messner, 2002, 2007). Wilson and Daly (1985, p. 61), taking a biologically essentialist stance, propose that this shared social knowledge 'should be [considered as] basic evolved attributes of masculine psychology'. Illustrating the powerful effects that taken-for-granted shared social knowledge can have on females, Cazenave et al (2007) indicate that the female leisure snowboarders

possessed a more “masculine” gender identity. Furthermore, Cazenave et al (2007, p.430) argue that ‘children tend to conform to their parents’ stereotypes’ proposing that a resulting “masculine” gender identity emanates from being primarily socialised in an environment ‘where the freedom to learn values and roles for themselves’ (2007, p.430) is valorised. Cazenave et al (2007) speculate, and call for further research to support their notion, that the primary socialisation received in that environment imbues females with “masculine” desires of wanting more control and self-determination. Moreover, an examination of the socialising factors which influence an individual’s choice of risky leisure sport would attempt to partially address Olofsson et al’s (2014) invitation to explore the intersectionality of risk, gender, class and age discovering how, through social interactions, they influence the social (re)production of risk that has been largely overlooked. These two new avenues of research could lead to questions that ask not how leisure is affected by society but, conversely, how leisure, more and more, affects society.

Illustrating the significance of socialisation on potential motorcyclists, McDonald-Walker (2000) indicates that in her fieldwork for *Bikers Culture, Politics and Power*, with the exception of one, all of her participants knew other motorcyclists before they learned to ride. Therefore, the pre-existence of motorcycles within their social milieu, provided the impetus to ride motorcycles (McDonald-Walker, 2000). Martin et al’s (2006) American female respondents reported that they were motivated to become motorcyclists themselves by firstly riding pillion⁷ with boyfriends, and later as a means of exercising control as riders of their own machines. One respondent asserts her reason for never riding pillion as ‘you can’t see, don’t have the wind in your face,

⁷ Riding on the back seat of a motorcycle

you can't feel the bike, you don't have the Zen, you're not in control ... you can't move with it, you can't bond with it' (Martin et al, 2006, p. 180).

According to Hedenborg (2015), Swedish men, who are associated with equestrianism, were often socialised into horseriding through a long relationship with horses, often spanning several generations of the same family. Horses become so socially intertwined in those families that riding becomes an expectation they are born into. Although familial influences are important to Swedish women riders, Hedenborg (2015) sees this as spousal influence; their husband rides, so they do, too. Hedenborg (2015) notes that this may not be generaliseable throughout the world-wide horseriding culture and is, therefore, a potential subject for further research.

1.7.2 Subculture.

Although originally a concept specifically explaining youth delinquency and deviance from mainstream culture (Scott & Marshall, 2009) the term subculture can also be applied to a group of individuals engaging in a shared occupation at any stage of their life course (Haenfler, 2014). Donnelly and Young (1988, p. 224) contend that 'the act of becoming a member of a particular subculture is also the act of taking on an appropriate subcultural identity'. However, although intrinsic to their identity, many individuals engaging in the leisure sports featured in this research are neither youths nor delinquents. Consequently a useful definition reflecting a wider participant demography is provided by Schouten and McAlexander (1995). In the context of this research subcultures can, therefore, be defined 'as a distinctive subgroup of society that self-selects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular product class, brand, or *consumption activity* (...) shared beliefs and

values; and unique jargons,' (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995, p. 43 my emphasis). They have, as Muncie (2013, p. 457) indicates, 'secured their social space'.

1.7.3 Social class.

The National Equestrian Survey carried out on British riders by the British Equestrian Trade Association (2015) indicates that far from being practised by higher class elites, as is commonly thought, British horseriding and ownership is increasingly the preserve of unskilled working-class females, classified by the Market Research Society as C2DE⁸. Conversely, motorcycling appears to have undergone a process of gentrification where traditionally working-class pursuits including motorcycling (Bourdieu, 1991; Jderu, 2015; McDonald-Walker, 2000) have become popular with the middle or upper-class (Halnon & Cohen, 2006). This is evidenced by Princes William and Harry both having been keen motorcyclists (Motorcycle News, 2016). The notion of gentrification within motorcycling is further reinforced by unpublished data collected by the Motorcycle Industry Association on attendees of the *Motorcycle Live* exhibition in 2015 held in Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre. Seventy-four percent of attendees were classified as ABC1, upper middle or middle class.

Individual narratives regarding their route to snowsports participation are largely absent in the literature. Customer survey research obtained from 17,270 participants and carried out by the Ski Club of Great Britain (2016, p. 9) indicate that it is older, more family oriented groups of people that are 'bringing children and young adults into the market' while also noting that the traditional route of school ski holidays is declining. Moreover, with the worsening monetary exchange rate at the time of

⁸ Commonly used Social grading system based on occupation devised by the National Readership Survey ABC1 = Upper/Middle class, C2DE= working/lower class

writing, possibly due to Brexit, this trend is considered as being likely to continue (Ski Club of Great Britain, 2016) and be exacerbated by travel restrictions imposed on British skiers by the COVID-19 Pandemic. While the survey comprehensively reports the sociodemographic of its respondents in terms of age, gender and personal skiing preferences, it fails to include socially important details of occupation, personal income, education level or social class. These data were also omitted from the Ski Club (2012) survey. The sociological value in collecting these data has been demonstrated firstly by a confirmation of the gentrification thesis in motorcycling evidenced by the *Motorcycle Live* exhibition attendees and secondly, in upending the commonly held belief that horseriding is predominantly a pursuit for the upper-class elite.

1.7.4 Summary.

This literature review indicates that risk, either subjective or objective, has influenced human behaviour for millennia. As a consequence of the European Enlightenment, which concentrated on science and rational human thought, a scientific understanding of risk developed from earlier religious or supernatural beliefs and dogmas. Risk thus became identifiable, quantifiable, measurable and importantly, controllable (Davidson, 2008; Lupton, 1999). Beck (1992) contends that as modern society moved out from under that sacred canopy, with a corresponding weakening of religious and social bonds, individuals in an increasingly risky and diverse world have had to rationalise acceptable risk for themselves. Ferudi (2006) suggests this is why modern and late-modern society has become risk averse with risk-takers, with some notable exceptions such as City bankers and various explorers, being generally criticised by society. However, Giulianotti (2009) argues that risk can provide individuals with therapeutic and cathartic experiences. It is this

seeming paradox of the therapeutic benefits of risk being performed in a risk averse Western society which speaks to my second research question ‘What factors influence the individuals’ continuing engagement in risky leisure sport activities such as motorcycling, skiing and horse riding’?

Although risk can now often be quantified, individual *perception* of risk varies and may not always be aligned with those quantified, *objective* risks. ‘Optimism Bias’ (O’Sullivan, 2015, p. 12) is described as being ‘widely considered as one of the most reproducible, prevalent and robust cognitive biases observed in psychology and behavioural economics’ (O’Sullivan, 2015, p. 12). Optimism Bias presents itself as individuals “always looking on the bright side”. They see only positive outcomes when performing their leisure sports often in the face of overwhelming statistics suggesting the contrary. The effects of Optimism Bias may account for the higher incidences of personal injury seen in younger people, especially males, when engaging in risky behaviours.

Attenuating the effect of Optimism Bias is Adams’ (2001, p. ix) notion of innate ‘risk thermostats’. These individually calibrated thermostats are the barometers of what constitutes an individual’s perception of acceptable, or not acceptable, risk. The risk thermostat, a robust internalised psychological device, attempts to maintain risk homeostasis. Consequently, when an individual persistently receives positive outcomes from their behaviour, another internal psychological device, described by Adams (2001, p. 14) as ‘risk compensation’, is triggered to adjust upwards the thermostat setting, thus maintaining homeostasis and an acceptable (higher) level of risk. This possibly explains experienced individuals often having fewer, but sustaining more serious injuries than neophytes. The combined effects of Optimism

Bias, the risk thermostat and risk compensation models are further contributing factors addressed by my second research question.

According to O'Sullivan (2015, p.12) Optimism Bias 'transcends gender, race, nationality and age'. The effect of this pan human phenomena speaks directly to my third research question 'Why is there a gender disparity in the pursuits of recreational motorcycling, skiing and horse riding? Gender, in the same way as risk, is socially constructed through (re)formulating our social world (Beauvoir, S. d. (1989 [1949]); Connell, 1987; Oakley, 2015). Moreover, gender roles, socially ascribed but arbitrary divisions of human attributes (Delphy, 1993) are also socially (re)produced sometimes to the detriment of female motorcyclists or, albeit less so, skiers. This is commonly articulated through taken-for-granted discourses surrounding male sporting superiority (Messner, 2002, 2007). Consequently, all genders, unfettered by notions of biological essentialism, should be equally free to engage in horse riding, motorcycling and skiing. Indeed, in terms of gender equality Dashper (2015) argues that all forms of equestrian sport are gender independent with males and females able to engage each other on equal terms. Cazenave et al (2007) shines a light on a possible cause for gender inequality. They suggest that Socialisation, a process where new members of a pre-existing society learn the norms and expectations of that society is where:

[C]hildren tend to conform to their parents' stereotypes' proposing that a resulting "masculine" gender identity emanates from being primarily socialised in an environment 'where the freedom to learn values and roles for themselves' is valorised (Cazenave et al, 2007, p.430).

Evidence presented in this literature review demonstrates that the socialisation process and subcultural membership are powerful joint factors in addressing my first research question 'what factors influence the individuals' interest/engagements in

risky undertakings in general'? McDonald-Walker's (2000) monograph *Bikers Culture, Politics and Power* indicates that with just one exception, other motorcyclists, either as family or friends, provided the impetus for her British respondent's initial interest to join the motorcycle subculture. The North American female motorcycle riders in the work of Martin et al (2006) admitted that it was riding pillion on their boyfriend's motorcycle which later prompted them to ride their own machines thus becoming subcultural members in their own right. Hedenborg (2015) contends that for some Swedish men who have been brought up with and around horses, riding becomes a social expectation that they are born into. Much like the North American women motorcyclists of Martin et al (2006), Hedenborg (2015), proposes that the Swedish female partners of these men are often introduced to the equestrian subculture by their male partners. The Ski Club of Great Britain (2016, p. 9) indicate that it is older, more family oriented groups of people that are 'bringing children and young adults into the market' further observing that the traditional socialising route, the school skiing holiday, is declining. Moreover, the COVID-19 restrictions on overseas travel placed on potential skiers, combined with an unfavourable monetary exchange rate due to Brexit, will have conspired against British leisure snowsports.

Subcultural membership is thus open to individuals engaging in a shared occupation at any stage of their life course (Haenfler, 2014). Donnelly and Young (1988, p. 224) posit that 'the act of becoming a member of a particular subculture is also the act of taking on an appropriate subcultural identity'. A useful definition for a subculture of risky leisure sports specifically relating to my research surrounding horse riding, motorcycling and skiing is articulated by Schouten and McAlexander (1995). They propose that a subculture is defined:

[A]s a distinctive subgroup of society that self-selects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular product class, brand, or *consumption activity* (...) shared beliefs and values; and unique jargons (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995, p. 43 my emphasis).

Stereotypically assumed as being an élité leisure sport, horseriding and horse ownership in Britain is becoming less so. A survey carried out by the British Equestrian Trade Association (2015) reveals that it is unskilled and/or working class females who are the drivers of change in the equestrian leisure subculture. This contrasts sharply with the gentrification seen in the motorcycle subculture. Due to a plentiful supply of cheap ex War Department motorcycles combined with mechanical training, often received in the military, the British working man traded up from his bicycle to a powered two wheeler (Jderu, 2015). As motorcycles have become more expensive and easier to maintain the motorcycle has become less dependent on its riders mechanical ability and more so on their financial ability (Halnon & Cohen, 2006). Further evidence for gentrification via royal patronage is that Princes William and Harry have both been keen motorcyclists (Motorcycle News, 2016).

This review of the literature has provided insights as to how my research questions were formulated. It includes an explication on historical and late-modern understandings of risk and how risk can be ameliorated and used for therapeutic benefit. I have attempted to chart the typical route into a subculture of risky leisure sport via the influences of primary and secondary socialisation whilst also paying attention to the important gender inequalities found within the three leisure sports featured in this research. Finally I have illustrated how the long held stereotypes surrounding class membership of these leisure sports needs to be re-thought.

The following chapter details the philosophical and conceptual framework used to examine my research questions.

Chapter Two

Conceptual Framework

This research is guided by the premises informing the Structuration Theory model whilst also considering the important temporal elements of ‘morphogenetic cycles’, a theory conceptualised by Margaret Archer (1982, p. 468) which, like Structuration Theory, aims to form an historically elusive and coherent ontological bridge between social structure and human agency without attributing primacy to either. Archer (1982) proposes that unlike Structuration Theory, which omits explanation of how the passage of time affects social structure, morphogenetic cycles emphasise the dynamic nature of structure and action in that they differ over time and space. Social structure predates the social actions which remodel it and the resulting remodelled structure postdates those social actions. Consequently, morphogenetic cycles aid Structuration Theory in understanding how, for example, female motorcyclists enter a pre-existing male dominated subculture and then through their collective agency are able to remodel that subcultural space over time to become more gender equal.

My participants’ experience of “being” (*dasein*)⁹ in their chosen sport/s is examined phenomenologically. As Brymer and Schweitzer (2017, p. x) contend, ‘the ultimate aim of phenomenology is to return to immediate or primordial experience through intuition or insight’. By situating phenomenology within an overarching model of structuration, this research attends to at least one possible criticism of the phenomenological model. Namely, by focussing on the experiences of the individual, insufficient attention is paid to the influence of macro-level social structures with a corresponding overemphasis of the role of individual agency. The intuitive insights

⁹ Defined by Martin Heidegger (1962 : 62) as ‘the analytic of the existentiality of existence’.

provided by a phenomenological analysis of my participants' lived experiences, developed through analysing their interview transcripts, was used to form questions which were quantitatively evaluated for any (in)congruence with interview data using a self-completion questionnaire survey.

To further elaborate on my conceptual framework I will first present a succinct explanation of the structuration model. Next, I will briefly introduce Dave Elder-Vass's (2012) proposal that social science research should be articulated within a critical realist, social constructionist ontology, before finally providing a brief overview of Alfred Schutz's (1967) sociological phenomenology.

2.1 Structuration model.

Originally formulated by Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and Anthony Giddens (1976, 1984) and significantly revised since (Stones, 2005; Elder-Vass, 2010, 2012; Morawska, 2013a; Morawska, 2013b), the structuration approach posits the ongoing process of the development of an individual's human agency and the (multi-level) societal structures which are constructed by and which (re)constitute each other through mutual engagements. Structures can be conceived of as more or less durable patterns of social (including economic, educational and political) relations and cultural formations (re)constituted through the everyday practice of agile¹⁰ social actors. Moreover, structures are plural in their purposes, modes of operation and dynamics. Human agency refers to everyday engagements with their structural environment by individuals whose pursuits are informed by the available "cultural tools" or repositories of basic guidelines (or 'norm circles' (Elder-Vass, 2012, p. 22) responsible for endorsing and enforcing action) and actual resources (knowledge,

¹⁰ The formation and (re)constitution of culture in a constantly evolving social world requires its members to be dynamic, innovative contributors rather than static, concrete observers. See Morawska (2011)

skills, and position in societal structures). These daily engagements can reproduce, elaborate and transform the surrounding structures through individuals' interactive responses to the problems posed by changing situations.

2.2 Realist Social Constructionism.

Dave Elder-Vass (2012) argues that the notion of a synergy between realism and social constructionism has been dismissed by some on the grounds that they are contradictory. However, Elder-Vass (2012) proposes that, with subtle modifications, realism and social constructionism can become mutually complementary. This is articulated by Elder-Vass (2012, p. 3 emphasis in the original) who suggests that 'social scientists should be *both* realists *and* social constructionists'. To combine these differing ontological perspectives into a single useful synthesis, Elder-Vass suggests that the beliefs held by radical social constructionists - that all things reside in the social world *only* because of how humans think of them - should be rejected in favour of a more moderate approach. This approach is more in line with Elder-Vass's brand of realism and the belief 'that there are features of the world that are the way they are *independently* of how we think about them' Elder-Vass (2012, p. 6 my emphasis). A form of social constructionism complementary to realism is, therefore, a moderate one (Elder-Vass, 2012). One which accepts that there are some things existing in the world in the way that they do, whether we think of them or not. To illustrate the utility of Elder-Vass's (2012) proposition, pre European Enlightenment Aristotelian Scholasticism, the dominant knowledge paradigm (Kuhn, 1970) for centuries, considered that the Earth was the centre of the Universe with all other celestial bodies in orbit around it. The Renaissance mathematician and astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), showed that the Sun was in fact at the centre of our universe and that all other bodies orbit around it. In reality, though, the Earth

had always been in orbit around the Sun independently of our beliefs, which were then modified in a fundamental shift of the knowledge paradigm, to accommodate revised human knowledge.

I propose that a synthesis of critical realism and moderate social constructionism, such as that posited by Elder-Vass (2012), provides this research with a persuasive account for how individuals initially choose, join and subsequently (re)produce or potentially modify, the three sporting subcultures researched here.

2.3 Sociological Phenomenology.

Phenomenology, originally formulated by Edmund Husserl, commends its practitioners to study a phenomena 'in itself' (Husserl, 1970, p. 48) as it is apprehended and experienced by the human senses (Merleau-Ponty, 2005 [1945]; Moran, 2000). However, rather than being bound by a single unifying theme, phenomenology is considered by Spiegelberg (2012) as being more like a movement. This is mainly due to it constantly 'reinterpreting its own meaning to an extent that makes it impossible to rely on a standard definition' (Spiegelberg, 2012, p. 2). This has led to there being as many different versions of phenomenology as there are practitioners of it (Spiegelberg, 2012). There is, however, one unifying concept identifiable in all versions of phenomenology and that is Husserl's original injunction that phenomenologists must always return to the '*sachen selbst*' or to the 'things themselves' (Husserl, 1939, p. 117).

However, Husserl's (1939) original formulation of phenomenology emphasised the essence of phenomena as apprehended by an individual's transcendental ego (Ritzer, 1992). Husserl's phenomenology can, therefore, be considered largely as a philosophical thesis and is thus unsuitable, without comprehensive modifications, for

this sociological study. In contrast, Alfred Schutz's phenomenological project evolved from Husserl's original model and, rather than focussing on an individual's transcendental ego, is concerned with the intersubjectivity between the everyday lives of social actors, whilst at the same time retaining Husserl's vision of 'phenomenology as a rigorous science' (Ritzer, 1992, p. 414). Schutz's position is that 'sociology's task is to make a scientific study of social phenomena' (Schutz, 1967, p. 9). Schutz achieves this in some measure by extending Max Weber's original conceptualisation of meaningful social action, or *verstehen*, (Morrison, 2006, p. 447) which Schutz criticises as being theoretically simplistic and incomplete, castigating Weber for 'analysing them [social actions] only as seemed necessary for his own purposes' (Schutz, 1967, p. 9). According to Schutz (1967), Weber's conceptualisation of social action is primitive and, therefore, not fully developed due to its failure to fully differentiate between social action and mere behaviour (Schutz, 1967). For an example of differentiation: is my cough merely a physiological reaction to something in my throat which, therefore, needs clearing, or is my cough directed at an individual to attract their attention? If it is the former then it is merely behaviour. If it is the latter it would be a directed social action with a specific, attention seeking goal. The main aim then of Schutzian phenomenology is 'the clarification of Max Weber's basic concept of interpretive sociology' (Schutz, 1967, p. 13) through a scientific re-understanding of social action.

Schutz (1967) accomplishes this through adopting Weber's (1961) notion of the social scientist constructing a second order 'ideal type'¹¹ (Schutz, 1967, pp. 186-187; M. Weber, 1961, p. 59) to describe specific social actions which are themselves constructed by the individuals' first order experience of their everyday life within their

¹¹ 'the construction of certain elements of reality into a logically precise conception' (Weber, 1961: 59)

cultural milieus. These first order constructs or 'typifications' (Ritzer, 1992, p. 417) exert a coercive socialising influence on an individuals' everyday life world or (*Weltanschauung*)¹² due to being 'largely socially derived and socially approved' (Ritzer, 1992, p. 418).

For the purposes of this research, I propose that my second order thematic constructs, which form the framework of my interview guide, should be considered as analogous to the ideal types discussed above. The themes, which are then explored through the first order social and cultural experiences contained within my respondents' everyday life world, are exposed and developed as typifications through the process of being interviewed. Thus, the typifications formed from the phenomena apprehended by my participants illuminate how my participants construct their life world, which they then share with other members of their sporting subculture.

¹² German term for 'the worldview or philosophy of life of different groups within society' (Scott and Marshall, 2009 : 803)

Chapter Three

Research Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction.

Charles Ragin contends that although social life is endlessly diverse and complex, the primary goal of social researchers is to attempt to understand, and then to make sense of, complex social diversity (Ragin, 1994). Consequently, an aim of this research is not merely to report on the three sporting subcultures but to offer a comparative analysis of any similarities. The research aims to provide insights enabling an identification of Shutzian ideal typologies useful in predicting potential future subcultural members. Analysis of leisure sports based on a common theoretical framework is considered an effective use of a comparative design by Esser and Vliegenthart (2017). Esser and Vliegenthart (2017, p. 2) propose that comparative research designs, unlike single case studies, allow contrasts to be identified between 'different macro-level units, such as (...) social milieus, language areas and cultural thickenings'. Bryman (2008) proposes that comparative designs allow the researcher to test the utility, or not, of an existing theory. To that end, I used a mixture of (largely) qualitative and to a lesser extent quantitative methods, utilising descriptive statistics, in order to understand the selected leisure sports' diversity and subculturally significant phenomenon. The largely qualitative nature of this research, which is concerned with exploring the lived experience of those who engage in risky leisure sports, is considered by Silverman (2010) as an ideal methodology for this type of research as it will predominantly ask the *how* and *why* questions rather than the *how many* questions - the domain of purely quantitative

methodologies. That being said, in an attempt to increase my research's external validity, and hence any generaliseable features, it would be useful to identify quantifiable commonalities or differences within and across the three leisure sports. Therefore, I triangulated my qualitative findings by using an internet based, cross sectional survey questionnaire described more fully below.

It is, however, not my intention that this research necessarily provides generaliseable knowledge, but that it should be considered as 'plausible, yet partial and tentative' (Morawska, 1997, p. 68) and should be treated as interpretive (Ragin & Amoroso, 2011) potentially providing a set of heuristic markers to guide further research.

3.2 Reflexivity.

Considered by Finlay (2003) to be a fundamentally key aspect of qualitative research, reflexivity provides opportunities to focus on researcher bias, social and cultural impacts on participants' responses and the researcher's analysis and interpretation of stories (Conklin, 2007). Therefore, in an attempt to confront my biases and, as a male researcher, to reflect on how the research process affects my ongoing understanding of my participants' lived experiences (especially in the female dominated sport of equestrianism) during the qualitative phase of this research I kept reflective notes after each interview. After contact with my participants, I recorded my contemporaneous thoughts and reflections in order to 'monitor and audit the research process' (Finlay, 2003, p. 4). These auditable and retrievable reflective and reflexive accounts of my interactions with research participants, according to Coffey and Atkinson (1996), could play an important part in the quest for validity throughout my data collection.

I believe my biggest challenge, concerning any conscious or unconscious bias in carrying out this study, is that I am an experienced male motorcyclist trying to understand female participation in the subculture. I am also a mature male interviewing predominantly younger female horse riders and snowsports participants. However, I am encouraged by Merton's (1972) notion of insiders and outsiders. Rejecting the extreme insider thesis which posits that only like can truly understand like, Merton (1972), adopting a moderate view, does not consider that my privileged, embedded position within the motorcycle subculture is great cause for concern. He argues that if this were the case in contemporary Sociology, *only* those with a privileged position could understand and intellectualise their particular social milieu. For example, only female motorcyclists could understand female motorcyclists, only white male horse riders could understand white male horse riders and so on. As Simmel and Weber contend, "one need not be Caesar in order to understand Caesar" (Merton, 1972, p. 31). However, throughout this research I have been mindful of, and attempted to employ Husserl's 'phenomenological epoché' (Husserl, 1970, p. 45), a process of the researcher 'bracketing' out preconceptions of 'all scientific, philosophical, cultural, and everyday assumptions' (Moran, 2000, p. 11). Therefore, I have endeavoured to identify, confront and suspend any bias that may influence my interpretations of my participants' lived experience.

3.3 Ethical considerations.

Prior to commencing any research with human participants, ethical approval was obtained from the University of Essex Research and Enterprise Office (REO) using the 'ethical approval application form for staff and doctoral students' currently available via the University of Essex REO home page. Furthermore, ethical guidelines provided by the British Sociological Association (BSA, 2002) and the

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, 2015) with particular reference to those concerned with anonymity, confidentiality, safety and privacy were consulted and incorporated. All interview respondents were adult with written informed consent being obtained on a suitable form authorised by the REO (Appendix 1). I have deposited the signed originals of consent forms in a lockable filing cabinet. Scanned electronic copies have been sent to respondents. A project information sheet (Appendix 2) devised in collaboration with the REO was made available to all participants, either electronically by email or as a paper copy. This provided sufficient information about my study and allows for a participant's informed consent.

Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time up to data analysis and were able to decline to answer interview questions. Interviews were digitally recorded on a portable voice recorder. The participants' identities were anonymised using pseudonyms, chosen by me, at the start of verbatim transcription. Participants were, however, given the option to choose their own pseudonym.

To comply with the Data Protection Act (1998), recordings are securely stored on a password-protected laptop computer which remained in the United Kingdom throughout my research. Further copies are stored for safekeeping on the University of Essex's secure data server. Although I took digital images of anonymous showgoers and trade stand personnel at trade events, I consider that my photographs do not materially differ from those which would normally be expected to be taken at such public events and, therefore, do not infringe the individual privacy of attendees.

Personal data collected digitally is purely for research use and as such complies with section 3.2 of the University of Essex's Data Protection Act (1998) guidance notes. This stipulates that (subject to ethical considerations) an exemption under the act exists so that such data can be held indefinitely to be re-visited and re-analysed

for future research in a related area (University of Essex, 2017). Furthermore, my participants have all given their consent, given suitable ethical re-validation in the future, for their data to be used for secondary analysis.

Lastly, but as important as protecting my research participants, as a researcher in the Social Sciences I need to ensure my professional integrity and personal credibility is upheld by presenting my research findings truthfully and accurately.

3.4 Data Collection

Primary data was obtained from the sources detailed below and used the following methods:

- Fieldwork observations from trade shows, one from each sport
- Semi-structured interviews
- Web based cross sectional, self completion questionnaire survey

3.4.1 Fieldwork observations.

I attended three British trade shows and other specific events during 2017-2019 in order to immerse myself into the leisure sport subcultures and to observe firsthand the human interaction which I consider essential in the (re)production of the leisure sports social milieu. Furthermore, fieldwork allowed me to test *a priori* themes facilitating development of any *a posteriori* themes.

I attended the following trade exhibitions and events:

- *The Telegraph Ski and Snowboard Show*, Battersea, London - 26-29th
October 2017

- *Motorcycle Live*, Birmingham NEC - 18-26th November 2017
- Equestrian one day event held near Colchester, Essex – 26th May 2019

Before I began my observations, I approached the organisers of the equestrian one day event to gain their permission; an unaccompanied male taking photographs, especially at a female dominated equestrian event, may arouse suspicions.

As an ethnographic training exercise, a pilot visit to *Motorcycle Live* at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, was carried out in November 2016. Although I attended this trade show as a member of the general public and not as a researcher, I wanted to get a feel for a real environment in which to test and expand my knowledge of ethnography as a non-active researcher in a safe unpressurised way. To aid a systematic approach to the exhibition visit I developed, with my supervisor, a list of themes (Appendix 6) to guide my observations. This was adapted for use in my later fieldwork observations.

3.4.2 Sample selection.

Human participants for the qualitative data collection formed a non-probability, purposive snowball sample (Bryman, 2008). I included an equal gender balance chosen by subculture membership not socioeconomic status; however, socioeconomic data was collected for analysis. I selected a snowball technique not only because it is a popular form of qualitative data collection, but it also ‘delivers a unique *type of knowledge*’ (Noy, 2008, p. 331 original emphasis). Noy argues that as snowball sampling is fundamentally social, in that it taps into existing (organically dynamic) social networks, the knowledge that it elicits can acquire the “thickness” valorised by qualitative social science research (Noy, 2008).

Sample selection for the quantitative survey can be considered as a purposive snowball sample (Bryman, 2003). Being a snowball sample I exerted no influence or input regarding gender or socioeconomic status thus any researcher bias was reduced or eliminated. Although a snowball sample is considered to be a non-probability sample (Bryman, 2003) in that the sample will not be selected randomly, the knowledge it helps to develop will have positive implications for the (limited) generalisability of my research across the target population.

3.4.3 Gatekeepers.

Careful planning by the researcher, before trying to gain access to a subcultural group, is challenging because the amount of time required to acquire what Wolf (1991, p. 22) describes as an 'insider's perspective' may be at odds with the amount of time the research project offers. Moreover, as Crowhurst (2013, p. 471) points out, the role of gatekeeper (who facilitates access to a targeted group) has traditionally been seen as being merely 'mechanistic and instrumental'- individuals that have to be negotiated with purely due to their useful relationship with the target group. The relationship I have with my gatekeepers is hoped to be more in line with what Crowhurst (2013, p. 471 original emphasis) envisages as 'dynamic *encounters* between gatekeepers, researchers and participants, which shape and transform the process of gaining access and the research as a whole'. My gatekeepers are known to me, though much like Simmel's (1964 [1950], p. 402) 'stranger' rather than as personal friends. Consequently, being both close and distant, as Simmel (1964 [1950]) indicates, I can approach them objectively. They are currently engaged in equestrian and snowsports activities and have agreed to grant me access to their personal networks. However, I am reminded by O'Reilly (2012) who notes that a fruitful relationship with a gatekeeper: a) relies on continuous negotiation and b) is

built on trust. As a motorcyclist for over forty years I have developed Wolf's (1991) "insider perspective", I am, therefore, well placed to act as my own gatekeeper to gain access to the motorcycling subculture. I am aware that my "insider perspective" carries potentially difficult political responsibilities: how much of myself do I expose to my respondents? Appearing to know too much can stifle interviews, conversely, appearing to know too little could come across as being disinterested or even rude (O'Reilly, 2012).

3.4.4 Semi-structured interviews.

To gain an in-depth content with thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of my participants' lived experience which travel beyond the superficiality of conversational encounters, I used semi-structured interviews. Research interviews are, according to Steinar Kvale (1996, p. 1) 'attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world'. Feminist writer Anne Oakley (1979) warns against treating interview participants as mere objects for sociological study, a resource to be exploited for its own ends. Consequently, with this and Crowhurst's (2013) advice in mind, I exercised caution to promote an atmosphere of equality in a non-hierarchical environment which is conducive to a dynamic encounter. To assist me I adopted the guidance provided by Brymer and Schweitzer (2017, p. 50) who advise that 'the most important quality to bring to the phenomenological interview is a deep sense of curiosity where the 'taken for granted' is regarded as unfamiliar.

I considered that, mainly due to the constraints in resources for a lone researcher, circa fourteen interviews per leisure sport (forty two in total) was sufficient to identify commonalities or differences within my respondent sample and across the three

leisure spots. An interview guide was prepared based on themes directly related to my research questions (appendix 3). Interviews of circa one hour duration¹³ were digitally recorded with typed verbatim transcripts produced using *Dragon Naturally Speaking* speech-to-text software. I have used this technique before finding it considerably more accurate and time effective than the traditional listen/type system. At the conclusion of the interview I asked permission from the respondent to re-contact them for any follow-up questions or to clarify any ambiguities that may arise later. I also considered if the interview warrants an early (polite) termination due to poor quality responses. This happened during one interview when the female participants' uninvited male partner joined in thus potentially skewing her responses.

3.4.5 Themes to be examined.

The following six *a priori* themes were devised as a start point to guide my qualitative data collection:

- Individuals' socialisation into their chosen sport/s
- Subculture composition of the three sports
- Personal psychosocial needs fulfilled by engaging in their chosen sport/s (hedonism, transcendence, empowerment)
- Risk perception and risk coping strategies
- Potential causes of gender inequality
- How and if gender inequality is handled and/or overcome

I added further themes/subthemes throughout the process of data collection.

¹³ One hour is a guide, many were longer, others less so dependent on the quality of communication

These themes, along with a number of supporting questions, are contained in the interview guide. They directly relate to my research questions and were developed in conjunction with insights from my literature review and my own *a priori* assumptions. I used the same printed copy of the guide for all interviews thereby acting as a thematic aide memoir as well as offering a standardised level of internal validity¹⁴ across all interviews. Although all themes were addressed, to aid the flow of conversation, questions relating to those themes were not always asked in the same order. I considered the natural flow of a conversation, rather than rigidly obeying the guide's question order, would allow participants a more comfortable space in which to articulate their answers in greater depth and, as a result, would provide me a greater insight into their life world. Therefore, I find myself adopting the spirit of the proposals made by Ken Plummer (2001) and David Silverman (2010) that a research methodology should be our servant and not our master.

3.4.6 Self completion survey questionnaire.

To provide a means whereby the validity of my qualitative interpretations can be supported I have used an internet based self completion survey questionnaire to triangulate them. However, as Hammersley (2008) suggests, I have done so without advocating primacy of one method over another. The questions my survey asks were informed from some of my participants' interview responses and were formulated using proprietary software licensed from *Qualtrics* by the University of Essex. The survey was launched via email to some previous interview participants who agreed to forward it to their fellow sporting participants. I also launched the survey via my personal Facebook page, where I asked my Facebook friends to 'like'

¹⁴ Is the research measuring what the researcher believes is being measured through the systematic elimination of potential biases?

and 'share' the link to the survey. The survey was also placed on the Facebook pages of several local motorcycling, skiing and horseriding groups. Cascading the survey in this way has resulted in attracting 544 participants across the three sporting disciplines.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Thematic Analysis.

Thematic Analysis (TA) is espoused by Braun and Clarke (2006) as a research method *in its own right* which has, according to Javadi and Zarea (2016), become a popular choice for the analysis of qualitative data. Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2006) propose that TA should be considered as a foundation method for novice researchers. Advocating further for TA's foundation status, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that TA should be the first qualitative method to be learned 'as it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). With this in mind, Braun and Clarke (2006) have formulated an easily understood, six part prescriptive model for TA befitting its foundational position. However, authors such as Potter (1997) although speaking about Discourse Analysis which like TA explores immanent themes in qualitative data, argue that models for qualitative analysis are inappropriate and should not be followed like cookery recipes as 'a large part of doing discourse analysis is a craft skill, more like bike riding or sexing a chicken than following the recipe for a mild Rogan Josh' (Potter, 1997, pp. 147-148). A later contrasting view in support of prescriptive guides, such as that offered for TA by Braun and Clarke (2006), is advanced by McLeod (2011). He contends that the absence of suitable guides reinforce notions of the mystery of qualitative analysis which, as a result, elevates it to a level accessible only by the researching elite. It seems entirely reasonable that

suitable, methodologically rigorous, guides are made available to those early career researchers as yet untrained in qualitative analysis. Moreover, if, as Guest *et al* (2012) suggest, TA is becoming a more popular method of qualitative analysis, a prescriptive guide such as that provided by Braun and Clarke (2006) should be considered as an invaluable companion to the production of a rigorous TA.

A prescriptive guide is, therefore, convenient for my research as TA is considered to be an easily assessable and flexible analytic tool for early career researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is due, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), to TA requiring no extra specialist linguistic training as would be required for a discourse or narrative analysis. Moreover, its flexibility of application (Braun & Clarke, 2006) lends itself to the analysis of a broad spectrum of qualitative data interpretation including ethnographic interviews (Aronson, 1995), social policy (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994) and phenomenology (Bevan, 2014; Van Manen, 2014). Furthermore, unlike theory driven, deductive approaches such as Conversation Analysis (CA) or Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), TA can be applied independently of any theoretical or epistemological preconceptions or considerations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The benefits of theoretical and epistemological independence and flexibility are further enhanced by the ability to apply TA to either an inductive, deductive, or a combination of the two approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This feature is particularly salient to my research as although I formulated my interview guide largely from my own *a priori* deductive personal lived experience and fieldwork observations, several latent themes, such as participation in their sport being compared with the euphoria associated with drug use, emerged inductively from an analysis of the interview data. Finally, Braun and Clarke (2006) propose that the theoretical freedom enjoyed by TA extends to it being considered an appropriate fit

with an ontologically constructivist research study such as this. This ontological and epistemological flexibility aids my research which examines the everyday lived experience of my individual participants' understanding of the reality of events, their experiences of them and what they mean and how they are closely affected by, and linked to, a range of social discourses.

However, TA is not immune from criticism. Central to its operation is its identification, or development, of specific themes during the analysis of any form of qualitative data. For this reason Boyatzis (1998) sees TA as merely a universal tool to be applied to *any* qualitative data rather than being considered as an analytic method in its own right. Although being relatively simple and accessible, this simplicity has led to a criticism of TA even by its champions, Braun and Clarke (2006). They argue that as no specialised linguistic understanding is required from the practitioner of TA it is, consequently, unable to offer the practitioner any analytical assertions as to the participants' use of language (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Moreover, Nowell et al (2017) assert that due to the scarcity of published literature relating to TA as a distinct analytical method, as opposed to those methods which specifically address phenomenology, grounded theory or ethnography, it may leave novice researchers feeling unsure in their ability to produce a meticulous thematic analysis. However, my research attempts to go some way to counter that criticism in the following ways: by a) the rigorous application of Braun and Clark's (2006) guide to a systematic TA; b) the application of Nowell et al's (2017) approach to testing the (in)veracity of the analysis and; c) the use of a quantitative method, in this case a survey questionnaire, to triangulate the results of my qualitative findings.

3.5.2 Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of Thematic Analysis.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step method was used to assist data analysis as detailed below:

Figure 3.1

Phase of Analysis	Describing the process
1. Familiarisation of the data:	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Defining and naming themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Reviewing themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question(s) and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

The six phases of Thematic Analysis. Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006)

3.5.3 Nvivo 12 CAQDAS.

NVivo 12, is a suite of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) provided free of charge to researchers by the University of Essex. I have attended two NVivo courses as part of my continuing professional development as a researcher and have access to online tutorials and instructional textbooks specific to

Nvivo 12. Using CAQDAS allows the data set to be organised in such a way that promotes easy electronic storage and retrieval of specific sections or themes in the data during their analysis (Silver and Lewins, 2014). I have used the software much as Silver and Lewins (2014) propose by using it as a well organised, easily accessible and electronic filing cabinet. Although being a useful tool in speeding up the data storage, data security and retrieval process, while at the same time maintaining order and organisation of so much data, Silver and Lewins (2014) point out that that CAQDAS has its limitations. CAQDAS cannot generate or interpret surface level or latent themes; therefore, it cannot replace the creative analytical and interpretive process of a human analyst.

I will now present a detailed, phase by phase account of my analysis using Braun and Clarke's (2006) model.

3.5.4 Phase one: Familiarisation of the data.

All previously digitally recorded interviews were transcribed, verbatim, by me onto separate Microsoft Word documents. During the interviews I had allowed participants to either choose their own pseudonym or they allowed me to select a suitable gendered pseudonym. It was at the transcription stage and onwards that only pseudonyms were used. In the event, all but one participant allowed me to choose for them. Directly after each interview I recorded my verbal reflections of the interview. I noted how the interview was conducted and whether the participant and I had managed to develop a sufficiently good rapport, conducive to capturing at least a glimpse of Erving Goffman's (1969 [1959], p. 114) notion of my respondent's 'backstage'. Although Goffman did not carry out interviews, this is where, according to Goffman (1969 [1959]), an individual's, usually private and publicly repressed, true nature emerges from behind the facade, or public face, normally reserved for

interactions with others who have not developed such an intimate rapport. I also noted the location where the interview was carried out and how that location either encouraged and promoted, or hindered, the flow of conversation. I always gave participants the option to choose the location for the interview in an attempt to suppress any potential imbalance of power between researcher and participant. As a result of offering the participant the choice of interview location, I believe my interviews benefit from an authenticity which may be lacking had they been conducted in a more alien formal setting. The following is an example of how the environment can influence the interview. I carried out an interview of a male motorcyclist, and a senior figure within a large organisation, in his office. His constant use of expletive suggested he was very relaxed, maybe even tinged with bravado as I was a complete stranger to him. I feel sure he would not use such language during his everyday interactions with his colleagues. Furthermore, I considered, reflexively, how the process of carrying out a research interview had an ongoing role in developing my own interviewing skills and how I could incorporate the experience into the next and subsequent interviews.

In accordance with the terms of my ethical approval, all raw data recordings remain securely stored on my password protected laptop computer and also on the University of Essex's secure data cloud.

I used the voice to text software package, *Dragon Naturally Speaking Premium*, version 13 to produce my transcriptions. The use of speech recognition software greatly reduced the time required for me, an unskilled researcher/typist, to produce a faithful and accurate transcription of interviews. Initial transcription was carried out by listening to the recording via headphones and attempting to simultaneously recite the words heard through the headphones into the software microphone. I was able to

adjust the speed of the recording's playback, allowing extra time for me to cognitively process what the respondent was saying. This was useful as some respondents spoke more quickly than others. Interview duration was between forty-five minutes and one and a half hours with initial transcription taking between four and five hours. Once the initial transcription had been completed I returned to the beginning and repeated the process this time reading the transcript whilst listening to the respondent and correcting any errors in either my understanding, where ambient noise had masked a response or where the software has misinterpreted my verbalisations. I carried out a final check as to the transcriptions accuracy and my understanding of the participant's words by sending the completed transcript to the participant for their comments. Known as 'respondent validation' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 11; Silverman, 2001, p. 233), it is a measure of methodological or 'internal validity' (Bryman, 2008, p. 32; Conklin, 2007; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Silverman, 2001) which considers whether the data collected measures what the researcher believes it does. This procedure ensured that the interview data was reviewed, by the respondent, as a check for accuracy of their meaning and for any potential misunderstandings or other discrepancies to be challenged and corrected prior to inputting into the CAQDAS package. Moreover, the act of listening twice to the data allowed me to become immersed in what the respondent was saying and to note any 'latent' themes which Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 84) propose is the finding and consideration of any underlying ideas existing underneath the surface layer of meaning but which may have helped form that surface layer. A taxonomy to tease out potentially latent themes from those which present as initially obvious has been formulated by Bazeley (2009). An adaptation of her taxonomy, tailored for my

research, is presented below. The taxonomy features three levels of analysis:

Describe \Rightarrow Compare \Rightarrow Relate.

Figure 3.2

Describe:	Details of the participant. How did participants talk about the issue and how many participants discussed it. What they included and omitted in their discussion.
Compare:	Differences or similarities in the central issue within and across the sporting disciplines and gender. Is the theme expressed differently in each group or is it absent?
Relate:	How did this issue arise and under what conditions? How does this issue relate to the existing literature? Is there a link between the sporting disciplines? Can I identify an 'ideal type' of participant?

Bazeley's Taxonomy of latent themes, adapted from Bazeley (2009).

My immersion in the qualitative interview data during the initial transcription, its subsequent editing and secure storage including triangulation with my quantitative survey questionnaire, suggests that the requirements proposed by Nowell et al (2017) for their test of trustworthiness in phase one of Braun and Clarke's (2006) model, presented earlier in fig 3.1, have been addressed and phase one of my data analysis can be considered trustworthy.

3.5.5 Phases two and three: Generating central issues and the ongoing search for themes.

Before proceeding with a presentation of the process of theme generation, it may be useful at this point to define the constituent parts of a theme as used in my research. Although many qualitative research textbooks mention themes as being

fundamental to qualitative research, a cogent definition for them is generally not coherently articulated. DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000) go so far as to suggest that a definition of what constitutes a theme is often left to the researcher, or reader, to interpret for themselves arguing that:

Readers are often burdened unfairly by having to determine what researchers mean by themes that they state they have identified in research reports but that they never describe or discuss further (DeSantis & Ugarriza, 2000, p. 367).

However, Brink and Wood (1998), had previously suggested that their point of departure when describing a theme was to propose that a theme is a feature found in the data which corresponds to a *central issue*. Elaborating on this, based on a synthesis of the development of the themes described in content analyses, ethnography, phenomenology and grounded theory forming their literature review, the later work of DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000) provides greater depth and clarity to the earlier Brink and Wood (1998) definition. They propose:

A theme is an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole (DeSantis & Ugarriza, 2000, p. 362).

Finally, Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) encapsulates all the above whilst also focusing on the centrality of theme development to the research question(s) by asserting that:

[A] theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set.

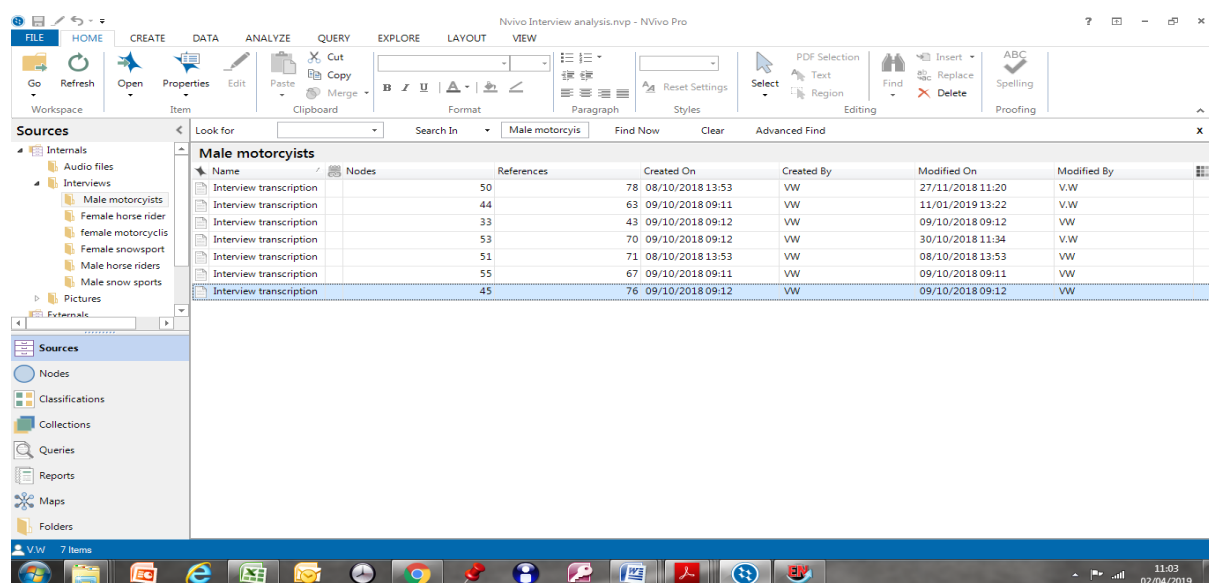
3.5.6 Phase five: Defining and naming themes.

Answering a criticism by DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000) regarding the lack of a suitable definition for what a theme is in qualitative thematic analysis, I present to my reader a synthesis of those previous definitions for defining a theme as it pertains to my research:

A theme is a recurring feature or topic found within and/or across all of the interview transcripts which represent something important in the lived experience of my participants in relation to my research questions.

Transcription data from forty interviews were inserted into *Nvivo* 12 CAQDAS labelled as sources and subdivided into six separate folders. Each folder related to male and female participants in the three sporting disciplines with each participant's transcription occupying its own sub folder (see fig 3.3).

Figure 3.3



An *Nvivo* screenshot showing six source folders by gender and sporting discipline.

One male motorcyclist is highlighted

Digital images harvested from my fieldwork observations were also uploaded into *Nvivo*'s picture folder under sources. These images provide a useful cross sectional

snapshot relating to the gendered participation and the demographics of trade show visitors at the typical public events attended by my participants.

3.5.7 Phase four: Reviewing and revising themes.

Using the Nodes¹⁵ label I started developing a list of metacategories or central issues which related to general areas surrounding my research questions. Owing to the large and possibly overwhelming amount of data harvested from three sports and forty interviews, I reviewed and combined some themes I had previously defined and named. This required a departure from Braun and Clarke's (2006) original sequential model of TA. I initially started to analyse twelve transcriptions comprising two male and two female respondents from each of the three sporting disciplines. This allowed me to start coding for themes found within each data set and adding them to the appropriate central issue. For example, if the respondent spoke about any early familial influences in their participation of their sport, that was input under the central issue of "socialisation". Answers to questions relating to the participant receiving any previous sporting injuries and how these may change their engagement in their sport were placed under the central issue of "risk awareness". Using this example figure 3.4 indicates that the theme of "has injury changed how you participate?" features across thirty-two out of forty interviews and is mentioned forty-one times. The facility to immediately identify the frequency of the occurrence of specific themes in the source interview transcriptions when combined with the frequency of respondents' reference to that theme is useful in identifying what respondents consider to be an important issue for them.

¹⁵ Nvivo use the term Node as a collective noun to specify a feature of central importance found in a data source

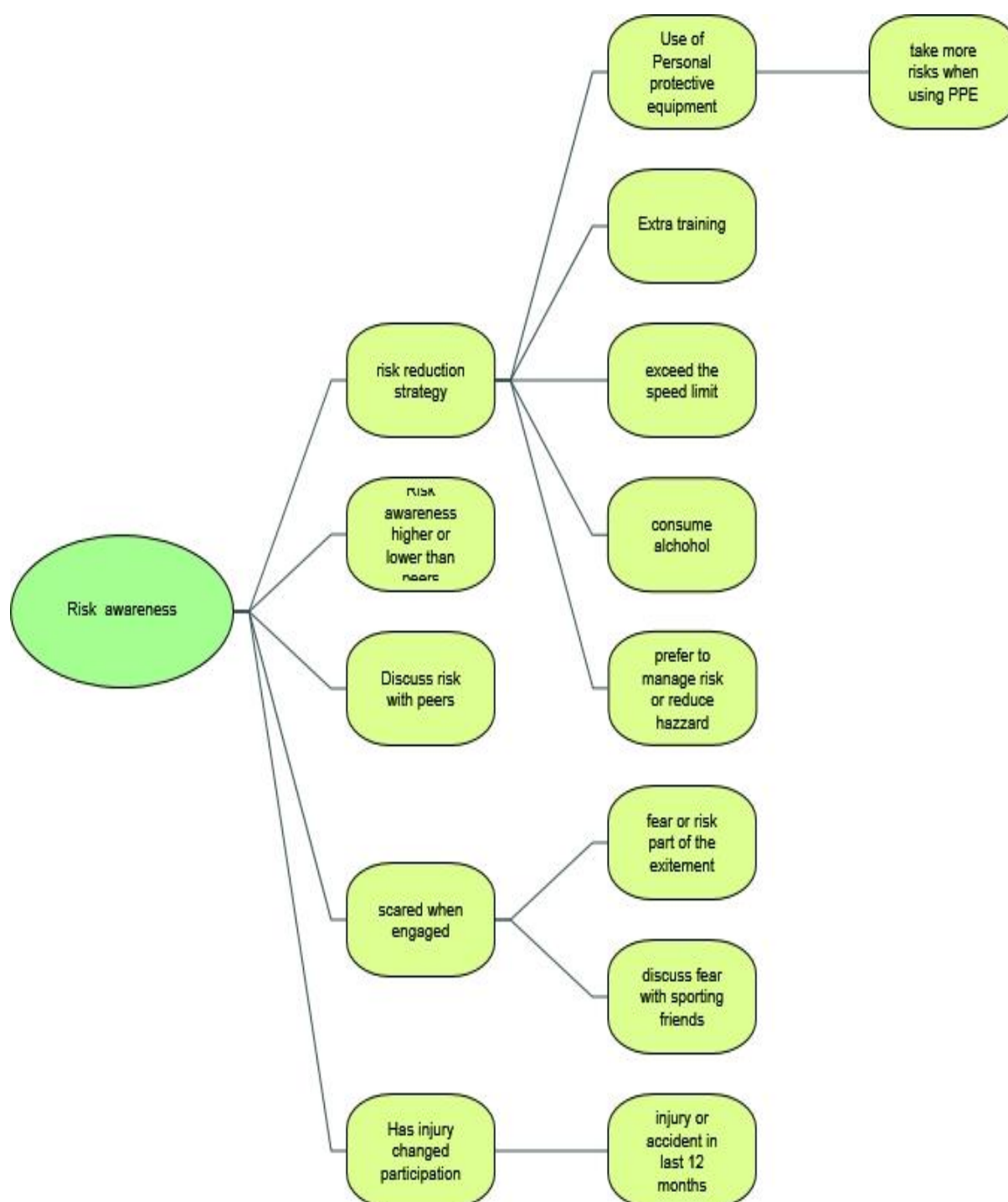
Figure 3.4

Name	References	Sources	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Risk awareness	34	58	08/10/2018 12:13	VW	16/02/2019 15:46	VW
accident in previous 12 months	9	9	16/10/2018 09:54	VW	16/01/2019 11:49	VW
Alcohol consumption	34	54	16/10/2018 09:55	VW	16/02/2019 15:51	VW
being in control	8	14	29/10/2018 09:53	VW	12/02/2019 12:24	VW
change in risk perception over time	29	37	29/10/2018 12:12	VW	16/02/2019 15:52	VW
discussion of risk or fear with sporting friends	38	68	10/10/2018 15:35	VW	16/02/2019 15:40	VW
ever been injured	21	24	30/10/2018 11:00	VW	16/02/2019 15:49	VW
exceed the speed limit	12	17	30/10/2018 11:04	VW	29/01/2019 13:22	VW
fear or risk part of the excitement of riding, skiing	26	41	10/10/2018 16:24	VW	16/02/2019 15:36	VW
has injury changed how you participate	32	41	10/10/2018 16:31	VW	16/02/2019 15:49	VW
Manage risk	29	35	16/10/2018 09:47	VW	16/02/2019 15:29	VW
modify riding with pillion	6	7	29/10/2018 15:51	VW	23/01/2019 11:50	VW
public perception of how risky or frightening the spor	11	15	29/10/2018 09:47	VW	12/02/2019 09:59	VW
Reduce hazards	5	6	16/10/2018 09:47	VW	29/01/2019 13:15	VW
Risk awareness higher, lower or the same as peers	37	43	10/10/2018 16:29	VW	16/02/2019 15:47	VW
risk reduction or management strategy	34	73	10/10/2018 15:44	VW	16/02/2019 15:48	VW
Extra lessons	37	65	16/10/2018 09:58	VW	16/02/2019 15:27	VW
PPE	36	91	16/10/2018 09:56	VW	16/02/2019 15:52	VW
pink or female specific	8	17	07/11/2018 09:51	VW	29/01/2019 13:26	VW
take more risks when wearing PPE	7	9	29/10/2018 14:52	VW	12/02/2019 15:48	VW

The theme “has injury changed how you participate?” filed under the central issue of “Risk awareness”.

As TA is considered to be an iterative process of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ritchie & Spencer, 1994; Ritchie, Spencer, & O'Connor, 2003), after I had completed the initial pass of twelve interviews, I revisited the themes to rationalise and combine any themes which seemed to be closely related to each other but did not require their own separate theme. I then continued the process of identifying new themes, or adding data to existing themes, for the remaining twenty eight transcriptions. The completed central issue of “risk awareness”, with its many corresponding themes, is illustrated in figure 3.4 above. In addition to the list view, *Nvivo* provides a useful and easily accessible mind map which allows a visual representation of theme evolution from a central issue. The central issue of the risk awareness of participants and the corresponding evolution of themes developed from within the data is presented in figure 3.5 below.

Figure 3.5



Development of the theme of risk awareness

3.5.8 Self completion Survey Questionnaire.

Bryman (2008) proposes that a test for the validity of findings within qualitative data can be ascertained by using more than one method, or source of data, as a cross check. This cross checking of one data source with another data source is defined as 'triangulation' (Bryman, 2008; Gilbert, 2008; Hammersley, 2008). In an attempt to support the validity of my research, and at the same time comply with Nowell et al's (2017) notion of trustworthiness described earlier, I have harvested a second source of data in the form of an internet based, self completion survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data from participants of all genders engaged in horse riding, motorcycling and snowsports. However, due to the reported gender diversity of respondents the analysis concentrates on the respondents' biological sex¹⁶. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in a mixed methods, or 'multi-strategy design' (Robson & McCartan, 2016, p. 13), research design has been increasing in popularity. This increased popularity is in despite of an 'incompatibility thesis' (Robson & McCartan, 2016, p. 26) held by some methodological dogmatists. They argue that qualitative and quantitative methods come from such distinctly different epistemological methodologies they 'cannot be combined for cross-validation or triangulation purposes' (Sale et al, 2002: 43). According to those methodologists my research would be analogous to an attempt to mix oil and water. However, as Robson and McCartan (2016, p. 27) point out 'the very existence of this type of [mixed methods] project and its rapid emergence in the past few years as a preferred alternative, casts serious doubts on the incompatibility thesis'.

¹⁶ Gender identity data was collected and may form part of a future analysis

I chose a self completion questionnaire survey to triangulate my qualitative data as it is considered to be a suitable way to collect cross sectional data from a large sample at a single point in time (Bryman, 2008). Moreover, surveying a sample from the three targeted populations elicits the range of data I wanted to collect namely participants' values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviour and knowledge (Bryman, 2008; Fink, 2003; Gilbert, 2008) of their chosen leisure sport. Finally, a cost effective electronic, internet based platform was used as other paper based methods of questionnaire delivery, i.e. postal or by telephone are costly, time consuming to analyse and suffer a poor response rate (Bryman, 2008; Gilbert, 2008).

3.5.9 Qualtrics online survey tool.

I used the *Qualtrics* software package to analyse 544 responses from participants of all genders engaged in horse riding, snowsports or motorcycling as a leisure pursuit. *Qualtrics* was chosen over other available online survey tools such as *Survey Monkey* or *Smart Survey* primarily because the University of Essex has a licence which allows researchers at the university free access. A secondary concern surrounded data security. As the survey questionnaire is internet based, commercially driven software developers would, potentially, have access to my data which they could possibly exploit for their own commercial purposes. Furthermore, to mitigate any possible breach of personal confidentiality no personal details were requested which could identify any specific individual.

Ten survey questions were derived from the process of developing qualitative themes; however, due to the practical time constraints of being a lone PhD researcher and my fear of participants not completing a lengthy questionnaire, not all qualitative themes were tested quantitatively. My main consideration when devising

the questions was to explore any interesting, or unexpected, experiences reported by my participants during their interviews. Once I had identified potentially interesting experiences I ensured that the resulting closed ended questions were purposeful¹⁷, unambiguous and as Fink (2003) suggests, allow the respondent to concentrate on one issue at a time. I also couched the questions in such a way as to present them as statements that respondents could be more or less in agreement with when selecting from a seven point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly agree' to 'Strongly disagree'. Appendix 4 presents a version of the complete survey exported to a Microsoft Word document¹⁸ which displays all of the questions. A seven point Likert scale was selected over a five point scale although they are both considered suitable for this type of survey (Malhotra & Peterson, 2006). I wanted to: a) include the mid-point scale 'Neither agree nor disagree' as I specifically wanted to test the strength of the belief or opinion pertaining to the specific question, and b) I wanted to increase the discrimination within the responses as Dawes (2008) suggests respondents do use more scale points when they are available. However, Dawes' (2008) study, examining the benefits of using five, seven or ten point Likert scales in survey instruments, also indicated that 'there was very little difference among the scale formats [five or seven point] in terms of variation about the mean, skewness¹⁹ or kurtosis²⁰' (Dawes, 2008: 61). Dawes' (2008) research, therefore, indicates that I could have captured a similar degree of detail using a five point scale, which potentially accounts for their popularity.

¹⁷ When the respondent 'can readily identify the relationship between the intention of the question and the objectives of the survey' (Fink, 2003: 15).

¹⁸ Please note that the formatting of the survey has been modified during export to MS Word. The actual online version is available here, please copy and paste the URL below into your browser:
https://essex.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_824Xihho8ID5zyl?Q_DL=6M5Q8rYIgjNkY5_824Xihho8ID5zyl_MLRP_6nHBIPtxJfURw6p&Q_CHL=email

¹⁹ Data may be normally distributed in the classic 'bell jar' shape with symmetrical tails or skewed negatively, with the long tail to the left or positively with the long tail to the right.

²⁰ Kurtosis refers to the shape of the data around the mean and the tails of the distribution. A normal distribution has a kurtosis value of zero (Dawes, 2008: 73).

The survey was launched via email to some previous interview participants who agreed to forward it to their fellow sporting participants. I also launched the survey via my personal Facebook page, where I asked my Facebook friends to 'like' and 'share' the link to the survey. The survey was also placed on the Facebook pages of several local motorcycling, skiing and horseriding groups. Cascading the survey in this way has resulted in attracting responses from 544 participants across the three sporting disciplines.

Chapter Four.

Letting the data speak. Research Findings

4.1 Introduction.

This research provides a contemporary sociological examination, through a phenomenological and social constructivist lens, of factors which influence an individual's entry and their persistent and long term participation in, risky leisure sports. I am particularly interested in understanding why horse riding, statistically considered to be the riskiest leisure sport in my study, is dominated by women²¹ who are considered more risk-averse than men (Byrnes et al, 1999). This research also examines two other risky leisure sports; overwhelmingly male-dominated motorcycling²² and the slightly less male-dominated snow sports of skiing and snowboarding²³. The pronounced gender inequality reported by British skiing and equestrian organisations, (British Equestrian Trade Association, 2015; Skiclub of Great Britain, 2019) has also been widely researched in motorcycling (Alford & Ferriss, 2007; McDonald-Walker, 2000; Miyake, 2018; Thompson, 2012). The widespread gender inequality reported in the literature is verified by my contemporaneous notes taken during fieldwork observations. I attended two national trade shows, one each in the case of motorcycling and skiing, and one local one-day equestrian event. Supporting the officially reported gender inequality within leisure equestrian sports my field notes taken at the one-day equestrian event read:

Out of 150 participants at this event I noted from the competitor entry list around ten obvious male names (6.6%). There were several named Sam, this could be either Samuel or Samantha and Charlie could be Charles or

²¹ 74% of leisure horse riders in the UK are female

²² 90% of leisure motorcyclists in the UK are male

²³ 66% of British snow sports participants are male

Charlotte. The gender of the participants was not noted on the entry list (...) I noted no other ethnicity other than white British.

Attendees of the *Motorcycle Live* show held at the Birmingham NEC displayed an opposite, but just as pronounced, gender inequality favouring males when compared to the equestrian event. However, an overwhelming “whiteness” was also observed as an extract from my fieldnotes records:

Participants were overwhelmingly male with females making up probably no more than 5% of the show going population. I noted only two or three females who were obviously riding; this was due to them wearing appropriate motorcycle riding clothing (...) the ethnicity of show-goers was almost exclusively white. I noted three Black show-goers and no Asians. This surprised me as Birmingham and Coventry, which are close to the NEC, have significant Black and Asian communities.

The *Telegraph Ski and Snowboard Exhibition* held at London’s Battersea Park presented the same whiteness but was more gender-equal than the other two events attended. Although reported as being a male-dominated sport by the Skiclub-of-Great-Britain (2019), my fieldnotes indicate that:

There appeared to be just as many females in attendance as males this may be because I was visiting on a Friday during half term school holidays which may skew the ratio in favour of females. Bearing in mind this show is held in the heart of a multi-ethnic capital city show-goers were almost exclusively white I saw three or four black Caribbean males, two of which were representing commercial trade stands. The only Asian people I saw were all on the Japanese tourist industry standard which was promoting skiing in Japan.

The observed exclusivity of white competitors at the one-day-event, as well as the overwhelming whiteness of my equestrian sample, is reported in other equestrian research (Dashper, 2017). Indeed Stuart, one of my own horse riding participants opined that ‘it’s a very white biased sport and there’s absolutely no reason why it should be like that’²⁴.

²⁴ 4/12/17

Although beyond the purview of this research, the evident whiteness of participants within these sports warrants a future examination. Lastly, this research is concerned with identifying participants who might appear to confirm Alfred Schutz's (1967, p. 185) conceptualisation of 'Ideal types' and whether similar ideal types can be identified within and across all three sports in this study.

A considerable body of literature, sociological and psychological, has previously examined sporting risk. That research has focused in the main, on what are generally thought of as extreme sports. For example, Svebak and Apter (1997) cite mountaineering, white water rafting, para-gliding, bungee-jumping, pot-holing and deep-sea diving as traditional extreme activities. The urban sport of Parkour, or free-running within the built environment, is considered by Kidder (2017) to be a late-modern expression of an extreme sport. Although these sports are performed in very different environments even a minor miscalculation by those individuals engaging in them often results in a similar conclusion; death or serious injury. It is paradoxical, therefore, that willing practitioners of extreme sport obtain sufficient personal benefits which seemingly outweigh the potential for personal injury or death.

In contrast, this research concerns itself with the leisure sports of motorcycling, horse riding and skiing which, although risky, generally do not punish their participants so severely for minor misjudgements. However, both the widely reported sociological and psychological benefits enjoyed by those engaged in extreme sports also motivate those who practise leisure sports in this study.

My findings indicate that although the participants were highly cognisant of the risk to personal injury in their particular sport, the benefits they find in terms of continuous belonging to a subculture and various expressions of well being, for example,

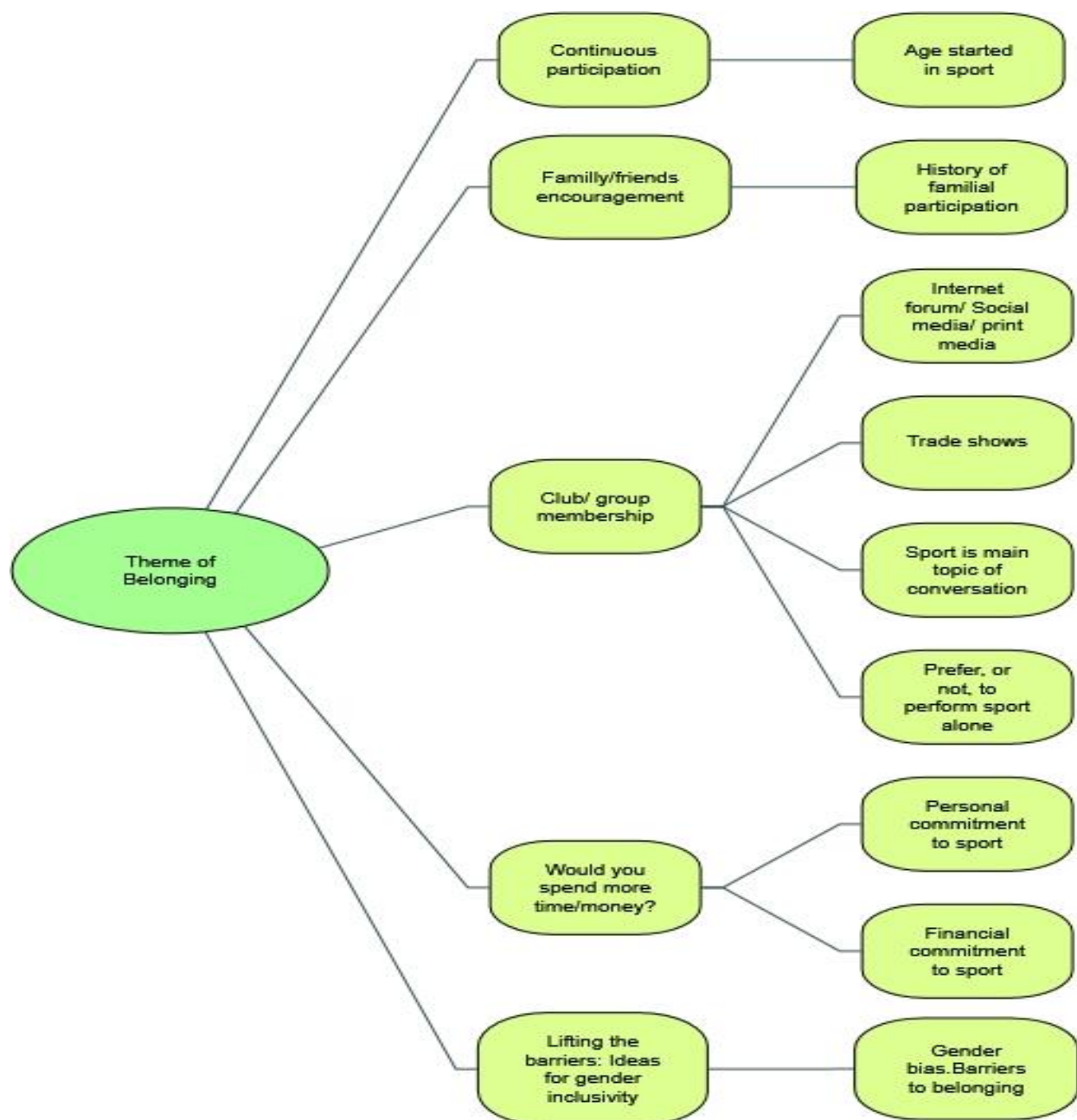
increased personal self-confidence, outweighed that risk. As an experienced motorcyclist I occasionally suffer minor physical discomfort from a forty-year-old shoulder injury, resulting from falling from my machine. I often ask why do I still ride motorcycles?

My findings, using primary qualitative and quantitative data harvested from all three leisure sports, are presented as an explication of the following main themes and their related subthemes which emerged during data analysis. I first present findings concerning the theme of belonging. Second, I present findings surrounding the theme of risk and lastly, the theme of wellbeing. The main themes were derived as a *posteriori* heuristic guideposts to address my research questions following distillation of my data during the analysis phase. The theme 'belonging' addresses those sociological factors which were instrumental in influencing an individual to initially engage and then, moving forward, to continually engage in their chosen sport. The theme of risk addresses an individual's level of understanding as to the risk of personal injury and how their understanding of risk and its mitigation, for example through undertaking training, is communicated, if at all, to other participants through a social constructivist lens. The theme of wellbeing also speaks to participants' continuing engagement and the significant psychological benefits their sport provides. Running throughout all three themes is a desire to understand the gender disparity in the three sports and if there are any identifiable influences which may help balance that inequality.

4.2 Theme of Belonging.

Figure 4.1 below provides a representation of how the main theme of belonging was developed within Nvivo from my *a priori* assumptions and the responses from my interview participants.

Figure 4.1



Main theme of Belonging

4.2.1 Friends or family encouragement.

All my participants, irrespective of their chosen sport, report that either someone, and not always a family member, or some other significant event, was initially responsible for sparking an interest in their chosen sport. Male motorcyclist Kurt²⁵ reports 'my dad never rode so it never came up, but he taught me to drive when I was 17, so naturally I just gravitated towards a car as I've never had any family members that had ridden [motor] bikes'²⁶. For Kurt, now aged fifty-three and a motorcycle salesman, the start of his belonging to the motorcycle subculture began when he was twenty-four, and he has been riding continuously since:

One of the guys I was working with turned up on a CB 900 Bol'd'Or [80s Honda motorcycle]. I thought yeah that looks nice and I said to him "wow that looks really really, I like it". He said, "I'll take you for a spin [a ride on the back]". Took me for a spin, came back and said: "I've got to get one of these". I got a bike within three months and that's, that was the start of it²⁷.

Unlike Kurt who joined the motorcycle subculture through a process of secondary socialisation, thirty-three-year-old training co-ordinator Jenny was introduced to the subculture of horses at a very early age:

I was first sat on a horse before I could sit myself up (...). I've got an older sister, twelve years older, she's been in horses all her life as well and my dad and my granddad. They've all had horses so I was kind of born into it²⁸.

However, although Jenny considers herself 'born into it', she spent a considerable period of time when she did not ride at all:

[F]rom the age of probably 10 till my mid-20s I didn't ride at all, still totally obsessed with horses but didn't have our own. I probably went to a riding school a couple of times in that period and, you know on holiday, that sort of thing (...) I didn't get back into it until my mid-20s when me and my sister (...)

²⁵ All names used are pseudonyms.

²⁶ 23/7/18

²⁷ 23/7/18

²⁸ 3/12/17

we said we really miss it. Let's get-together, get a horse between us and get back into it. And then that was it and then I started riding ever since²⁹

Although his parents had never been skiing, male skier Andrew and his brother had been discussing with friends the great time those friends had on holiday 'I think some other friends had talked about going. They had really enjoyed it so we thought we'd give it a go. So we literally packed our bags, put them in the car and drove down to Austria'³⁰. However, although Andrew has, like horseriding Jenny, had significant gaps in his skiing career he continues to return to the slopes. 'I'd say from the age of 18 I probably went three or four times in a row. I had a gap maybe about ten years and then went another couple of times. Another gap and I think in the last six or seven years I think we've been five times'³¹.

At the time of writing, Andrew and his family were actively planning a skiing trip for that season.

A significant adult life event can lead a participant to their chosen sport. Nora reports that although horse riding 'was something I'd always wanted to do (...) it wasn't really anything my parents could probably afford to do'³². At age forty-six a significant life event, Nora's divorce and work stress combined with the intervention of a friend, provided the catalyst to realise her ambition:

I had a friend that didn't ride but she knew her friend had a riding yard and she's the one that bought me 10 lessons for a Christmas present. She knew I was very stressed with my divorce and work and I just felt I had nothing else in my life I thought it's now or never³³.

Nora, now fifty-one, has been riding her own horse for the last five years.

²⁹ 3/12/17

³⁰ 16/6/18

³¹ 16/6/18

³² 3/12/17

³³ 3/12/17

Once established, a pause in subculture membership can endure through periods of significant bereavement grief back into continuous participation. From starting to ride horses at age eight, Caroline, now forty-nine, has ridden continuously with the exception of eight months caused by her third horse suddenly dying. 'My horse quite unexpectedly died and I said I wouldn't have another horse and I really didn't ride for about eight months'³⁴. The enduring nature of subculture membership and the void which comes from enforced membership loss is articulated by Caroline who describes how those eight horseless months felt:

[T]he emotional trauma, or whatever else you could call it, of grieving for him like that and the fact that I'd had no lead up to him dying, I just said I can't ever, ever go near that [horse riding] again. That's it³⁵.

Caroline's rehabilitation back into the equestrian subculture began when she and her sister went on a working horse riding holiday:

We rode every day for eight+ hours herding cattle and stuff and when I got back from that I suddenly thought God I've just realised what's been so missing in my life is a horse and the riding and the whole relationship with yer (sic) horse, all of that³⁶.

Drilling down further into the importance of Caroline's self-image as an embedded member of the equestrian subculture she admits that:

I've always said it's sort of in my blood. I know that's a funny thing to say but that's how it feels to me, and that eight months where I didn't ride I was in a very peculiar place. (...) I can remember when I first got the horse, my present horse, people saying to my husband "you've got your wife back then" in the nicest possible way³⁷.

Illustrating the robust durability of social construction, subculture members, independent of gender, who have had, often considerable periods of non-participation, sometimes use the epithet 'born again' to describe their return to active

³⁴ 16/2/18

³⁵ 16/2/18

³⁶ 16/2/18

³⁷ 16/2/18

participation for example ‘born again biker’ (Bonnett, 2005, p. 5) or ‘born again skier’. Even for those participants who have not had such prolonged periods of non-participation the concept of their willing rebirth back into a subculture where the risk of personal injury is ever-present indicates that their chosen sport holds an important, perhaps in the case of Caroline irreplaceable, place in their life world.

4.2.2 Club or ‘set’ membership.

Once an individual has become a member of a subculture how important is club membership in maintaining an individual’s membership of that subculture? The female motorcyclists in this research sample appear to construct a mutually supportive female group identity in belonging to a national, and exclusively female, riding club the *Curvy Riders* motorcycle club. The *Curvy Riders* actively prohibit male membership. When asked if motorcycling is a major source of conversation at their meetings *Curvy Riders* member Joan answers:

It is insofar as that we’ll talk about anything we’ve done that’s helped our confidence. We don’t really talk about great rides that we’ve done, it’s like “I did a stupid thing the other day” or “I found this out” or “I learned that” or laughing at ourselves really, having a giggle. And then we talk about all sorts of other things, diets, kids and just everything else³⁸.

Pam, also a member of the *Curvy Riders* frequents other well-known meetings where mixed groups of local motorcyclists meet up. Asked the same question as Joan, Pam responds:

All the time, yeah absolutely yeah. Although I don’t understand a lot about [motor] bikes or know what’s what, they all tend to talk about bikes and I like that (...) it’s always generally bike talk (...) I don’t understand it half the time but I enjoy listening and trying to enjoy learning about it, although I don’t always know what they’re talking about³⁹.

³⁸ 2/10/17

³⁹ 25/9/17

Irina, the secretary of a local *Curvy Riders* group describes social construction-in-action facilitating mutual support from fellow members:

It's an opportunity to speak to like-minded ladies. So there's an opportunity for us to examine each other's bikes and decide who likes what; why they like it and how they're getting on with it, what they'd change about it. Yes it's a motorcycle club so we talk about motorcycle things mainly, 80%⁴⁰.

Some male motorcyclists also seem to enjoy belonging to either a formal club or, like Pam, attending their local motorcycle meeting places. Frank enjoys 'the comradeship and all that kind of stuff, being a member of a club. I've been a member of a couple of clubs over the years. It's always been a big part of who I am really'⁴¹. In contrast, Barry who is not a club member attends well-known meeting places on an ad-hoc basis where motorcycles and motorcycling form a major part of the conversation of attendees:

I go down Loomies⁴², it's because Loomies is nearer to me than Box Hill⁴³, it's quite a famous one. I last went to Box Hill about three weeks ago actually. So I'll probably go to Box Hill two or three times a year and Loomies, I don't know 7, 8, 9 times a year⁴⁴.

Like Joan, who talks about a range of topics with her fellow *Curvy Riders* members, for club member George a conversation 'can be started off motorcycle and it can suddenly disappear off at a tangent talking about holidays and stuff'⁴⁵. It appears that 'talking bikes', either at a club or other meeting place, plays a large, but not exclusive, part in the conversation among like-minded motorcyclists, almost like presenting their motorcycling credentials as a bonafide 'motorcyclist'.

⁴⁰ 2/10/17

⁴¹ 8/11/17

⁴² A popular cafe near Winchester who specialise in catering for motorcyclists

⁴³ Ryker's cafe near Box Hill also specialise in catering for motorcyclists

⁴⁴ 14/11/17

⁴⁵ 30/10/17

Few female horse riders in my sample were members of an organised riding club. However, several were members of the national bodies which represent equestrian interests. When asked if she is a member of a riding club, riding instructor Mia, who does not currently own a horse said ‘not at the moment purely because I haven’t got my own to compete on. I have maintained my BEA [British Equestrian Association] membership though’⁴⁶. Nora enjoyed a riding club membership until the instructor moved away ‘I used to belong to a group called *Older riders*, basically riders over 21. It was really, really good. I really enjoyed it but the main instructor moved away and it just dissolved’⁴⁷. Nora now belongs to the British Horse Society (BHS). Male horse rider Cliff⁴⁸ who plays competitive polo for the Royal Navy is a member of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Equestrian Society as well as the Tidworth Polo Club. Club membership for Cliff is considered a means-to-an-end. It merely enables him to compete in Polo. For the other male horse riders in the sample, riding club membership is not a consideration unless engaged in competitive riding. This is articulated by Luke, who with his wife, were once active one and three-day Eventers:

We used to be members of the riding club and we were members of the BHS and you have to be a member of British Eventing to do the Eventing, but that’s pretty much all lapsed in the last year, no sorry, we are still members of the BHS, we still get all of their magazines⁴⁹.

Peter also links riding club membership with engaging in competition ‘there is a local riding club which I used to belong to years ago when we were doing showing and stuff’⁵⁰. Since stepping away from local club competitions, Peter reports that ‘I’m a

⁴⁶ 25/11/17

⁴⁷ 3/12/17

⁴⁸ 13/8/18

⁴⁹ 3/3/18

⁵⁰ 15/3/18

member of the British Horse Society, that's a registered charity and they exist really to promote horses and the welfare of horses'⁵¹.

Bert who has been riding for ten years from his mid twenties expressed a similar belief regarding the need to join a riding club for competition. However, Bert uses his non-active membership of British Eventing, the national body which organises one and three-day events in the United Kingdom (UK), as a way of immersion into the competitive aspect of the subculture:

I'm a non-riding member of British Eventing (...) that also has a quarterly magazine. But again it's very much at this stage, is very much a sort of inert membership, simply sort of supporting. If I were to ever to compete in British Eventing obviously I would have to change my membership of that to something different. But I mean that's really sort of a way of staying engaged with the news. It's a way of being a supporter of something⁵².

The lack of club membership is also a feature of snowsports which, like the lack of riding club membership in horse riding, is gender independent. Male snowboarder Chris who organises snowboarding holidays for his group of friends does not consider club membership would be a benefit to him:

Snowboard UK is one of them for example. That is kind of a club if you like. You pay a membership fee but I've never no, I've never really had the appetite to be part of that and I think it's largely because actually, I've got a pretty big network of people anyway, I don't feel the need to network further so that's probably it⁵³

Monica, an operations manager for a ski tourism company based in the French Alps, is not a member of any club 'but I think that's also because of living here'⁵⁴. Harry, a ski instructor, may provide a possible reason why some horse riders and skiers do not feel the need to join a riding or skiing club. Unless they want to compete, albeit

⁵¹ 15/3/18

⁵² 11/4/18

⁵³ 16/4/18

⁵⁴ 3/11/17

as amateurs, like Chris and Monica they have ample opportunity to ride with their peers.

I'm a member of BASI, which is the British Association of Ski Instructors so that's the only one really. I guess I don't need to be a member of any others because I'm here [the French Alps], but if I was to live in the UK I would join one probably. I think I would want a group of people to go skiing with who are like-minded, so I definitely would⁵⁵.

For ex-ski instructor Poppy, club membership was motivated by her need to remain registered as an instructor. Her membership has since lapsed 'I was a member of the Canadian Ski Instructors' Alliance when I was teaching, but I haven't been a part of that for the past five years'⁵⁶.

The lack of ski club membership reported by the respondents above who spend considerable periods of the year on the slopes is mirrored by those British skiers or snowboarders who spend one or two weeks away for their annual holiday. No 'holiday' skier or snowboarder at the time of their interview had an active club membership.

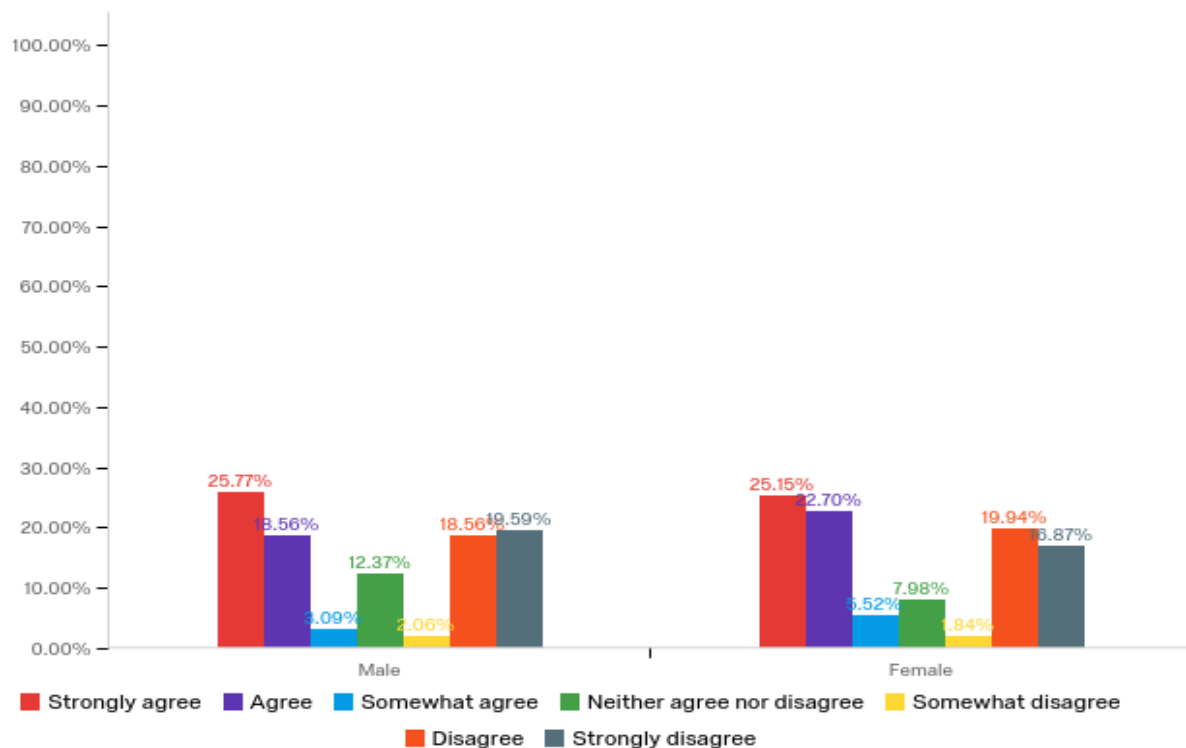
To test the validity of the qualitative data findings examined above, the results of the self-completion survey question statement 'I am a member of a club' are presented by participant gender and by sport graphically in figure 4.2 below.

⁵⁵ 7/12/17

⁵⁶ 24/11/17

Figure 4.2

I am a member of a club (by gender)



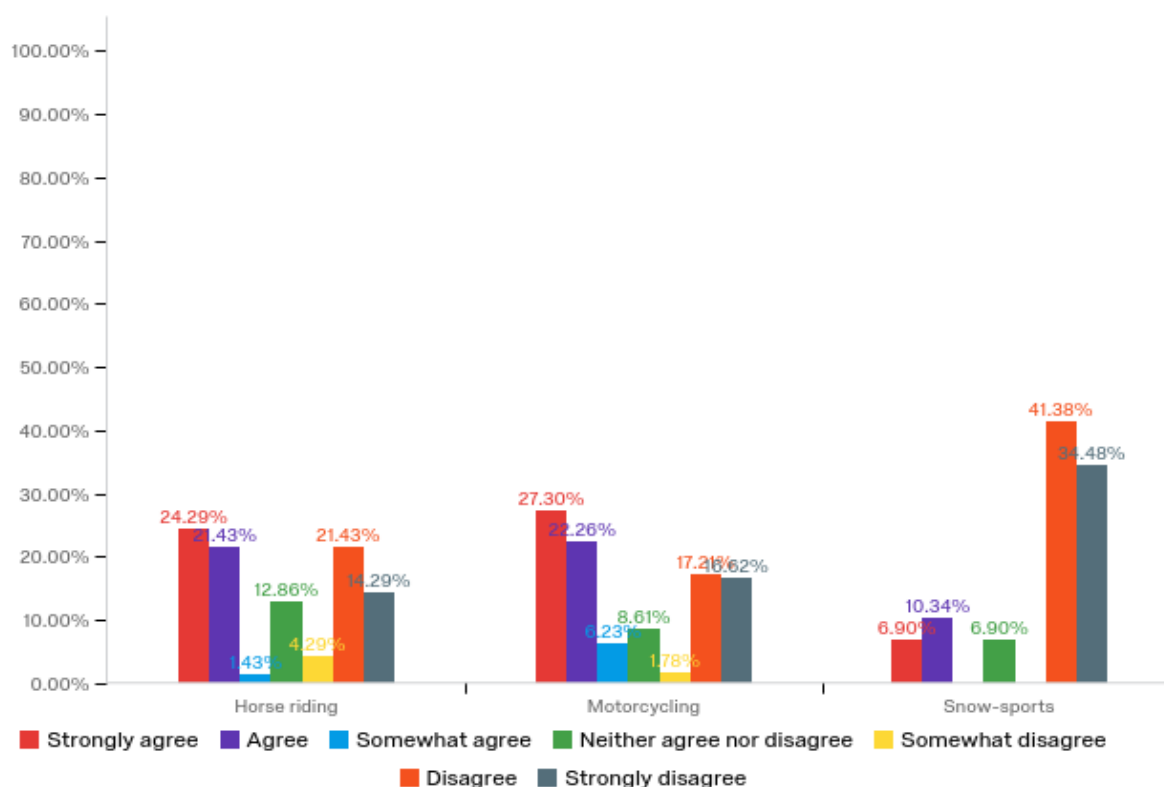
n=430

I am a member of a club (by gender)

Figure 4.2 indicates that males and females appear in almost equal measure to valorise, or not, club membership. Forty-seven percent of male participants in the sample are club members and forty percent of males are not. Although seven percent more males are club members it appears that for males, club membership is not considered a priority of subculture membership. For females, club membership appears more important. Fifty-three percent of which are club members and twenty-eight are not.

Figure 4.3

I am a member of a club (by sport)



n=436

I am a member of a club (by sport)

Figure 4.3 illustrates club membership by sport. Horse riding and motorcycling have very similar profiles of club membership. In contrast, snowsports participants appear to reject club membership with over seventy-five percent of the sample not being club members. This may be due to the nature of British snow sports participants who perhaps, unlike horse riders and motorcyclists who participate regularly, ski infrequently and, therefore, do not consider the need for club membership. The findings obtained from the survey data appear to confirm the findings from the interview data; club membership is not considered as being central to every individual's engagement with their sport with some individuals actively rejecting club membership. Prior to the internet, for many, being a member of a club provided either a source of entry into, or affirmation, of subculture membership. If, therefore, three-quarters of the sample are not club members, what has taken their place?

4.2.3 Social media, internet forums, trade shows.

With the exception of *Curvy Riders* members, if belonging to an organised physical horse/motorcycle riding or ski club is not how the majority of participants affirm membership to their sport, do members of the three subcultures engage in any of the many internet-based social media or specialised internet forums associated with their sport or do they visit an annual trade show? Non club member Brian finds that the internet forum specific to the make and model of his motorcycle is useful 'I don't think of it as a social forum I think of it more as an information forum because I usually use it for hints and tips and various bits on the bike and if anyone's identified issues'⁵⁷. Brian does not engage in any other online activity. He has no Facebook or Twitter account and occasionally reads copies of motorcycle publications but says 'I wouldn't go out to buy it'.

Harley-Davidson riding Sam is a regular user of both internet forums and Facebook 'most days and probably for about an hour a day'⁵⁸ browsing on 'Harley ones mostly and custom bike ones and *Motorcycle News* [weekly newspaper] one a bit (...) so yeah, I keep an eye on all that'. Much like Brian, Mark browses on one UK and one worldwide forum specific to his make of motorcycle:

I don't spend much time there [UK forum]. There is another one that seems to cater for the whole world. You got Americans on there, Australians, British and they seem to be a little bit more, you know, "what's this technical detail"? "What's this problem"? "What's that"? And they seem to be a little bit more together. And I use that one a little bit more than I use the other one so those are the two⁵⁹.

Motorcycle salesman Kurt has an altogether different relationship with internet forums:

⁵⁷ 25/10/17

⁵⁸ 28/3/18

⁵⁹ 9/8/17

I stay away from forums, probably because of my job. I think with forums they can make mountains out of molehills at times. They can unfairly bias a manufacturer or a model. You tend to get the longer threads on the bad side, they don't often elaborate on the good side⁶⁰.

Although Kurt is suspicious of forums, he has been a regular attendee of the various trade shows before they became part of his working life:

[We] used to go to the bike shows, the Excel show in London, been to a few times. The NEC bike show [*Motorcycle Live*] is the biggest one usually. So we always used to sort of go up there but spend the day looking at absolutely everything, not just bikes⁶¹.

Nora has had similar negative experiences with equestrian forums. 'I did [use them] when my horse was very sick, my first horse. But actually, it made it all worse for me because there were loads of different opinions, "oh you should do this, you should do that"'⁶².

Stuart, an accomplished amateur jockey who has been involved with horses all of his life has a comparable experience reporting 'I will visit forums for other things completely non-horse related, so it's not that I don't use forums, I just can't stand to listen to the bilge that they talk on them'⁶³. When asked if he subscribes to any of the equestrian specific magazine titles he replied 'We occasionally get *Horse and Hound* from my dad but, I confess, I never open them'⁶⁴.

Barry, who is not a riding club member, but who regularly attends the TT motorcycle races on the Isle of Man, is a sporadic user of forums and Facebook spending:

[I]n a normal day probably five or 10 minutes on Facebook. There is still a couple of forums that I dabble in now and again. I subscribe to a lot of the

⁶⁰ 23/7/17

⁶¹ 23/7/17

⁶² 3/12/17

⁶³ 4/12/17

⁶⁴ 4/12/17

motorcycle pages on Facebook. Most of my Facebook is full of pictures of motorcycles or motorcyclists⁶⁵.

In common with the male participants, *Curvy Riders* club member Susan is an avid reader of the internet forum specific to the make and model of her motorcycle. She also uses other more general motorcycle forums as a way to keep in touch with the subculture. 'I do my research; see what the forums say you know? I don't go generally buying something unless I've not looked at it first'⁶⁶. A slightly embarrassed Susan admitted spending 'probably a couple of hours a day, Yeah, a good couple of hours a day'⁶⁷ on forums:

I am on a couple, obviously *Curvy Riders* so I'm on that. I'm on the *Fazer* [model specific] forum and I'm also on the *East Anglian biker's* forum and there's another one called *Biker Mates* as well, but that's just generally sort of keeping a heads up on what's going on out there you know?⁶⁸

Curvy Riders member Joan is more of a Facebook than a forum user:

I don't do forums. No, I'm not on anything like that. I tend to think there for geeks, it's like you know, "I've got this size blah blah blah" and I can't be doing with that (...) I'm on Facebook and I do a couple of local, there's the *Norfolk and Suffolk female biker's* and the *Curvy's* but no, I don't go on forums as such⁶⁹.

Laura also uses Facebook rather than forums. She uses Facebook to help organise her social calendar and Facebook also provides her with a venue to discuss her specific motorcycle with other owners:

Facebook [*Curvy Riders* club group] occasionally. I like to have a little, see what's going on because they often have events and then we can arrange meetings and stuff. So I'm more up for that then for the Internet forums. I never logged onto them and their Internet page (...) I'm on the Facebook Bandit [Suzuki motorcycle model name] site but not on the Internet as in like their forums(...) I like to see what they're doing, see what changes they're making and when I put a new exhaust on my bike a while ago I put it on there.

⁶⁵ 14/11/17

⁶⁶ 2/10/17

⁶⁷ 2/10/17

⁶⁸ 2/10/17

⁶⁹ 2/10/17

But it's not something I'm on all the time. I like scrolling through it and liking peoples Bandits⁷⁰.

Janet also prefers Facebook over forums because:

[T]hey bore me. *The Round Britain Rally* has a forum page that I occasionally check and I run the Round Britain Rally Facebook group. There's one for the *Curvy Riders*. If I need some information I'll go and look but otherwise, I don't do forums very much. I'm way too addicted to Facebook. (...). There's a couple of other groups I belong to but which I don't follow I think I've had them set so that if a friend posts something I see that. (...) it's mostly just to connect people locally and to find out what's going on⁷¹.

Janet, whose partner also rides a motorcycle only ever reads a motorcycle-specific publication if her partner buys one.' so I will peruse them but not much. 'No the technicalities of motorcycles... [hold no interest]'⁷². Janet only attends motorcycle trade shows as a companion for her partner.

Director of a Ski chalet company Victoria, who is not a ski club member, likes to 'follow things on Twitter and Facebook, yeah social media. My social media feed is all filled up with things about skiing'⁷³. Skiing specific internet forums or attending any ski trade shows are of no interest to Victoria. When asked if she reads, or has any subscriptions to ski magazine titles, she responded that she does not 'Because all we do is skiing and snowboard so that's all we talk about'⁷⁴. Occasional holiday tourist skier Jane uses social media or forums:

Very rarely. The only time I might do that is if we are looking for a new place to go and I might Google the place that we are thinking of going and then sometimes, you get put onto skiing forums where people are discussing that location. But I've never sought out a ski forum if you see what I mean [earlier Jane suggested she may look at forums to seek the opinions of skiers

⁷⁰ 31/8/17

⁷¹ 15/9/17

⁷² 15/9/17

⁷³ 22/1/18

⁷⁴ 22/1/18

regarding certain black runs [the most difficult on-piste] in a particular resort]⁷⁵.

Monica also uses forums as a shop window for potential ski-related purchases. She uses Facebook much like motorcyclist Laura, as an opportunity to meet socially and, in Monica's case, to get free training:

I look at forums if I'm thinking of buying like some equipment and there are several Facebook groups that I'm a member of based around here [French Alps], and there are social media groups that a lot of the ski schools will offer free lessons to people who work here, so I'm part of those groups to get free ski lessons⁷⁶.

Sarah first went on a skiing holiday with friends aged twenty-two. She then had a fifteen-year break before returning to the slopes six years ago. She has returned, to the same resort, every year since. Sarah uses resort specific forums to check up on the local weather conditions rather than as a way to immerse herself further into the skiing subculture; neither does she frequent any ski-specific social media sites or browses any ski literature. She performs this virtual *reconnoitre* 'leading up to when we are going. There's a website for that particular resort and we just kind of go on it to see what the conditions are like, just to be prepared and look forward to it and anticipate it really'⁷⁷. Occasional skiing tourist James uses Facebook much like Sarah to track:

The hotel we are going to, I follow them on Facebook. I follow the hotel we went to a couple of years ago on Facebook. And then there's the ski guides like *Crystal Ski* who do the holidays and *Alpine Ski* who we went with last year. So I follow them just to really see what the snow conditions are like and everything else⁷⁸.

⁷⁵ 16/6/18

⁷⁶ 3/11/17

⁷⁷ 12/3/18

⁷⁸ 29/11/17

Louise is a very keen and committed snowboarder who spends several weeks away each year admitting 'I would forego other things before I forego snowboarding'⁷⁹. She is also very active on the internet and social media. 'I do Twitter and Instagram and I do follow people and look at people so yes I do'⁸⁰. She also occasionally uses social media to give her an emotional boost. 'When I'm sat at my desk and it's a bit of a grey horrible day I might have a quick flick through it see what she's up to [the person she's following on social media], look at the blue skies and lovely snow and get green with jealousy. So I do, I do do social media yeah'⁸¹. Snowboarder Chris, although regularly organising group holidays, never accesses snowsports forums but does admit to being in a 'community of skiing, winter sports enthusiasts on Facebook, so it's just Facebook group'⁸². Harry has a similar relationship with forums using them 'rarely unless I'm looking for specific information on something'⁸³. However:

My Facebook page is ski saturated. Partly because there's a group in this valley [French Alps] that's got two or three thousand members which are permanent residents, business owners so that's really useful for everything from buying and selling kit and everything. Not just ski related but furniture and people looking for jobs, people advertising jobs⁸⁴.

Daniel, now twenty-two started skiing at age five. Although not a club member, Daniel uses several platforms to organise his social calendar and to keep himself informed:

⁷⁹ 24/11/17

⁸⁰ 24/11/17

⁸¹ 24/11/17

⁸² 16/4/18

⁸³ 7/12/17

⁸⁴ 7/12/17

I'm on one called *Billy's snow mates*. It's basically like a forum where people post cool pictures and stuff and then they kind of say "I'm going to Val d'Isere on this date whose there"? And someone else will write "oh yeah I'm there, meet up for a drink" kind of thing it's all to do with that. But there's loads of information on there about seasons, advice on equipment. So I look at that quite a bit and see what's happening. (...) My Instagram is full of skiing and snowboarding videos and pictures. I post a couple if I think they're all right⁸⁵.

Caroline does not use Facebook and only uses an equestrian internet forum 'if I'm interested in a particular subject I'll then go and look'⁸⁶. She does though attend the *Horse of the Year Show* at London Olympia 'I've been to Olympia a few times, I love Olympia. So the last two years I've been to the freestyle music dressage at Olympia, and I quite like a mooch round the shops'⁸⁷.

Chloe also uses equestrian forums to gather information:

If I wanted to research what is wrong with my horse I'd look it up, Google it and then it's a minefield, isn't it? Or if I was thinking about changing the feed he's on I'd have a look at the different range and look at that and think how that compares with what I'm giving him now. So yeah, it's a very useful tool the Internet. You can pick up a lot of advice, training and how to improve your horse this way or that way so yeah, I probably do visit it a couple of times a week⁸⁸.

She also uses Facebook to improve her riding skills 'I have joined some companies on Facebook which are horse-related to see if there are any offers or shows that are going on or training information'. She does not subscribe to any equestrian publications because 'if you want to read something or find out about something, you can just Google it and then find it'⁸⁹. Chloe also enjoys occasionally attending one of the big national equestrian events 'I might go to the *Horse of the Year Show* or *Badminton [Horse Trials]* just to be at the event and see it and then while I'm there, I

⁸⁵ 27/3/18

⁸⁶ 16/2/18

⁸⁷ 16/2/18

⁸⁸ 25/11/17

⁸⁹ 25/11/17

might go round and do a bit of shopping and have a look⁹⁰. In contrast Ella, aged sixty-two stopped riding when she went to university. She has been back in the saddle for ten years with a shared horse but shies away from any social media engagement due to her profession as a teacher reasoning that 'I see all the harm that it causes and I think it's very inadvisable for me as a teacher to put anything on social media'⁹¹. Although her busy working life does not allow time to spend reading subculture magazines, she occasionally:

Go[es] to events sometimes, not very often and I like to go to Olympia [*Horse of the Year Show*] or I've been a couple of times to, I went to *Burghley* [three day event] and I've been to another one, (...) so yes I like to go to things like that⁹².

Peter, who volunteers at a local riding charity, will frequent equestrian forums to gather opinions about a potential purchase:

Occasionally if I'm interested in, I don't know what it might be, buying a new pair of jodhpurs or something, I might go on and see recommendations, and I do occasionally dip into things where there are YouTube videos of stuff going on, but not hugely often⁹³.

Peter has no other interaction with social media. 'I've never been interested in that sort of technology. I'm not very good at it; I'm not interested in it'⁹⁴. Bert, whose current busy lifestyle precludes horse ownership, expresses that:

I follow equestrian people on social media and occasionally engage in a conversation on Facebook and Twitter. I wouldn't particularly join a forum unless [pause]. I think it would be different if I had a horse and wanted to find out something that I felt I couldn't ask somebody else but no, I'm not particularly into chat forums and things⁹⁵.

⁹⁰ 25/11/17

⁹¹ 25/11/17

⁹² 25/11/17

⁹³ 15/3/18

⁹⁴ 15/3/18

⁹⁵ 11/4/18

Bert does purchase the occasional equestrian magazine, and he gets one as part of his non-active membership of *British Eventing*. Although willing, again his hectic professional schedule does not allow a fuller immersion into the subculture:

I've not yet been to Olympia or *Horse of the Year*. I would like to, Olympia comes at a really bad time of year for me professionally so it's not easy to get... Olympia is late December about 20th December and *the Horse of the Year* is October⁹⁶.

The findings of interviews surrounding media engagement indicate most participants within and across all three sports engage to some degree in social media. Forums are predominantly used to virtually test equipment or clothing by using other forum posters opinions or experiences before making a purchase. However, several respondents were attuned to the confusing and potentially damaging information found on the internet. Facebook appears to be the most popular platform. Its many groups dedicated to the varied areas of interest found within all three sports could be considered to be cyber clubs in lieu of the more traditional physical clubs, which most often, unlike Facebook, charge a subscription. The predominantly supportive value of Facebook to female motorcyclists in the male-dominated subculture is usefully summed up by Pam who comments:

[T]here's more support from women to women and sometimes the men sort of comment on women that they shouldn't be riding anyway so that's not, but definitely on the all-female ones there is a lot of support around things that do go wrong⁹⁷.

Most of the participants reported that they do not regularly subscribe to any subculture specific literature.

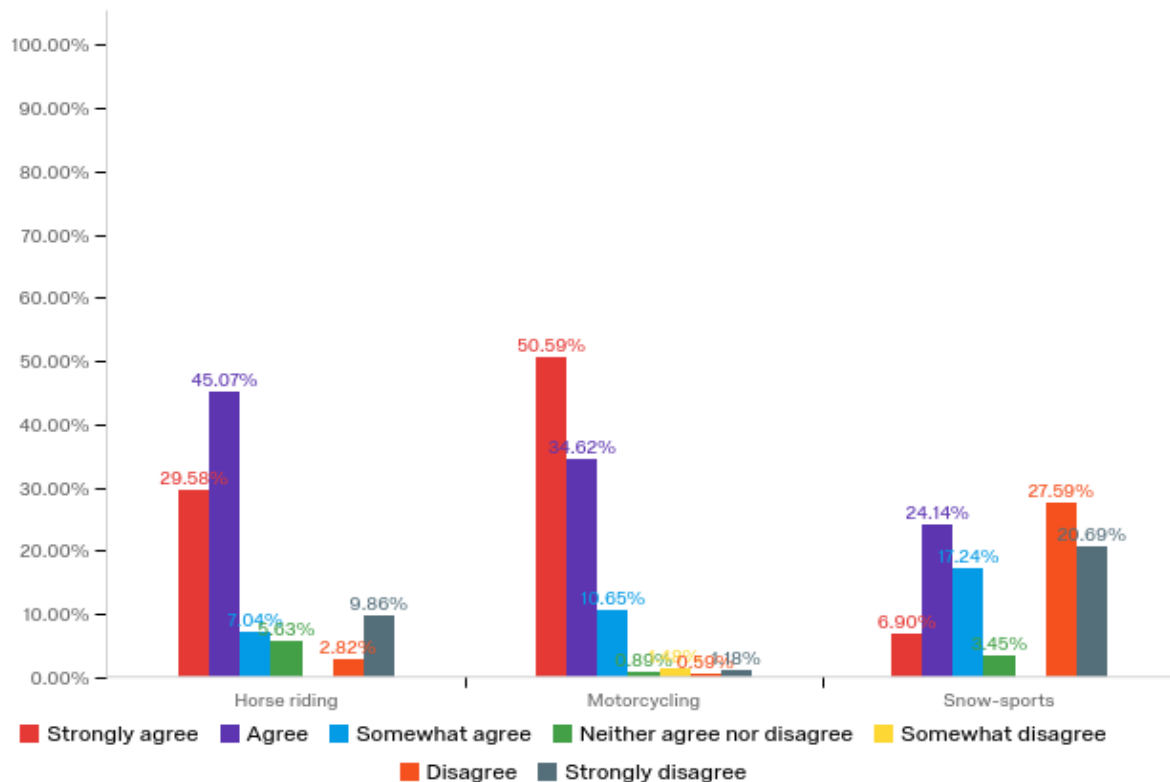
⁹⁶ 11/4/18

⁹⁷ 25/9/17

The findings from the quantitative data set which asked respondents for their levels of agreement of the statements, 'I participate on social media /forums specific to my sport' and 'I never buy print/digital magazines about my sport' are presented below.

Figure 4.4

I participate on sport specific social media



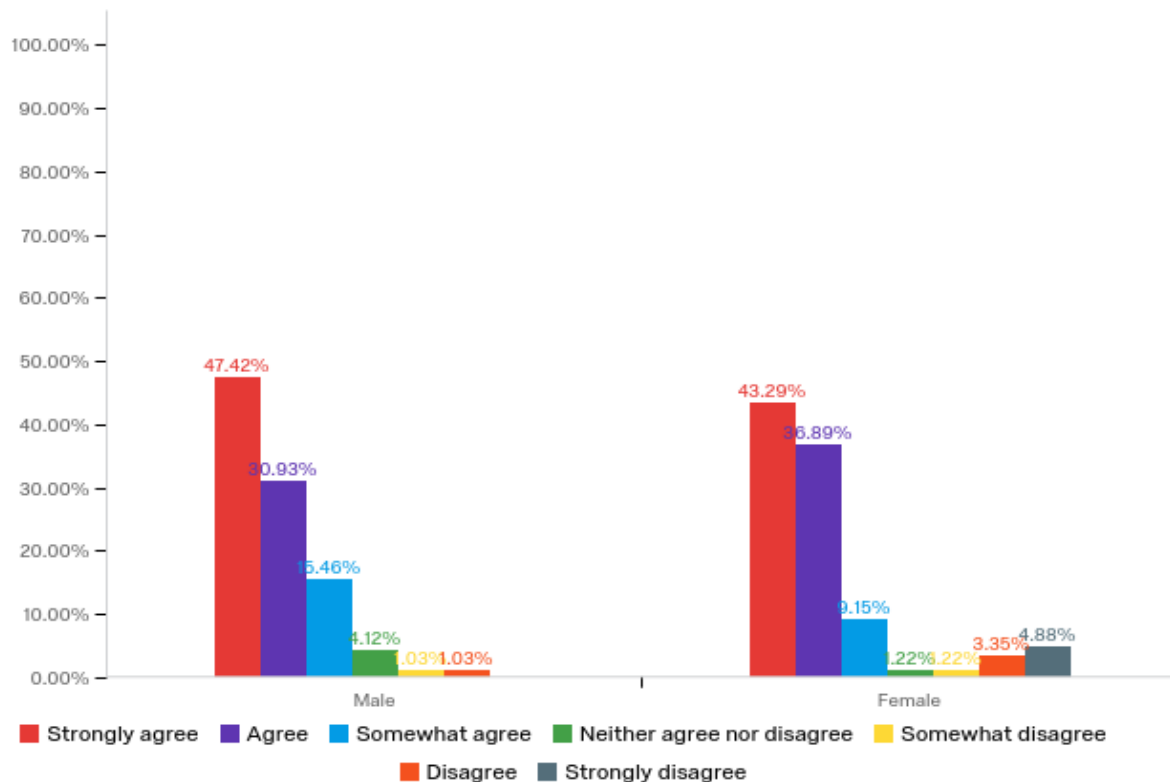
n=438

I participate on sport specific social media

The graph above indicates that there is an overwhelming agreement with the statement 'I participate on sport-specific social media' for horse riders and motorcyclists. However, less than a third of participants in the snowsports sample either agrees or strongly agrees with the statement. Conversely, nearly fifty percent of the sample either disagrees or strongly disagrees with the statement. This result appears at odds with the qualitative data whose respondents reported often using social media as a way to keep their finger on the pulse of local activities within their sporting milieu.

Figure 4.5

I participate on sport specific social media (by gender)



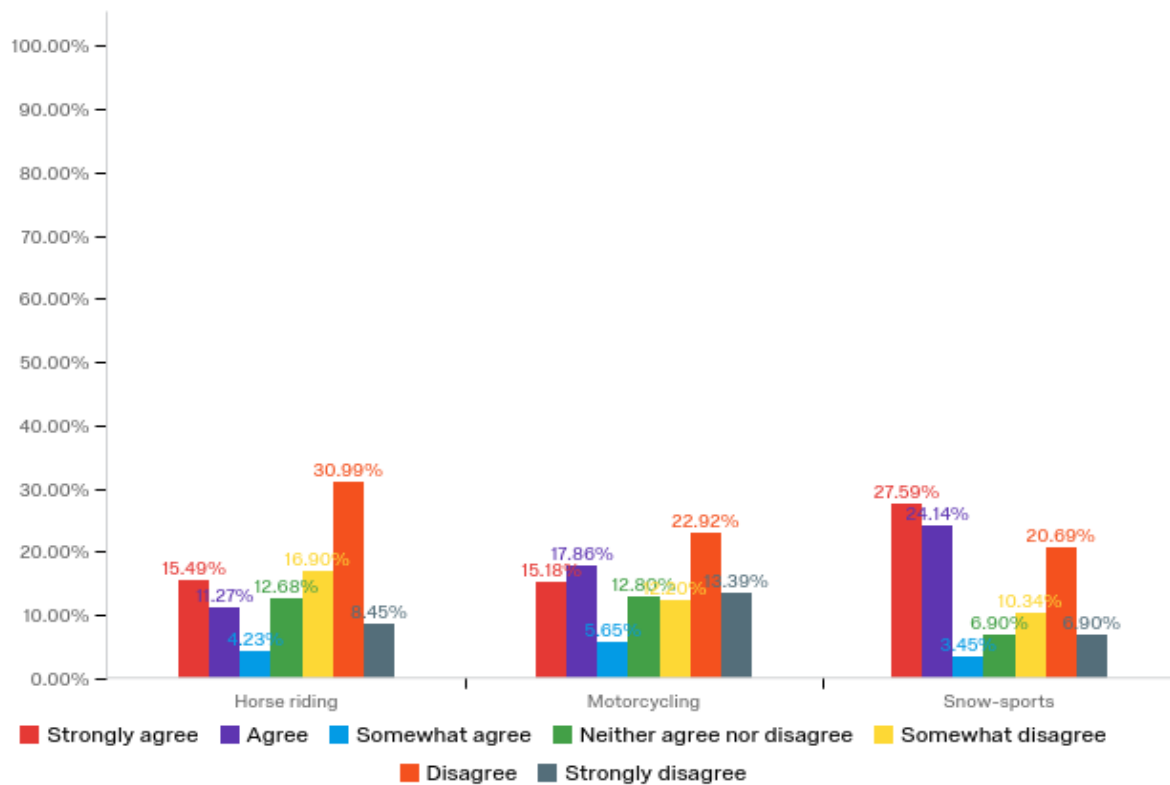
n= 432

I participate on sport specific social media (by gender)

From a visual interpretation, the graph above indicates a congruent relationship within the gendered participation in social media. Over seventy-eight percent of males and eighty percent of females report that they participate on social media. Conversely, only one percent of males disagree with none strongly disagreeing with the statement. Interestingly, females, often more active than males within the private sphere and so, arguably, considered to be the glue which binds many social aspects of society, have an eight percent disagreement with the statement. More generally the findings associated with the question statement indicate that irrespective of gender, which appears to play no significant part, social media is central to the (re)formation of the subcultures milieu.

Figure 4.6

I never buy print/digital magazines about my sport (by sport))



n=436

I never buy print/digital magazines about my sport (by sport)

If social media occupies a central position in subculture cohesion, figure 4.6 tests printed media, or their digital versions, for their place in the three sports. Nearly forty percent of horse riders report a disagreement or strong disagreement with the question statement. By disagreeing with the statement they are indicating that they do buy printed/digital editions of subculture specific magazine titles. However, over twenty-five percent of horseriding respondents agree that they do not subscribe to this form of media. According to the British Equestrian Trade Association (2015) in 2015, there were 1.3 million regular leisure horse riders in the UK. These findings suggest, therefore, that 325,000 regular horse riders in the UK reject printed or digital media titles. Thirty-six percent of motorcyclists also appear to disagree or

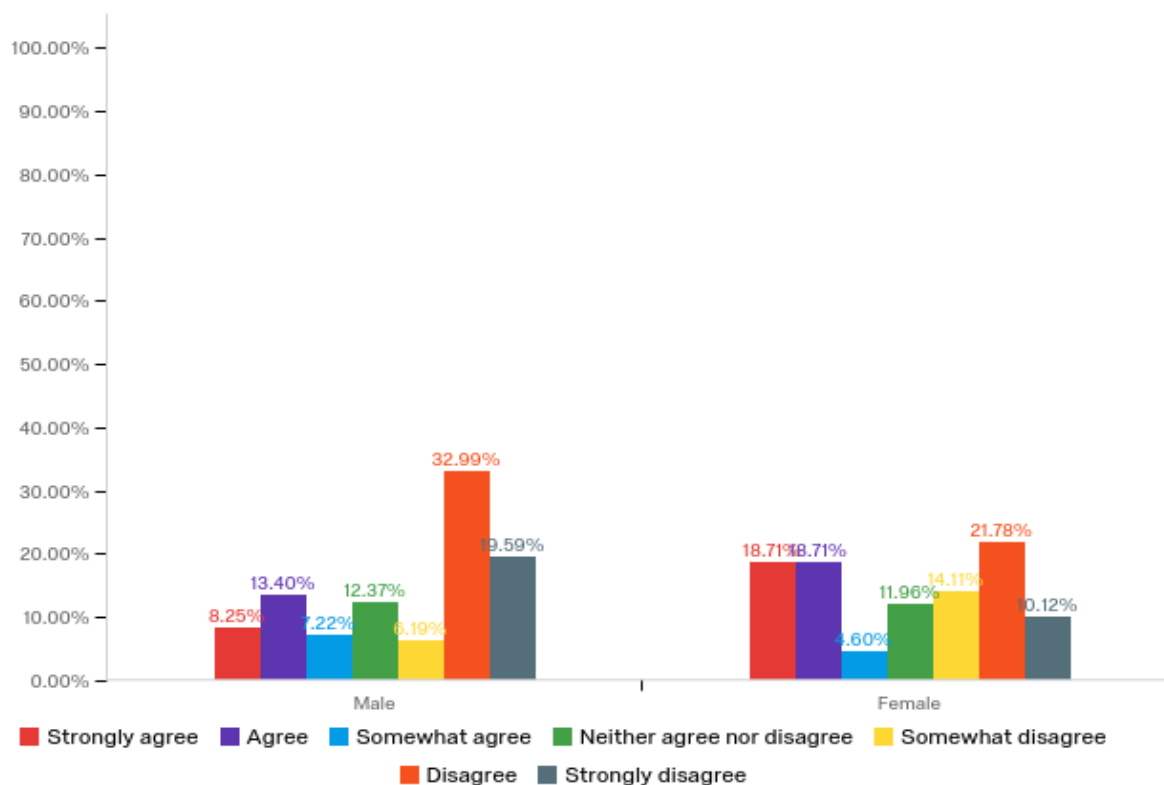
strongly disagree with the statement indicating that they too, buy printed or digital editions of sport-specific titles. Thirty-three percent of motorcyclists do though either agree or strongly agree with the statement which suggests that a third of motorcyclists do not engage with their subculture specific titles. Official UK government figures report that at the end of 2016 there were 1.11 million licensed motorcycles in England (Department for Transport, 2016b)⁹⁸. This indicates that 363,000 motorcyclists do not partake in subculture specific titles.

Snowsports participants appear to reverse the above findings. Over fifty-one percent of sample participants agree or strongly agree that they never buy subculture specific titles with twenty-seven percent indicating that they do. Despite the popularity of snowsports, this may be due to the lack of skiing specific titles readily available in the UK coupled with the decline in skiing trade shows reported by the Skiclub of Great Britain (2016)..

⁹⁸ These figures represent licensed motorcycles. Those declared SORN are not included. Therefore, the actual figure will be higher than that reported.

Figure 4.7

I never buy print/digital magazines about my sport (by gender)



n=430

I never buy print/digital magazines about my sport (by gender)

When participant gender is considered, over half of the males across the three sports disagree or strongly disagree with the statement 'I never buy print/digital magazines about my sport' which imply that they do buy these media with twenty-one percent strongly agreeing or agreeing that they do not buy them. This trend is mirrored, to a lesser extent, by females thirty-two percent of whom disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. Nearly a third of females will, therefore, purchase these titles. However, a slightly higher percentage of females, thirty-seven percent, agree or strongly agree with the statement 'I never buy print/digital magazines about my sport'. That well over a third of females never buy print or

digital titles is, maybe, no surprise as two out of the three sports are heavily biased towards males with magazine titles reflecting, and commercially exploiting this bias.

4.2.4 Financial commitment to their sport.⁹⁹

Although all three sports are physically accessible to most individuals, independent of gender, a measure for the strength and depth of belonging to a sporting subculture may be gauged by an individual's financial commitment, and whether an individual would spend more given suitable funds. To help measure this, and to identify any similarities which may point towards identifying a recognisable 'ideal type' of subculture member, across and within the three sports I collected socioeconomic data¹⁰⁰ from all interview participants (Appendix 5). At one end of the financial scale, Brian with an annual household income of between twenty-five and fifty thousand pounds takes a utilitarian view of motorcycle ownership 'the bike is a more functional thing; it gets me from A to B when I need to and it's a cheaper option than taking the car' (...) I basically look at it as the most appropriate tool for the job'.¹⁰¹ Brian continues with his utilitarian standpoint arguing that 'no [I would not spend more] I'm pretty much, everything I've got does the job it's needed to do'.¹⁰² Lifelong motorcyclist Sam, with an annual income of more than fifty thousand pounds, with 'thirty-odd grand's worth of Harley'¹⁰³ admits that he spends 'clearly nothing as much like I was when I was racing but yeah, yeah, probably, probably too much'¹⁰⁴, furthermore, he would spend more if he could. Care manager Frank, whose

⁹⁹ An individual's financial commitment to their sport was not tested on the self completion questionnaire. This was a conscious decision to prevent any social desirability bias which might artificially inflate an individual's self reported annual income or spending pattern

¹⁰⁰ Age, gender, household income, highest education achieved, occupation, ethnicity

¹⁰¹ 25/10/17

¹⁰² 25/10/17

¹⁰³ 28/3/18

¹⁰⁴ 28/3/18

more modest annual income of between twenty-five to fifty thousand pounds, concedes that 'if I've got money in the bank, well I'm terrible because I wanna buy a new exhaust pipe or buy another motorbike'¹⁰⁵. The depth of Frank's passion for motorcycles was summed up by confessing 'if there's money in the bank, if I'm not spending it on motorcycles I'll quite often be booking up weekends away or planning on going away on the bike'¹⁰⁶. Horse riding instructor Mia, like Frank, is so passionate about her sport that, through a lot of laughter, she confides in spending 'pretty much everything'¹⁰⁷. Asked if she would spend more Mia replied, 'yes, yeah, definitely. If I had it I'd have my own horse back here [at the yard where she works] on full livery'¹⁰⁸ and I'd upgrade the horsebox'¹⁰⁹. This sentiment is shared by Laura who has been motorcycling for four years. Laura admits to spending 'yeah pretty much all of it. All of my free income, yes, and quite a bit of the bank's too I would say'. Although Laura's annual income is between twenty-five and fifty thousand pounds, when asked if she could spend more she immediately stated 'Yes. That was an easy one wasn't it'¹¹⁰?

Due to the considerable expenditure surrounding equestrian activities, Luke has had to prioritise his past household budget and has clearly held some regrets regarding his historical commitment:

We could have had a much better, nicer house much earlier if we hadn't been... We got stuck into paying for livery instead of or, as well as, a

¹⁰⁵ 8/11/17

¹⁰⁶ 8/11/17

¹⁰⁷ 25/11/17

¹⁰⁸ The most expensive way to own a horse whereby all animal husbandry needs are taken care of seven days a week by others. The owner just turns up and rides. Anecdotally and depending on the yard this can be circa £600 per month

¹⁰⁹ 25/11/17

¹¹⁰ 31/8/17

mortgage so we didn't have a nice car, we didn't go on fancy holidays. Our money was divided between mortgage and the horses pretty much¹¹¹.

Bert who does not yet have the time to own his own horse finds that his current level of expense is justified because 'I found the activity in itself so engaging that's persuaded me to part with substantial sums of money in order to do it' further commenting that 'if I had the wherewithal to have my own horse then I probably would [spend more] and I think I would probably make the effort to make that possible'¹¹².

Full-time health professional Nora, who earns more than fifty thousand pounds annually, has her horse on a full livery. She admits that 'I work for my horse really. I do, I do (...) but as he's got everything that he needs. Would I spend more? No, no I do what I want with him'¹¹³. Chloe justifies spending almost half of her income on her horse by comparing the amount she knows her friends spend on what could be considered as luxury items. 'I've asked what do you spend a month on your hair, facials, manicure, pedicure, shopping and it works out the same as what I spend on my horse'¹¹⁴. Jenny, much like motorcyclist Frank, spends a considerable amount of her over fifty thousand pounds annual income on her horse and horse-related equipment. In justifying her reasons for spending, considering it more an investment rather than a frivolity, she argues:

Yeah, there's loads of things that I want. Yeah, I do try to rein myself in but I just love. Yeah, I wouldn't think twice about spending money on a pair of riding boots because I think I'll wear them every day you know. That's why I need to invest rather than spend loads of money on a pair of high heels that I'll wear once in a blue moon¹¹⁵.

¹¹¹ 3/3/18

¹¹² 11/4/18

¹¹³ 3/12/17

¹¹⁴ 25/11/17

¹¹⁵ 3/12/17

Susan, who earns less than twenty-five thousand pounds annually, would also prefer to spend her money on motorcycle clothing:

So [I'm] always buying clothes or you know, I don't do the handbag thing or stilettos or anything like that so generally it's bike gear, bike boots or whatever, stuff to do with the [*Curvy Riders*] club. Yes, I think quite a lot of my money goes...¹¹⁶.

Pam considers herself generally quite constrained when it comes to shopping generally 'I go through phases where I'm quite good and don't spend anything and then I go on a little spurt'¹¹⁷. However, Pam, with an annual income of between twenty-five and fifty thousand pounds, is not immune to the potentially persuasive effects of consumerism when she goes window shopping:

I often walk out with another pair of boots or other things. I've got four pairs of motorbike boots and I only tend to wear one pair at a time but I tend to wear the same ones all the time, so the others I've got I don't really wear, so why I bought them...¹¹⁸.

Skiing is widely considered in the UK to be an expensive leisure sport. This is mainly due to the need for travelling to and finding accommodation at, suitable skiing venues around the world. The expense is articulated by Poppy who confided that she had spent heavily 'this year because we went on quite an expensive trip so yeah, I would say a big portion of our income this year was on our ski trip'¹¹⁹. For Poppy, the time she can spend skiing is regulated by her finances suggesting that 'if I had more money, I would go on another ski holiday'.

Whereas several of my participants engage in their sport for only two or three weeks a year others have made snowsports their occupation and live in Europe, or further afield, for several months of the year during the skiing 'season'. Victoria, a

¹¹⁶ 2/10/17

¹¹⁷ 25/9/17

¹¹⁸ 25/9/17

¹¹⁹ 24/11/17

ski company director with an annual income of over fifty thousand pounds, reported that 'I do spend a fair amount on kit like skis and snowboards and I've got quite a lot of sets of skis. I do spend quite a bit of my income and I would spend more if I had it yeah'. Jane, whose primary socialisation discouraged unnecessary expenditure, is much more of a cautious spender when on her one or two week a year family skiing holiday. Although with an annual income of more than fifty thousand pounds a year she states 'just the amount of everything just adds up so steeply when you go skiing. And there is a little bit of difficulty around that for me I think'¹²⁰. Keen snowboarder Louise also with an income of more than fifty thousand pounds illustrated the strength of her financial commitment to her sport. She confesses to spending 'as much as I could yeah. It would be the last thing that would go so to speak. I would forego other things before I forego snowboarding'¹²¹.

It is clear, therefore, that to join and remain in the subculture, all three sports require a significant financial commitment. For some like snowboarder Louise, that commitment in belonging to the subculture has priority over other spending commitments. Brian has a different, utilitarian, attitude to motorcycling and is unique among all my participants. Brian sees his engagement in motorcycling as merely a means to an end. Although motorcycles represent a financial commitment, it is a more cost-effective solution to commuting than taking the car. Although residing in the UK since childhood, Brian's Asian, and parentally inculcated cultural heritage possibly play a part in his attitude to motorcycling. A plausible explanation for the utility of motorcycles is provided by Sarna (1990, p. 10) contending that, 'In India as a whole, two-wheelers constituted about 56 percent of total vehicles registered in the country in 1985'. For many others though, irrespective of gender and financial

¹²⁰ 16/6/18

¹²¹ 13/11/17

means, belonging to their subculture transcends other financial considerations. Subculture membership in my small qualitative sample does not appear to have a minimum cost of entry either in terms of finance or social class; it can be accessed by all and at any level an individual is financially comfortable with.

4.2.5 Sport is the main topic of conversation among peers.

As presented above, individuals do not always join subculture specific clubs or read sport-specific media. However, when they meet other subculture members are their conversations centered on their sport or does it at least form a major part? Kurt, who is immersed in the motorcycle subculture daily, posits that ‘when you get started talking about motorcycles with like-minded people yeah, it generally does dominate the conversation’¹²². Barry, now aged sixty, who has with the exception of a small break, been motorcycling since he was seventeen, agrees that the topic of motorcycling is the dominant subject, ‘yeah I would have said so’¹²³. Frank provides an insight into the tribal language used by motorcyclists who are busy (re)affirming their belonging or status within the motorcycle subculture, often to the exclusion of others in a social group. A motorcycling friend of Frank has recently migrated to Australia and Frank reminisces that:

We used to meet up in a pub with my wife and another friend of ours who is not into motorbikes at all and they used to take the mickey out of us because we were talking in code, talking about FZ [Yamaha model] and GPZ [Kawasaki model] and all that kind of stuff and they didn’t have a clue what we were talking about really, and R1’s and R6’s [both Yamaha 1000 and 600 cc] and CBR’s [Honda model] and all that kind of code language¹²⁴.

George is a member of a riding club and at eighty-one, the oldest and most experienced of my participants. He has a different opinion, ‘It can be started off

¹²² 23/7/18

¹²³ 14/11/17

¹²⁴ 8/11/17

motorcycle and it can suddenly disappear off at a tangent talking about holidays and stuff¹²⁵. This suggests that his club members are so well embedded in the cultural milieu they do not need to constantly seek (re)affirmation from the other group members. Moreover, *Curvy Riders* club member Susan reports that:

Yeah we do a bit of chitchat about it but it's not the whole content of the day, definitely not, it might be talking about the next Ride-out or whatever, but definitely not much more (...) it would just be too dull. If it was all about bikes I would get bored¹²⁶.

Laura provides an insight into how she has de-mystified the mysterious language of motorcycling and has thus, negotiated her place in the subculture. Initially:

I had no clue. "Oh I like that one because it looks pretty" and to a certain extent until I had some kind of knowledge I played the girl card "oh I don't understand, you'll have to tell me". We play that one when we don't know¹²⁷.

It also appears that not surprisingly given the tribal language discussed earlier, motorcycle conversations are reserved exclusively for motorcyclists. Laura talks motorcycles:

[W]ith those that you only know through biking and that you don't know particularly well then yeah, it tends to be about who you know in the biking community, what show you're going to next and it's bike related. Closer friends it's not, some of them have been around long enough to have crossed that barrier¹²⁸.

Irina, like Laura, also uses motorcycle club conversations for:

[A]n opportunity to speak to like-minded ladies. So there's an opportunity for us to examine each other's bikes and decide who likes what, why they like it and how they're getting on with it, what they'd change about it. Yes, it is a motorcycle club so we talk about motorcycle things mainly, 80%¹²⁹.

¹²⁵ 30/11/17

¹²⁶ 2/10/17

¹²⁷ 31/8/17

¹²⁸ 31/8/17

¹²⁹ 2/10/17

Mia considers horse riding and equestrianism central topics of conversation on the yard 'of course yes, yes definitely'¹³⁰. However, when out 'happy hacking' with friends, Nora does not find conversations are limited to horses, moreover, she sometimes finds any conversation intrusive:

[N]o we talk about everything really. We don't really talk about the horse as such, I find we talk about work, where we're going or what we've got planned is quite nice. Sometimes it's quiet, if you've had a busy day it's quite nice just to go along and not feel you have to make conversation you know¹³¹?

Again while hacking out with friends Sherry says that 'we don't actually talk about the horses, we talk about other stuff (...) it turns into a bit more of a social, meeting up with a friend'¹³². This is confirmed by Ella who reveals a similar insight 'not always no, we'll talk about our day at work or holidays, all sorts of things. I mean obviously we do talk about horses but it isn't our only topic of conversation at all'¹³³. Jenny, who is a relative newcomer to the yard, appears to have initially negotiated her way into the yard via her equestrian knowledge. It appears that once her credentials as a bona fide member of the subculture have been accepted by the more established members of the yard, equestrian discussions have become secondary. 'I mean the more I've got to know the ladies here the more social we've become'¹³⁴. Expanding on the importance of sociability with her peers Jenny reports that:

We like to do our ride and dine days during the summer. We'll go out for a ride and either stop at the pub with our horses for a drink or we'll go out for a ride and come back get changed and go out to dinner straight after¹³⁵.

Monica uses the social time between runs to discuss that day's events to plan the next day's ski runs and to impart local knowledge of snow conditions

¹³⁰ 25/11/17

¹³¹ 3/12/17

¹³² 3/12/17

¹³³ 25/11/17

¹³⁴ 3/12/17

¹³⁵ 3/12/17

When we are out skiing we are talking about how was the last run (...)or yesterday I did this run and it was really empty we should try to do that first because if we wait until 11 o'clock the sun is gonna be on it and it will have gone slushy(...) And then if we've just met up like for dinner or something here [in the resort] we'll talk about where we went what we did, talk about "oh I've never done this cool ride I would really like to do that"¹³⁶.

A sport specific linguistic code, such as that between motorcyclists, which Frank alluded to earlier, also features in snowsports. Monica illustrates the exclusive nature of the tribal language:

I think that's what my mum found difficult because she wasn't doing any of that and it makes no sense to somebody who is not skiing to say "oh I'm going to do a particular run today, so and so did it yesterday and they said the left-hand side was a bit shoddy so stick to the right-hand side"¹³⁷.

Louise attests to the importance of group cohesiveness and the inclusiveness of membership (re) formulated within the social spaces of the snowsports subculture:

[P]erhaps when you go to a party at home the first thing people say, you know what do you do and people start categorising people, whereas in snowboarding it's a bit irrelevant. Your age, what job you do what your religion is, it's all a bit irrelevant because you're all there to snowboard and that's what you're interested in, that's what you talk about. And you might not actually find out about what somebody does until days after you meet them because that's not really important, that's not important stuff¹³⁸.

Poppy is more cautious when replying. '[T]hat's a hard one. I wouldn't say it's the main topic of conversation, but it has come up. You would talk about skiing but not, you know, more than any other subject I would say'¹³⁹. Snowboarder Chris agrees, 'it's one of them, it's one of the main topics of conversation'¹⁴⁰.

¹³⁶ 3/11/17

¹³⁷ 3/11/17

¹³⁸ 24/11/17

¹³⁹ 24/11/17

¹⁴⁰ 16/4/18

Peter's experiences of 'horsey' conversations are similar to Jenny's. Once an individual has successfully flagged their subculture membership, conversations centred on equestrianism become:

[J]ust one aspect. I suppose it's the thing that we've all got in common so that's a good starting point, but as you get to know them you do branch out about other things. But certainly initially, if you're just meeting somebody for the first time, it's bound to be just the horses¹⁴¹.

Stuart, a lifelong horseman appears to confirm that once a member's credentials have been accepted by the subculture, conversations centred on the sport become unnecessary. Although Stuart says 'there will be some, normally it's kind of a bit of caustic wit and banter with people we haven't seen for a while and having a drink and a laugh. It's probably more about that, to be honest with you'¹⁴². Bert articulates well the fluid nature of conversations within his social sphere:

I think the actual social context does change. When I've been with horsey people at horsey events the conversation is very much to do with what's going on. But also it depends on how often you see those people because if there are people you don't see often, the conversation can be much more free-ranging, but if it's people you see on a very regular basis then it tends to be the thing of the minute, which is probably just a ride you had or a horse you've seen that you might want to buy¹⁴³.

The words of my participants articulate a powerful account of the importance of the social aspects of subculture membership. Often when members first meet each other their sport forms a unifying bond using the sacred linguistic code which (re)affirms their membership of the subculture. It appears that once their membership is recognised conversations move on to more profane everyday topics. This sociability may be surprising as the three sports are usually performed individually. Indeed, as will be presented later, the individuality, and sometimes solitude, offered by these sports is cherished.

¹⁴¹ 15/3/18

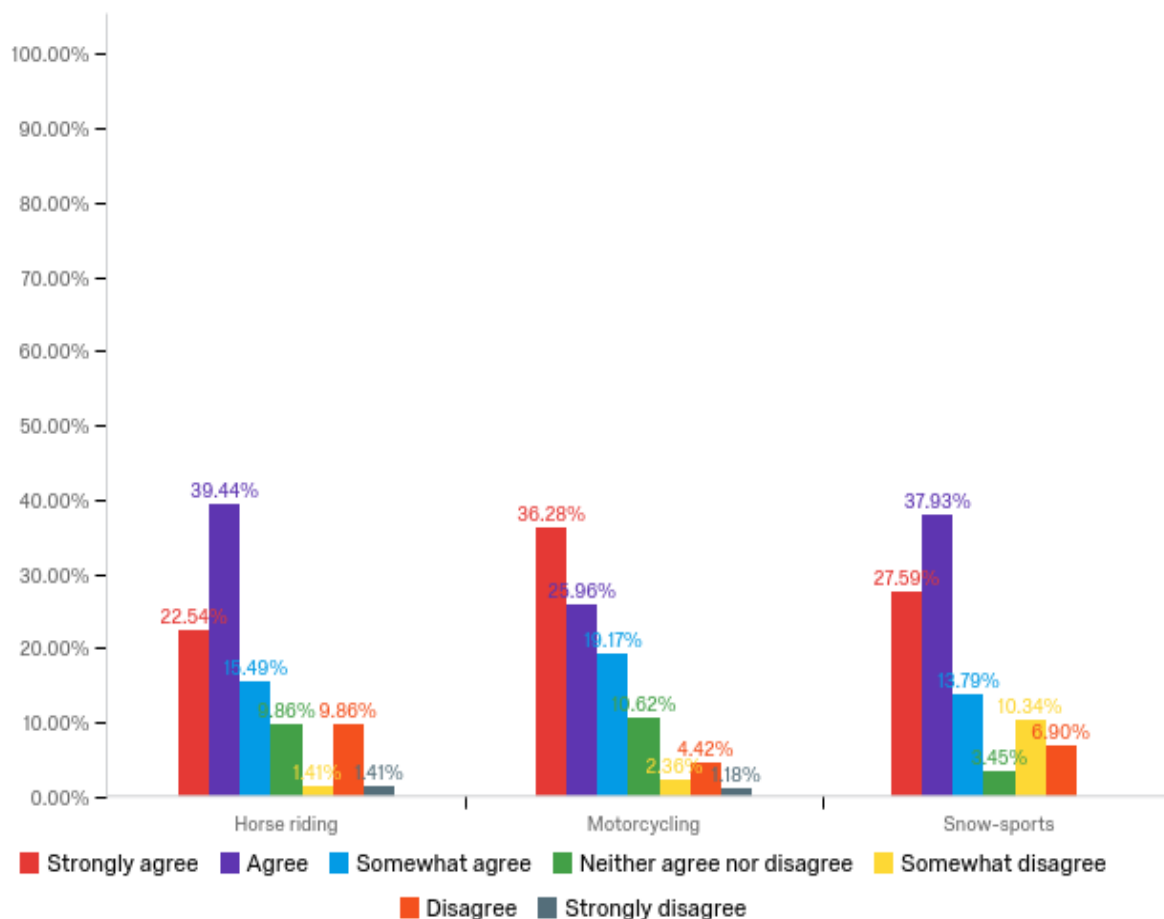
¹⁴² 4/12/17

¹⁴³ 11/4/18

The importance of sociability or, 'being apart together', within the subcultures is presented in the following quantitative data.

Figure 4.8

The social side of my sport is important to me (by sport)



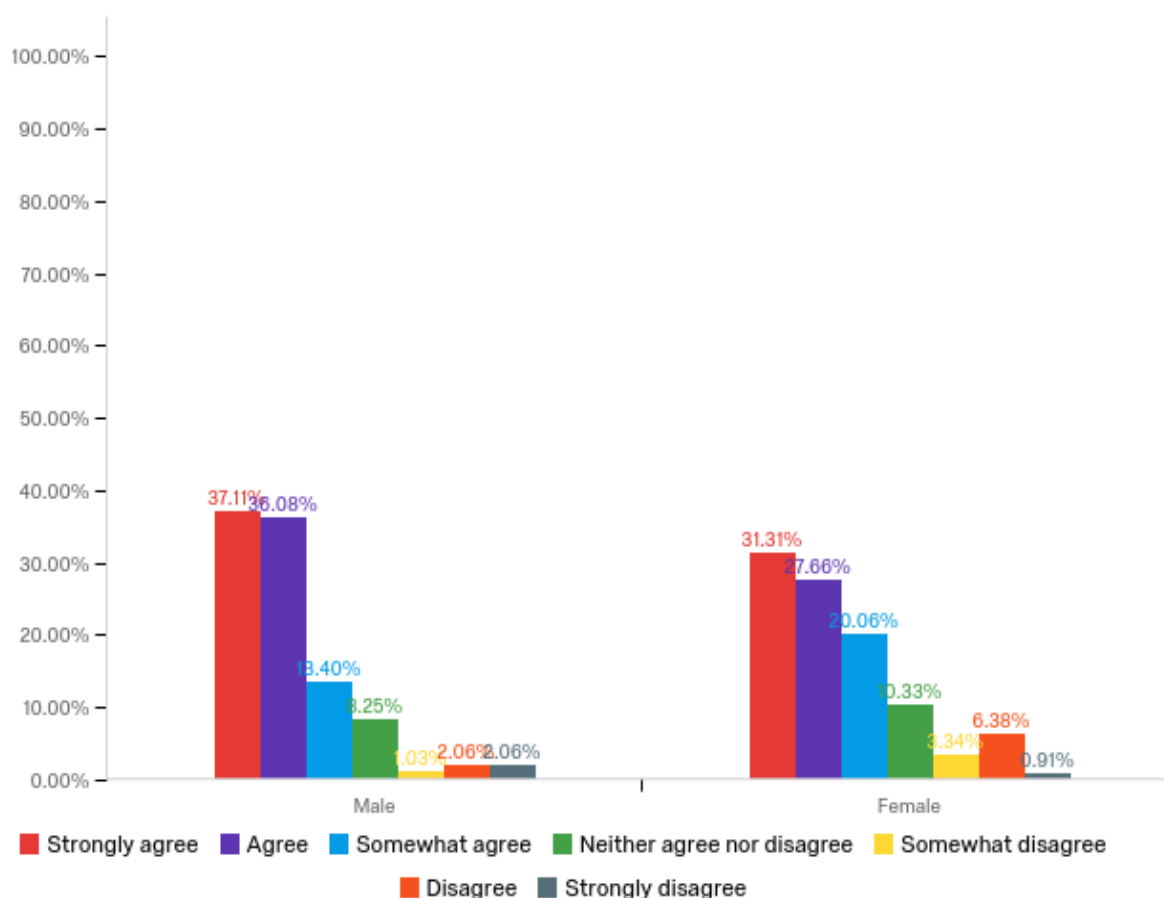
n=439

The social side of my sport is important to me (by sport)

Figure 4.8 above indicates that most participants within and across all three sports display high levels of agreement with the statement 'the social side of my sport is important to me'.

Figure 4.9

The social side of my sport is important to me (by gender)



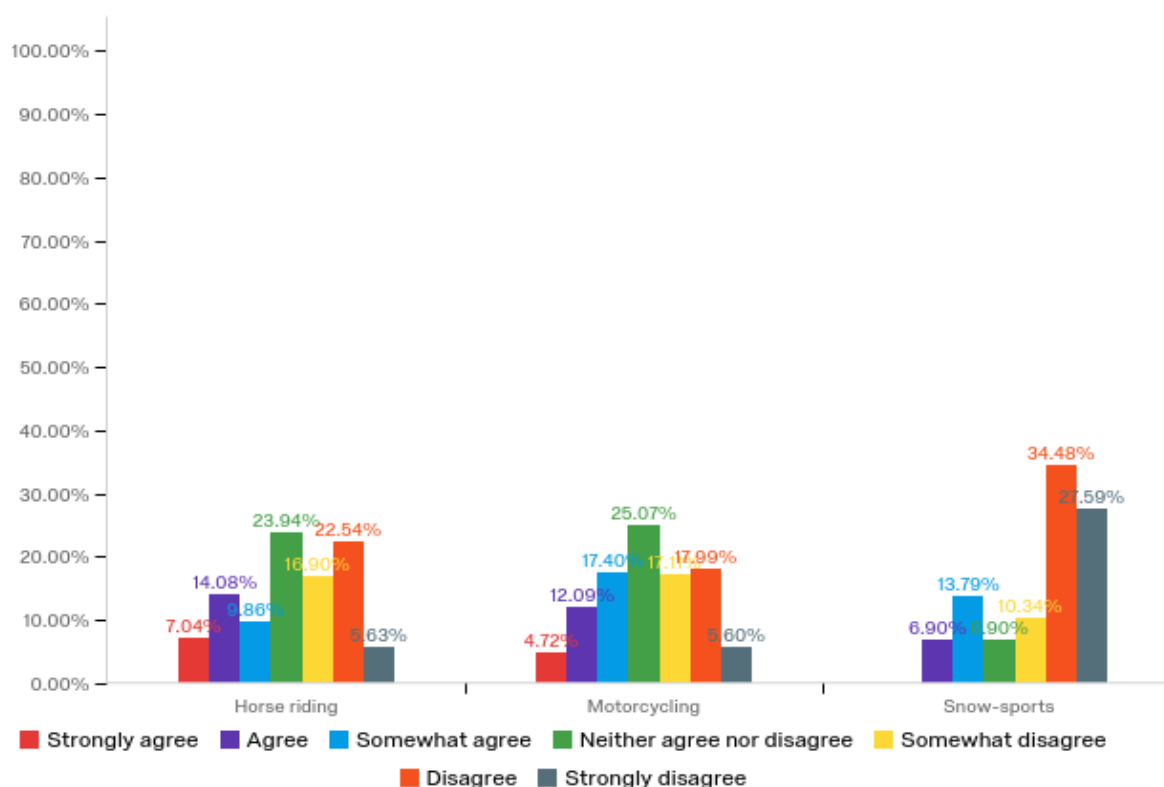
n=433

The social side of my sport is important to me (by gender)

When the same statement is analysed by gender, once again a clear pattern is presented. According to the data an unquestionably greater percentage of males, over eighty-six percent, either somewhat agrees, agree or strongly agrees. It would seem that males overwhelmingly value the social aspect of their sport. Females display less polarisation of responses but never-the-less the results are still heavily polarised between the seventy-nine percent of females who do value and those ten percent who seem not to value the social aspect of their sport.

Figure 4.10

I prefer to engage in my sport alone (by sport))



n=439

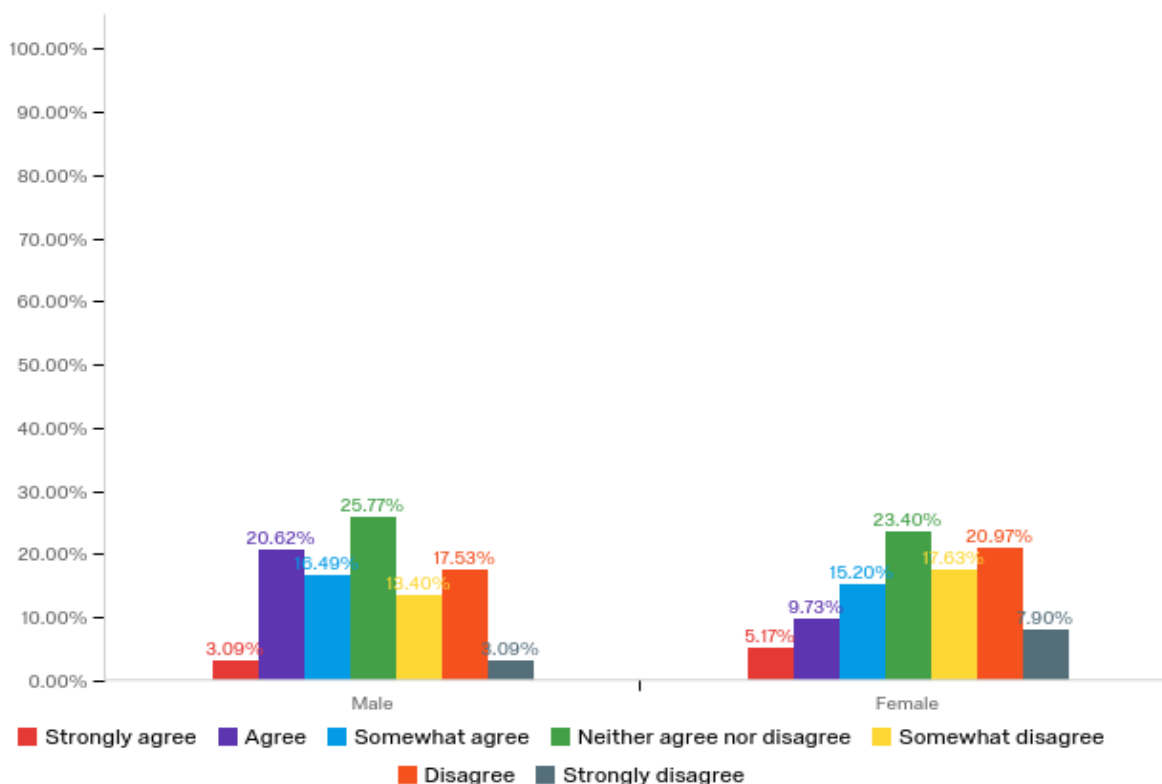
I prefer to engage in my sport alone (by sport)

Nearly thirty percent of horse riders indicated some level of agreement with the statement 'I prefer to engage in my sport alone'. This contrasts with forty-four percent whom, at some level, preferred to engage in their sport together. Twenty-four percent, or nearly a quarter of the horse riding sample, were neutral in their opinion indicating that they were happy to ride in company or alone. Thirty-four percent of motorcyclists, over a third of the sample, preferred to ride their motorcycles alone. Forty percent of motorcyclists preferred to ride as part of a group. This finding exactly mirrors the overall forty percent of the horse riders who prefer riding in a group. Only twenty percent of snowsports participants in the sample agreed or somewhat agreed that they preferred to ski alone. Sixty-two percent, nearly two-thirds of snowsports participants would rather ski as part of a group.

Based on this small sample, skiing would appear to be by far the most sociable of the three with regard to engaging in the sport. This may account for the popularity of the many “après ski” opportunities found at many of the resorts.

Figure 4.11

I prefer to engage in my sport alone (by gender)



n=433

I prefer to engage in my sport alone (by gender)

Overall, when compared with other males in the sample, slightly more males prefer to engage in their sports alone with thirty-nine percent recording some level of agreement. Over twenty percent of the sample ‘agrees’. A combined thirty-four percent, just over a third, disagree at some level with the statement indicating that these males prefer a degree of company when performing their sport. What is telling is that over a quarter of all males, nearly twenty-six percent of the sample, were ambivalent with no preference either way. The data indicates that, when compared to the male sample, fewer females prefer to engage in their sport alone. Thirty

percent of females reported that they prefer to engage in their sport alone. However, over forty-six percent of females indicated that they prefer company when performing their sport. The data for females who have no preference for performing alone or together is strikingly similar to the male data. Twenty-five percent of males vs. twenty-three percent of females indicated that they have no preference, one way or the other, in whether they perform their sport alone or in the company of others.

4.2.6 Personal commitment to their sport.

In an attempt to drill down to some of the personal motivations underpinning an individual's engagement in their sport, in addition to the financial commitments examined earlier, I wanted to gauge the depth of an individual's feelings for their sport; to ascertain how much of an individual's essence goes into belonging to the subculture. Brian reminds us of his utilitarian relationship with motorcycles. When questioned if he ever takes the long way home out of sheer enjoyment for motorcycling; the journey is more important than the destination, he argues 'why would I want to spend another hour and a half going somewhere just for the sheer hell of it? I don't do it in the car so I don't see why I should do it on the bike'¹⁴⁴. Kurt on the other hand already owned a car before he got the motorcycle 'bug' and provides an example of how wanting something, in this case, a motorcycle, was prioritised in his hierarchy of needs. Kurt confessed that 'I didn't need a motorcycle, I wanted one'¹⁴⁵!

Sherry articulates her passion and depth of commitment well. 'Whatever I do in life the horse has to be considered first (...) unfortunately for my husband, he does come

¹⁴⁴ 25/10/17

¹⁴⁵ 23/7/18

top of the list really because it's his well-being. I have to put him first'¹⁴⁶. Luke also attests to the all-encompassing nature of equestrianism and to the level of personal commitment it requires 'when we were heavily involved in horses then that's just your life. It's a bit like children I've never had'¹⁴⁷. Laura, who is quite new to motorcycling, has developed a similar life-affirming commitment. 'It's my life now rather than something I just do every now and again'¹⁴⁸.

Caroline had to prove her personal commitment to equestrianism at a young age before her parents would support her financially to own her first pony:

I used to go up to the stables on a Saturday and Sunday and all wrapped up if it was winter with my flask and some sandwiches and help in the riding school, so muck out, clean tack and for that I'd get a ride (...) I think once they [parents] realised I'd still go up there in the middle of winter, it was absolutely freezing¹⁴⁹.

Frank's commitment was expressed in terms of his educational sacrifice which can be interpreted as the influence of Weber's concept of *Zweckrational*, or instrumental rational action whereby the means justify the end (Scaff, 2008):

[W]hen I left school I kind of realised that if I went to Sixth Form college I wouldn't be able to buy a motorbike. So I got myself a job instead so I could afford motorbikes. It was just something I always wanted to do... Always it was never a question really; it was just a question of when¹⁵⁰.

Victoria sees her commitment to her sport as 'more of a way of life really than just, you know, a holiday once a year'¹⁵¹. Poppy took her commitment to skiing to the extreme. Having learned to be a ski instructor in North America, Poppy loved being

¹⁴⁶ 3/12/17

¹⁴⁷ 3/3/18

¹⁴⁸ 31/8/17

¹⁴⁹ 16/2/18

¹⁵⁰ 8/11/17

¹⁵¹ 22/1/18

immersed in the whole skiing subculture to such an extent she stayed for six years. 'It wasn't just the skiing, the activity, it was the whole lifestyle around it as well'¹⁵².

Conversely, those in the sample who engage in their sport as tourists, for a few weeks a year, have an entirely different view as to the depth of personal commitment they are prepared to indulge in. My youngest participant, Robert describes how it feels to enjoy a leisure sport before it becomes an all-consuming passion; almost like how a gentle breeze has the potential, given the time, to fan an ember into an inferno:

I go [skiing] and then I kind of forget about skiing for a while, and then someone mentions skiing and then I think, ah skiing that's really good and I kind of want to go more and more until the time we go and then it kind of resets again every time¹⁵³.

Robert provides another youthful insight into how it feels to be on the boundary of subculture membership and has previously discussed this with his father. I asked him if sometimes he thinks that he really has to go skiing. Robert replied 'if you haven't been skiing for a while and you hear about skiing or you think about skiing then you really want to go skiing, and I'm kind of getting that now because we're going skiing soon'¹⁵⁴.

Chad, aged eighteen, skis once a year with his family. His response to my asking him if he would spend his own, rather than his parents' money on a skiing holiday suggests that, although an enjoyable leisure sport, Chad has not yet passed the 'ember' stage. He confessed that 'no I wouldn't. I wouldn't pay a lot of money to go skiing. If I was on a small budget I wouldn't pay to go skiing. I wouldn't choose to (...)

¹⁵² 24/11/17

¹⁵³ 16/6/18

¹⁵⁴ 16/6/18

there are other places I'd like to go that I haven't been'¹⁵⁵. Chad also admitted that if he had a bigger budget in the future he would spend on a skiing holiday, 'if I can afford it then yes, definitely'. For Andrew skiing 'is not that important to me'. He has reached a standard of proficiency which enables him to engage commensurate with his expectations. He hires ski equipment at the resort because 'whether it makes you go faster, to me I'm not a level when that would make any difference'¹⁵⁶. When asked if he would like to become a more proficient skier Andrew responds 'I'm not prepared to put the time in to get to that level'. For keen squash player James, advancing his skiing proficiency is less about time and more about the money spent on a sport he does infrequently, although at the time of his interview James had been skiing for four consecutive years:

The trouble with skiing is because it's only once a year I don't chase it the rest of the year. I don't go to dry slopes and everything else. It's a little bit too infrequent to be like that (...) If I've got £500 to spend would I spend it on a pair of boots and skis? Probably not (...) I might spend £100 on a squash racket without even thinking about it and about £70 on a pair of squash shoes because I'm using them week in and week out, but spending £100 on a pair of ski boots or £150 on a pair of ski boots for one week a year...¹⁵⁷.

The personal commitment of individuals to belong to their subculture appears, in this sample, to be related to the frequency of engagement and the corresponding investment in time. Moreover, these findings suggest that commitment to a subculture is gender independent. Horse riders and motorcyclists, possibly due to the frequency of their participation and an intersubjective sharing of a common subcultural 'stock of knowledge' (Schutz, 1967, p. 80), seem to be the most deeply committed to their sport with their references often describing their sport as being a way of life. This deep connection with their sport is mirrored by some of the

¹⁵⁵ 16/6/18

¹⁵⁶ 16/6/18

¹⁵⁷ 29/11/17

snowsports participants, some of whom are so deeply embedded in their sport that they have chosen to live and work in ski resorts around the world. For others, snow sports are just like any other expensive family holiday.

4.2.7 Gender bias and barriers to belonging.

Earlier in this chapter, I stated that gender bias is widely reported within the three sports. If a sport appears heavily biased towards a particular gender, why does that bias persist? Another equally important question, given that leisure time is now widely regarded as important for an individual's well being, is how can gender bias be addressed? Both questions are important in understanding the level of difficulty to be overcome by a potential motorcyclist, horse rider or skier/snowboarder, especially if they do not conform to the stereotyped gender norm for that subculture.

4.2.8 Motorcycling.

Motorcycling is heavily biased towards males. Although more females are choosing to ride motorcycles they are still outnumbered by males who make up around ninety percent of motorcyclists in the UK. Brian believes that primary socialisation is the main driver for future participation:

I think actually it's probably something to do with peer issues. I don't think girls get introduced to motorbikes until later in life unless their father had one¹⁵⁸.

Furthermore, Brian believes that:

[B]oys tend to want that power and the thrill of being on a motorbike at a younger age, and they probably got more exposure to it because of their peer groups¹⁵⁹.

Probing further into Brian's belief that it is the power and thrill of motorcycles that attracted boys, I asked if he thought motorcycling had a macho image. He replied

¹⁵⁸ 25/10/17

¹⁵⁹ 25/10/17

that 'there is a real testosterone issue about a lot of it, especially when you got more than one motorcyclist at a time'¹⁶⁰. Sam takes a more measured view stating that 'there are macho people in motorcycling; I don't think it's necessarily macho (...) it doesn't have to be, it's not inherently so but there is a lot of macho bullshit around, absolutely there is, and certainly around the Harley guys'¹⁶¹. Sam also believes that the attraction of macho men to motorcycles is a UK import, like the Harley-Davidson's themselves, from the United States. For Sam, British Harley riders 'tend to be like weekend Hells Angels or people who are trying to pose about or something like that, I'm not really sure. And I think that lot, all of that lot, accounts for the macho bullshit'¹⁶². Harley-Davidson owning Sam also points out that, although for some, there may be a Hells Angel, macho image to aspire to 'they're plenty of guys with Harleys that just like them as I like them'¹⁶³. Kurt recognises that, traditionally, motorcycle sport is 'very male-dominated, and so is Formula One, Rallying, things like that. Yeah, I think there's a touch of machismo about riding a motorcycle yeah. It does make you feel good if you know you look good on a bike'¹⁶⁴. Kurt continued to expand on the traditionally held stereotype of motorcycling manliness. Reminiscing about the 1970's *Brut* 33 advertisements featuring motorcycle racing world champion Barry Sheen with his model girlfriend Stephanie Kurt reflects that motorcycling was:

Very playboy-ish at the top level. Yeah, I think that's where a lot of that image comes from. Traditionally females have been pillion riders. I don't know whether years ago it's because it was sort of frowned upon because (...) years ago it had that bad boy image. I think that's really long gone now but mud sticks and it's hard to, it's hard to change the image of something that's been around for so long¹⁶⁵.

¹⁶⁰ 25/10/17

¹⁶¹ 28/3/18

¹⁶² 28/3/18

¹⁶³ 28/3/18

¹⁶⁴ 23/7/18

¹⁶⁵ 23/7/18

Barry takes an essentialist view regarding male domination within motorcycling believing that 'It's sort of natural for men to want to... It's seen as a masculine thing for men to want to go fast and I think psychologically men want to go fast and crave excitement more than women'¹⁶⁶. Frank, like Kurt, also points his finger at the influence of the mass media perpetuating the gender bias using the aphorism 'sex sells'.

I think growing up, there is a kind of sexist kind of thing; "Back Street Heroes"¹⁶⁷ with the pictures of the girls in the bikini sat on a motorbike. And thinking about that as well when you used to go to the bike shows. They always used to have a girl in a Lycra top didn't they¹⁶⁸? And that kind of stuff which I don't think is particularly helpful really¹⁶⁹.

George is the oldest of my participants and was motorcycling through the sixties when most of the macho, bad-boy images of motorcyclists were created. 'It was sold as being a macho sort of environment in certain areas of the media. It was also sold as a hooligan element, an environment of the youth'¹⁷⁰. George blames the mass media for selling a sensationalist image of motorcycling as being socially deviant:

The general media, it was always about the Rockers¹⁷¹ and the Mods¹⁷² always trying to stir up... The Mods and Rockers clashed... there was a fight. This kind of thing you know? Half the time it didn't happen you know? It did happen but it wasn't the way the media, typical media they blow things up out of total proportion of what really happened¹⁷³.

Although George was riding a motorcycle through this period he did not identify with either youth culture. 'I was a motorcyclist that is how I always saw myself. I wasn't a

¹⁶⁶ 14/11/17

¹⁶⁷ A British magazine title which frequently displays female sexual objectification

¹⁶⁸ According to my contemporaneous field notes, they still do

¹⁶⁹ 8/11/17

¹⁷⁰ 30/10/17

¹⁷¹ Motorcyclists, AKA greasers, the old guard

¹⁷² Scooter riders, seen as a MODern youth culture

¹⁷³ 30/10/17

Rocker. I wasn't a Mod. I like to think I wasn't a tear away. I was just a motorcyclist'¹⁷⁴.

To some extent Sophia's motorcycling experiences reflect those of the males when riding in a mixed-gender group but finds riding with women generally less intimidating:

Sometimes it can get a bit balls on tank, let's all just go as fast as we can and show what we can do. But I tend not to find that with, there are some women that are like that but predominantly, and I'm not saying that all men are like that either because they're not, but I think you're less likely to find that in an all-women group than in a predominantly male group¹⁷⁵.

Although Sophia admits that there are some very aggressive female riders in her all-female riding group she finds the group less macho:

[P]redominantly the riders that we've got are very supportive of each other. Everybody seems to have the same apprehensions generally you know? If you talk to people somebody would say "oh yeah I've done that", "oh yeah I felt that" or "I've gone out and had a crap ride". I've done that. I just feel there's a little bit more of support there¹⁷⁶.

Susan expresses a controversial opinion and one based on Simone de Beauvoir's (1989 [1949], p. 267) famous injunction that 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'. Motorcycling continues to be biased towards males due to ideas of hegemonic masculinity, largely perpetuated by males:

I think there's very much a stigma still that its man's sport, a man's leisure rather than a female you know? There is still very much in this country you know, women should be tied to a sink even though there is equal rights and you know things like that. But just the older male generation is, "no, women should be at home. I should be allowed to go out and play on my bike". I think that's what the issue is that they're [women] not encouraged to do so by their partners. If they've got a partner that will encourage them to do so then great, brilliant, but there's not a lot of men out there that do. I think they perhaps almost feel threatened by females, especially if we are in a group like this. You might get the odd curious guy come up you know, "why do you ride"? But

¹⁷⁴ 30/10/17

¹⁷⁵ 11/10/17

¹⁷⁶ 11/10/17

generally we are blanked by males; believe it or not, other women have said that [laughter]¹⁷⁷.

I asked Susan why males might be threatened by women motorcyclists; had she personally encountered any hostility. She responded that 'I have yeah and that it's just more so the older generation' further adding:

We're kind of entering into their world. What is it only 10 or 12% of women ride out of men? So yeah you do get questions but there are guys out there that say it's really good to see women ride but you do get a higher proportion of "no no no you really should be at home looking after the family blah, blah blah"¹⁷⁸.

Like Susan, Pam also believes that 'some men don't like women riding and that comes evident through on some other posts. The vast majority of them do. A lot more accept it now I think than it was once that females ride'¹⁷⁹.

Joan has also had experience of the enduring, and often patronising, nature of gender bias towards female motorcyclists. While shopping for a new motorcycle at her local dealership:

I was in there talking to the chap and telling him what I rode and what I was looking for. He took me straight to the step throughs [mopeds and small bikes] and then said: "Oh but don't you want a 125"? No I ride a [Honda CBR600] and he was completely surprised and that was annoying¹⁸⁰.

Laura believes 'there is still a lot of pressure on women to not ride and there are lots of reasons given why you shouldn't; it's too big, it's too heavy, you won't be able to manage, it's dangerous, it's this, it's that'¹⁸¹. When I asked Laura where she thinks that pressure comes from, I expected her to say that men placed these potential obstacles in the way. Although there was the expected element of male disapproval,

¹⁷⁷ 2/10/17

¹⁷⁸ 2/10/17

¹⁷⁹ 2/10/17

¹⁸⁰ 2/10/17

¹⁸¹ 31/8/17

Laura opines that, with regard to subcultural membership, women are often complicit in their own subordinacy:

It's men that say it directly to women, but then women who have heard it, and believe it from other people, have been only too pleased to say similar to me... or about themselves. "I couldn't ride that it's too big", "it's too heavy" it's, "why do you do it"? "It's too dangerous". They have taken on these things on as being the truth. You can't do it because you're female and they are passing that on to me¹⁸².

Janet, sixty-one years old and slightly built, is well aware of the motorcycle gender bias. However, she enjoys using the generally bulky and shapeless motorcycle clothing to disguise her femininity:

I actually kind of like the fact that when I'm toggled up I'm like the Michelin man; you can't tell [which gender]. There's been times when I've been going on to the US military base when you have to stop and show your ID, and before I lift my helmet they say good afternoon Sir and then they go Ma'am and it's like...¹⁸³.

In adopting her motorcycling disguise, Janet negotiates the gender issue by not conforming to normal female gender stereotypes. For example, she does not wear pink clothing 'I do have a pink one [Hi Viz vest] but I never wear it (...) I don't like it really'¹⁸⁴. Janet finishes by saying that 'I don't necessarily want to be anonymous but I do like the fact that it's not gender... It's hard to tell. I go out of my way to not identify as being male or female or age or anything'. Janet clearly finds a personal benefit in projecting her androgynous appearance when riding her motorcycle. This is evidenced by an example of a riding incident. 'I have had it when there's traffic both ways [on a single undivided carriageway] and there was room in the middle and

¹⁸² 31/8/17

¹⁸³ 15/9/17

¹⁸⁴ 15/9/17

this big lorry moved over just to try to block me and that was definitely a guy, and he got the nasty sign from me'¹⁸⁵.

4.2.9 Horse riding.

Leisure horse riding is, as described earlier, seventy-four percent biased towards females. Nora provided first-hand evidence that that figure, in some events, is a conservative estimate. 'The last ride, the Danbury ride, I helped out on the desk checking people in and I think it was 200 and I think there were probably three men'¹⁸⁶. I asked Nora why she thought that was. She replied:

[M]y husband says to me "I would like to learn to ride", but he wouldn't do any of the care. I would probably end up, if he got a horse, getting it ready and worrying about the health of the horse and everything. My husband would probably just want it all tacked up and have a lesson and then go home'¹⁸⁷.

Nora's opinion that males appear more interested in riding as opposed to the animal husbandry side of equestrianism seems to be supported by Stuart, a lifelong horseman. He believes that fewer men engage in horse riding because:

Maybe it's something to do with that it takes quite a lot of skill that needs a lot of patience to get and I think that maybe a lot of males, again I'm generalising, but whether we [males] are more impatient (...). I think that maybe they [females] prefer that longer game, the greater mental challenge and don't just look for instant hit gratification'¹⁸⁸.

When I later mentioned to Stuart that leisure horse riders were seventy-four percent female he was surprised. 'Is it only seventy-four percent? I thought it was higher. Yes but I think maybe that perception is perhaps what puts some males off'¹⁸⁹. Stuart went on to explain that in equestrianism, gender is not binary. 'I know from personal

¹⁸⁵ 15/9/17

¹⁸⁶ 3/12/17

¹⁸⁷ 3/12/17

¹⁸⁸ 4/12/17

¹⁸⁹ 4/12/17

friends and stuff, there are a lot of gay people who are riders. Some of the top riders are gay'¹⁹⁰.

4.2.10 Snowsports.

Gender inequality in Snowsports is less pronounced than in the other two sports. However, males account for sixty-six percent, or two thirds, of British snow sports participants. Experienced snowboarder Chris considers that:

Maybe women are a bit more risk-averse. Maybe they're just more sensible than men (...). I snowboard more with men than women so I think on balance it is still a male thing. But I think in my experience the men that I snowboard with, as opposed to the women, are more risk-takers. Maybe there's a, maybe it comes down to the competitiveness¹⁹¹.

Later in the interview, Chris expanded on his competitive nature. He felt that fewer women snowboard because they are less prepared to accept risks to personal injury 'I mean I've always been sort of, to try to get better, to improve my ability on the snow. Whether that manifests itself in taking more risks perhaps, whether you see that in women I'm not sure'¹⁹².

Daniel shares Chris' opinion regarding the riskier nature of snowboarding as being a barrier to belonging for potential female snowboarders. 'I think probably snowboarding is a bit more dangerous [than skiing]. I think if you're a woman looking into the snowboarding scene you're going to notice it's male-dominated and you're going to wonder why it's male-dominated, and that might put you off'¹⁹³. The machismo performed by male motorcyclists presented earlier also appears to be evident on the ski slopes. Harry, an experienced skier, instructor and tour leader reported that 'there is quite a lot of machismo with skiing. There's a lot of tall tales

¹⁹⁰ 4/12/17

¹⁹¹ 16/4/18

¹⁹² 16/4/18

¹⁹³ 27/3/18

told down the pub of daring exploits and I think that could put people off¹⁹⁴. I probed deeper into Harry's understanding of what, where and how machismo is displayed on the slopes:

I guess the park stuff [an area where tricks are performed] is seen as quite macho. "I've done a black flip, "I've done a double backflip", "I've done a triple whatever backflip", that sort of competitive, trying to be the bigger man, tell the bigger pub story about what you did on skis. You know half of its rubbish. I guess I see that as quite macho, sort of trying to be the alpha male. Talking the talk even if you're not necessarily walking the walk

The park is generally an easily accessible area where many skier/snowboarders would go to see the kind of acrobatic manoeuvres Harry refers to. The overt display, reinforced by pub stories, would do nothing to encourage those risk-averse females mentioned by Chris and Daniel. Louise has personal experience of gender inequality in snowboarding. She explains reminiscing about her first snowboarding course:

I wasn't aware because I was a bit ignorant it is bliss. I wasn't aware that it was seen as quite a male-dominated sport, extreme sport. I wasn't really aware of that until I got into it a bit more and that's when I started to... my first course was in Chamonix with 10 men. I was the only female on there. (...) So that season the company that ran that course they said that they had something like 150 people through their doors that season doing courses, only 10 were women¹⁹⁵.

Ski parks and ski and snowboard courses might provide the spaces where male competitiveness is manifestly displayed. The six percent of women on Louise's course falls woefully short of the thirty-four percent that the sport itself suggests are women. Overt displays of masculinity could, therefore, be a cause of that gender inequality. Another cause could be the numbers of male groups vs. female groups enjoying skiing holidays or families where only the male skis. Ski Chalet director Victoria, aged forty-four, gives her professional opinion:

¹⁹⁴ 7/12/17

¹⁹⁵ 24/11/17

I would say definitely amongst my age group it's male-dominated. I would say people in their 20s it's probably half and half, but even from what we see as groups coming to the chalet is you get more all-male groups then you do females coming on a ski holiday; and you get more families coming where the woman doesn't ski or doesn't ski very much and it's the guy that really wants to go and he brings his family¹⁹⁶.

Janet's holiday experiences of any observable gender inequality in Austria is probably more in line with industry reports in that she 'think[s] it seems very even in my experience of being on the slopes in Austria. And yeah, if you look around you in the lift queue, I've never sort of felt "oh my God I'm the only woman" or "Oh where are all the men?"'¹⁹⁷ A further indication that snowsports are lifting the barriers to belonging and becoming less male-dominated is provided by Amelia, who works in a French resort. I asked her if skiing had a macho image. She replied:

I think it's getting less so. I think one of the things that I liked about it when I was a child or what drew me to it was that you get lots of sort of girly ski kit and things like that. So I felt that shops were targeting me in a way whereas with other things like rock climbing that's just not the case at all and it's getting more like that than less so. So, I don't think it's got as much of a macho image as some other sports¹⁹⁸.

I quantitatively tested the extent to which male and female participants in the three sports felt that their sport was sexist.

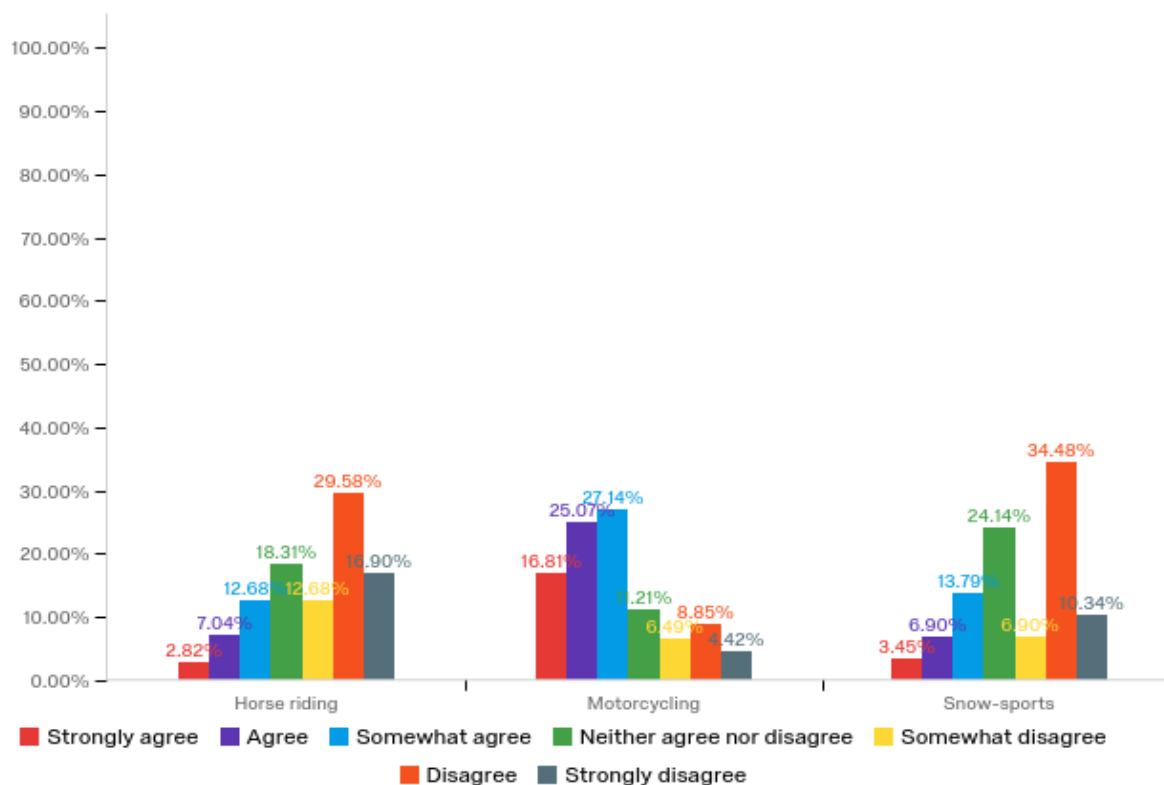
¹⁹⁶ 22/1/18

¹⁹⁷ 16/6/18

¹⁹⁸ 14/11/17

Figure 4.12

My sport is quite sexist (by sport)



n=426

My sport is quite sexist (by sport)

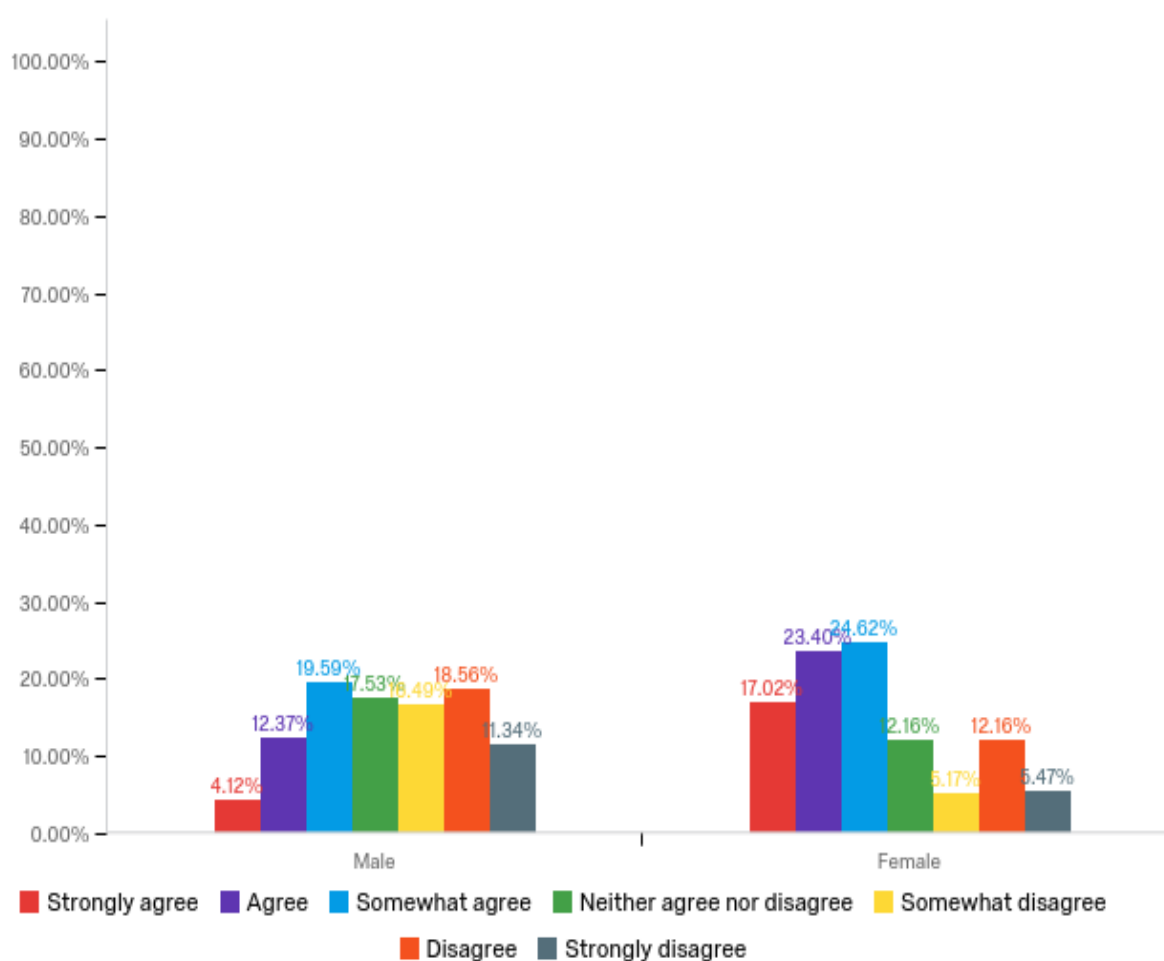
The results indicate that forty-six percent of horse riding participants disagree or strongly disagree that their sport is sexist. Less than ten percent agreed or strongly agreed. This may have profound implications for the equestrian industry who report that seventy-four percent of leisure riders are female. The widely held belief among participants in my small sample that equestrianism is not sexist may help remove, at least one barrier to greater male participation.

On the other hand, findings from the survey indicate that forty-two percent of motorcyclists either strongly agree or agree with a further twenty-seven percent somewhat agreeing that their sport is sexist. Taken as an aggregate figure seventy percent of motorcyclists in the sample believe their sport to be sexist. This may come

as no surprise as motorcycling in the UK is generally considered to be biased by some ninety percent towards males. Sexism in motorcycling is a tough and uncomfortable barrier to negotiate as some of my female interviewees have attested to.

Figure 4.13

My sport is quite sexist (by gender))



n=426. 329♀ 97♂

My sport is quite sexist (by gender)

The graph above indicates that nearly two-thirds of females consider that the sport in which they participate is 'quite sexist'. Sixty-five percent of the female sample strongly agree, agree, or somewhat agree that their sport is quite sexist. A much smaller percentage of nearly twenty-three percent, less than a quarter, disagree. Males exhibit a different opinion to females with just over a third or thirty-six percent,

out of a smaller sample size, either strongly agreeing, agreeing or somewhat agreeing that their particular sport is sexist. Forty-eight percent, or nearly half of the male sample, disagree that their sport is sexist. That nearly fifty percent of males disagree that their sport is sexist may point to the unconscious action of hegemonic masculinity whereby some males occupy a privileged position in society and are, therefore, largely shielded and thus immune to sexism's negative effects.

4.2.11 Lifting the barriers: Ideas for inclusiveness.

To this point, findings have been focussed on belonging, how individuals (re)produce their subcultural membership from within. I now examine my participants' views for ways to address the gender inequality within their sport.

4.2.12 Motorcycling.

Brian believes that to encourage more females onto motorcycles the industry should 'create a slightly different bike market (...) because I think manufacturers might alter the way they build the bikes'¹⁹⁹. Sam takes the view that:

It's probably about role models. (...). I don't think we've got high profile women icons in motorcycling. The ones that we have got, the ones that we see portrayed [in the media] tend to be wearing skin-tight leather and ridiculous pointy heeled boots that you couldn't possibly ride a motorbike in²⁰⁰.

Joan also picks up on the image of females portrayed in the popular motorcycle media. 'Actually, the image of the female biker isn't really what most of us are because it's all about skimpy leathers and that's the image that's portrayed to me. If you are female biker you're gonna be into the bondage gear'²⁰¹.

¹⁹⁹ 25/10/17

²⁰⁰ 28/3/18

²⁰¹ 2/10/17

I asked Mark how males could be more gender-inclusive. He replied that male motorcyclists should:

Be a little bit more welcoming; be a little bit more inviting. That applies to me as well I suppose because I go out as an individual not really interested in talking to other motorcyclists (...) that's not really how to make friends and influence people is it? That's not going to attract women²⁰².

In contrast to Joan's negative experience in her local motorcycle dealership, Barry, who works in a motorcycle dealer's parts department, indicates that:

[We] are quite encouraging at work. We make a point of if the bikes obviously for the woman then we talk to the woman because there's a tendency in the motorcycle trade for people to talk to the bloke even if it's the woman that's buying a bike or wanting spares for a bike. (...) it's not so in every dealership, unfortunately²⁰³.

As Barry's workplace appeared to be inclusive, I inquired if his dealership ever used promotional events to attract more women. Barry answered that 'they've had none since I've been working there (...). I've known them for 20 years and I can't ever remember a female-only event at work'²⁰⁴. Frank is of the opinion that motorcycling should be promoted by the industry 'in a way that ladies would like to come and join us really. For example motorbike shops (...) why don't they have nights when they encourage people to go there and see what other ladies do with motorbikes'²⁰⁵?

Laura puts barriers to belonging firmly in masculine hands:

[T]hey've made all of us suffer for so long [much laughing]. They get a very hard time if they lay their hands on our bikes ['I'll] help you move that', get your hands off my bike I can do it myself! It's the assumption we can't when we can... and I think women have believed it to for years and years and years. There is an assumption that we can't, therefore, we won't. And I think it's just not been part of female lives because they've believed it [motorcycling] to be a male thing²⁰⁶.

²⁰² 9/8/17

²⁰³ 14/11/17

²⁰⁴ 14/11/17

²⁰⁵ 8/11/17

²⁰⁶ 31/8/17

Laura provides further evidence that hegemonic masculinity has, potentially, coerced females into becoming complicit in their own exclusion from motorcycling. 'They've believed what they've been told and they've not challenged it. And yet for me, the person that told me I couldn't do it was my mother.'²⁰⁷ Laura also offers some practical measures to help combat masculine bias:

It's got to start with the manufacturers. There's a lot of power in advertising and I think if they could somehow find a way to make it more appealing to women at entry-level. (...) It's not accessible because it's dominated by men everywhere. It makes it tricky to go in and talk about bikes, there aren't women in showrooms, there aren't women selling the clothes, its men doing everything and I think that makes it intimidating. I think it needs to be frontline services and sales but also the manufacturing needs to be made, the advertising and the product needs to be made... needs to have more of a female focus or less of a macho focus. Maybe that's all it takes, less of a macho focus²⁰⁸.

Some manufacturers and dealers have identified the commercial benefits behind encouraging more females onto two wheels. Some of these benefits address concerns raised earlier. Kurt's premium brand dealership reports that:

We're starting to see more ladies that ride just on their own. They'll come to the [dealer organised social] ride outs as well. It's changing because they don't feel so intimidated or at least within our groups they don't feel so intimidated. They're made to feel welcome, they're not alienated. (...) You see more adverts now with ladies riding motorcycles; more films now where ladies are riding motorcycles²⁰⁹.

Furthermore, Kurt believes that manufacturers could be a major force for change within motorcycling:

They could tailor advertisements to be more inclusive to female riders. BMW for example, they have a riding school which does cater with a ladies only class so that if they're a little bit "I don't want to do it it's going to be all men" they are catered for. I think it is down to manufacturers. (...) I think there's just not enough being done²¹⁰.

²⁰⁷ 31/8/17

²⁰⁸ 31/8/17

²⁰⁹ 23/7/18

²¹⁰ 23/7/18

4.2.13 Horse riding.

Mia has been told by other women who take their children to *Pony Club*, that boys do not enjoy the day-to-day chores of looking after a horse. To mitigate this, Mia encourages her son to ride by performing these various tasks herself. Mia suggests ‘that’s what they enjoy, the riding part of it, the Cowboys and Indians part of it not necessarily the day-to-day chores’²¹¹. However, she admits this can be difficult ‘in that a lot of mums either don’t have the inclination to run the pony just for the child to ride, can’t afford to do that time-wise [or] financially’²¹². Sherry also believes that males prefer to ride and not to be involved in the process of equine husbandry ‘the men I know they wouldn’t want to have the hassle if you like of everything that goes with it, the care side’²¹³.

Expanding on the fun aspect of riding to encourage more boys, Mia said that her son was at *Pony Club* ‘the other night with a blow-up punch bag and a sword and they were jousting. It was only at walk but it appealed to my son’s boyish nature. And I saw a clip the other night of a group of ponies, children on horseback with bows and arrows’²¹⁴. Stuart considers that team sports such as horse ball and polo, where there is more of a gender mix, would help foster inclusivity adding, ‘it could be that promoting different types of sports that are more focused towards males might help’²¹⁵. Polo playing Cliff agrees proposing that:

[E]vents like *Polo in the Park* and stuff that are widely accessible to the public are good ways (...). I think you have to induce an element of like, the sporting,

²¹¹ 25/11/17

²¹² 25/11/17

²¹³ 3/12/17

²¹⁴ 25/11/17

²¹⁵ 4/12/17

the proper sporting side to it. (...). I think polo is actually a really good way for people to do it because it's quite a competitive action-packed sport²¹⁶.

Just as in motorcycling, Mia feels that the manufacturers of equipment could help reduce gender bias:

There is a lack of boys stuff on the market. So for girls I can go and buy a multitude of pink fairy fluffy stuff for the kids and their ponies, glittery and sparkly, but for the boys I had to resort to making my own hat cover, Spiderman hat cover, Spiderman rug for the pony because it's, just not a huge amount out there²¹⁷.

Nora also believes in introducing boys at a young age but worries that horse riding is not only expensive but is also perceived by boys as not manly. 'I think if children in school were introduced, but it's such an expensive hobby. I don't know. Do men think it's not macho enough'²¹⁸?

Again, like motorcycling, Sherry believes the 'magazines that we were talking about earlier like *Pony* magazine always portrays little girls, so I think probably the media always portray it as a little girl sport'²¹⁹.

Chloe believes that male-only riding clubs, and more choice in clothing, could be a useful way forward in reducing the gendered inequality in horse riding; just as the *Curvy Riders* female-only club have done for motorcycling. I asked Chloe how the sport could become more inclusive. She believes that males:

Probably feel quite overwhelmed because of the majority being female, and if there were more male-only riding clubs, riding schools men out there, that would like to try it or have done it as youngsters and had a massive gap, wouldn't feel intimidated. I think men prefer to do things more in a male environment rather than come down with all these women and think oh no. And also maybe the outfits, I don't think they like wearing the jodhpurs and everything²²⁰.

²¹⁶ 3/8/18

²¹⁷ 25/11/17

²¹⁸ 3/12/17

²¹⁹ 3/12/17

²²⁰ 25/11/17

Sadly, according to Chloe, no such clubs currently exist and clothing choice appears to be limited.

4.2.14 Snowsports.

Harry considers that the snowsports industry has been reactive with regard to gender inequality and that it is increasing its offerings for women as more women participate:

I think it has become more gender-inclusive in the last 10 years. I think there are more female skiers than there have been before. I think kit is part of that; there are now women-specific everything, helmets, rucksacks. Not just the clothes but ski poles, ski boots everything now there is a women-specific version for all the different elements of skiing²²¹.

Furthermore, Harry credits the move towards gender equality with an increase in females employed on the slopes away from stereotypical hospitality roles:

[T]here there are now many more female instructors and more sort of female mountain guides and that's become more encouraging to women. (...) In terms of being a role model, I think there are more female instructors around and that feeds in²²².

Victoria sees the French snowsports industry getting more involved with female-specific initiatives:

There's a thing called *She Rides* which is a snowboarder thing and that's about getting women involved with snowboarding, and that's out here in France. I wonder if there should be something run by like the snow dome. There are several snow domes over the UK and maybe they could run something specifically aimed at women²²³.

Like Joan and Sam, who believe successful female role models are a way forward to unlock the gender barriers in motorcycling, Victoria also sees the value of aspirational role models in encouraging more women to the slopes. She suggests:

²²¹ 7/12/17

²²² 7/12/17

²²³ 22/1/18

People like Jenny Jones, she's a world-class snowboarder, she is very good for getting women involved and Shemi Olcott she's a skier. When they're on TV I think that encourages women to get involved in snowsports²²⁴.

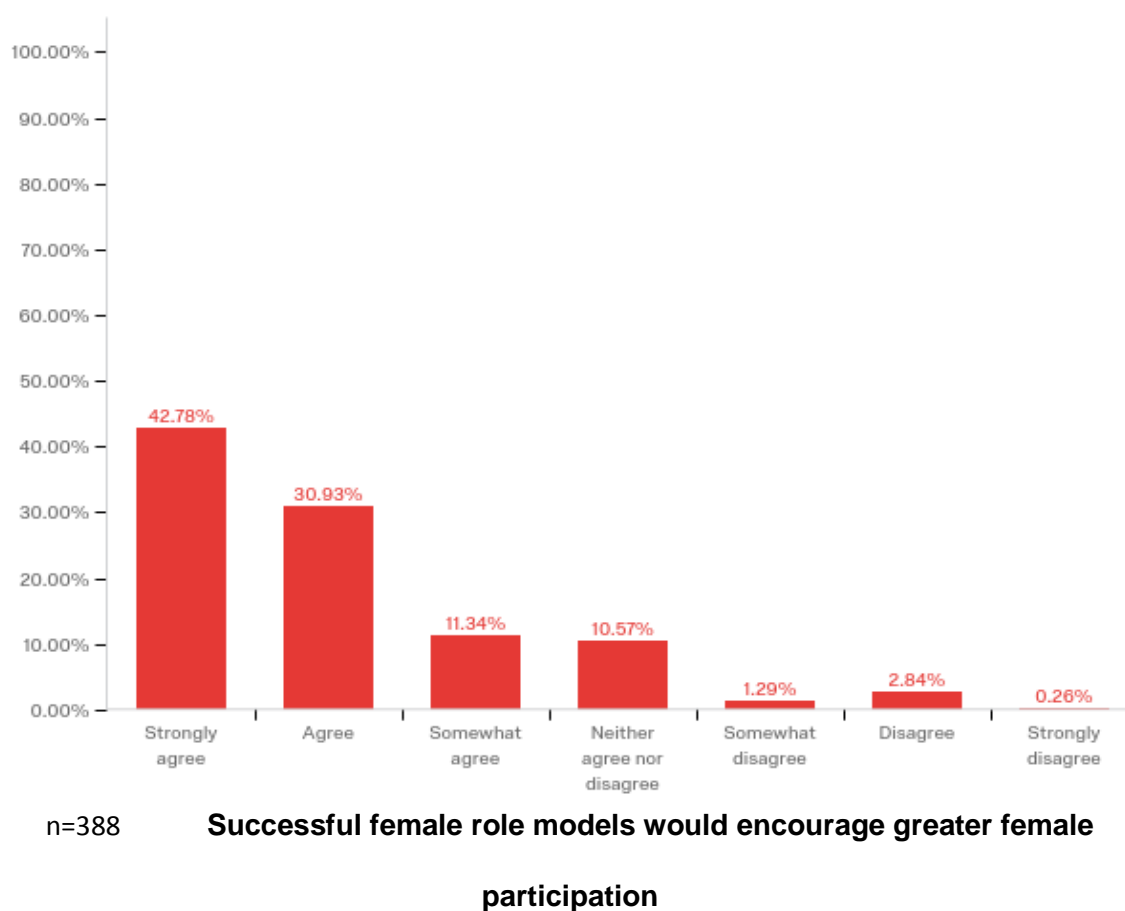
The findings indicate a number of measures, some common to all three sports, which would go some way to helping lift the barriers to inclusion. These include a greater emphasis from the media in promoting gender equality. In the case of the motorcycle media reducing, or even removing, instances of female genderual objectification in line with the British tabloid press. The equestrian press could do more for gender equality by including masculine figures, or male interest pieces in the various titles. The motorcycle industry could look to making its products and dealerships more female-friendly. The snowsports industry has recognised that to encourage female participants it needed to offer female specific clothing and equipment. The equestrian industry appears to be lagging behind in this regard.

Suitable female role models in motorcycling and skiing are considered by my respondents to be of central importance with regards to gender equality. Motorcycling exhibits the greatest gender inequality within the three sports examined by the research and could, therefore, potentially benefit the most from greater female participation. To understand if this attitude to role models is more widely held, the question, 'Successful female role models would encourage greater female participation' was quantitatively tested in the survey results in figure 4.14 below.

²²⁴ 22/1/18

Figure 4.14

Successful female role models would encourage greater female participation



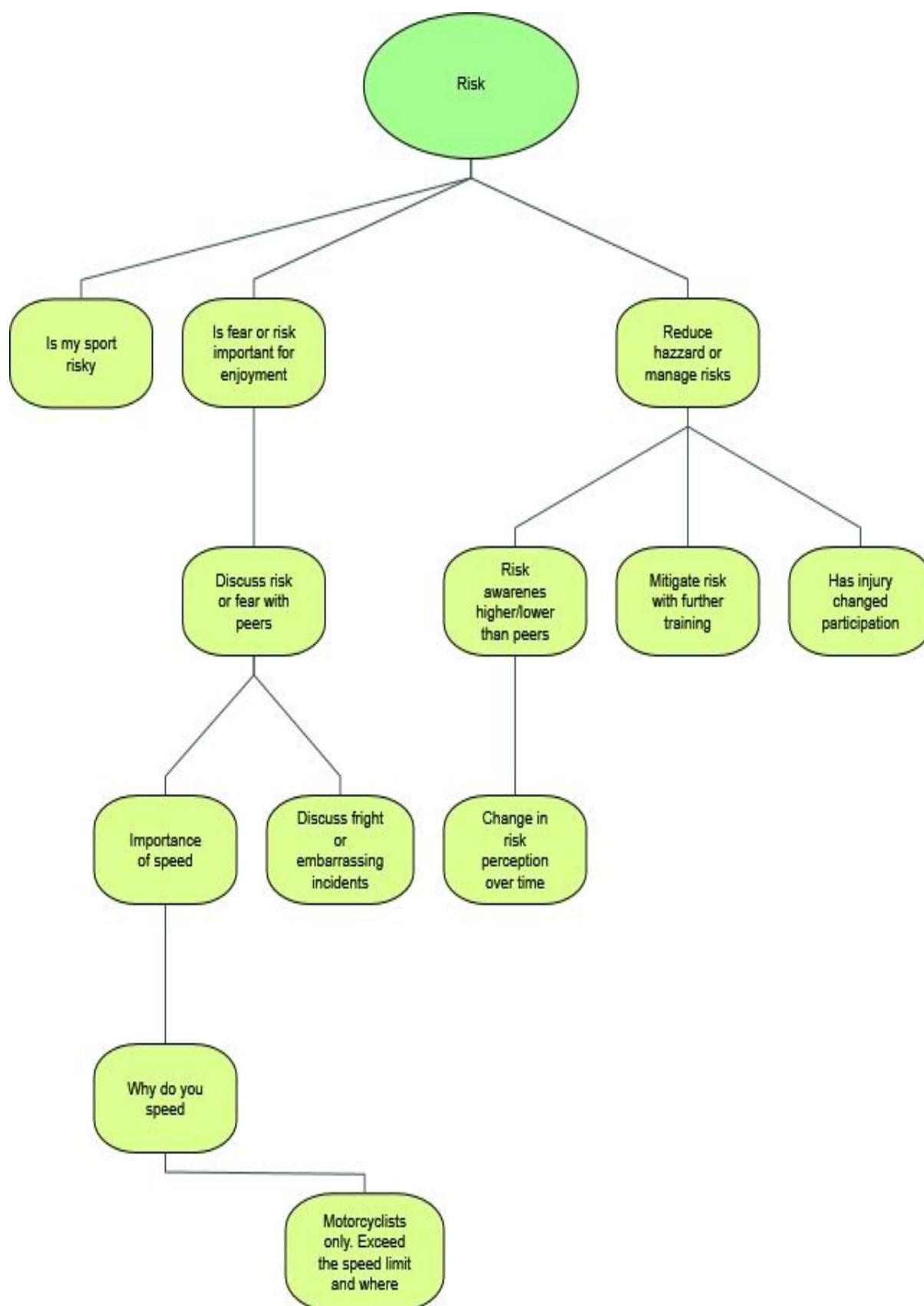
The results shown in the graph indicate that over eighty-five percent of motorcyclists in the sample, irrespective of gender, believe that inspirational female role models would have a positive effect on encouraging more females onto motorcycles. This result quantitatively supports many of the individual narratives collected during participant interviews.

4.3 Theme of Risk

I presented earlier published statistics illustrating the extent of risk to personal injury within the three sports. The theme of risk explicated below examines if the meaning of risk is (mis)understood by my participants, how individuals manage their risk and how risk is communicated within each sport to those who engage in them.

Figure 4.15 below illustrates how the overarching theme of risk was developed from the literature, my own *a priori* assumptions, participant narratives and myself as an embedded motorcyclist.

Figure 4.15



Theme of Risk

4.3.1 Is my sport risky?

Brian, who uses his motorcycle for commuting in lieu of his car, is well aware of the risks to personal injury when motorcycling:

I think it can be dangerous. It can be fatal if you get it wrong so the view I take is very much a case of looking at the risk that's there at the time or being aware of all the risks that are there while you're riding and basically trying to try to mitigate those risks in terms of both the road conditions, the environment and the traffic around you²²⁵.

Experienced motorcyclist Sam appears to reject the concept of motorcycling risk for those who are fully engaged while riding. Sam justifies his position by comparing a motorcycle with a gun:

I'm not convinced that I think that riding motorbikes is dangerous. But clearly if you were riding and not concentrating on what you were doing it would be dangerous, so I'm not sure I would agree with that premise really. (...) It's like a gun isn't dangerous but a gun that explodes in your face is dangerous. It's what you do with it that makes it dangerous or not dangerous²²⁶.

George believes that motorcycling is in itself, not dangerous. '[T]he point is you've got to treat every other person on the road as a bloody idiot. If you don't then yes it is and, unfortunately, that only comes from experience'²²⁷. George sees the risk as coming from other road users and from a motorcyclist's own attitude towards risk. 'If you're a bit of a risk-taker you don't see the dangers. Whereas if you are less of a risk-taker you tend to hold back a little bit more rather than go for it'²²⁸.

Polo playing Cliff, like George, also believes in the ameliorating effect of experience on risk:

I think you take a risk every time you get on a horse but you have a riding hat but that's not gonna stop you if you fall under a galloping horse or anything

²²⁵ 25/11/17

²²⁶ 28/3/18

²²⁷ 30/10/17

²²⁸ 30/10/17

like that. Or if you fall and another horse goes over you in polo, that's not going to stop you getting hurt. So yeah, I do understand the risks but (...) if you're sufficiently experienced then those risks can be mitigated against²²⁹.

The belief that risk can be mitigated with experience is shared by Peter who understands that horse riding 'clearly is risky, statistics will tell you it's a risky sport. But it doesn't feel to me that I'm taking huge risks because it feels like I know what I'm doing²³⁰.

Sophia understands the risky nature of motorcycling due to her feelings of vulnerability when riding versus the protection she feels when driving. She believes that:

[Y]eah at the end of the day it could kill me and I'm thankful every time I come home in one piece. I know friends who have had bad accidents. Personally, I don't know anybody who's been killed on a motorbike but, you know, I know that it is a dangerous sport, a dangerous occupation and I'm more aware of it than I am in the car because I suppose I feel more protected in a car²³¹.

Joan agrees with Sophia that a motorcyclist is a vulnerable road user and, therefore, the risks in motorcycling often come from external, uncontrollable forces:

I do feel vulnerable on the bike. (...) I think the biggest risk is being other road users. Other road users and road surfaces are the biggest risks to me. I can do everything I can do to make myself a safe rider but its other road users. And I'm aware of the injuries that can occur, very much so, and the deaths²³².

Sherry tries to ride her horse safely shying away from any potentially risky equestrian activities such as jumping or eventing. She says that 'I feel I try to minimise the danger but you can't control external situations'. Chloe further elaborates that those external situations are often other road users. 'I mean it's risky as in on the roads with car users definitely. People just aren't slowing down and

²²⁹ 3/8/18

²³⁰ 15/3/18

²³¹ 11/10/17

²³² 2/10/17

aren't giving you a wide enough, and they're in a hurry to get past and that's really dangerous. And that's from car drivers you know, that's not us'²³³.

Kurt organises and attends ride-outs from his dealership. I asked him if he was aware of the risky nature of motorcycling. He responded, 'yeah very aware yeah. I've seen a couple of bad accidents, one was a fatality. I've seen quite a few near misses on, sort of group rides, and that yeah I'm very aware of the risks involved'. Barry has used further training to mitigate the risk and its potential results:

I've done IAM²³⁴ riding courses who are at pains to point out the risks. Other than that I've had multiple friends killed over the years. I've got a friend who's in a home for the incurable with brain damage after a motorcycle accident²³⁵.

Although Pam understands some of the risks when out on her motorcycle 'it's not something I put a lot of thought into. I keep it very sort of basic. (...) So I'm probably not fully aware of all the risks involved. I'm aware of the basic risks and the dangers'²³⁶. Laura has not studied the official UK government statistics. 'I don't know the numbers involved but I know that it's a very dangerous thing to be involved in'²³⁷. Tourist skier Sarah agrees that she skis well within her comfort zone but, 'having said that, there are always others around you'. This suggests that Sarah, in common with the motorcyclists and horse riders, believes that the risk in skiing comes from other skiers or snowboarders on the slopes and not from her own behaviour. Louise feels that her:

[P]erception of risk in snowboarding is evolving, but I think you can manage the risks. So if you're snowboarding with all the safety equipment on, on-piste on a sunny day on a blue piste²³⁸, the risks are small. If you're gonna go in the

²³³ 25/11/17

²³⁴ Institute of Advanced Motorists. A road safety training organisation

²³⁵ 14/11/17

²³⁶ 25/9/17

²³⁷ 31/8/17

²³⁸ Considered to be the easiest on piste run

backcountry²³⁹ with no obvious safety equipment, you don't know what you're doing, the weather is bad, you're asking for trouble. So you pick and choose what risks you want to take²⁴⁰.

Poppy considers that although she is an experienced skier her maturity and experience mitigates the risk. 'I'm a pretty experienced and advanced skier but definitely way more cautious. And I think as you get older as well you find that, well for me, I definitely worry more about the consequences if I got an injury'²⁴¹. Mia, who has worked in the finance industry, has a commercial understanding of insurance companies' attitudes to equestrian risk when working with potential clients. 'It also comes up quite regularly that it's a risk sport and somebody needs to fill an extra questionnaire to get insurance cover'²⁴².

Most of my participants believe that they engage in a risky sport. Those that deny their sporting risk often used their experience as an invisible shield to guard against the external forces they cannot control. One female motorcyclist participant initially declined to take part in this research as she did not consider her sport to be risky and, therefore, would not be a useful research participant. As there were some differences of opinion in the qualitative data, I surveyed the proposition that individuals considered their sport risky by sport and by gender. Figure 4.16 below indicates that survey participants across all three sports generally disagree to some extent that their sport is not risky. Just over eighteen percent of horse riders do not consider their sport to be risky whereas seventy-one percent do consider horse riding to be risky. Well over a quarter of horse riders strongly disagree that horse riding is not risky. Seventeen percent of motorcyclists do not consider motorcycling to be risky. However, seventy-three percent of motorcyclists do consider that

²³⁹ Off piste and considered the most challenging

²⁴⁰ 24/11/17

²⁴¹ 24/11/17

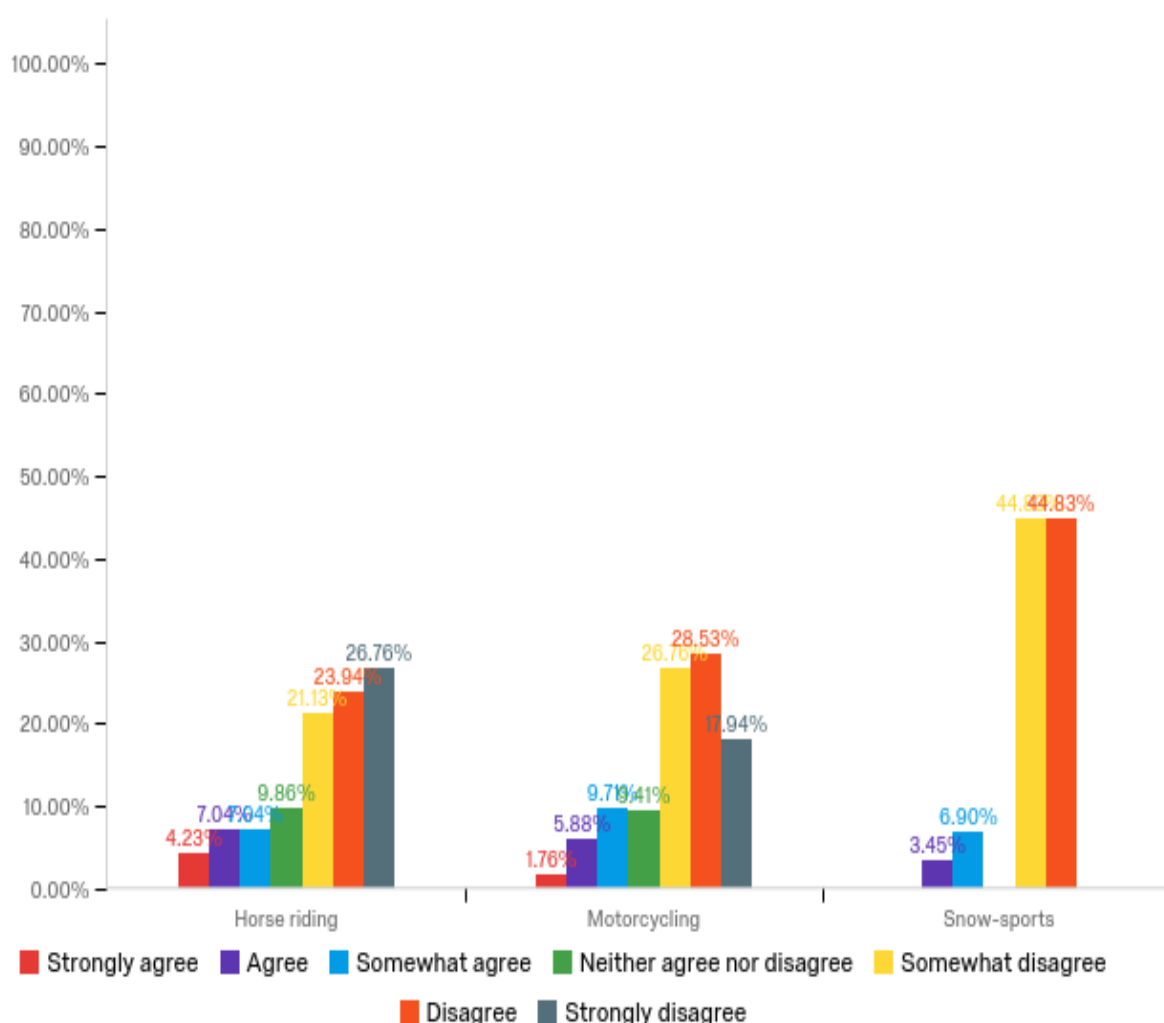
²⁴² 25/11/17

motorcycling is a risky activity. Snowsports participants display the greatest polarisation of attitude. Ten percent of the sample agree or somewhat agree that their sport is not risky. However, an overwhelming eighty-nine percent either somewhat disagree or disagree that their sport is not risky.

These results indicate that most participants, across all three sports, consider their sports, to a greater or lesser extent, to be risky.

Figure 4.16

I do not consider my sport to be risky

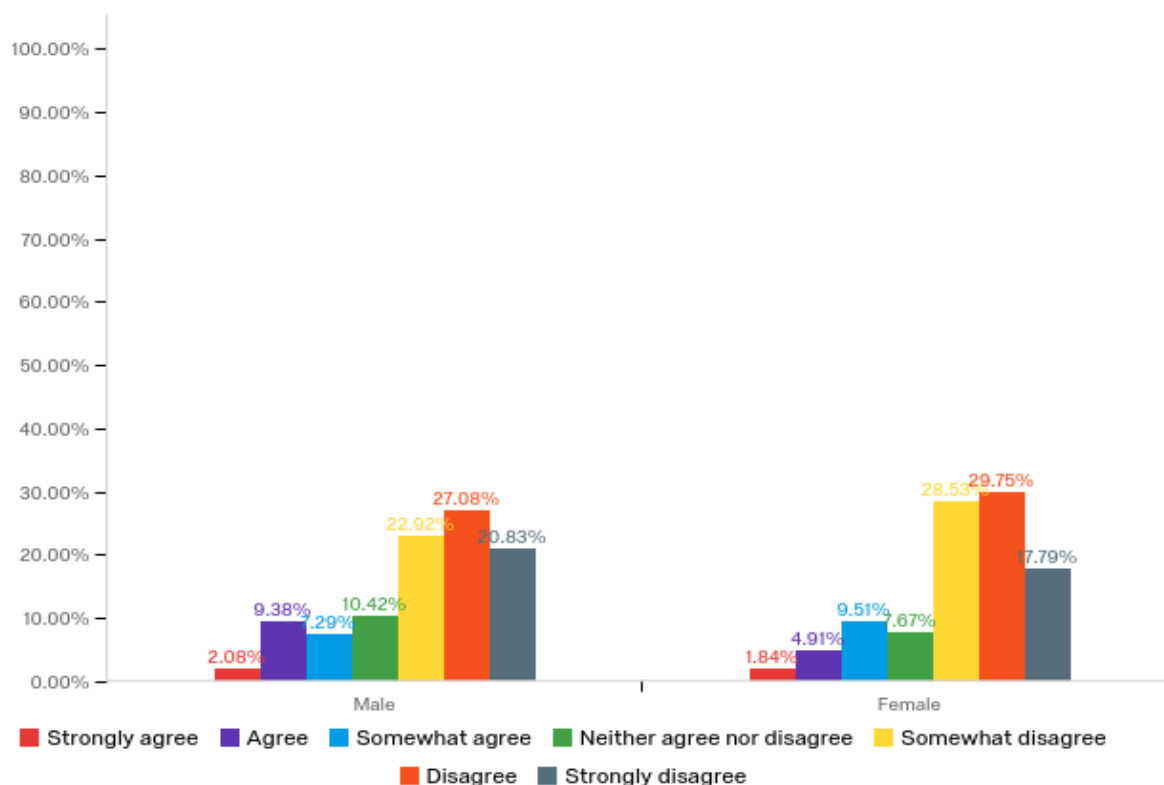


n=440

I do not consider my sport to be risky (by sport)

Figure 4.17

I do not consider my sport to be risky (by gender)



n=429

I do not consider my sport to be risky (by gender)

When the participant's gender is considered it can be seen that males and females display a near-identical profile. Just over seventy percent of males and seventy-six percent of females disagree to some extent that their sport is not risky. Eighteen percent of males and sixteen percent of females do not consider their sport to be risky. Less than a fifth of the sample, therefore, do not consider, to some extent that they engage in a risky sport. Conversely, around three-quarters of the sample consider that there is an element of risk in their sport. It appears from this graph that biological gender does not play an important part when considering if their sport is risky. These results, therefore, seem to reject any notion of essentialism in either gender when engaging in any of these three sports.

4.3.2 Is risk or fear an important part of your sport?

The research indicates that, with few exceptions, participants, independent of gender, generally consider their sport to be risky. Why then do my participants persist in performing their sport when they appear attuned to the risk of personal injury? Are the risks in their sport part of the reason they participate?

Sam considers that in motorcycling, risk and fear are integral to the sport, 'for some people yeah, excitement for sure, fear for some people yeah'²⁴³. Barry takes a more thoughtful position on fear, while he accepts it as part of the sport; he is not comfortable with it and avoids getting into fearful situations:

I suppose practically you've got to say it [fear] is but personally I'd rather avoid it. I don't set out to be scared and I try and minimise the situations in which I would be scared if that makes sense. It's part of motorcycling. I wouldn't say it's the most pleasurable or enjoyable part. Generally, if I'm scared it means I've lost control of the situation, not necessarily the bike but the situation and I don't like that and that doesn't end well normally²⁴⁴.

Sherry uses fear as a risk reduction strategy to help keep her safe when out on her horse, 'I think you have to have a certain amount of fear because that's what keeps you safe, isn't it?'²⁴⁵ Motorcyclist Laura also uses fear in a positive way to measure danger. Laura feels 'fear sometimes but is fear actually a negative emotion? If you're feeling fear then your senses are heightened and you're aware of the dangerousness of your situation which is hopefully going to make you respond in a safer way'²⁴⁶. Chloe believes that for her, horse riding is about getting the balance right between fear and the excitement felt from the release of adrenaline. 'It's the adrenaline challenge and fear and it depends how much you got of each'²⁴⁷.

²⁴³ 28/3/18

²⁴⁴ 14/11/17

²⁴⁵ 3/12/17

²⁴⁶ 31/8/17

²⁴⁷ 25/11/17

However, Chloe argues that to maintain the feelings of excitement that the adrenaline brings it's necessary to occasionally ramp up the fear. She explains:

If you kept doing the same riding and the same show jumping or dressage at the same level and never moving on, after a while it would be like, I've done this test so many times. (...) But then when you go up bigger you might feel, oh hang on, I'm not sure. But then you overcome that and there's adrenaline then yes, I've achieved that and it's not as scary as I thought it was gonna be, but it's always a mixture²⁴⁸.

Ella has a similar relationship with fear as Chloe. I asked her if fear is part of the excitement of riding. She replied 'I would have to say it must be because we all keep doing it' adding 'it's been said to me that if you had the perfect horse that never did anything wrong, it would be boring'²⁴⁹. Experienced skier Victoria also identifies a positive link between fear and excitement, 'yeah I think its part of why it's exciting; because there is that fear. If there wasn't any fear at all then it wouldn't be as exciting '²⁵⁰. Skier Joan is convinced of the positive effect fear has on skiing and also the need to challenge herself to keep getting a level of excitement:

Yeah, I would agree with that. Yeah, yeah, if it wasn't scary it wouldn't be half of what it was. (...) I think that I'm a fairly, a fairly fear adverse skier. So whilst I recognise it as part of the experience I don't, I don't seek, actively seek it out. Although having said that if I've had a few days really easy then I'll probably look out something a bit harder²⁵¹.

However, Joan qualifies her statement by explaining that the fear has to be the right kind of low-level fear. She has done one bungee jump, considered an extreme sport, before but would never do it again 'because the fear reward balance isn't right in my eyes. The fear is just beyond frightening'²⁵². For both Joan and Chloe, there are clear rewards in achieving the right balance between fear and risk. Monica adds a little detail to her notion of the fear/risk balance believing her self confidence is

²⁴⁸ 25/11/17

²⁴⁹ 25/11/17

²⁵⁰ 22/1/18

²⁵¹ 16/6/18

²⁵² 16/6/18

boosted by overcoming fear²⁵³. I asked her if fear has a place in skiing, she responded:

Yes, I think so. I think that's part of the enjoyment, the adrenaline and things like that, you need that... It adds to the excitement sometimes. There are different levels. There's fear of like maybe I was going a bit too fast but actually, now I've done that, I'm really proud of myself because I was worried before. And then there's others where you think you really must get away from this slope²⁵⁴.

Bert remembers that he felt nervous when his horse was once spooked by something. However, he has increased his self-confidence as a result:

I'm sorry I didn't enjoy it more by being less nervous, but I did enjoy it. I certainly noticed that my tolerance for things that I might find scary is improved the more I do them. Like going on rollercoaster's and things like that, which I now love, there are one or two that I wouldn't go on before...²⁵⁵

Louise not only thinks that fear is important in her sport of snowboarding, but that it has a useful place at all levels of competence in her sport. 'I think at any level of the sport there's an element of fear. I think how people deal with that or handle that, or what level of fear they have will depend upon them as an individual. Louise alludes to a notion that each individual has an internal 'risk thermostat' (Adams, 2001, p. 15) set to a different temperature of risk. Amelia's²⁵⁶ fondness of scary fairground rides finds accord with the risk-thermostat model. She confides that 'I quite like scary things in general'. However, Poppy makes the same qualification in skiing that we have seen in the other sports. There is often a tension between the negativity of being scared and positive effect of adrenaline-fuelled excitement. She adds 'I think it's a fine balance getting the adrenaline rather than being afraid'²⁵⁷.

²⁵³ An important point which I expand on later in the theme of 'wellbeing'

²⁵⁴ 3/11/17

²⁵⁵ 11/4/18

²⁵⁶ 14/11/17

²⁵⁷ 24/11/17

Conversely, Caroline rejects the notion that fear is important in horse riding ‘no, it’s more about adrenaline I think than fear’²⁵⁸. Jenny looks at fear as a destructive inhibitor to her horse-riding ambitions rather than as an adrenaline liberating emotion, ‘yeah it does ruin it yeah. If I’m too scared I stop myself doing things that I’d want to do’²⁵⁹. Sarah thinks there is an element of fear which adds to the excitement of skiing, ‘potentially yeah it is for some people. I don’t think is what drives me’²⁶⁰. Cliff believes that his enjoyment of polo would be diminished if he was frightened. ‘I don’t think I would enjoy it if I was scared or if I had fear’²⁶¹. Cliff then suggests that the control he feels he has over his horse mitigates any fear:

I’m in control so I don’t think I would feel the fear on a horse when horse riding because I feel that I have an element of control over the horse. So if, you know, it is exceeding my limits I could stop. (...) I don’t think I’d fully enjoy, I wouldn’t enjoy galloping if there was fear involved²⁶².

Daniel has spent many of his holidays on the ski slopes with his parents but considers that skiing on blue runs, like his mother, would not provide the stimulation he craves. ‘I think if I did that all day I would find it boring. (...) that wouldn’t be everyone’s appeal but for people like me, the risk of it is definitely the thrill’²⁶³. Robert, the youngest participant, understands some of the risks in skiing ‘but I wouldn’t say I like it because it’s dangerous, but it does add to it somewhat’²⁶⁴. Eighteen-year-old Robert articulates the immortality of youth and appears to consider falling from his skis as an occupational hazard. I asked him if he thought fear is part of the excitement of skiing. He replied, ‘yeah, yeah definitely because we do jumps as well. Some of the, not off-piste but a kind of little bit off the side, which is

²⁵⁸ 16/2/18

²⁵⁹ 3/12/17

²⁶⁰ 12/3/18

²⁶¹ 3/8/18

²⁶² 3/8/18

²⁶³ 27/3/18

²⁶⁴ 16/6/18

definitely exciting and I've fallen off those jumps so many times²⁶⁵. I probed further and asked how he would feel about skiing if it became safer and more sanitised. He thought that:

It would still be fun but there wouldn't be that risk involved, there wouldn't be, you could just go as fast as you want and it wouldn't be at all... because me and my brother are competitive about how fast we can go so we could just go both as fast as we like and there wouldn't be any hazards so it wouldn't be impressive²⁶⁶.

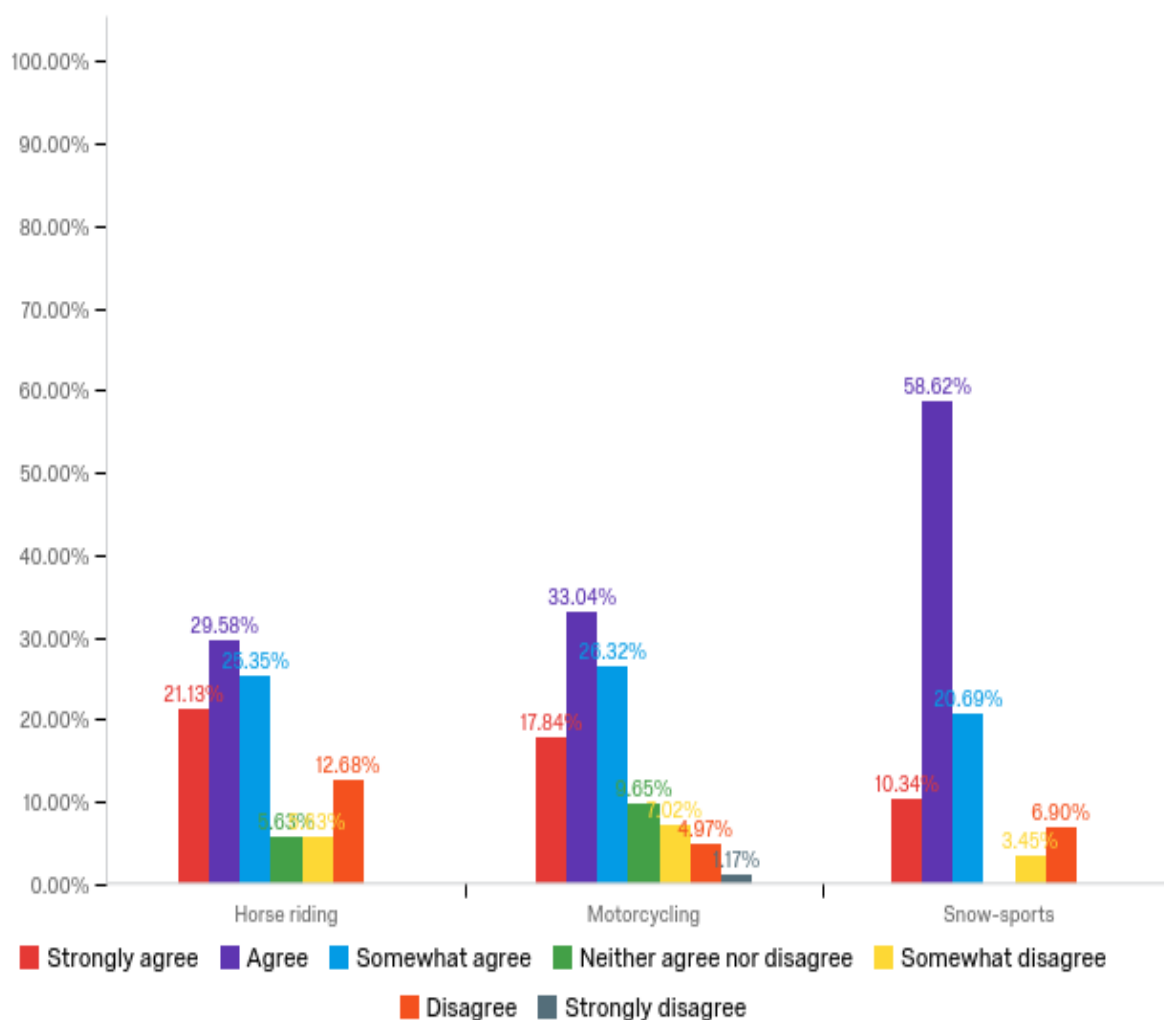
Many participants consider that fear is a useful part of their sport. Some overcome fear to give them more self-confidence; others embrace the fear as part of their risk reduction strategy, using it to calibrate their risk-thermostat. For others, fear adds to the excitement of their sport which, if absent, would detrimentally affect their participation in it. To assess the extent to which fear is part of the excitement of their sport I presented the survey statement, "sometimes fear or being slightly scared is part of the excitement of my sport" to survey participants. The results indicate that participants within and across all three sports largely agree with the statement. The graphs below present this in detail.

²⁶⁵ 16/6/18

²⁶⁶ 16/6/18

Figure 4.18

Sometimes fear, or being slightly scared, is part of the excitement of my sport.

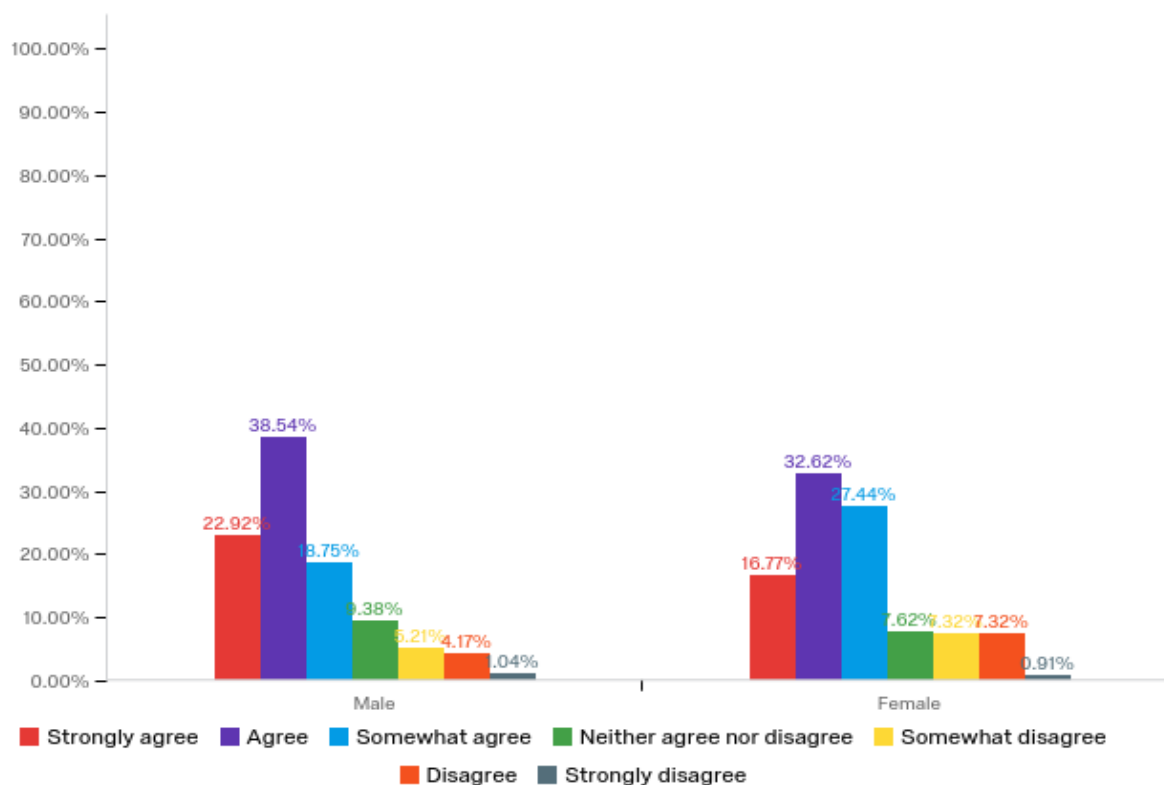


n=442 **Sometimes fear or being slightly scared, is part of the excitement (by sport)**

Figure 4.18 indicates that seventy-six percent or over three-quarters of horse riders agree to some extent that being scared adds to the excitement of horse riding. This is mirrored by seventy-seven percent of motorcyclists and eighty-nine percent of snow sports participants.

Figure 4.19

Sometimes fear, or being slightly scared, is part of the excitement of my sport (by gender).



n=431 **Sometimes fear or being slightly scared, is part of the excitement (by gender)**

When gender is considered, males and females agree more than they disagree. Slightly more males than females strongly agree that fear adds to the excitement. Overall, eighty percent of males and seventy-seven percent of females agree that fear or being slightly scared adds to the excitement of their sport. Conversely, ten percent of males and fifteen percent of females disagree. The results provide a compelling account that, irrespective of gender, participants within and across the three sports believe that fear or being slightly scared adds to the excitement of their sport. The need for variable levels of fear thus supports Adams' (1995) risk-thermostat model.

4.3.3 Reduce the hazards or manage the risk?

The findings above point to the fundamental importance for participants of fear, or being scared, while participating in their sport. I now turn to an examination of an individual's preference to either reduce the hazards or manage the risk they encounter in their sports. Motorcyclist Brian opines that 'it's a case of being aware of the risk and how do you mitigate it'²⁶⁷. George, who has recently undertaken an advanced motorcycle test agrees, 'you've got to learn to manage the risks. There are always hazards in life'²⁶⁸. Riding instructor Mia does not see the risk/hazard question as a simple binary. She feels that 'you've got to ride what's underneath [so] you've got to manage the risks but equally, I think we do need to look at the frangible pin type stuff'²⁶⁹, increased safety'²⁷⁰. Nora would prefer to manage the risk when hacking out. She explains, 'I prefer to learn to deal with things because you don't know what you're going to come across'²⁷¹. Caroline's response finds accord with the notion that fear and risk is important in equestrian sport 'because to reduce the hazards would mean probably not riding really'²⁷². Jenny feels that her increasing confidence allows her to manage the risks whereas before she would rather have reduced the hazards. 'I think now I'm getting more confident and I know I've got a relatively safe horse I'm happy to face things that I wouldn't have been happy to do before'²⁷³.

Motorcyclist Susan believes that 'as there are more and more cars on the roads every single day I don't think you're ever going to get rid of the hazards. I think

²⁶⁷ 25/11/17

²⁶⁸ 30/10/17

²⁶⁹ Replacing solid eventing fences with safer collapsible ones

²⁷⁰ 25/11/17

²⁷¹ 3/12/17

²⁷² 16/2/18

²⁷³ 3/12/17

you've just got to be more aware of the risks'²⁷⁴. Joan also takes a pragmatic view when riding her motorcycle. Those [hazardous] things are there when we ride on the road so we can't get rid of them, so you have to manage them'²⁷⁵. Jane feels that as road hazards are inevitable, extra motorcycle training is a useful aid in their mitigation. She explains:

Well obviously it would be nice if you never had to encounter slippery white lines or misplaced bits of ironwork'²⁷⁶ and stuff like that but I think it's better to know how to deal with them when you encounter them, better to have those skills, better to go away and learn how to deal with the inevitable I think'²⁷⁷.

Polo player Cliff considers that risk can be managed effectively by training:

I think manage the risks yeah. (...) as a whole, we like to take things away that might be dangerous et cetera whereas actually, I think a better thing to do is to teach people how to manage that danger and put an onus on someone's own choices in life. Let someone choose how they want to act/react rather than take the opportunity away. So I'd go for manage the risks'²⁷⁸.

Harry links training and experience in a combined strategy to manage his risk on the ski slopes. Harry prefers to:

[M]anage the risk, you can't reduce the hazard. You could reduce the hazards completely by not going skiing, not going off-piste, but no, it's definitely making intelligent decisions and getting training and getting experience and learning is how you deal with it'²⁷⁹.

Keen eventer Luke also regards training as the key to risk his management. 'For me, I would prefer to manage the risks because that's what it's all about; because the hazard is there regardless. You could still get hurt and it's learning to ride properly, learning to come at a fence properly'²⁸⁰.

²⁷⁴ 2/10/17

²⁷⁵ 2/10/17

²⁷⁶ Loose drains and manhole covers on the road

²⁷⁷ 2/10/17

²⁷⁸ 3/8/18

²⁷⁹ 7/12/17

²⁸⁰ 3/3/18

Irina believes that riding her motorcycle defensively and wearing the correct motorcycle clothing has helped her to manage her risk in the face of ever-present hazards:

I think you manage the risks by being a defensive rider. (...) Until I changed to a luminescence (sic) helmet, it is very luminous I can be seen for miles, I was on the verge of giving up because every single time I went out I had a near miss and it wasn't my fault and I thought, this just isn't worth it. And then I got the luminescent helmet, no more near misses. So it's a case of visibility of the rider for sure²⁸¹.

Victoria considers hazards on the slopes to be unavoidable so she says 'I'd probably prefer to manage the risks. I think the hazards are gonna be there anyway'²⁸². Jane feels that in the Austrian resort she goes to the hazards are reduced by the resort management. Therefore, she feels she would manage any risk associated. She believes that:

I'm not sure that you can reduce the hazards in skiing more than they already have been. When I'm in ski resorts I'm generally quite impressed by what they do. Admittedly Austria has got a really good record so I'm not sure if I would feel differently if I'd had skied elsewhere. So overall I'm up for managing the risk I think²⁸³.

Poppy feels that risk management adds to her enjoyment of skiing. Like others she believes that hazards are unavoidable in her sport:

I think I would rather manage the risks because some of the best experiences I've ever had there's been an element of risk there, but it's been managed but I think you can take, like with anything, taking a managed risk, because there's always gonna be hazards anywhere²⁸⁴.

Chris enjoys the challenge of managing risks when snowboarding. 'I'll be out there the whole day if I can and I manage the risks. And actually, that's something I enjoy.

²⁸¹ 2/10/17

²⁸² 22/1/18

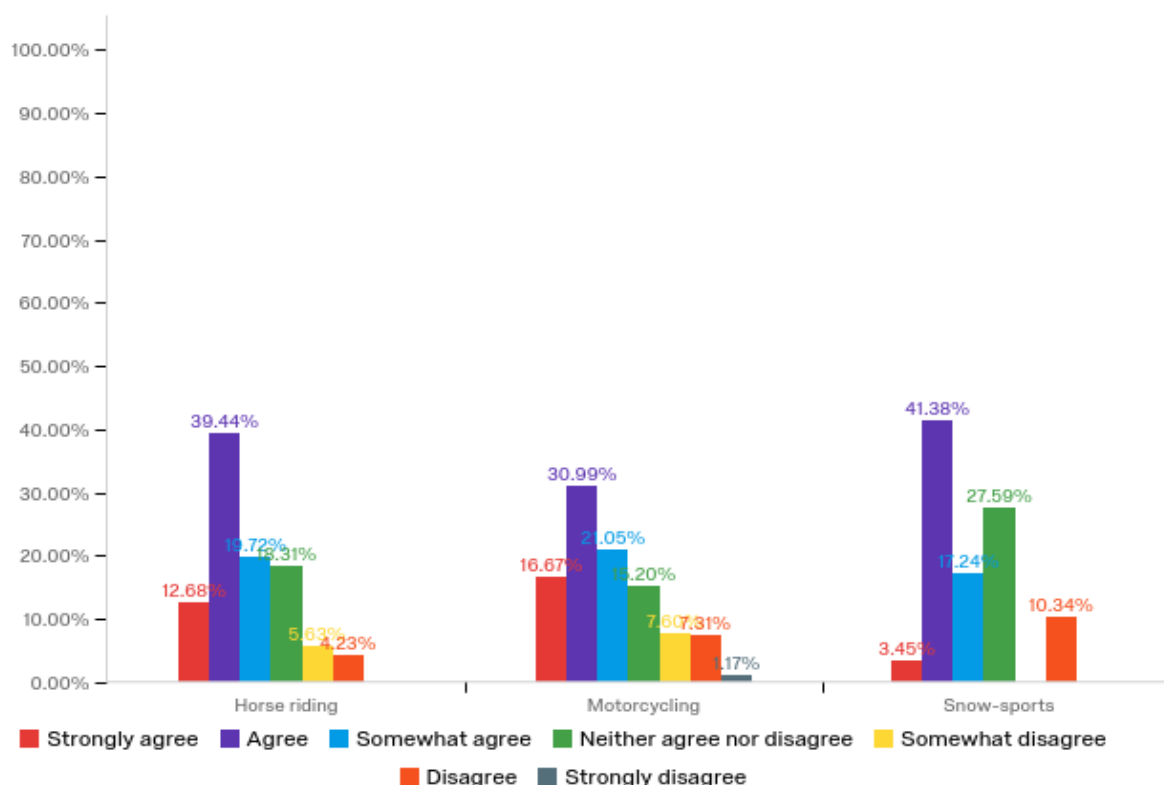
²⁸³ 16/6/18

²⁸⁴ 24/11/17

So I look often for opportunities to, I kind of get bored with riding piste if you like because it's the same thing over and over and over again'²⁸⁵.

Figure 4.20

I would prefer to manage risk rather than reduce the hazards (by sport)



n=44 I would prefer to manage risk rather than reduce the hazards (by sport)

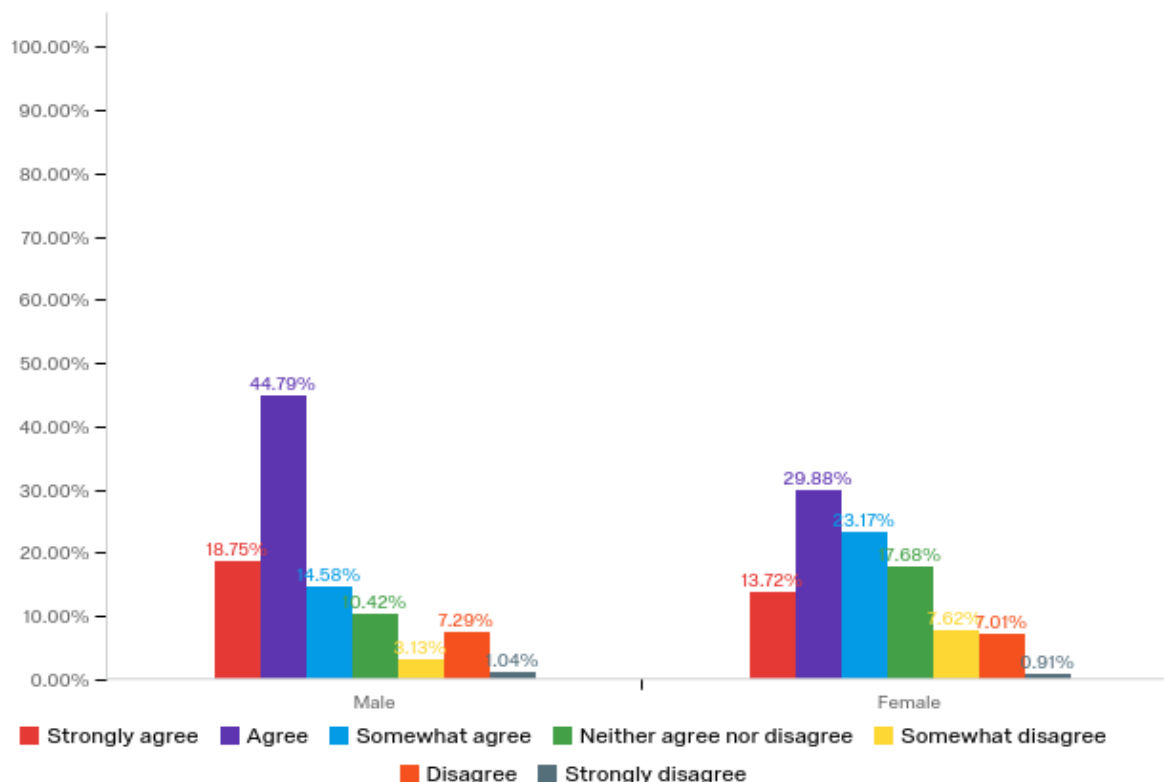
The graph demonstrates that within and across sports, participants generally prefer to manage risk rather than reduce the hazards. As I presented earlier, risk adds excitement to the sporting performance with most of the interview participants actively seeking some level of risk management. Sixty-eight percent, or more than two-thirds of motorcyclists, prefer to manage risk over reducing the hazards. Horse riders come very close with nearly sixty-seven percent preferring to manage the risks. Sixty-two percent of snow sports participants, very nearly two thirds, prefer to manage risk; however, snowsports participants also exhibit the highest rate of

²⁸⁵ 16/4/18

ambivalence with over a quarter, at twenty-seven percent, with no feelings either way.

Figure 4.21

I would prefer to manage risk rather than reduce the hazards (by gender)



n=43 I would prefer to manage risk rather than reduce the hazards (by gender)

Figure 4.21 above indicates that it is males who would prefer to manage risk. Over seventy-eight percent agreed at some level that they would prefer to manage risk against eleven percent who disagreed. Two-thirds of females, or sixty-six percent, prefer to manage risk against fifteen percent who disagreed with the statement. Although both males and females prefer to manage risk over hazard reduction, males display a stronger affinity to risk management. This finding seems to fly in the face of popular male stereotypes that often see males as risk-seekers without thoughts of the consequences.

4.3.4 Risk awareness higher or lower than sporting peers.

Both males and females prefer to manage risk over reducing hazards. To examine this further, I wanted to understand if my participants had a greater or lesser understanding to that of their peers surrounding the risk in their particular sport or whether they were unrealistically optimistic regarding their chances of sustaining an injury while performing their sport. I asked Brian if he thought his risk awareness as a motorcyclist is lower, higher or about the same as his peers. He responded with ‘I don’t really have that many [motorcycling friends] that I would say I talk to but I think they tend to take a bit more of a gung ho approach to life I think. I think they’re aware of the risks but I think... I would probably say I’m more aware of it’²⁸⁶. Motorcyclist Sam concurs saying that ‘I think that my perception of the risks involved is higher’²⁸⁷.

Barry believes that extra training has given him an edge over his peers reporting that ‘I’d probably say better than most. That came back from the feedback coming from the IAM. In fact, one of the comments was, “a highly developed sense of self-preservation”’²⁸⁸. George has also had feedback from his advanced motorcycle riding test assessor which justifies a belief in his higher risk perception. George shared his feedback saying ‘that I was looking so far ahead that I hardly ever use my brakes now. That makes me better than a lot of people’²⁸⁹. Polo player Cliff considers his risk perception is higher than his peers, possibly as a result of his military training where risk aversion could help prevent military escalation. ‘My

²⁸⁶ 25/11/17

²⁸⁷ 28/3/18

²⁸⁸ 14/11/17

²⁸⁹ 30/10/17

assessment of risk is higher. I'm probably more risk-averse than others. I don't know if that comes from my job or not²⁹⁰.

Horse riding instructor Mia thinks that is her teaching others that has helped her risk perception to be better than her peers:

I think because of the teaching side and the issues that potentially come out to me it's probably greater than a lot of... Again it comes back to people that have horses who don't necessarily have the knowledge. They don't read the animals, they don't understand the regular work, they don't read them in the stable. (...) The general knowledge affects the level of risk, in my opinion, lack of knowledge increases the actual [not the perceived risk] risk to persons around horses²⁹¹.

Training appears to have an effect on an individual's risk perception relative to their peers as does experience. Horse rider Jenny explains:

I would say my risk awareness is probably higher because of my experience. I'm always like planning, if I go out on a hack I always plan where I'm going to go. (...) I do my little risk assessment before I go out. If there's a hunt or shoot going on I'll take her into the school²⁹².

Experienced horse rider Caroline suggested that 'I think my risk perception is probably quite high compared to some other people that I ride with who potentially will do things that I wouldn't do'²⁹³.

Kurt considers that his perception of risk is the same as his motorcycling peers, but feels he is more attuned to risk than other road users. 'I would say probably about the same as anyone that I know who rides a motorcycle. But I would probably say much greater than anyone that doesn't ride a motorcycle and who just drives'²⁹⁴.

²⁹⁰ 3/8/18

²⁹¹ 25/11/17

²⁹² 3/12/17

²⁹³ 16/2/18

²⁹⁴ 23/7/18

Joan shares Kurt's view stating that I would say that it's higher than, certainly than non-biking friends²⁹⁵.

Frank considers that as all motorcyclists have fallen from their machines at some point in their motorcycling career, 'I wouldn't say that my risk awareness is any different to other people that ride bikes'²⁹⁶. This view is shared by horse riders Nora, Ella and Sherry.

Although motorcyclist Sophia considers herself, 'probably about the same because most of the motorcyclists I know are aware of their own mortality and the fact that, you know, it is a dangerous sport', she later added that 'I do know people who, you know, are quite happy to go out and do a 120 [MPH] down the A11'²⁹⁷ but I tend not to go out with them'²⁹⁸. This suggests that her perception of risk is higher than many of her peers. Laura, too, thinks her perception of risk is similar to her peers but when I asked if she had more or less of a chance of having an accident she said 'I think I've probably got less, (...) less of a chance because I don't do the speedy speedy on the road stuff'²⁹⁹. Sarah initially considered that her perception of risk is the same as the other members of her skiing friendship group. However, she later modified her view believing that her risk perception is higher than her peers:

I would say we are all about the same. I would say the three more experienced ones are more happy to take risks because they're more competent and more confident on their skis. But for me it's not necessarily the skiing that holds me back, it's the thought of throwing myself off a mountain³⁰⁰.

Sophia, Laura and Sarah initially consider that they perceive risk similarly to their peers; however, they later articulate a higher risk perception.

²⁹⁵ 2/10/17

²⁹⁶ 8/11/17

²⁹⁷ Major trunk road joining Norfolk to London

²⁹⁸ 11/10/17

²⁹⁹ 31/8/17

³⁰⁰ 12/3/18

Pam rides her motorcycle with groups of male motorcycles and groups of female motorcyclists so is able to make a useful, gender-dependent, comparison. She considers that:

[W]ith the males, (...) I would say my risk awareness is higher than theirs. Not saying it because they're male, I think they like to show off sometimes, they like to race each other, they like to drive stupid and I just don't think it's worth it because of the risks involved. So I would say my risk perception is much greater than theirs. When I go out in the groups with the females they do ride by group rules, so you know, (...) you have to stick to a certain speed. The slowest riders will ride at the front and the fast ones at the back so I think that everyone's risk..., not just because of the rules, I think there's a lot more awareness around the dangers (...) I would certainly say with the females, the awareness of risk is much greater than when I go out with my partner and his friends who are males³⁰¹.

According to Irina, age also seems important. Her risk perception relative to her peers is:

[D]efinitely higher. I think it's an age thing (...). I did and observed ride with the advanced motorcyclists the other week. He said "you've got elements of advanced riding". I said "I should hope so you know? [I'm just [a] defensive rider"³⁰².

Victoria has witnessed many incidents on the slopes which have resulted in injury. These incidents have, vicariously, lead to her greater perception of risk 'just because I see people getting injured, and because I do the extreme side of the sport. And, therefore, I've made myself aware of the risks'³⁰³. Stuart has used the aftermath of horse riding accidents, which have left friends severely disabled, to give him a higher perception of risk. He considers that 'I'm probably more aware because I've had various injuries myself and seen others'³⁰⁴.

Although Jane admits to not having many skiing peers to compare her risk perception against she considers that 'I am more risk-averse and more aware of the

³⁰¹ 25/9/17

³⁰² 2/10/17

³⁰³ 22/1/18

³⁰⁴ 4/12/17

potential risks around us, when we are skiing than the rest of my party, very often'³⁰⁵.

Amelia mitigates risk by using the correct safety equipment when skiing. Regarding risk, she explains, 'I think I'm more conscious of it than other people. I've gotta real thing about, you know, wearing helmets and having the right safety equipment and that kind of thing; so probably more so than other people'³⁰⁶. Snowboarder Louise links gender and risk perception:

I don't think they [males] generally think about the risks as much. I think they're more casual with their bodies because of the way women are and women's biology. Women go to the doctors more they're more aware of their bodies and I don't think men as much are. So unless a man has had like a big accident in some way (...) I think men generally don't see the risks as much³⁰⁷.

However, Snowboarder Chris is well aware of the risk and his own mortality:

Yeah, I think I identify risk more clearly. I know some people who just do stupid things who maybe push themselves a little bit too far. But I'm quite calculated and a very rational person and whether it be eyeing up a kicker, which is like a jump basically in a snow park, I'm not likely to go for the biggest one because I know that I'm probably going to land on my back and kill myself³⁰⁸.

The majority of my interview participants consider that their perception of risk is higher than that of their sporting peers. Louise projects the widely held stereotype of the risk-seeking male as a means to justify her higher perception. Male respondents from within and across all three sports appear to reject the stereotype. They use training, experience or witnessing others injury to justify their higher perception of risk. Given that injuries are common and widespread in all three sports, I wanted to understand if a larger survey sample displayed the same opinions as my interviewees.

³⁰⁵ 16/6/18

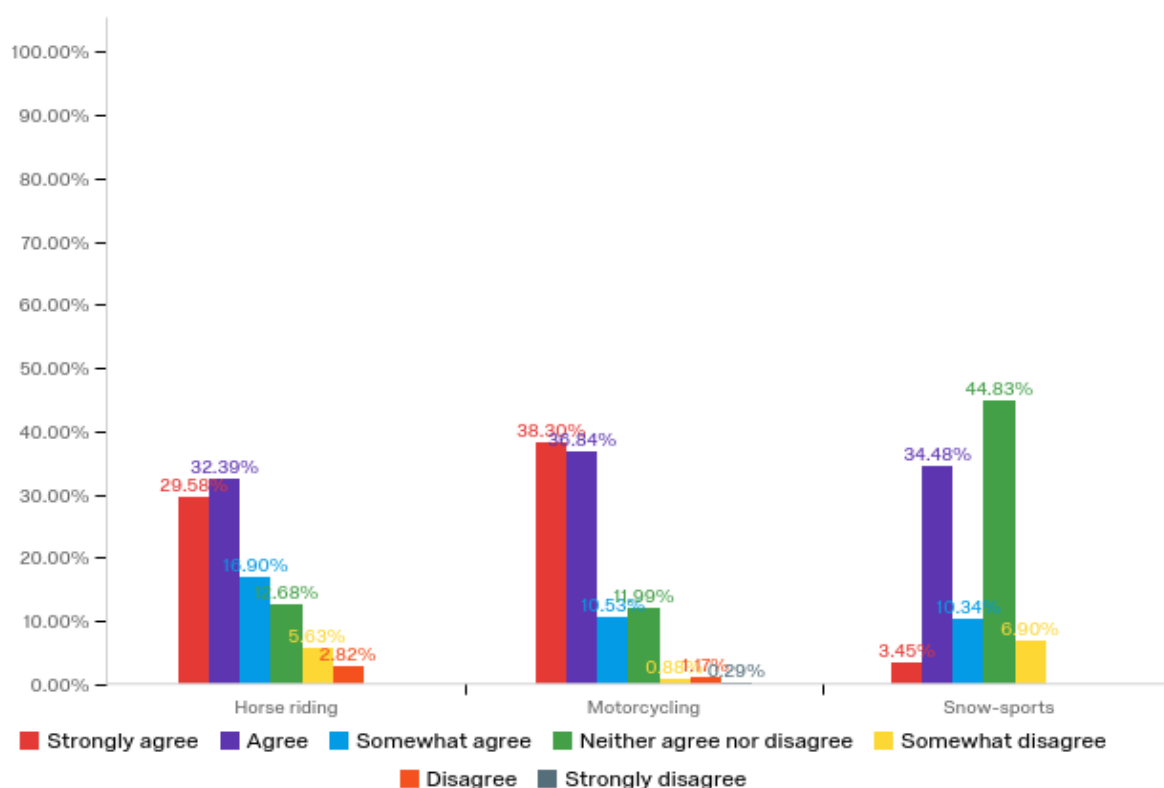
³⁰⁶ 14/11/17

³⁰⁷ 24/11/17

³⁰⁸ 16/4/18

Figure 4.22

My understanding of the risks in my sport is higher than other peoples



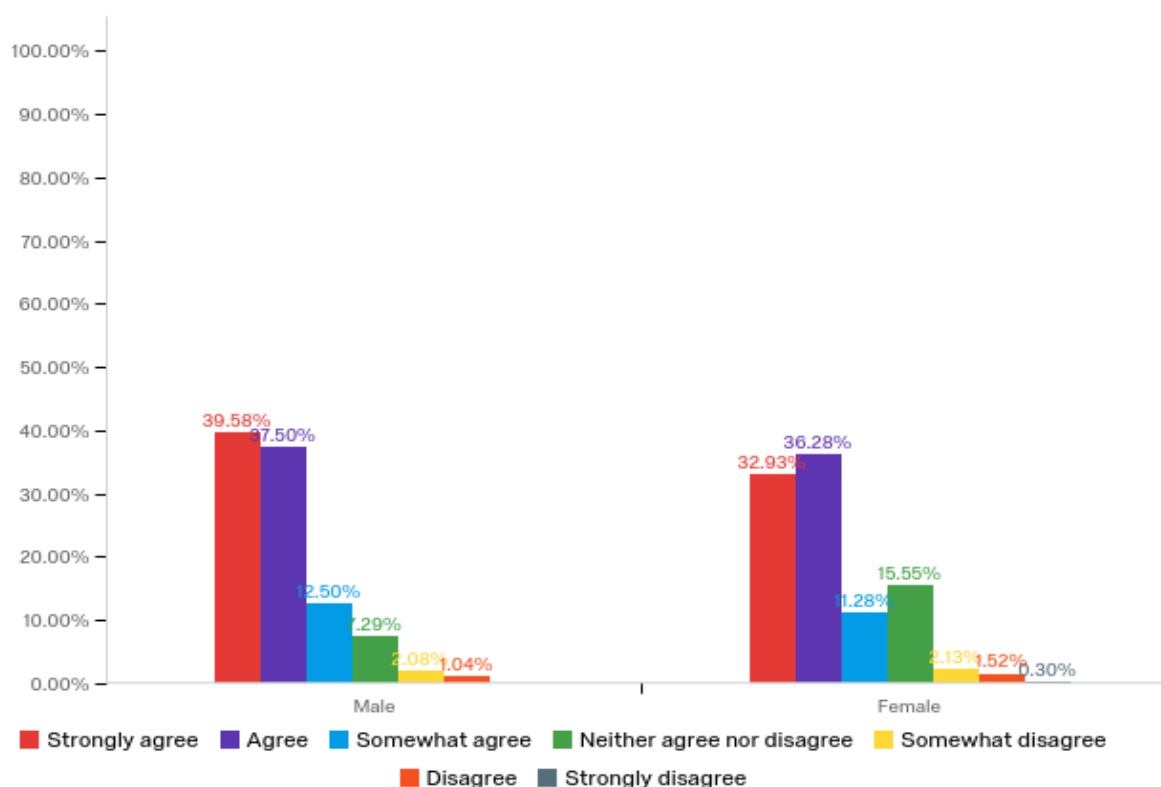
n=442

My understanding of the risks in my sports is higher than other people's (by sport)

Figure 4.22 indicates that sixty-two percent of horse riders and seventy-five percent of motorcyclists strongly agree or agree that their risk perception is greater than that of their peers. The effect is not so pronounced among snowsports at thirty-eight percent. These findings appear to support the views of my interviewees. However, the standout figure of nearly forty-five percent is snowsports participants who appear ambivalent to risk perception comparative to their peers.

Figure 4.23

My understanding of the risks in my sport is higher than other peoples (by gender)



n=431

My understanding of the risks in my sports is higher than other people's (by gender)

Figure 4.23 indicates that eighty-nine percent of males and eighty percent of females strongly agree or agree that they have a greater perception of risk compared with their peers. These findings, when examined with the interview data, suggest that participants, irrespective of gender, within and across the three sports display a measure of unrealistic optimism regarding their risk to personal injury.

4.3.5 Discussing risk or fear with peers.

The evidence presented illustrates how an individual can modify their perception of risk vicariously through witnessing others injuries and through training or teaching. Can injury, training or teaching influence others; can they be likened to ripples in a pond, radiating out from an experience to influence others? Do participants use the stock of knowledge to inform each other through discussing risk within their sporting

subcultures? Sam reports that 'I think we talk about, obviously people who have had accidents and people that have had problems get talked about of course'³⁰⁹. Kurt does not talk about motorcycling risk with his peers, unless, like Sam, a friend has an accident:

[U]nless there's been a recent incident maybe in the news or we hear of someone that we know that's come off or, as we've had in a ride out, a fatality. It does bring it home to you. Yeah, occasionally we do speak about the risks but probably 95% of the time they're put very much to the back because no one wants to talk about coming off a bike. Yeah, it's a hard one, but as I say, no we don't talk about risk³¹⁰.

I asked Barry why he does not talk about motorcycling risks with his friends. He holds a similar view to Kurt suggesting that 'I suppose its two things, one; you don't want to talk about it because you don't want to think about it and two; if you do think about it you will think it will never happen to me...'³¹¹. The lack of discussion surrounding risk and thoughts of "it will never happen to me" is articulated by Frank who suggests that:

I don't think it occurs really. Yeah occasionally you might talk about, "I had a near-miss this morning when somebody pulled out in front of me", that kind of stuff or, somebody's had a big off and you think about it then. But no, I don't really. I've been to funerals of mates that have died on crashes and stuff like that. You ride your bike there and then you ride your bike home you know? I guess it's that thing about it always happens to somebody else, doesn't it? It's never gonna happen to you and of course, the reality is, it could happen to anybody, couldn't it³¹²?

Sofia proposes that 'yes it comes up in conversation because, you know, we have had [*Curvy Riders*] members who have had accidents (...) but not... to the extent that none of us would want to go out because of the risks'³¹³. Pam and her friends seem well attuned to the risks involved with riding but prefer not to acknowledge risk

³⁰⁹ 28/3/18

³¹⁰ 23/7/18

³¹¹ 14/11/17

³¹² 8/11/17

³¹³ 11/10/17

openly. 'I think it's like the elephant in the room, no one talks about it. Everyone knows the risks are there but it just doesn't come up in general'³¹⁴. Conversely, accidents suffered by Irina's female friends are a way to discuss risk, using the discussion as a cathartic. 'If anybody's had an accident then we will talk about it. Or if anybody's got any concerns we'll talk about it. But it's not at the forefront of conversation'³¹⁵. Horse rider Ella's experience mirrors that of Irina's. Her friends discuss equestrian risk 'rarely. Obviously, if somebody has had an unfortunate experience then we will talk about it, if for no other reason than to reassure and we all look after each other'³¹⁶. Furthermore, Ella confesses that she finds sharing embarrassing moments, which could have lead to injury, with her friends is useful 'because then you start to laugh about it and other people confess to having similar experiences'³¹⁷.

Victoria discusses specific risks with her experienced skiing friends when initially planning a route off-piste. Her friends discuss actual, rather than the possible, injuries suffered developing strategies for possible risk reduction:

[I]f there is a lot of snow like there is now; we'll talk about avalanche risk. If we are planning a day that's off-piste then we'll talk about the risks involved. We don't tend to talk about [possible] injuries from skiing on piste unless someone's got an injury and then we'll talk about it (...). More in a way of how can we make this as safe as possible³¹⁸.

Susan, an active *Curvy Riders* member, uses discussions with other club members regarding the risks involved in motorcycling to drive club training, or road safety initiatives:

³¹⁴ 25/9/17

³¹⁵ 2/10/17

³¹⁶ 25/11/17

³¹⁷ 25/11/17

³¹⁸ 22/1/18

[W]e talk about near misses, we talk about stupid car drivers. (...) I guess we talk about risks and perhaps how to avoid them. We also look at other ways of reducing that risk perhaps by attending courses somewhere, getting the group together to attend courses such as fire bike [safe riding courses organised by the local fire service] and things like that so yeah, it's there, it's in the background all the time³¹⁹.

Laura considers that frequent discussions of risk add to her groups stock of knowledge that encourages the use of new and novel personal protective equipment (PPE). She explains that:

[A] friend, just over a year ago, she had a bad accident on the A47. She was in intensive care for some time and that affected all of us and we were all very cautious for a while afterwards. We do talk about it, sometimes we act upon it. We bought these air vests³²⁰, I don't like it, I wear it sometimes but yeah, it does affect us and we do talk about it³²¹.

Monica and her group of friends spend the skiing season at the same resort that Michael Schumacher had his skiing accident. I asked her if his highly publicised accident formed part of their discussions. Monica replied that 'yeah we talked about that lots because that was here... but we kind of treated it as something that was very unfortunate, but wouldn't change what we did, especially because he was really unlucky, he wasn't doing anything silly'³²². Harry and his friends also discussed the Schumacher accident which appears to have influenced the wider use of helmets within the subculture. Harry explains:

The Michael Schumacher accident was quite a big hit because that was in Meribel and I know the spot, I know the square metre where it happened. So we talk about that quite a lot. That's obviously fuelled the helmet debate quite a lot. (...) through the instructor kind of pathway, you talk about risk quite a lot risk to your clients mostly and risk to yourself³²³.

³¹⁹ 2/10/17

³²⁰ Air vests are currently uncommon for leisure motorcycle riders but commonly used in motorcycle sport and are becoming popular with equestrian leisure riders.

³²¹ 31/8/17

³²² 3/11/17

³²³ 7/12/17

Monica and her friends appear to be taking a fatalistic viewpoint. Schumacher, an experienced skier, was wearing a helmet and was only marginally off-piste when he fell and hit his head on a rock. For Monica this accident could not be attributed to anything other than fate so, therefore, will not affect her future participation. For ski instructor Harry, Schumacher's accident was a way to introduce the risk of not wearing a helmet to his clients. If Schumacher had not been wearing a helmet he would have, undoubtedly, been killed.

Amelia and her friends discuss the potential risks when they plan to do something other than their routine on-piste skiing. The discussions form a risk reduction briefing, something inculcated in her by her father. 'I'm quite conscious of that kind of thing particularly because of having done things like rock climbing and that kind of stuff as a child. My dad really instilled that kind of stuff'. Many of Luke's friends carry physical reminders of equestrian accidents but they do not appear to discuss the risks involved while horse riding. Injury is considered so normal as to not warrant discussion. Luke outlines why:

It's just not part of it. I mean I've, of our very good friends; most of them have got a plate or a pin or something, the ones that compete. Even the ones that didn't compete even the ones that have just ridden generally. Actually, there's all sorts of things have gone on and people have got hurt³²⁴.

Luke's viewpoint is brought home by Chris, an experienced snowboarder, who attended his interview nursing the broken arm he had received a month earlier. His snowboarding accident occurred only two days into a week's holiday. I asked him if he discussed snowboarding risk with his friends back in the hotel bar after being discharged from hospital following surgery. Chris replied:

³²⁴ 3/3/18

Yeah, but not a lot. I think we probably did more on this trip because I came back with a broken arm, after day two but I think, generally speaking, no. I think if everyone is fit and healthy then probably not, not so much. Obviously, it might come up in conversation but it doesn't, risk doesn't dominate the conversation, far from it.

Bert rarely discusses the risky nature of equestrianism with his peers. When he does:

[I]t would tend to be a story in the news that would provoke a conversation about risk, either a fatality or someone who's had a bad accident. Like there was a time 18 months ago or longer both William Fox-Pitt and Andrew Nicholson had very bad falls from horses in competition and were both in hospital³²⁵.

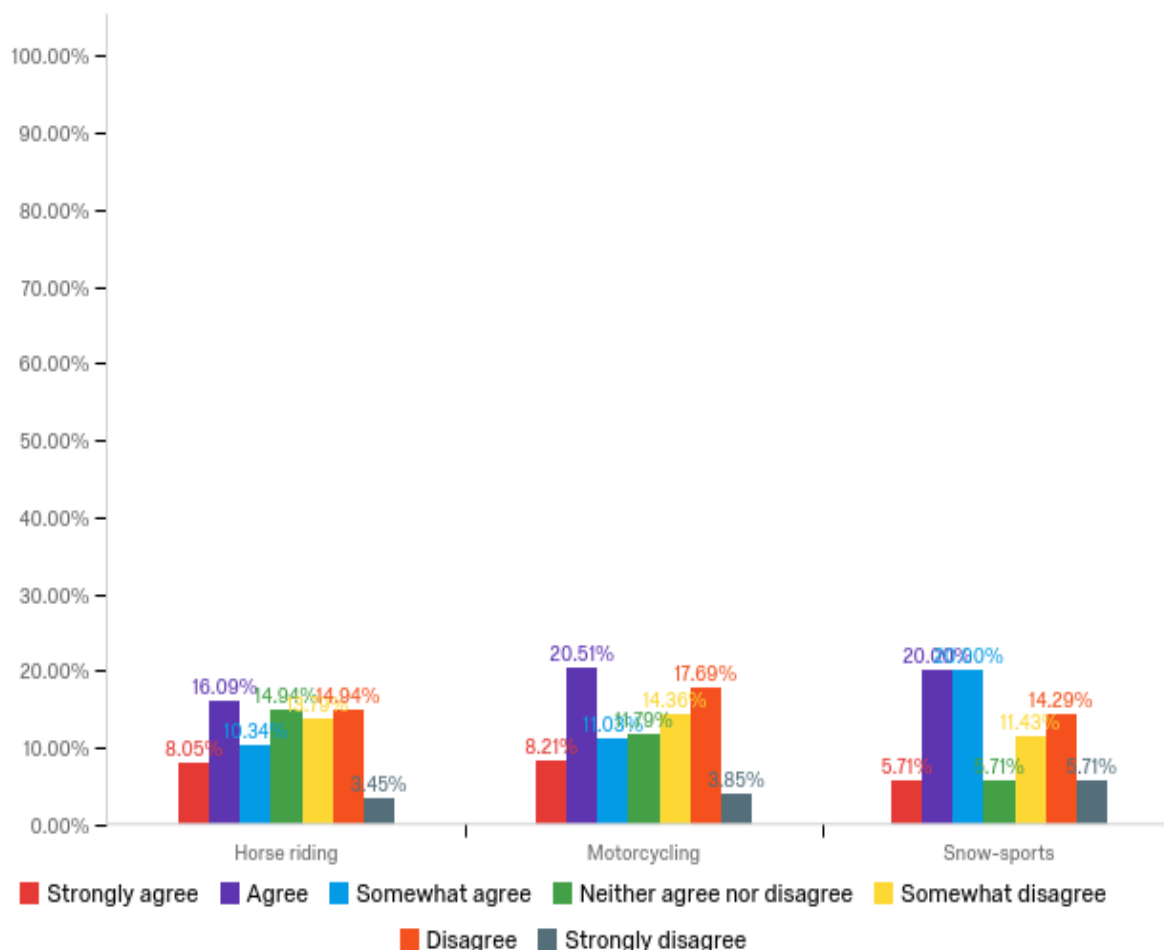
Some individuals admit to never discussing risk, treating it, like Pam does, as the elephant in the room. However, group discussions within subcultures, regarding their own, high profile or friends incidents, therefore, disseminate knowledge of potential risk among members of the group adding to the subcultures stock of knowledge. Moreover, discussing specific incidents, for example, Michael Schumacher's accident or an embarrassing "near miss" can be a cathartic experience for individuals who can learn vicariously from them; knowing the risk enables management of the risk.

The discussion of risk is not, therefore, a general topic of conversation within and across the three sports. To understand more about how risk is communicated within the subcultures I surveyed participants to ascertain to what extent they agreed with the statement "I rarely if ever, talk to other people about the risks to personal injury in my sport".

³²⁵ 11/4/18

Figure 4.24

I rarely, if ever, talk to other people about the risks to personal injury in my sport



n=441

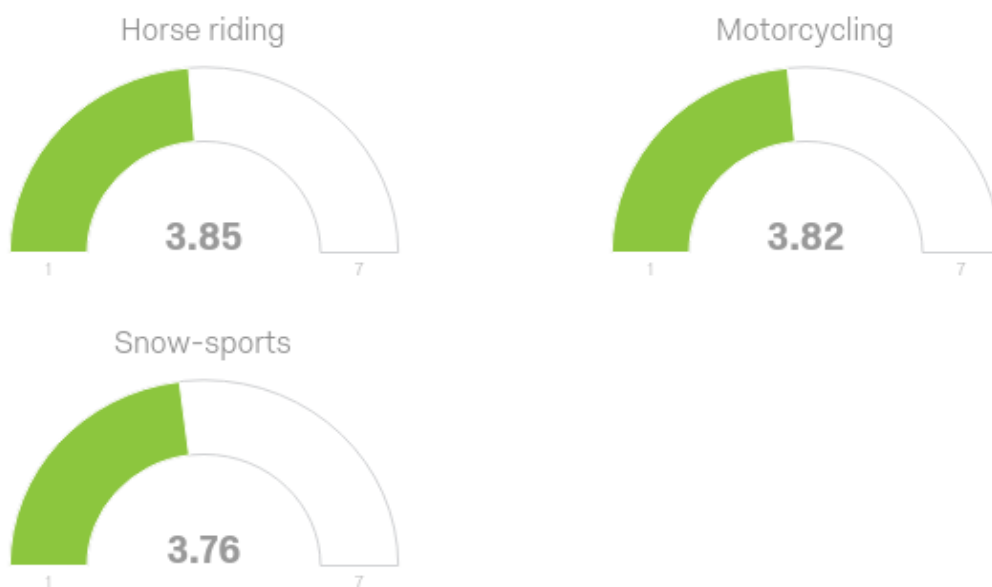
I rarely, if ever, talk to other people about the risks to personal injury in my sport (by sport)

Figure 4.24 indicates that thirty-four percent of horse riders agree with the statement. Consequently, over a third of horse riders surveyed rarely discuss the risks involved in their sport. However, thirty-two percent either strongly disagreed, disagreed or somewhat disagreed with the statement indicating that they often discuss risk amongst themselves. Nearly forty percent of motorcyclists strongly agree, agree or somewhat agree that they rarely discuss risk whilst nearly thirty-six percent disagree and often discuss risk. Risks associated with snowsports are rarely discussed by fifty-five percent of the sample whereas thirty-five percent do discuss

risk. Due to the spread of responses, Figure 4.25 below compares the mean response based on the seven-point scale with one strongly agreeing and seven strongly disagreeing with the statement. The graph shows that the mean responses within and across the three sports are close to each other. The graphic suggests that slightly more of the sample agree that they rarely discuss risk rather than disagree with the statement.

Figure 4.25

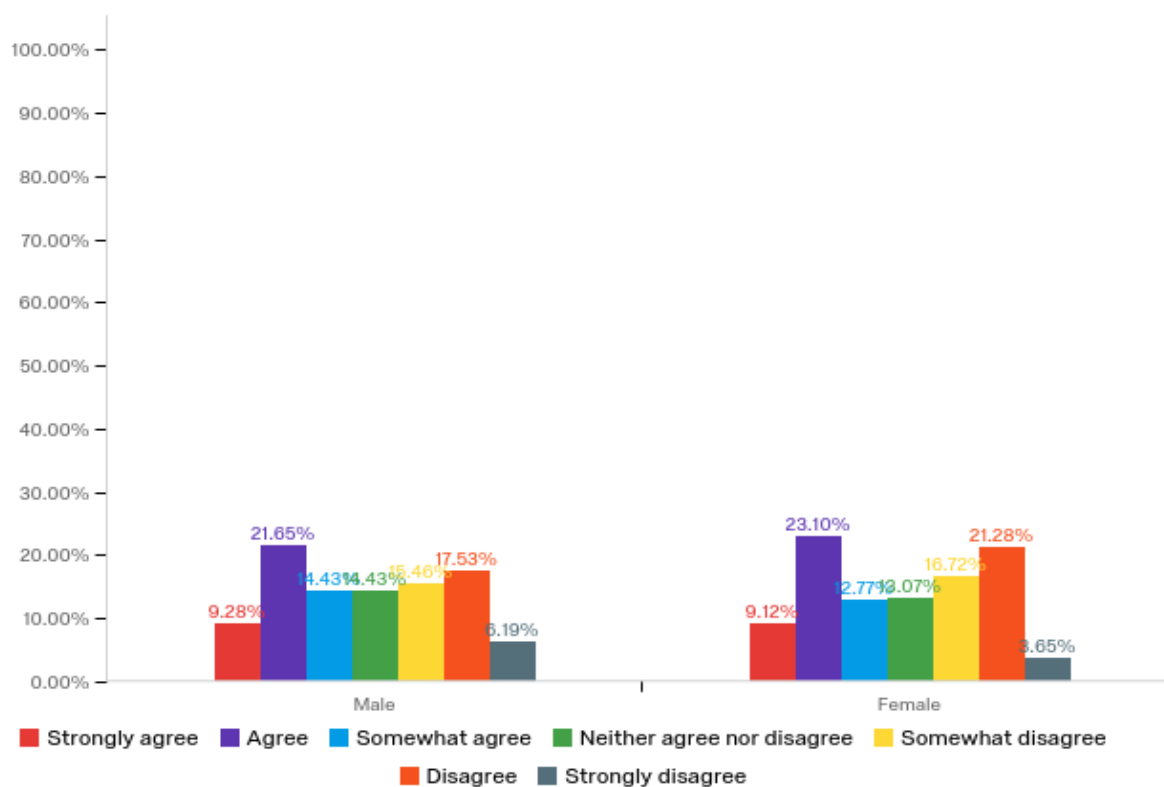
I rarely, if ever, talk to other people about the risks to personal injury in my sport



Mean responses to I rarely, if ever, talk to other people about the risks to personal injury in my sport (by sport)

Figure 4.26

I rarely, if ever, talk to other people about the risks to personal injury in my sport (by gender)

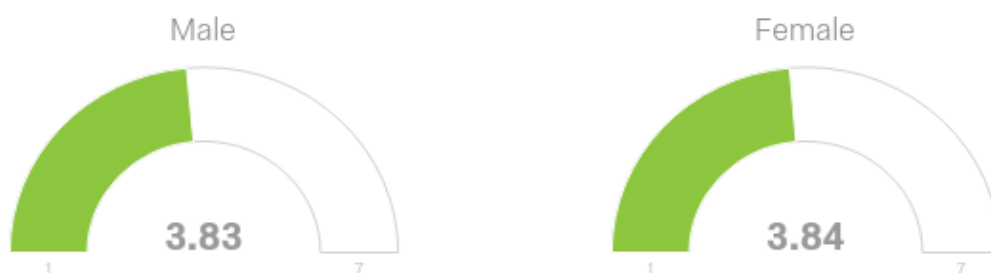


n=430

I rarely, if ever, talk to other people about the risks to personal injury in my sport (by gender)

Figure 4.27

I rarely, if ever, talk to other people about the risks to personal injury in my sport (by gender)



Mean responses to I rarely, if ever, talk to other people about the risks to personal injury in my sport (by gender)

When respondents' gender is considered, the mean score of responses suggests that gender does not influence my sample's attitude. Male and female respondents tend to prefer not to discuss risk.

Motorcyclist Irina offers a plausible explanation, applicable across all three sports, for why many individuals engaging in risky leisure sports rarely discuss the risks in their sport. She argues that 'If you're that worried about the risks that you've got to talk about them all the time, then don't do it'³²⁶. However, Irina also provides a credible explanation of why many other individuals feel the need to discuss risk. By not treating risk as Pam's 'elephant in the room', the shared 'stock of knowledge' (Schutz, 1967, p. 80) regarding the varied nature of risk grows within the group. This facilitates others to vicariously learn from one another; a kind of fast-track to experience and an example dynamic social constructionism. Supporting this notion Irina reported, 'oh yeah, yeah, definitely. There's a sort of shared information, "this happened to me watch out for it"'³²⁷.

4.3.6 Further training taken.

Findings presented earlier indicate that participants across and within all three sports generally prefer to manage risk rather than reduce the hazard. To examine the possible effect of training on how my participants manage risk I asked each of them if they had ever taken any extra sport-specific training or lessons. Motorcyclist Brian reports that he attended 'a *Bike Safe* course with the police which obviously gives you a much higher level of awareness than your average motorcyclist'³²⁸. Kurt has also attended the *Bike Safe* course delivered by police motorcyclists and has had his

³²⁶ 2/10/17

³²⁷ 2/10/17

³²⁸ 25/10/17

riding assessed by an ex-police motorcyclist, RoSPA examiner. However, as he was on his best behaviour, he felt it did not provide a true reflection of his everyday riding.

Kurt explains:

I went out with the RoSPA examiner who said I was at a very high standard of riding, but that was on a sort of half a day and obviously, under that sort of condition, you do ride a lot more conservatively. I've done the Essex Police *Bike Safe* course twice³²⁹.

Sam used to be a motorcycle IAM observer but admits that 'I haven't done anything in years'³³⁰. Although Mark has not attended a specific motorcycle training course, he has read:

[S]ome self-help books. I've got the police *Road Craft*, motorcycle (...) I can't remember its exact title [*Motorcycle Roadcraft*], and there's another one on riding a motorcycle so I've read those. (...) I'm all for it, keep polishing your skills up because you forget things³³¹.

Barry failed the advanced riding test after having around fifteen assessed rides. He states that 'I can't be bothered any more. I've devoted enough time to it. I've learned some stuff for it. I realise that I made some boo-boos [mistakes] on my test'³³². Although Barry admits to having failed the actual test, he was initially motivated enough to attend fifteen assessed sessions and concedes that he had learnt some risk management techniques. Frank has not attempted any recent post motorcycle test training except 'when I was learning to ride bikes. I did a police training day, but that was back in the day when I was about 17 years old. I haven't done anything since'³³³.

Susan is in no doubt about the benefits post motorcycle test raining has. Having previously attended a *Bike Safe* course she believes that 'it's important to improve

³²⁹ 23/7/18

³³⁰ 28/3/18

³³¹ 9/8/17

³³² 14/11/17

³³³ 8/11/17

on what you've already learnt. Like with anything really, you can kind of get into bad habits on things so I think it's quite good to be reminded of how to ride or how to handle an accident or how to act in a particular way'³³⁴. She proceeded to share her plans for future training. 'I'm planning on doing some more training such as *Essex Fire Bike* [delivered by Essex Fire Service] or *Biker Down* [first responder first aid training] and that kind of stuff'³³⁵. Joan has not attempted any further training but she has made a personal commitment to enrol in a future course:

I thought about it as soon as I first got my bike but I didn't feel I'd get anything much out of it because I just wasn't confident enough on the bike (...). I now feel confident enough to do some further training, just to hone my skills a bit I guess, and just to make sure I'm on the right track. I feel I am but I just want that backup so I'm thinking about doing the advanced [motorcycle riding course]³³⁶.

Pam has not yet done any extra training either but it:

[I]s something I've been considering because with the *Curvy Riders* (...) they're often advertising lots of different courses and lots of them are involved in other groups. (...) I would definitely be up for anything like that³³⁷.

Laura, a school teacher, sees the benefits of education and thus how post-test training could help her improve but she is constrained by lack of available time. I asked her if she had attended or planned any extra training. She replied:

No, not yet. I keep meaning to, not IAM or RoSPA, but I keep meaning to do an *Eye to Eye* course one and three, and *Bike Safe*. They don't tend, or I haven't managed to find them, during school holidays or on weekends and I can't take time out of term to do them so it's availability for me and our [*Curvy Riders*] group. One or two of the other female groups that I belong to organise lady only days on them but they're never convenient to me otherwise I would do them³³⁸.

³³⁴ 2/10/17

³³⁵ 2/10/17

³³⁶ 2/10/17

³³⁷ 31/8/17

³³⁸ 31/8/17

Irina is also planning to attend some extra motorcycle training. 'I'm thinking about doing the advanced training through SAM, the Suffolk Advanced Motorcyclists, to progress as it were. Not because I feel any danger but you've got to progress or stop'³³⁹. The notion of having to constantly learn in the dynamic sport of motorcycling is shared by riding instructor Mia. I asked her if she, as an instructor herself, ever received lessons. She replied:

yes absolutely. You're always learning working with horses, you never stop learning. So, I pinch a friend's horse and go for a jumping lesson here, [at her yard] when I can when the other ladies are having a jump lesson on a Monday, and thoroughly enjoy it'³⁴⁰.

Nora has 'lots of lessons. I have two lessons a week with my instructor and that's mainly like flat work, dressage. So I really enjoy that'³⁴¹. Luke admits to having lessons 'all the time yeah'³⁴². I probed deeper into the nature and frequency of his lessons and he responded that:

[P]robably once a fortnight at least I would have a coaching session for 40 minutes to an hour and doing all sorts of things. It could be flat work or jumping or whatever you fancy. We didn't always have it with amazing people but just regular local people and you would do six months or a year with somebody and then you would move on to somebody else and do different things'³⁴³.

Bert reveals that he has a forty-five-minute lesson 'at least once a week (...) on general flat work riding. Every three weeks or so, I try to have a jumping lesson'³⁴⁴.

However, Ella does not enjoy riding lessons. Describing herself as a happy hacker, with no ambitions to compete, she finds lessons intimidating, therefore only has a lesson 'a couple of times a year'³⁴⁵. She confides that:

³³⁹ 2/10/17

³⁴⁰ 25/11/17

³⁴¹ 3/12/17

³⁴² 3/3/18

³⁴³ 3/3/18

³⁴⁴ 11/4/18

Occasionally I have a lesson. It's not something I particularly enjoy. I feel less confident in the school than I do hacking out. Probably because most of my falls have been in the school because you're pushing yourself, often to do things that you wouldn't do out on a hack³⁴⁶.

Experienced horsewoman Caroline considers that for her current riding, mainly hacking out, training would not benefit her. However, she understands the value of training for more advanced riding:

Without wanting to sound that arrogant, because I don't mean it to sound like that, but I don't feel the need for what I'm doing with my riding currently I need to be taught because I'm hacking about having fun. If I was to get back into dressage, absolutely, I would start having lessons again³⁴⁷.

Although he takes polo lessons, I asked Cliff why he does not take any generic riding lessons. Much like Caroline, he felt that his current level of proficiency was appropriate for the type of riding he does. He explained that:

I can ride a horse quite well but I'm not that committed into... I feel like if you take generic lessons you're committed into, say, dressage or jumping and they're things I'm not really interested in. I much prefer just being out and about on a horse and I feel like I've got that standard so I don't need to commit money towards improving that³⁴⁸.

Like Caroline and Cliff, Chloe does not feel the need for lessons for her style of riding. Subscribing to the aphorism "practice makes perfect" Chloe stated, 'No I don't have a weekly lesson. I don't feel that I need to have a lesson every week. Of course, there is always improvement and you try work that out yourself and think about that³⁴⁹. When Pete was a keen eventer he took regular lessons. I asked him if he still did. He replied:

[N]o, I haven't, because just hacking around, I mean I know I'm not the best rider in the world but a long way from being the worst rider in the world. I know

³⁴⁵ 25/11/17

³⁴⁶ 25/11/17

³⁴⁷ 16/2/18

³⁴⁸ 3/8/18

³⁴⁹ 25/11/17

it's effective, I know my position is fairly good. I'm aware of my faults that I do have and I do, sort of make a conscious effort to sort of, think about those.

Pete and Chloe both appear to use their previous training as a foundation for critical self-reflections. They appear to recognise their shortcomings and attempt to correct them. Training, therefore, may not feature in their current riding, but it remains a legacy of influence on their current riding.

Victoria, an experienced skier, admits to having 'lessons every season' for 'probably a couple of weeks out of the year'³⁵⁰. Jane found that taking lessons increased her skiing proficiency to such an extent that it heightened her enjoyment. She explains 'I had a one-to-one lesson, actually on the slopes, and that was just a game-changer, that was just a game-changer. And from then on I pretty much loved it'³⁵¹. Amelia had many skiing lessons as part of her school's skiing trips but is now concentrating on her snowboarding technique. This has required her to take 'quite a few lessons since being out here as a seasonnaire'³⁵². Chris has been snowboarding for ten years and admits that 'I've never had any lessons. I acknowledge that actually, it would be quite a good thing to do to have more advanced lessons'³⁵³. However, Chris points out that 'it also costs a lot of money to do that, so it depends whether I want to pay that extra money to learn'³⁵⁴. Daniel's attitude to training mirrors that found across all three sports, although he has had skiing lessons in the past. He discloses that 'I haven't had a lesson in years; I just have confidence in my own ability I suppose'³⁵⁵.

³⁵⁰ 22/1/18

³⁵¹ 16/6/18

³⁵² 14/11/17

³⁵³ 16/4/18

³⁵⁴ 16/4/18

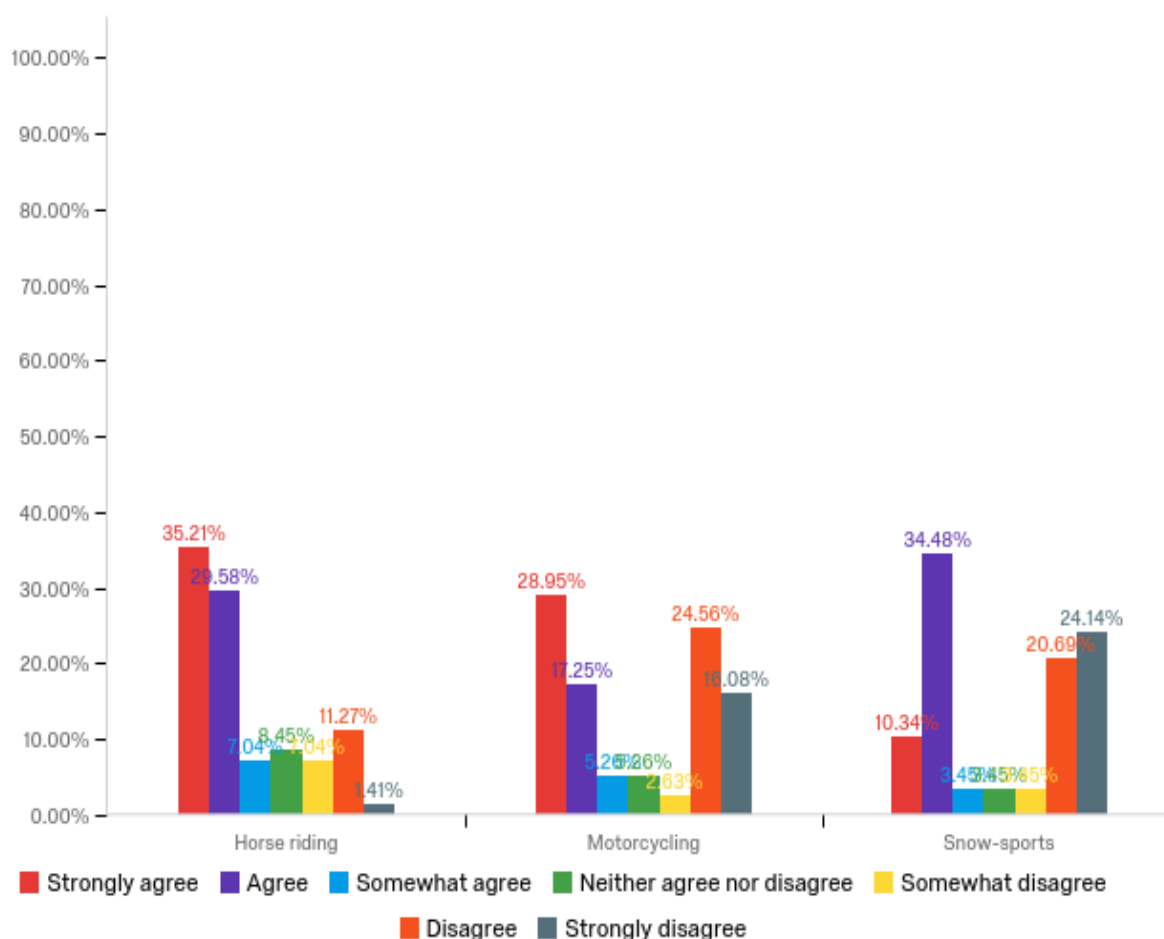
³⁵⁵ 27/3/18

Most of my participants have had some training in their sporting careers; many still receive ongoing training in their attempts to become more accomplished in their chosen sport. Motorcyclist Brian considers that post-test training gives him an edge on his peers and thus ameliorates risk.

I wanted to understand how widespread attitudes to extra training were in their sports and the extent to which my survey sample had engaged in any training within the last year. Figure 4.28 below shows that nearly seventy-two percent of horse riders have had engaged, at some degree, with training as opposed to twenty percent who had not. Motorcycling and snowsports attitudes toward training appear to be more polarised. Fifty-one percent of motorcyclists and forty-eight percent of snowsports participants appear to have taken extra training while forty-three percent of motorcyclists and forty-eight percent of snowsports have not undertaken training in the past year.

Figure 4.28

I have taken extra training lessons in the past twelve months (by sport)

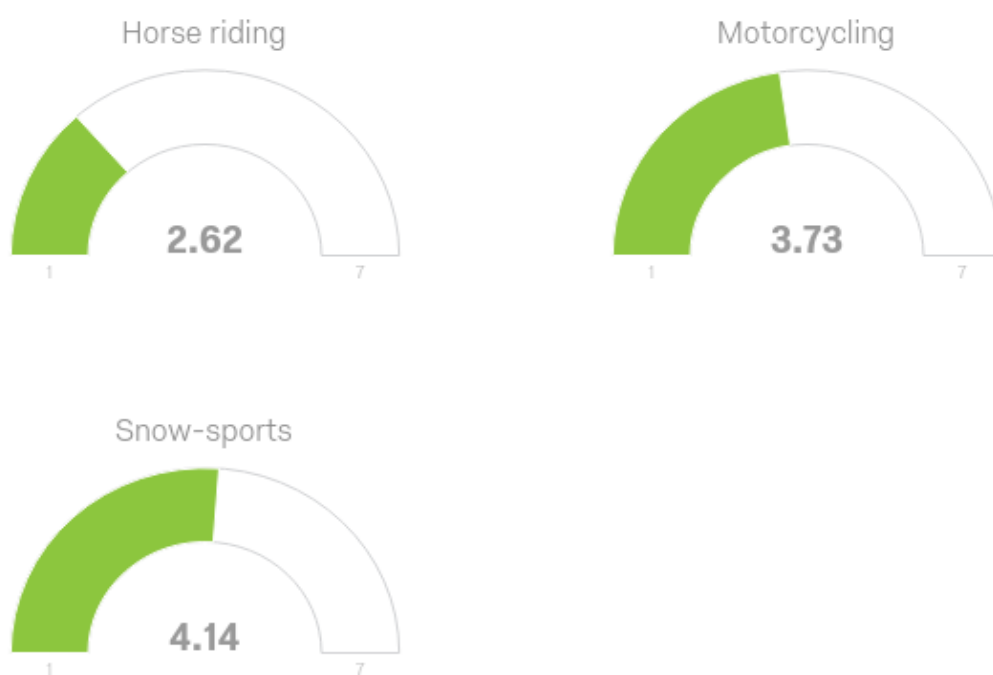


N=442 **I have taken extra training lessons in the past twelve months (by sport)**

An examination of the mean scores across the seven scale points presented in Figure 4.29 below confirms that horse riders in the sample report receiving considerably more training in the past year than either motorcyclists or snowsports. This may suggest that horse riders self identify as a high-risk group, thus use training more than the other sports to mitigate their risk as part of a risk management strategy.

Figure 4.29

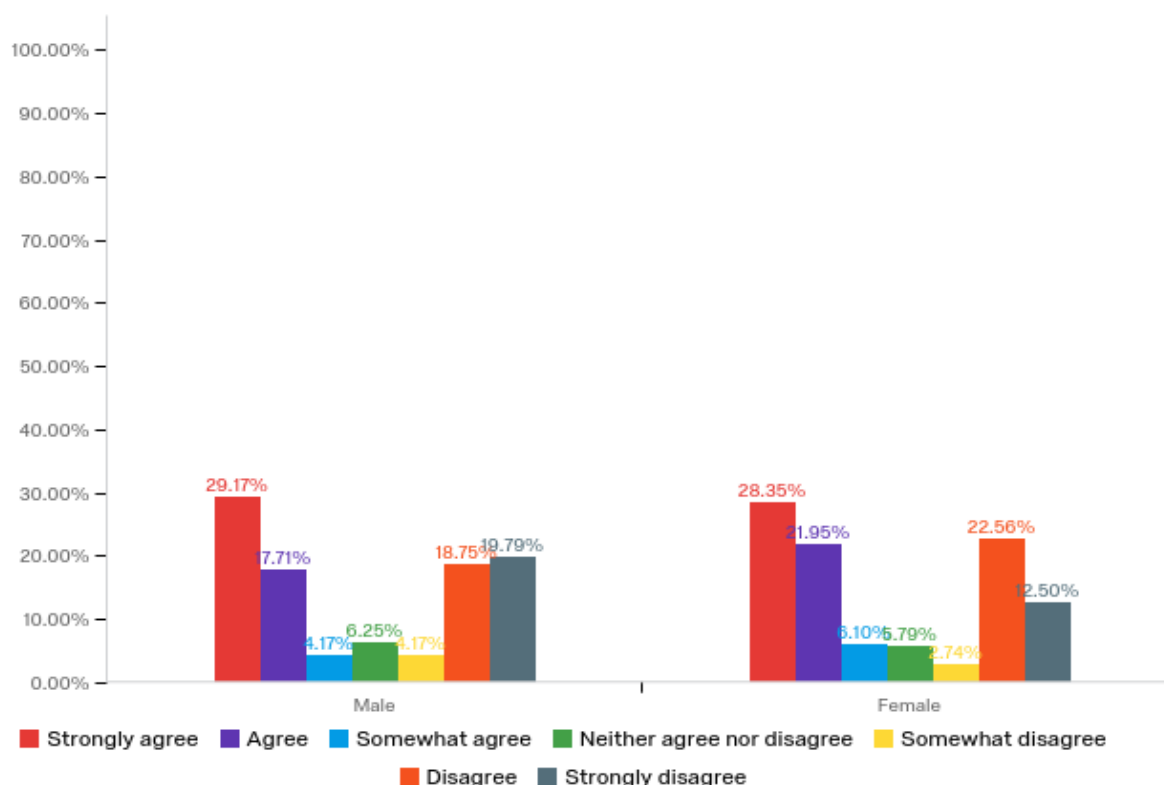
I have taken extra training lessons in the past twelve months (by sport)



Mean responses to I have taken extra training lessons in the past twelve months (by sport)

Figure 4.30

I have taken extra training lessons in the past twelve months (by gender)



n=442

I have taken extra training lessons in the past twelve months (by gender)

I also wanted to understand the part my participants' gender plays in attitudes to training. Figure 4.30 above indicates that fifty-one percent of males and fifty-six percent of females appear to have taken extra training over the past year while forty-three percent of males and thirty-eight percent of females had not. These results indicate that more females have taken extra lessons than men over the past year, but only just. This tentatively suggests that females use training to manage their risk only slightly more than men. Therefore, the popular stereotype, which sees women as more risk-averse to men, is, in this instance, questionable. If it were not so, I would have expected the percentage of women who manage risk through extra training to be considerably higher than that of men.

4.3.7 Changes in risk perception over sporting career.

The findings presented so far have focussed on my participants' *current* perception of risk. I wanted to examine how, or if, their perception of risk had changed over the time they been engaged in their sport. Brian, who had a considerable break in his motorcycling career, suggests that 'if I'd have carried on riding right through my life I don't know, to be quite blunt if I'd still be around'³⁵⁶. Brian then reflects back to feelings related to William Hazlitt's "immortality of youth" by proposing that 'in terms of my surviving my teenage years I was probably quite lucky'³⁵⁷. Barry also appeared to enjoy the immortality of youth confessing that, 'I don't know whether I rode quicker, but I rode less safely than I do now; and people used to say to me "you're gonna bloody kill yourself on a motorbike"'³⁵⁸. Mark considers that, due to technical advances in modern motorcycles, he feels safer than he used to when riding in the seventies. 'I feel a bit safer then I used to feel because of the technology of the bike I've got that makes me feel safer. I might not be safer but it makes me feel safer. I certainly feel a little bit safer'³⁵⁹. Sam articulates a similar trust and security in technology. 'I think it's changed over time. The bikes have got safer and the bikes have got faster'³⁶⁰. Kurt answered 'definitely. I'm a lot more aware of risks being on a bike. Yeah, hundred percent I'd say'³⁶¹. George, who has recently passed his advanced test, suggests 'not really. My riding method may have changed slightly [over time] but certainly not my risk assessment'³⁶². Susan opines that for her, her

³⁵⁶ 25/10/17

³⁵⁷ 25/10/17

³⁵⁸ 14/11/17

³⁵⁹ 9/8/17

³⁶⁰ 28/3/18

³⁶¹ 23/7/18

³⁶² 30/10/17

risk perception 'stayed about the same because even though I only really get out of my bike every couple of weeks when I get back on it I'm almost like a new rider'³⁶³.

Sophia feels that time spent riding her motorcycle has had positive crossover benefits when driving her car. She explains:

I tend to be more aware, when I'm driving the car, of what's going on around me. I think that has been a noticeable difference because I am, you know, more aware when I'm on the bike. So I think that has heightened my risk awareness and hazard perception. I look further ahead than I used to when I was in the car³⁶⁴.

Car driver Pam has also noticed a change in perception of risk since she has been riding motorcycles. 'Definitely, you notice a lot more when you're on a bike. Although, when you're in a car and something happens in front of you notice it but I think on a bike, well certainly for me, I pick up a lot more even if it doesn't involve me'³⁶⁵. Irina, too, links an increase in risk perception since she has been motorcycling believing, like Pam and Sophia, that this has positively benefitted her car driving. 'It's made me more risk-aware. I tend to look further ahead observe the road more avoid the potholes is also made me a better [car] driver in total'³⁶⁶.

Riding instructor Mia believes that information regarding equestrian risk is more readily available than ever before. 'I'm not that old but there was less health and safety when I was young than there is today and I think that forms part of the knowledge base'³⁶⁷. Nora's risk perception has increased since she has been riding:

I'm probably more aware now. (...) I think ignorance is bliss when I first started riding. I mean people at the yard used to say oh you're ever so brave. I used to take my horse out on my own, on a really busy road, under this railway bridge through a graveyard and go for a ride on my own and all I kept thinking

³⁶³ 2/10/17

³⁶⁴ 11/10/17

³⁶⁵ 25/9/17

³⁶⁶ 2/10/17

³⁶⁷ 25/11/17

of when I was riding was “oh look at his lovely white ears”. (...) I wouldn’t do it now and I’ve been riding longer, but it was just ignorance. I wasn’t aware of anything around me³⁶⁸.

Ella has also seen a dramatic increase in her risk perception over her equestrian career. ‘Oh yes definitely. Because when I was a child (...) I would jump on a pony bareback with just a head collar on and just one piece of rope attached to the head collar and take it down the main road (...) to a field, no control at all’³⁶⁹. When I asked Luke if his risk perception had changed he replied, ‘Yeah probably. I never used to worry at all about falling off (...) but I definitely don’t bounce. You get older you feel stiffer and you don’t want to hit the floor’³⁷⁰.

Cliff considers that he is less risk-averse now than when he started riding because he has gained experience to help manage the risk. ‘Yeah, I’m probably less risk-averse than I was to start with. Because I think that my risk aversion has decreased, whereas my ability has increased’³⁷¹. Peter, a very experienced horseman genuinely believes that his perception of risk has not changed over time. I probed for a deeper explanation and he answered:

I don’t think there’s been any significant change no. (...). I mean, I worked really hard to get up to a good standard of riding and horse knowledge as well and I think that gives you a certain amount of confidence³⁷².

Perhaps Cliff and Peter are being unrealistically confident, using the confidence gained from experience to shield them from risk. Given the high incidence of personal injury, perhaps confidence is as blissful as ignorance?

Although skiing is statistically considered less risky than equestrian sport, Daniel shares Cliff and Peter’s view. Believing that, ‘since I’ve got good at it the risk is less. I

³⁶⁸ 3/12/17

³⁶⁹ 25/11/17

³⁷⁰ 3/3/18

³⁷¹ 3/8/18

³⁷² 15/3/18

think the risk is less than what I did before because my confidence has increased'³⁷³. Chad, at eighteen years old and a relatively new skier, agrees. After a long thoughtful pause, he said, 'It's like I've got more confident and I might have taken more risks'³⁷⁴. Conversely, Monica feels that 'the more you learn about it the more you realise you don't know. (...) ignorance is bliss, isn't it?'³⁷⁵ Victoria thinks about different risks now she is older and more experienced. 'When I was younger I probably thought about maybe breaking a leg or something whereas now I think about avalanche risk'³⁷⁶. Jane considers that her change in risk perception is a natural part of ageing. She 'think[s] that risk perception changes as you get older anyway, I've definitely noticed that in me'³⁷⁷.

Figure 4.31 below clearly indicates that the risk perception of those participating in snowsports has changed the most. Sixty-two percent, or nearly two-thirds of the sample, consider their perception of risk has changed since they started. This compares with thirty-eight percent, just over a third, whose perception has not changed. The graphs for motorcycling and horse riding are similar. Fifty-five percent of horse riders believe that their risk perception has changed, as do forty-nine percent of motorcyclists. The six percent difference may be attributed to horse riders having been either actually, or vicariously, experiencing personal injury risk. However, thirty-eight percent of horse riders, forty-four percent of motorcyclists and thirty-eight percent of snowsports participants report that their perception of risk has not changed. These participants could be denying the effects of experience on increasing risk perception by using their accumulation of confidence, thus exhibiting

³⁷³ 27/3/18

³⁷⁴ 16/6/18

³⁷⁵ 3/11/17

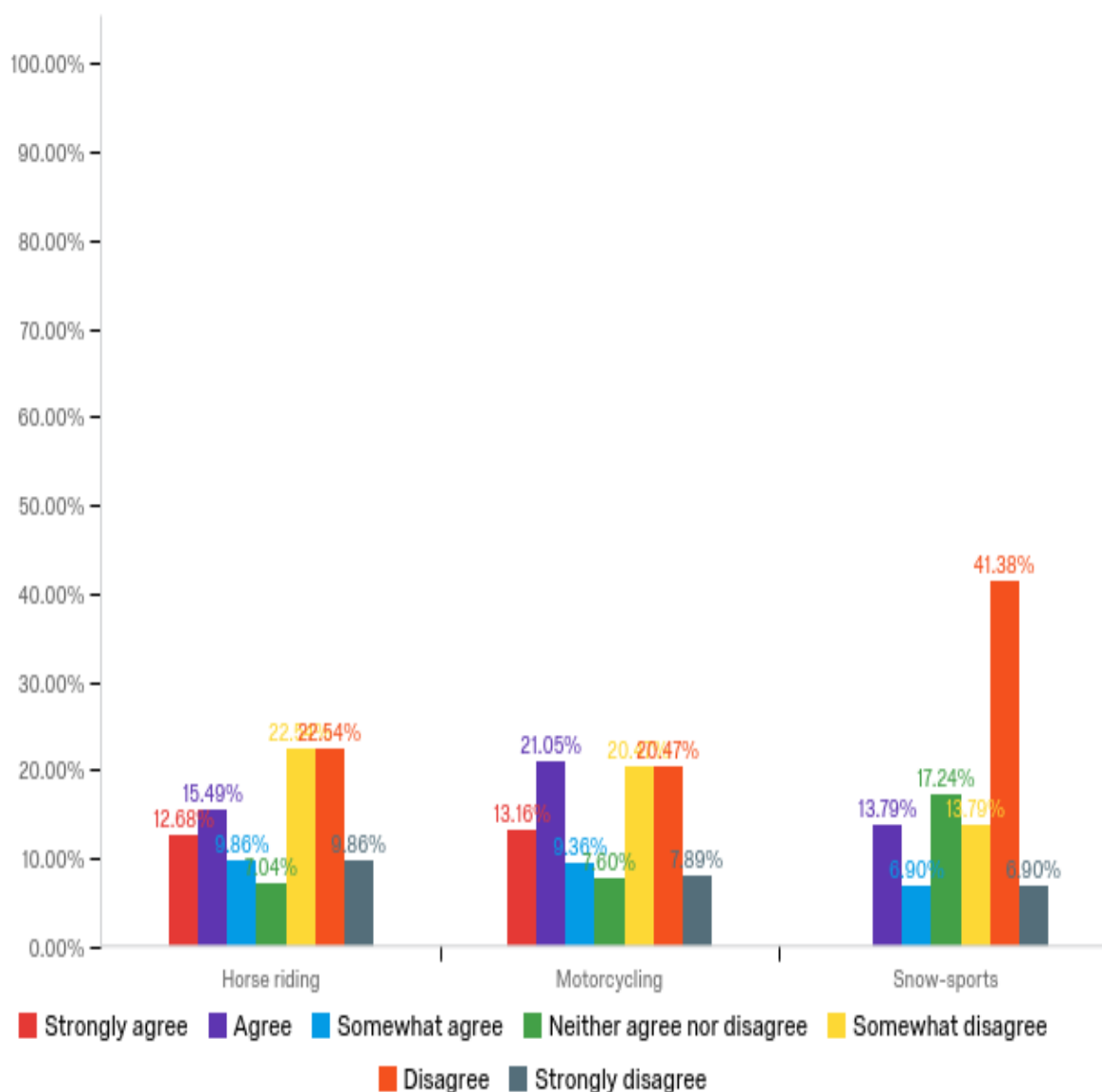
³⁷⁶ 22/1/18

³⁷⁷ 16/6/18

an unrealistic optimism in their ability.

Figure 4.31

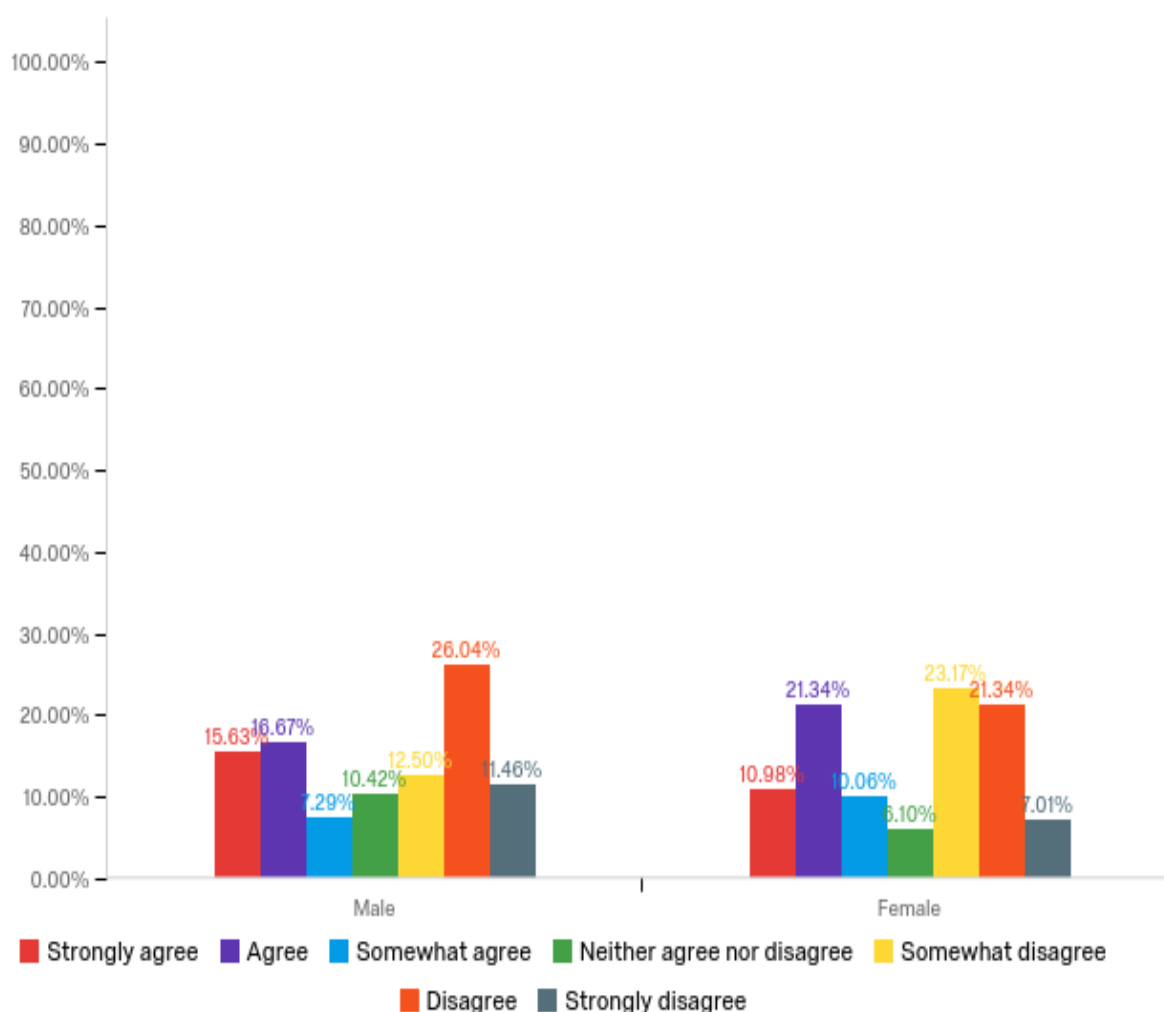
My perception of risk in my sport has not changed since I started



n=442 **My perception of risk in my sport has not changed since I started (by sport)**

Figure 4.32

My perception of risk in my sport has not changed since I started (by gender)



n=442 **My perception of risk in my sport has not changed since I started (by gender)**

I was interested to see if gender influences increasing risk perception over time. Figure 4.32 above shows that fifty percent of males and fifty-one percent of females agree that their risk perception has changed over their sporting career. This compares with thirty-nine and forty-two percent respectively who feel their risk perception is unchanged. The findings, therefore, indicate that both males and females have similar attitudes when considering changes to their risk perception over time. Changes in perceived risk over time could, therefore, be considered independent of participant gender.

Figure 4.33

My perception of risk in my sport has not changed since I started (by gender)



Mean responses to my perception of risk in my sport has not changed since I started (by gender)

Figure 4.33 above compares the mean score, by gender, obtained from the seven scale points. The means being so close supports the notion that gender plays no part in a temporal shift in risk perception of participants engaged in the three sports examined.

4.3.8 Has personal or vicarious injury changed how you participate?

My findings suggest that, although many individuals who engage in the three sports freely *discuss* risk amongst themselves and, therefore, add to the collective stock of knowledge, many do not. I wanted to qualitatively examine the effect of an *actual or vicarious* incident on an individual's sporting participation and to understand if any difference between discussion and personal experience occurred.

Sam suffered an injury on his motorcycle as a result of a mechanical failure. As he accepts personal responsibility for the failure, it will not affect his ongoing participation. The notion that injuries are self-inflicted, and can thus be ameliorated with experience or a responsible attitude to riding or skiing skill, is expressed by Joan. She believes that 'most of the people I know who have been injured, to a degree, you can look at it and go yeah, they maybe shouldn't have been doing what

they were doing at the time'³⁷⁸. Inexperience led to Harry's skiing accident. 'I made a stupid decision and I paid the price. I skied off-piste too early in the year (...) I wouldn't do that now, it was learning a lesson'³⁷⁹.

However, Irina, although aware of the risk, considers her friend's fatal motorcycle accident was self-inflicted due to her being 'a speed freak and I'm not'³⁸⁰. Irina has, therefore, not consciously changed how she rides. Frank attended a motorcycling friend's funeral and was very insistent that this event had not changed his participation. Similarly, George had heard of the events surrounding a motorcyclist's death but has not changed his engagement with motorcycling as 'that sort of thing doesn't worry me'³⁸¹. Sophia considers motorcycle accidents as 'part of the deal' adding that 'I wouldn't necessarily say it's changed the way that I ride at all'³⁸². Risk of injury as being "Part of the deal" defines Monica's attitude. She knows skiing is risky but takes a fatalistic viewpoint in that minor accidents are common, their severity 'just depends how you fall'³⁸³.

Caroline and Chloe have both had horse riding accidents which they attribute as being beyond their control. They, therefore, have not let these incidents change how they ride. Chloe's resolution was to sell the 'problem horse (...) So, I've removed that risk'³⁸⁴. Nora's accident had a profound impact on her riding. She broke her collar bone and two ribs falling from her horse. The six weeks rehabilitation meant she could not ride 'but I had this horrible fear about getting back on him'³⁸⁵. To successfully overcome her fear, Nora confessed that 'I did go on to have to

³⁷⁸ 2/10/17

³⁷⁹ 7/12/17

³⁸⁰ 2/10/17

³⁸¹ 31/10/17

³⁸² 11/10/17

³⁸³ 3/11/17

³⁸⁴ 25/11/17

³⁸⁵ 3/12/17

hypnotherapy because it was getting worse. I was getting really frightened again'³⁸⁶. Overcoming fear by using hypnotherapy is a strategy being considered by snowboarder Louise to regain her confidence after a fall. She confides that 'I will probably have a little bit of hypnotherapy from a friend before I start tackling this particular jump again, just to put my head in the right place before I do it'³⁸⁷.

Although not resorting to hypnotherapy after her motorcycle accident, Susan reports that, following her accident, 'the anxiety levels were quite high (...) and it did take me a couple of attempts to go out on my new bike'³⁸⁸. Apprehension surrounding re-engaging with their sport post-accident is shared by Victoria, who, although secure in her own skiing ability, became more conscious of other people possibly being out of control and colliding with her. She says that now 'I don't like it being very busy'³⁸⁹.

A positive effect of vicarious learning on how an individual engages with their sport after hearing of a friend's accident is illustrated by Laura. 'We were much more cautious. We all avoided going out at sundown because that's when she got.... (...). I'm more conscious of forward planning and checking the road in low sun'³⁹⁰. Accidents can also help an individual re-appraise their continuing participation in one sport allowing them to consider other avenues. Experienced snowboarder Chris, who has experienced several previous accidents, attended his interview nursing a broken arm. He considers his accident has provided him 'some time to think. I've been saying over the last year anyway [that] I want to scale back the amount of snowboarding holidays I do. (...) I've got a whole list on my phone of places around

³⁸⁶ 3/12/17

³⁸⁷ 24/11/17

³⁸⁸ 2/10/17

³⁸⁹ 22/1/18

³⁹⁰ 31/8/17

the world where I'd like to go to'³⁹¹. Participants interviewed within and across all sports have tended to learn from their mistakes, therefore, modifying how they engage with their sport whilst adding to the stock of knowledge. Others have adjusted how they participate in a response to another's injury by accessing that shared stock of knowledge. A number of participants took a fatalistic view. They considered that if an incident was beyond their control they could not learn from it, therefore, it would not lead to any future modification. Lastly, some individuals believe that their more cautious engagement with their sport, a manifestation of Adams' (2001, p. 15) lower calibrated 'risk thermostat', means that they have not learned from those accidents where they believe another's recklessness, possibly due to a higher calibrated risk thermostat, caused a self-inflicted injury.

4.3.9 The importance of speed.

The largely publicly held stereotype "biker" generally sees motorcyclists as single-mindedly besotted with speed, attempting to overtake slower moving traffic at all costs. However, speed also features prominently in horse riding with amateur riders competing against the clock in show jumping and against each other's times in eventing. The popular British winter television programme *Ski Sunday* celebrates the fastest men and women participating in alpine downhill, slalom and ski jump disciplines. To understand the importance of speed to my participants I asked them if speed or performance is important to them and why? This is considered an essential question as the importance of speed may be an important factor in why my participants persistently engage in a risky leisure sport.

³⁹¹ 16/4/18

Speed appears to be a central feature for motorcyclist Sam who admitted, 'yeah, I love going fast'³⁹². The combination of speed and acceleration is, for Barry, a heady mix confessing that, 'I like speed, I like acceleration and I guess there is also an element of the excitement of it'³⁹³. However, some tension appears to exist between what is considered to be socially acceptable and what actually happens on the road. This tension is articulated by Frank when I asked him if speed is important to him. He answered, 'I want to say no but I guess it probably is really, yeah. I don't think I'm a fast rider (...) but I do like to ride fast and keep moving'³⁹⁴. A moving motorcycle is extremely agile and manoeuvrable. Motorcycles with just a moderate five or six hundred cm³ engine capacity can easily exceed the British national speed limit and accelerate to sixty miles per hour faster than most super-cars. Laura describes the feeling of that acceleration as being, 'lovely. It's nice; it's desirable, it's important. It's also reassuring because you know it can get you out of difficulties'³⁹⁵.

However, outright speed is not that important to George and Joan who believe that the performance of their motorcycles also gives them a safety cushion. This is expressed by Joan explaining that 'I like to have that bit of power in reserve. It's not that I want to be riding it that way all the time it's just that if I needed to get out of a situation then it's there (...). I didn't think it was important but actually, I realised that it is important to me'³⁹⁶. Although, they 'like to go fast in the right conditions'³⁹⁷ absolute top speed is not a priority for Pam or Laura. As being typically smaller than men, both prefer 'manageability, control [and] manoeuvrability'³⁹⁸. As motorcycles

³⁹² 28/3/18

³⁹³ 14/11/17

³⁹⁴ 8/11/17

³⁹⁵ 31/8/17

³⁹⁶ 2/10/17

³⁹⁷ 25/9/17

³⁹⁸ 31/8/17

are bound by the same speed limits as most other British road users, I asked all my motorcycle participants if they ever exceed the speed limit for the roads they travel on. All except Irina, who answered ‘only accidentally’³⁹⁹, admitted to speeding on roads subject to the national speed limit. However, they also admitted that because of the high traffic density and pedestrians, they rarely, if ever, exceed the speed limit in a built-up area. Consequently, the stereotype of motorcyclists being committed “speed demons” appears, in the case of my participants, to be only partly accurate.

The notion of gaining pleasure from manoeuvring and controlling, in this case, a horse, appears equally as stimulating as outright speed. Stuart proposes that:

I would get nearly as much pleasure of sitting on a nice horse and having a good gallop up the hill as I would actually getting on a very well trained dressage horse and riding (...) at a slower pace. I think it’s more to do with skill and the involvement as opposed to just speed but yes, speed does add a good bit of buzz to it definitely⁴⁰⁰.

As Stuart alluded to above, the exciting nature of speed is not the exclusive domain of motorcyclists. Although much slower than a motorcycle, a 500kg horse galloping at a speed of thirty miles an hour can be just as exhilarating. Nora recently took her horse for a gallop for the first time reporting that ‘I was really nervous, I had a dry mouth (...) but I so wanted to do it, I really wanted to do it. (...) it was fantastic and I was like screaming “yippee” (...) I said can we do it again? (...) I’ve have had a couple of gallops since then’⁴⁰¹. The beach, where official regulations allow, is a favourite place for Caroline, and her horse, to enjoy the sensation of speed. I asked her how it made her feel. She confided that ‘when it was happening I was mixed between exhilaration and absolute terror. But when I got to the end and we stopped,

³⁹⁹ 2/10/17

⁴⁰⁰ 4/12/17

⁴⁰¹ 3/12/17

it was a real buzz'⁴⁰². The elation imbued by a speeding horse is further illustrated by Luke's animated response to the question. '[Y]eah oh God, yeah absolutely, absolutely, and if there are some jumps in the way it gets better. Yeah, yeah, oh absolutely'⁴⁰³.

The freedom to go as fast or, occasionally, as slow as you like down the ski slope without hindrance or official restraint is important for all my participants. Daniel makes the point that speed is 'the best bit for me, going fast on the slopes. (...) but yeah, if they suddenly kind of started to say "you can't go that fast" or there was like, Snow Police, that would really ruin it for me'⁴⁰⁴. The ability to speed down the piste obviously plays an important part for most skiers and snowboarders. However, for Harry, 'the speed is definitely the first thing that grabs you. I don't think that hooked me though (...) I guess that [speed] gets a little bit boring after a while. Just going fast all the while isn't that exciting'⁴⁰⁵.

To further understand the importance of speed in the three sports I asked the survey statement 'I don't enjoy going fast'. I asked a negatively worded question to dissuade possible acquiescence response bias⁴⁰⁶ from participants. Figure 4.34 below indicates that seventy-two percent of motorcyclists generally disagree with the statement; out of those over a quarter strongly disagree. Conversely, seventeen percent agree with the statement with less than two percent of the sample strongly agreeing that they do not enjoy going fast. This suggests that generally, motorcyclists in my sample do enjoy going fast. This compares with sixty-four

⁴⁰² 16/2/18

⁴⁰³ 3/3/18

⁴⁰⁴ 27/3/18

⁴⁰⁵ 7/12/17

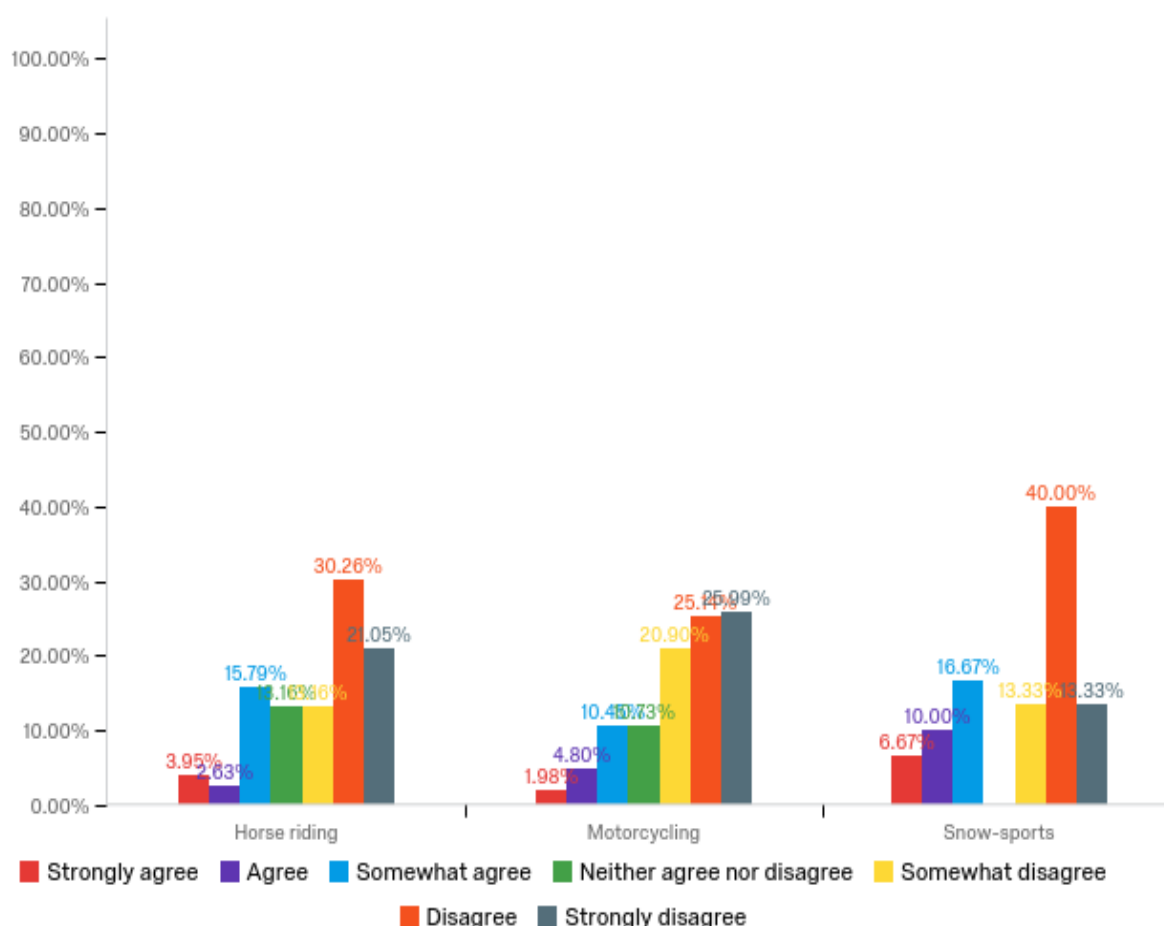
⁴⁰⁶ The tendency for a respondent to agree with a statement without considering the content of the item

percent of horse riders who generally disagree with the statement, out of which, twenty-one percent strongly disagree. There is slightly more agreement with the statement among horse riders than motorcyclists; four percent agree that they do not enjoy going fast.

Sixty-six percent, or two thirds, of snow sports participants sampled, enjoy speed on the slopes compared with one third, thirty-three percent, who do not enjoy speed.

Figure 4.34

I don't enjoy going fast



n= 461

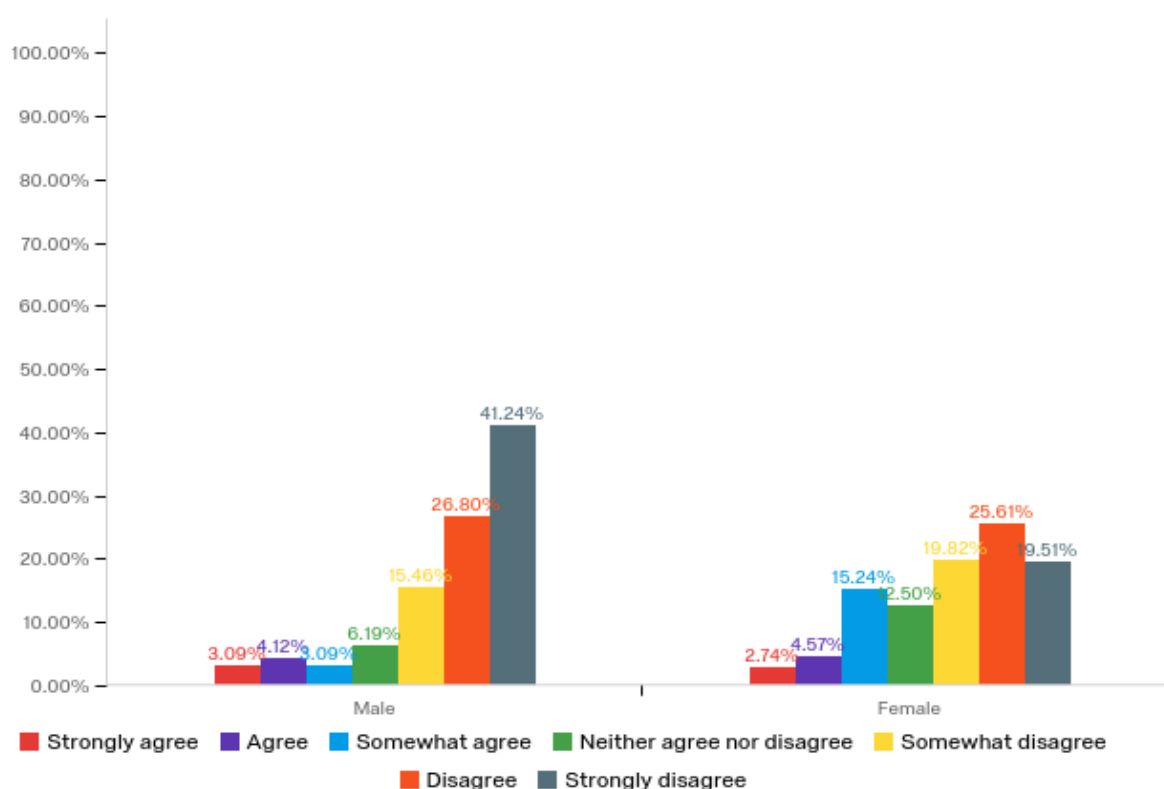
I don't enjoy going fast (by sport)

I wanted to examine any effect that gender plays in the enjoyment of speed. Irrespective of gender, my interview respondents all enjoyed the sensation of speed,

although some female respondents reported an initial nervousness. Figure 4.35 below illustrates how participant's gender influences the enjoyment of speed. Clearly, speed is a male preference. Over twice as many males report a strong agreement with the statement than females, forty-one percent vs. nineteen percent respectively. Conversely, only ten percent of males do not enjoy speed compared with twenty-two percent of females.

Figure 4.35

I don't enjoy going fast (by gender)



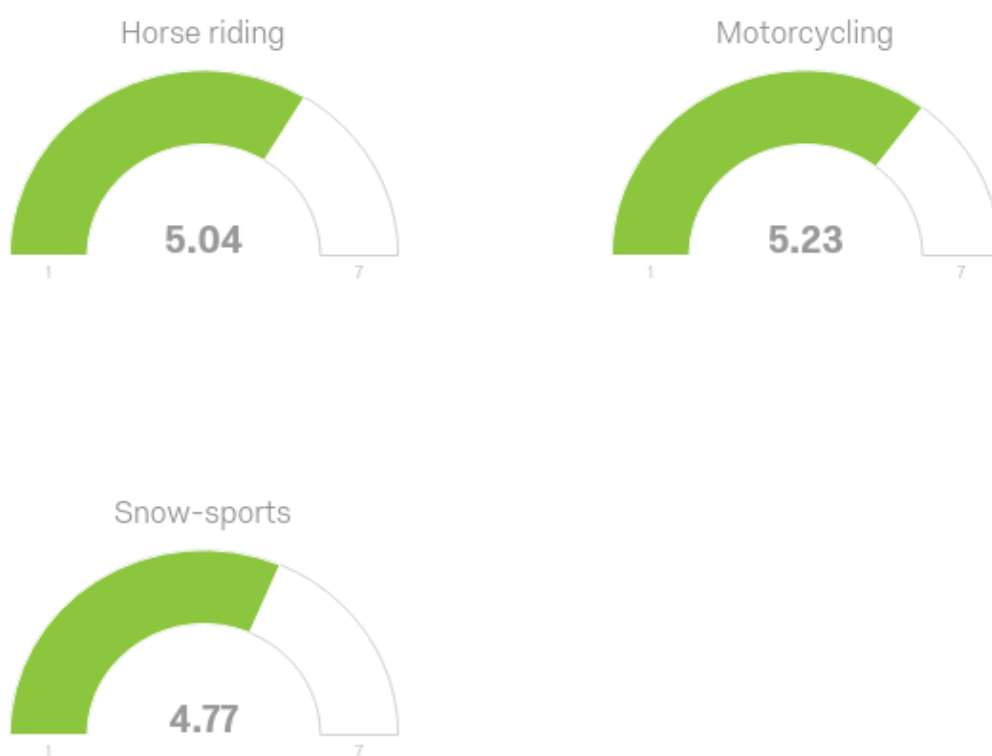
n=461

I don't enjoy going fast (by gender)

Figure 4.36 is an analysis of the mean scores from the seven scale points. This indicates that speed is generally enjoyed by all participants, perhaps slightly more by motorcyclists followed by horse riders and lastly skiers and snowboarders.

Figure 4.36

I don't enjoy going fast



Mean responses to I don't enjoy going fast (by sport)

When the mean score for gender is examined in figure 4.37 below, males' higher mean value indicates that they have a greater preference than females for speed.

Figure 4.37

I don't enjoy going fast (by gender)



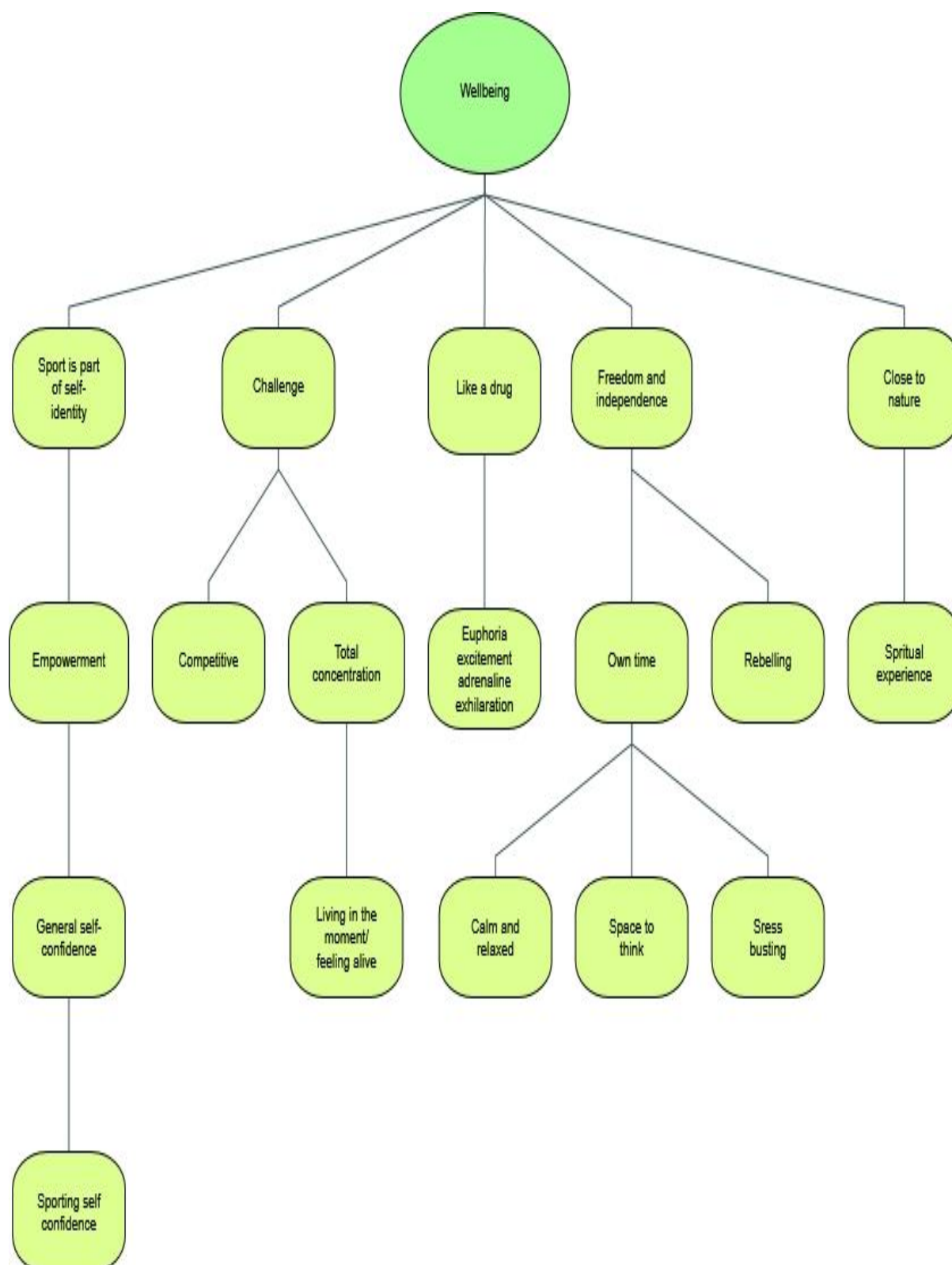
Mean responses to I don't enjoy going fast (by gender)

The findings presented above suggest that speed plays an integral, and important, part in all three sports. Nearly three quarters (seventy-two percent) of motorcyclists appear to valorise speed. This could help explain the enduring nature of the speed-obsessed “biker” stereotype. Although my entire sample confessed to exceeding national speed limits, this finding should be tempered with the sample motorcyclists’ qualitatively responsible attitude to inappropriate speed in built-up areas, riding within posted “red” speed limits. However, my findings also indicate that the enjoyment of speed is not restricted to motorcyclists. Sixty-six percent of skiers/snowboarders and sixty-four percent of horse riders, two thirds and nearly two thirds respectively, also enjoy speed. When gender is considered clearly males enjoy speed more than females. However, for nearly one in five females, speed is important. Overall, speed, therefore, occupies a central place in understanding why my participants persist in engaging in all three risky leisure sports.

4.4 Theme of Wellbeing

Previous studies indicate that extreme leisure sports, for example white water rafting, sky-diving, mountaineering, pot-holing, free running and bungee-jumping that far from disregarding personal safety, they can provide a number of psychological benefits for those engaged in them (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2012; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Kidder, 2017; Lyng, 2005a; Willig, 2008). This research seeks to understand if the psychological benefits of extreme sports are translatable to those sports, namely horse riding, motorcycling and snowsports, which perhaps do not require their participants to have such a highly calibrated 'risk thermostat' (Adams, 2001, p. 15). The following subthemes, to be examined as part of the overarching theme of wellbeing are presented below in Figure 4.38.

Figure 4.38



Theme of Wellbeing

4.4.1 Sport as part of individual self-identity.

Donnelly and Young (1988) propose that an individual's sporting identity is in a constant state of change due to influences, both internal and external, to the subculture. Their enduring thesis can be illustrated by Barry and Kurt's working lives in the motorcycle industry. Its dynamic, commercially structural pressure, combined with their membership as active agents of the motorcycling subculture, have conflated to form a major part of their self-identity. Barry admits that 'yeah people do associate me with bikes so I guess it's part of my image, and I work in a motorbike shop'⁴⁰⁷. For Kurt, motorcycling is 'very much' part of his identity and he would be 'devastated'⁴⁰⁸ if he was not able to ride. The skiing industry and skiing have also conflated to become a major part of company director Victoria's positive self-image. 'I love it. I'm glad that that's my life (...) and that is how people know me. Victoria is the skier. Victoria is the one who does the chalet company and that sort of thing yeah'⁴⁰⁹. The French alpine town that Monica works in as an operations manager for a ski chalet company was built specifically to serve the skiing industry. I asked her if skiing was part of her self-identity. She replied, 'I would say it probably is now, yeah. It's quite a big... Whether that's because I work here now as well or... This town was built to be a ski resort so it's quite important here but yeah, I didn't think it ever would be'.⁴¹⁰ Monica's self-identity has, perhaps reluctantly, been formed out of the structurally commercial influences of the town and her employment combined with the skiing culture of its inhabitants. Conversely, self-identity can also be developed

⁴⁰⁷ 14/11/17

⁴⁰⁸ 23/7/18

⁴⁰⁹ 22/1/18

⁴¹⁰ 3/11/17

independently of any industry associated with an individual's sporting activity. Louise has no connection to the snowboarding industry except for her passion for snowboarding reporting that 'Snowboarding is part of who I am. It's what I do'.⁴¹¹

Health professional and ex-ski instructor Poppy still identifies strongly with skiing:

Because I spent the majority of my adult life like that's what I did from 21 to 28 really. I was a ski instructor and I lived in the ski town and that's what I did for years and that's what my friends identified me as. "Oh, Poppy is a ski instructor that's what she does" and that was a part of my identity. And I still tell people about it when I meet people or when people tell me that they're going away skiing. I want to tell them about it because it was such a big part of my life. An important one I think for me.⁴¹²

Chris uses his self-identity as a snowboarder to encourage others to possibly try the sport. 'People talk to me about snowboarding because it's my identity. They know that I go riding every year 2, 3, 4 times a year in the winter season obviously, and they like to talk to me about it'⁴¹³.

The relatively informal structure of a motorcycle club can be as effective as a major industry in its ability to (re)produce individual self-identity. Susan considers that as her local *Curvy Riders* group had stagnated, she would use her strong self-image as a motorcyclist to re-invigorate the group. Her success can be illustrated, among others, by Laura a member of the *Curvy Riders* motorcycle club. Laura has only been riding for around four years and although still a relatively new member of the motorcycle subculture she suggests that motorcycling has 'become so much more important than I thought it would. I thought it was just going to be something that I did like I go to Zumba classes and I do yoga. It's changed; it's definitely part of me now'⁴¹⁴. There appears, however, to be a tension between being a female and belonging to the male-dominated motorcycle subculture. This is articulated by Joan,

⁴¹¹ 24/11/17

⁴¹² 24/11/17

⁴¹³ 16/4/18

⁴¹⁴ 31/8/17

who initially denied motorcycling was part of her self-identity. 'I would probably initially say no, but actually, it is. I quite like the fact that I'm a girl and I ride a bike. I guess I like the surprise factor when people go "oh you ride a bike do you"?'⁴¹⁵ Joan's self-image as a motorcyclist appears, therefore, to provide her with a positive psychological boost. Unemployed sixty-one-year-old Irina indicates just how important her self-identity as a motorcyclist is to her psychological wellbeing. Although admitting that 'it's an unusual thing for a woman of my age to do' when I asked if she was comfortable with her self-image as a motorcyclist she answered 'yeah it means I'm self-fulfilling, self-motivated'⁴¹⁶. The external influence leading to Nora's engagement with horse riding at age forty-six was provided by her divorce and later by her children being grown up. She realised that 'I need something for me and it was like an escape really'⁴¹⁷. Although Nora has only been riding for five years she is now fully embedded in the equestrian subculture and horses are now a big part of her self-identity:

Oh definitely yeah. Everyone knows me now "how is your horse, how is your horse" there's no turning back now you know. I will always have a horse; always would have to have a horse or be around horses⁴¹⁸.

Life events also played their part in Shelley's life which prompted her to return to horses in her thirties 'I got to a certain age, moved to a different area and then had to re-evaluate my life and I sort of think that it [horse riding] kind of saved me in a way'⁴¹⁹. Both Nora and Shelley seem to have received a psychological boost provided by their equestrian subcultural membership and its positive effect on their self-identity. An example of how far an individual's sport can become an entrenched, powerful feature informing their self-identity, as well as its ability to empower the

⁴¹⁵ 2/10/17

⁴¹⁶ 2/10/17

⁴¹⁷ 3/12/17

⁴¹⁸ 3/12/17

⁴¹⁹ 3/12/17

individual is provided by fifty-six-year-old primary school teacher Laura. When I asked this petite, unassuming female if motorcycling was part of her self-identity she replied:

Well, there's no doubt about it, it is my identity, it wasn't, it's grown. It's become who I am, my personality, particularly at work. The way I interact at work has become stronger, stroppier, noisier just a little bit more determined to stand up for myself than I used to be. I think that's from mixing with a lot of women [in the *Curvy Riders*] that are more like that. And I have learnt that actually, I don't have to be quiet and well-behaved, I can be loud and noisy and get what I want⁴²⁰.

For some their sport is clearly central to their self-identity, however, others see their sport as merely a part of their overall identity. Cliff is a member of the Royal Navy polo team and although he spends considerable time away from home when I asked if horse riding is part of his self-identity he replied 'yeah I think so yeah. I wouldn't say it's the strongest factor but is definitely, it provides some form of foundation to it yeah'⁴²¹. Holiday skier Sarah replied 'not necessarily'⁴²² when I asked if skiing formed part of her self-image. The frequency of Sarah's skiing, a thoroughly enjoyable one week per year skiing holiday, seems to be insufficient to greatly influence her self-identity. Perhaps Jane and Amelia respectively provide plausible explanations for Sarah's response with their experiences. 'It wasn't part of my identity it was about the experience rather than it playing a particularly big part of my life. It was about the experience offered rather than me being a skier'⁴²³. And 'I would say as part of a kind of package of loving to travel and loving to be outdoors and that kind of thing, I would say that's all part of my identity'⁴²⁴.

⁴²⁰ 31/8/17

⁴²¹ 3/8/18

⁴²² 12/3/18

⁴²³ 16/6/18

⁴²⁴ 14/11/17

With few exceptions, the centrality of their sport in constructing a positive self-identity was a major feature in my participant's narratives. To understand how important their sport was as an ongoing part of their self-identity, I asked how they would feel if they were prevented from engaging in it. At the time of collecting these data, the COVID-19 pandemic was an unimaginable future event and thus provides their responses greater impact. Almost all participants feel that their sport is such a big part of their life, being prevented from engaging in it is inconceivable. To illustrate this, I present a selection of passages from participant narratives. Motorcyclist Kurt, at fifty-three, is pragmatic about his motorcycling:

I can see a time when I won't be able to. I can't see a time when I will not want to (...) I don't envisage not being able to ride. I can't even think about that. I don't want to think about not being able to ride a bike. I'm quite happy not to drive a car you know? A car for me gets me from A to B but yeah, I can't, I don't wanna think about not riding a bike⁴²⁵.

Jenny, age thirty-three, uses Her Majesty The Queen as a role model for continuing to ride. 'I'd Wanna be like the Queen, still pottering around on my horses. Yeah I'd be very miserable I'd give up a lot to have my horse, I'd give up an awful lot so yeah, I don't want to leave that I don't think'⁴²⁶. The notion that age is only a number is expressed by sixty-one-year-old retiree Peter who cites knowledge of quite elderly horse riders:

[T]here was a lad at my school whose father was riding until he was 90 there's a guy that rides out racehorses who is about 80, so the day will come I'm sure. But I don't I just don't, it's one of those things I've pushed to the back of my mind⁴²⁷.

Age being no barrier to performing their sport is exemplified by advanced motorcycle test holder George, at eighty-one; he is the oldest participant in my study. Moreover, I have been part of a motorcycle-riding group with George on many occasions where

⁴²⁵ 23/7/18

⁴²⁶ 3/12/17

⁴²⁷ 15/3/18

his riding ability and skill has put many younger riders to shame. Finally, although curtly announcing that, 'I couldn't not snowboard', forty-eight-year-old self-employed business consultant and snowboarder Louise articulates the emotion she would feel if prevented from snowboarding; which would also remind her of her mortality:

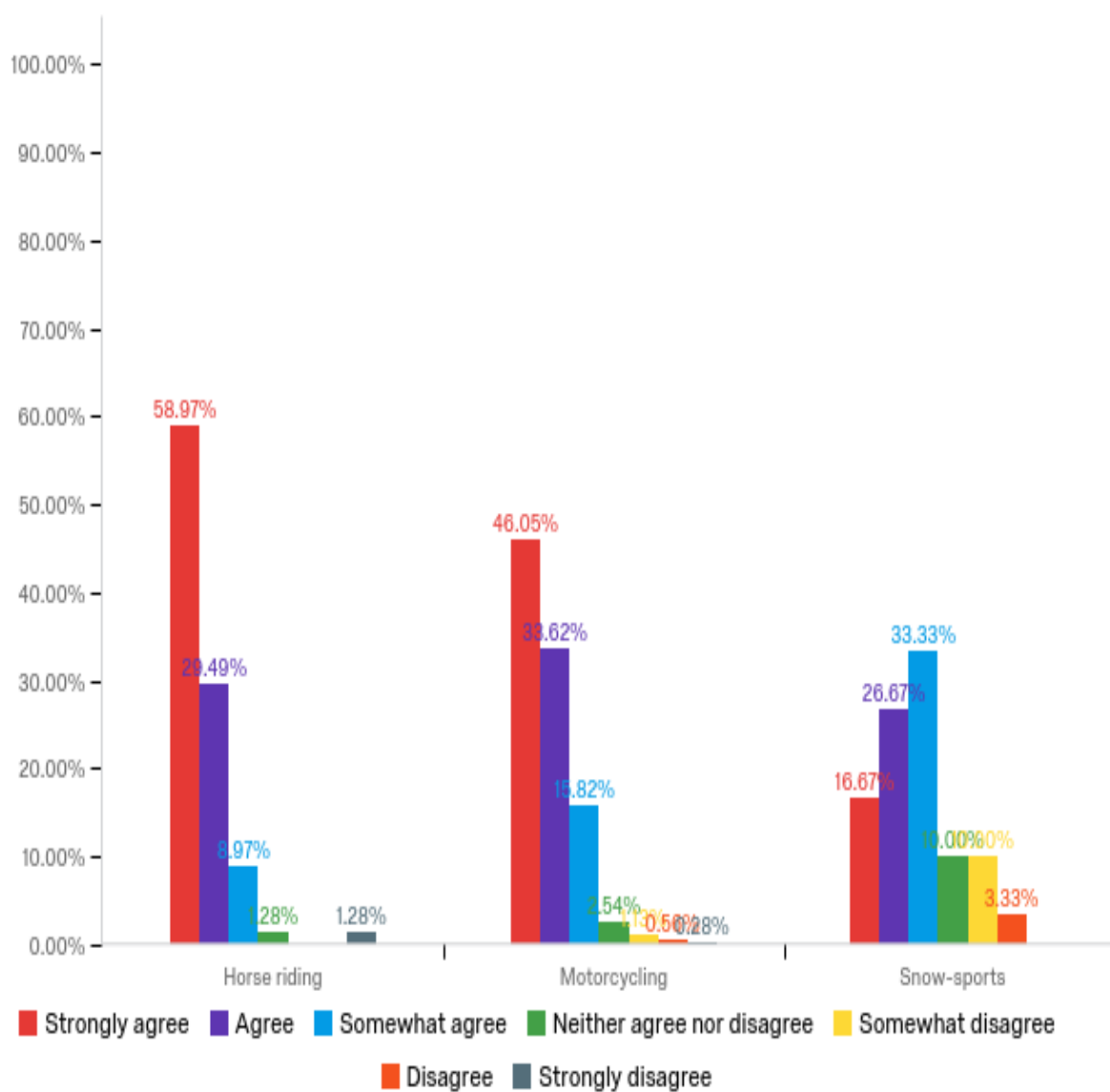
I would hate it. I would hate not being able to do it because (...) I wouldn't have the full access that affords me now. (...) I couldn't you know, get away from people or be in parts of the mountain where there's only a handful of other people. So yeah, I would hate not being able to, partly because it would reduce the enjoyment in life but also it would be an indication that I'm getting older you know⁴²⁸?

To ascertain the importance of their sport in the formation of self-identity on a larger sample, I formulated the survey question 'My sport is part of my self-identity'. Figure 4.39 below indicates that nearly fifty-nine percent of horse riders strongly agree that horse riding is part of their identity. Motorcyclists trail slightly behind with forty-six percent while snowsports appear to have the least effect on an individual's self-identity with nearly seventeen percent strongly agreeing that their sport is part of their self-identity. However, when all levels of agreement are considered together, the three sports become closer. Ninety-seven percent of horse riders, ninety-five percent of motorcyclists and nearly seventy-seven percent of snowsports participants all share some level of agreement that their sport is part of their self-identity. Conversely, only one percent of horse riders, less than one percent of motorcyclists and three percent of snowsports opine that their sport is not part of their self-identity.

⁴²⁸ 24/11/17

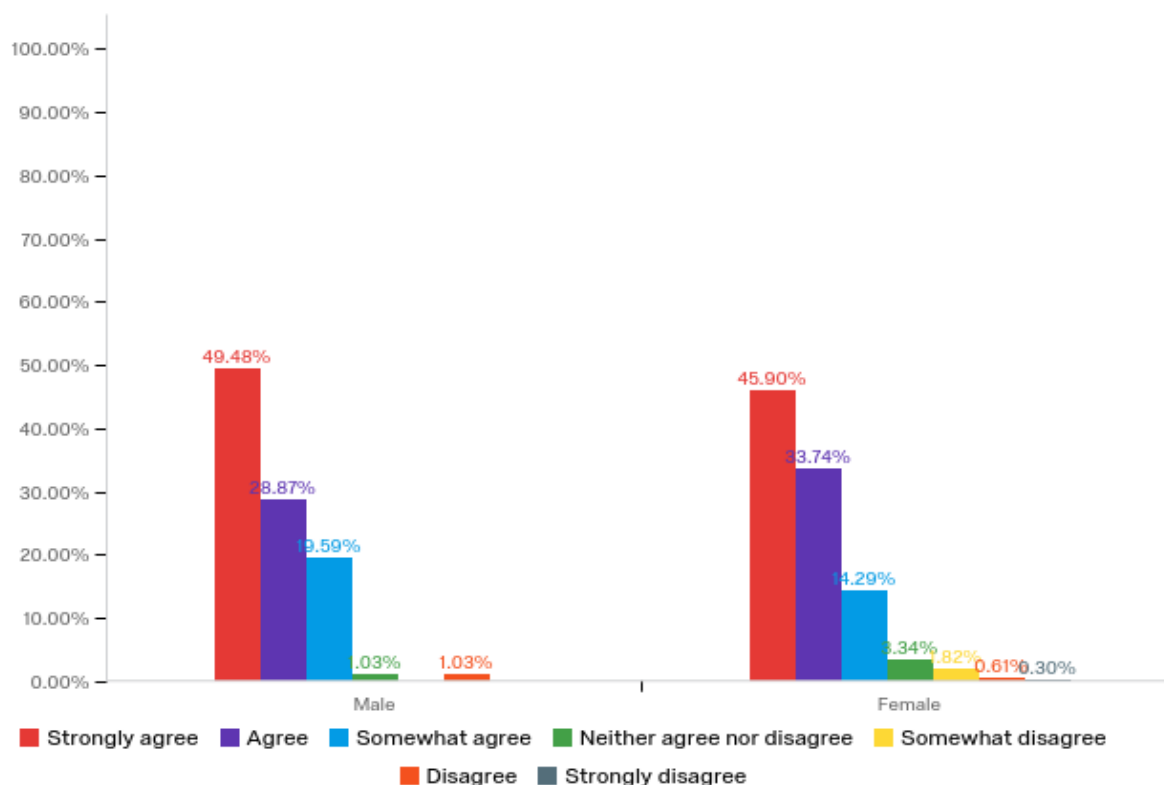
Figure 4.39

My sport is part of my self-identity



N=433

My sport is part of my self-identity (by sport)

Figure 4.40**My sport is part of my self-identity (by gender)**

n=462

My sport is part of my self-identity (by gender)

When participant gender is considered figure 4.40 above presents an interesting trend. Nearly fifty percent of males and forty-six percent of females strongly agree that their sport is part of their self-identity. When all levels of agreement are considered together nearly ninety-eight percent of males and ninety-four percent of females agree, to a greater or lesser extent, that their sport is part of who they are. Consequently, these findings suggest that there are no significant gender differences in the formation of self-identity for males and females engaging in the three sports. Males and females have, therefore, almost to the same extent, used their sport to construct a large part of their self-identity. These findings provide some plausibility for their continuing engagement with their sport; if they were to discontinue performing their sport, they would lose a meaningful piece of themselves.

4.4.2 Sport builds self-confidence.

Lirgg (1992) contends that self-confidence is an important, but fragile, contributor in personal achievement and self-esteem. Moreover, self-confidence is immensely influenced by an individual's socialisation (Lirgg, 1992). As presented earlier in "belonging", irrespective of gender, all of my participants indicated that it was either family members or friends, or sometimes a significant life event, which provided encouragement and sparked their initial interest in their sport, therefore, acting as agents of socialisation into their sport. Barry enjoys travelling huge worldwide distances on his motorcycle alone and suggests that 'anything that you do well is going to increase your general confidence'⁴²⁹. Barry then expanded on how motorcycling increased his self-confidence generally. 'Having done it once and found that it wasn't terrifying to do it on your own, and you weren't lonely all the time, and you met some amazing people, I actually quite like touring on my own now'⁴³⁰. A week camping in Scotland by herself sent motorcyclist and primary school teacher Laura's self-confidence 'sky-high. I'm planning the next one now which will be abroad somewhere [laughs]'⁴³¹.

Incrementally pushing an individual's comfort zone which then allows that individual to surmount greater challenge is illustrated by horsewoman Chloe. 'I've been able to ride the naughty pony in the riding school and I stayed on and so it gives you a big boost of confidence and you think yeah, I can ride more challenging ponies'⁴³². The fragility of self-confidence referred to by Lirgg (1992) has previously impacted Jenny. Although Jenny had some experience she was never able to hack out with her

⁴²⁹ 14/11/17

⁴³⁰ 14/11/17

⁴³¹ 31/8/17

⁴³² 25/11/17

friends on the yard with her previous horse, which she sold on. However, she is building her self-confidence with her new horse:

I'd think I wish that was me. I can't because my [previous] horse would probably kill me if I try to take her out. It was just a horrible time but now my confidence is getting better, there's all these things that I can do, I can do these things now (...) I feel now, I feel like I look forward to coming down. I look forward to going out on a ride, even though I love the social side, I love going out on my own⁴³³.

The increase in self-confidence derived from engaging in a risky leisure sport such as horse riding can also extend personal self-confidence boundaries in the workplace as health professional and lecturer Sherry explains:

I think that the horse actually taught me a lot about myself (...) in my younger days I would never have been able to stand up in front of a group of people and deliver a three hour lecture, but I think, with the horse there are moments of, yes, fear, anxiety of not being in control (...) and that can be quite scary but I sort of think if I can cope with that, I can cope with most other things really⁴³⁴.

The increase in self-confidence gained from being a ski instructor has helped Harry in similar ways to Sherry. The self-confidence gained through performing his sport at instructor level has allowed Harry to overcome his natural shyness:

I've been going through the instructor training. So as part of that, you have to deliver lessons and stuff and that definitely helps boost your self-confidence. Even when you're nervous at the start, as you take it on board and it becomes more natural it's kind of helped with talking to groups of 10 or 12 people (...) Whereas before I may have been shy I think, that's less the case now; I think at least it is on a topic where I am comfortable, like skiing⁴³⁵.

As examined earlier in 'Belonging', gender-specific subcultural clubs like the female-only *Curvy Riders* are spaces where members can potentially support each other as they (re)formulate meaning and negotiate their place within the male

⁴³³ 3/12/17

⁴³⁴ 3/12/17

⁴³⁵ 7/12/17

dominated motorcycle subculture. As a regional representative of the *Curvy Riders*, Susan is well placed to provide an insight into this self-affirming process:

I think it is [self-confidence building] we all sit and listen and we all give advice you know? Whether it's to do with motorbiking or whether it's to do with life situations because I think it just kind of helps really. I think it helps everyone's self-esteem to come out [to club meetings]⁴³⁶.

Being part of the *Curvy Riders* has impacted positively on Pam's self-confidence. Her narrative amply confirms Susan's insight into the self-confidence building ability of club membership:

I feel when I'm on the bike I do feel more confident in myself and when (...) we stop for cake and a juice you know, I do... when I get off I feel confident when people are sort of sitting there. I wouldn't class myself as a confident person in general, I'm the quiet one. I like sitting at the back. I don't really interact, don't really do and that's why I was a bit nervous about this [being interviewed]. But in my normal life so to speak I wouldn't class myself as confident. I'll always be no can't do that. But when I'm on my motorbike, and when I get off it, I feel quite confident. I feel like I wanna talk to the other people about bikes. (...) So I'd definitely say it boosts my confidence⁴³⁷.

Further evidence for increasing female self-confidence through the effects of social constructionism is provided by the female-only motorcycle event held at the well known *Ace Cafe* in London during 2015. Two world records were set: (1) the largest female bike meeting and; (2) the largest female bike parade (Rayner, 2015). One of the organisers, Sherrie Woolf reported that:

The industry isn't catering for women, it isn't listening [...] That's one of the reasons for this event, to say look how many women are riding their own bikes. That's the point we want to make, we're not just sat on the back - we have our own bikes. (...) [S]he now hopes the bike industry will start paying more attention to women bikers, who she feels are often overlooked (Rayner, 2015).

A major theme running through and across all of my participant's narratives was the belief that performing their sport added, not only their sporting self-confidence as

⁴³⁶ 2/10/17

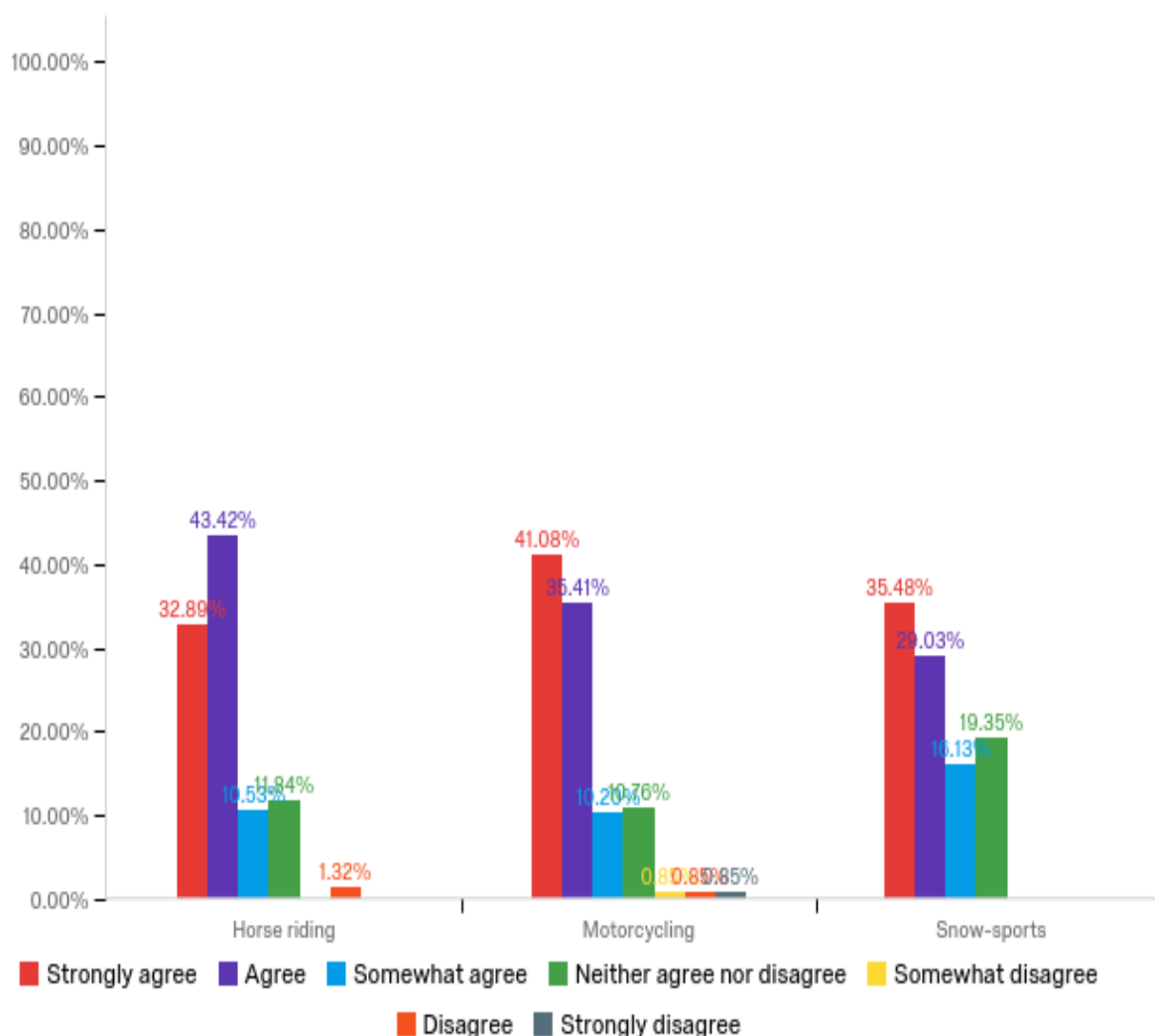
⁴³⁷ 25/9/17

they became more proficient, but that self-confidence could also be translated into their every day or working lives. To understand if this could be detected in a wider sample, I asked the survey statement 'Engaging in my sport has increased my self-confidence'.

Figure 4.41 below indicates a clear strong agreement or agreement with the statement across all three sports. Seventy-six percent, or over three quarters of horse riders and motorcyclists and sixty-four percent, or nearly two-thirds of snowsports participants, strongly agreed or agreed. When all levels of agreement are considered together, the three sports are remarkably similar in their agreement. Eighty-seven percent of horse riders and motorcyclists and eighty-one percent of snow sports participants all agree that their sport has increased their self-confidence. None of the snowsports participants strongly disagree, disagree or somewhat disagree, horse riders and motorcyclists either record none, or negligible levels of disagreement with the statement.

Figure 4.41

Engaging in my sport has increased my self-confidence



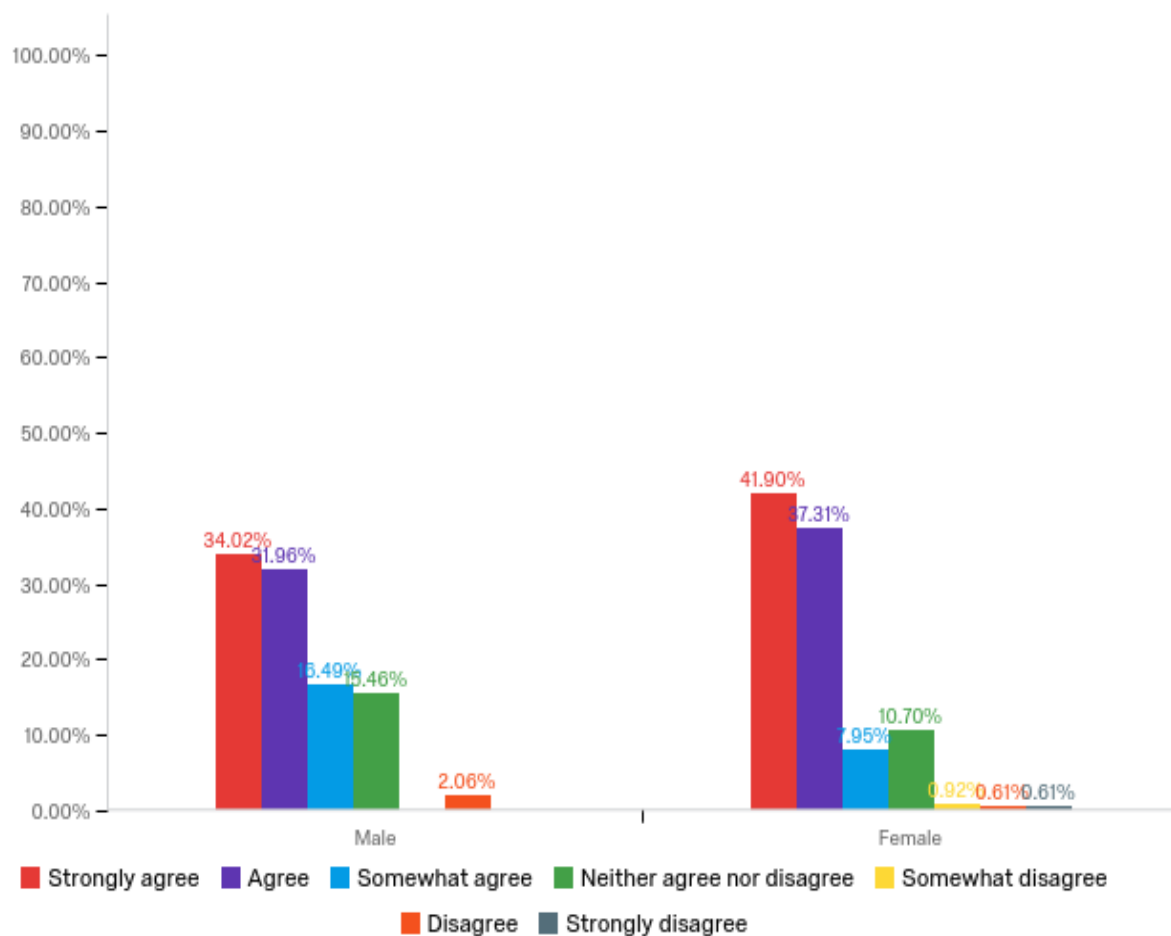
n=460

Engaging in my sport has increased my self-confidence (by sport)

When the participants' biological gender is examined in the same statement, see figure 4.42 below, sixty-six percent, or two-thirds of males and seventy-nine percent, over three-quarters of females strongly agree or agree that their sport has increased their self-confidence. When all ratings of agreement are examined, the gap between genders is reduced. Eighty-one percent of males and eighty-seven percent, or nearly seven in eight of females agree that their sport has increased their self-confidence. As before, levels of disagreement with the statement are either absent or so negligible as to have little or no effect.

Figure 4.42

Engaging in my sport has increased my self-confidence (by gender)



n=460

Engaging in my sport has increased my self-confidence (by gender)

These findings indicate that female's self-confidence may benefit more than males. However, both males and females' self-confidence is increased by their being active participants in their chosen sport. Therefore, their feelings of having greater self-confidence could be considered a factor in why they continue to engage in their risky leisure sport.

A late nineties meta-analysis concerning gender differences in self-esteem, a component part in self-confidence, suggested that males possess greater global self-esteem than females, the same research also indicated that the difference is small (Kling et al, 1999). These findings are generally supported by the later work of Harris

et al, (2018) who propose that gender is not a factor in their proposed new Lifetime Self-Esteem scale (LSE) scores presented as part of their new measure of global self-esteem. The quantitative findings from my, albeit small, sample suggest the contrary. Females who selected 'strongly agree' or 'agree' achieve a greater degree of self-confidence from performing their sport than males who selected the same rating scale, seventy-nine percent to sixty-six percent respectively. When all agreement rating scales are considered, the positive effects of engaging in risky leisure sports are clear. The nearly seven out of eight females who agree that their self-confidence has been increased through their sport indicate that women can potentially confound existing LSE measures by possessing greater self-confidence than males. This finding warrants further examination in larger-scale future research as it could have profound implications on how women's self-confidence can be increased in the future by being encouraged to engage in risky leisure sports such as those in this research.

4.4.3 Personal challenge.

Brymer and Schweitzer (2012, p. 485) examines the challenges faced by those who engage in extreme sports concluding that participants 'achieve a sense of life-fulfilment and as a result psychological well-being'. However, it appears that challenge, and its associated psychological wellbeing and mindfulness, is not the exclusive preserve of extreme sports. The challenge of a long night-time motorcycle ride can have useful psychological benefits for the rider. Frank explains, 'A few times I've done the national rally which I've really, really enjoyed. Riding overnight pushing yourself to do the 540 miles and that's about keeping going, keeping going all the time'⁴³⁸. George, still motorcycling at over eighty years of age, gets enjoyment

⁴³⁸ 8/11/17

and self-satisfaction from reading the road and adapting/reacting to its many potential dangers when motorcycling. 'It's the challenge of getting it right. I'm talking about going through the bends, getting it right'⁴³⁹. Frank expands on the satisfaction he derives from overcoming the challenges of potential danger when riding a road-going motorcycle:

You've got to take all that into account its, yeah the road surfaces you've got to keep an extra eye on those because... Be extra careful about what everybody else around you is doing. Yeah, it's more challenging, but also more enjoyable.⁴⁴⁰

Motorcyclist Joan and horse riders Peter and Chloe all enjoy the challenge of increasing their levels of proficiency in their sports but for Victoria skiing clearly provides extra positive mental health benefits:

I think really it just gives me a focus. Every day I want to achieve doing something that I enjoy and going skiing achieves that for me. So yeah, for my personal satisfaction then I'll go for a ski and if it's only for an hour that makes my day better than a day where I don't ski at all⁴⁴¹.

The physical challenge of skiing is articulated by Jane as a feeling of her being alive rather than the sometimes stultifying normality of everyday life. '[T]here's an aliveness in it and I think that the temperature, the scenery all kind of feeds into this kind of experience of just being really awake really awake'⁴⁴². I drilled deeper into what she meant by feelings of being alive and awake, she responded that:

Normally we go through life and we try to keep ourselves as comfortable as possible you know, we don't want to be too hot, we don't want to be too cold, we don't want to do this, but when you're skiing it seems like that just seems to go out of the window and its, and you just push yourself harder than you would do normally, and the discomfort is more than worth it, more than worth it⁴⁴³.

⁴³⁹ 30/10/17

⁴⁴⁰ 8/11/17

⁴⁴¹ 22/1/18

⁴⁴² 16/6/18

⁴⁴³ 16/6/18

However, as skiing can also be intensely physically exerting Jane also points out that 'I do look out that challenge. But I wouldn't want to be skiing like that all the time because it's hard work physically and psychologically'⁴⁴⁴.

Previous studies (Department-for-Transport, 2015; Sexton, Baughan, Elliott, & Maycock, 2004) indicate that more experienced motorcyclists have fewer accidents than younger motorcyclists, but they are more serious as the speeds are generally higher due to an increase in engine capacity and they challenge their skills in the pursuit of a more exciting experience. There appears to be a similar link between the challenges enjoyed by experienced snowboarders and those experienced motorcyclists. Chris, who attended his interview with a broken arm, explains 'with that progression comes challenging yourself more and yes you're more likely to stay on your feet, but when you fall over you're more likely to have a bigger crash'⁴⁴⁵. Challenge can, therefore, be a double-edged sword. My participants enjoy the challenges of becoming more proficient in their sport but an increase in proficiency can result in more serious injuries.

4.4.4 Leisure sports as competition with self or others.

Although this research is concerned with the every-day performance of horse riding, motorcycling and skiing as amateur leisure sports those same sports feature in world championship competition. The prizes, both financial and to the self-esteem for the successful professional competitor, can be substantial. Conversely, failure can be financially and mentally devastating. I was interested to understand how competitive my participants were either against others or against themselves.

⁴⁴⁴ 16/6/18

⁴⁴⁵ 16/4/18

At sixty-two, motorcyclist Brian admits to being less competitive than when he was younger and takes a pragmatic attitude to competition. He explained 'why would I push the bike to the limit to prove something? I probably wouldn't do that because I know if I get it wrong it's gonna be far more catastrophic than I would like'⁴⁴⁶. Conversely, Barry confesses that although he is not generally a competitive person 'I've been guilty of "I'll see you away from the lights mate" (...) yeah the traffic light Grand Prix I'm a bit of a sucker for'⁴⁴⁷ also adding 'I am quite competitive with myself. I can be quite hard on myself in terms of wanting to do a good job'⁴⁴⁸. The need to be as good as possible, or striving for self-actualisation⁴⁴⁹, is also articulated by fifty-five-year-old care manager and motorcyclist Frank who admits that he is competitive but that he also competes with himself:

Yes, I am competitive. (...) I haven't entered a lot of competitions over the years but I am competitive in terms of if I do stuff I like to be as good as I can at it (...) I'm by no means a very fit person but every now and then I think I need to get fit and I go running. I can't just go running, I have to time myself and then when I go the next night I have to go a couple of seconds quicker than I went the night before⁴⁵⁰.

Female motorcyclists can be as self-critical as the males if they feel they are underperforming when competing against themselves. Most expressed their need to perform as well as they could. Sofia voiced those needs:

I am [competitive] with myself (...) If I can't do something myself I get angry with myself so I am competitive with myself (...) it doesn't bother me what other people are doing but if I can't do it I feel as if I've let myself down⁴⁵¹.

An individual's competitiveness is not always given overt priority. Occasional skier and health care team manager Sarah aged fifty-one, and thirty-three-year-old

⁴⁴⁶ 25/10/17

⁴⁴⁷ 14/11/17

⁴⁴⁸ 14/11/17

⁴⁴⁹ According to psychologist Abraham Maslow, the pinnacle in the five tier hierarchy of human motivation

⁴⁵⁰ 8/11/17

⁴⁵¹ 11/10/17

Speech and Language Therapist Poppy, a keen skier, both consider that on a surface level they are not outwardly competitive. However, they both admit that they like to improve their skiing technique. Poppy considers that:

I don't think I am but then I think there are elements of that with me but it's more of an internal struggle rather than being competitive with other people. In skiing, I always wanted to train to be good for me and to do well and to be better at what I did⁴⁵².

Professional classical musician and keen horse rider Bert admits that 'I'm not a competitive person by nature and I'm also not a very brave one [laughs]' ⁴⁵³. However, Bert believes that horse riding has uncovered a previously unknown personal competitiveness. Like many other male and female participants in all three sports he prefers to compete with himself by improving his horsemanship. Interestingly, an unintended consequence of Bert's newly found competitive spirit is his participation in competitive pubic house quizzes. Bert explains:

I've learnt that I'm more competitive than I thought, certainly in terms of my riding. There's obviously much more about knowing yourself and being competitive about how you're progressing and I've enjoyed seeing how much I've progressed and I've perhaps enjoyed being more competitive, more than I thought I would (...) It's only been since I've been riding that I've actually discovered the competitive streak in me and coincidentally, started attending regular quizzes which made me realise just how competitive I actually am⁴⁵⁴.

Thirty-two-year-old marketing executive and experienced snowboarder Chris uses the physical geography of his mountain environment to compete against rather than other snowboarders. By competing against himself he is then able to draw on his own risk boundaries rather than being encouraged by others to exceed his own rationally constructed limitations. Chris divulged that:

I'm more competitive with myself I think rather than with other people. So I push myself (...). [I]f I struggle too much then I'll just back away from it but

⁴⁵² 24/11/17

⁴⁵³ 11/4/18

⁴⁵⁴ 11/4/18

there's an element of me being competitive with myself rather than me being competitive with other people (...) it's me against myself. It's me against the conditions, the mountain things like that but it's testing myself⁴⁵⁵.

Financial planner and riding instructor Mia, who regularly competes in amateur equestrian events, confessed that 'it's not all about the physical winning. It's about seeing improvement in the [horse/rider] partnership between competitions. So for me to go to a competition and perform worse than I had previously, I have a high need to avoid that feeling'⁴⁵⁶. Conversely, Shelley who has had some significant gaps in her equestrian career considers herself to be completely uncompetitive. However, she admits that 'I do like to set myself little achievable goals'⁴⁵⁷.

The majority of my interviewees within and across the three sports either favoured competing against themselves, geographical features or, in the case of horse riders, the clock rather than against others. They did not need big wins but liked to feel they had improved either subjectively or by receiving higher competition marks than last time. Even horse rider Jenny who initially confessed that 'I hate the idea of competing' enjoys 'competition with myself. There are days when I do really well and I'm like "oh great we've really got somewhere" and then yesterday it's like I was really rubbish'⁴⁵⁸.

The apparent need to compete against self, even with modest success, may be due to the generally solitary nature of the sports or a more fundamental need for my participants to self-actualise. To further understand the strength of competition against the self over others in a larger sample I asked the survey question 'I prefer to compete against other people rather than against myself'. Figure 4.43 below indicates a larger percentage (when compared with other rating scales) of horse

⁴⁵⁵ 16/4/18

⁴⁵⁶ 25/11/17

⁴⁵⁷ 3/12/17

⁴⁵⁸ 3/12/17

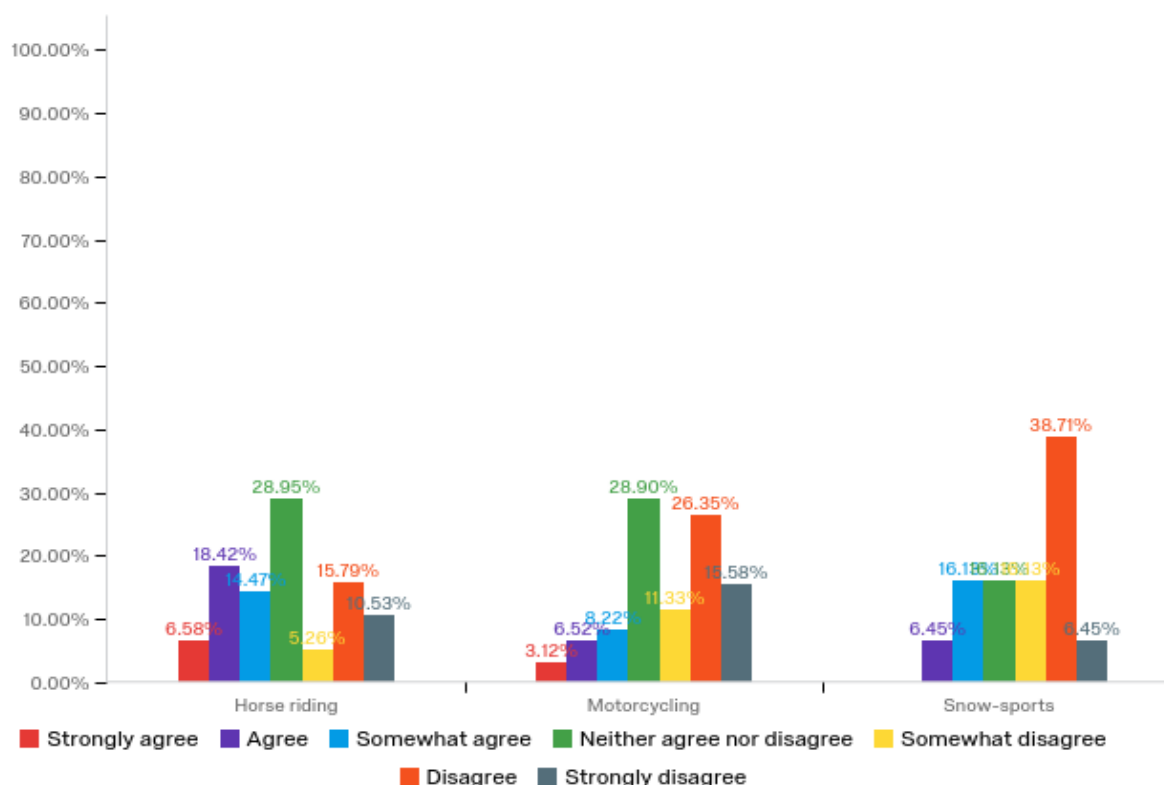
riders and motorcyclists have no preference for either competing against self or others. However, further analysis reveals that nearly forty percent of horse riders in the sample prefer to compete against others while thirty-two percent, nearly a third, prefer at some level to compete against themselves. The higher percentage for competing against others does not mirror my participant narratives but may be due to the popularity of amateur equestrian events among the survey sample.

Over fifty-three percent of motorcyclists prefer self competition compared with nearly eighteen percent who preferred competition with others. The much lower figure for competing with others may be due to the illegality of racing on UK public roads. Significantly over the other rating scales, over forty-five percent of skiers disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, therefore, indicating a clear preference for self competition. The preference for self completion mirrors participant narratives but may be due to the lack of organised competitions for amateur skiers.

Although there is no polarisation of the data it is clear that competition, either against self or others, plays a fundamental part for those engaged in these leisure sports.

Figure 4.43

I prefer to compete against other people rather than against myself



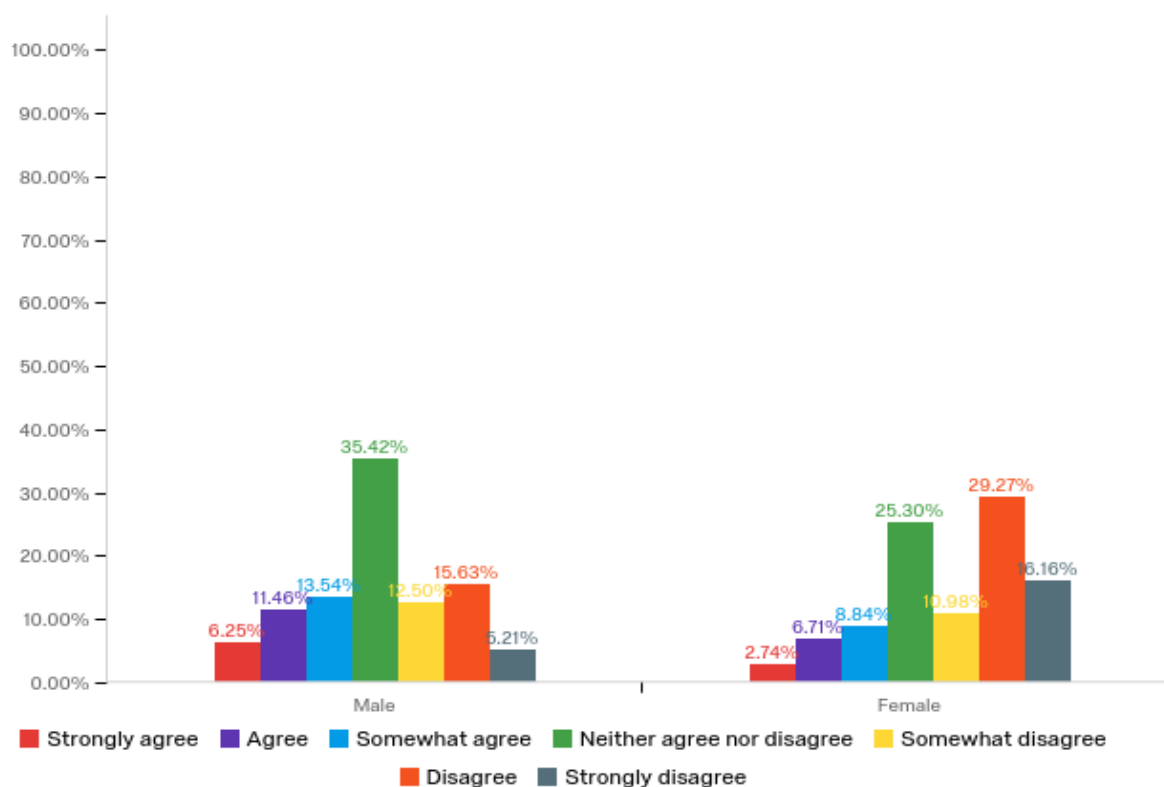
n=460 **I prefer to compete against other people rather than against myself (by sport)**

When participants' gender is considered in Figure 4.44 below thirty-one percent, or nearly a third of males agree at some level that they prefer to compete against other people rather than with themselves. Over thirty-three percent, just over a third of males in the sample preferred, at some level, to self compete. The highest scoring rating, of thirty-five percent, well over a third, neither agreeing nor disagreeing was surprising as males are stereotypically considered to be much more competitive than women. These findings suggest that the males in this sample are a little more ambivalent concerning their need for self competition vs. competition with others. Conversely, only eighteen percent of females agree at some level that they prefer to compete against others with just over a quarter neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. Fifty-six percent, well over a half of females prefer at some level, self-competition over competing against others. This finding is of interest as a recent

quantitative study (Coren, Elif, & Johanna, 2017, p. 139) partially opposes my findings when concluding that 'While women are less willing than equally able men to compete against other people, we find no gender difference in the willingness to compete against one's own, previous score'. My findings clearly indicate that although females are indeed less willing than men to compete against others, a gender difference in the willingness to self compete exists with just over a third of males vs. fifty-six percent of females preferring to self compete.

Figure 4.44

I prefer to compete against other people rather than against myself (by gender)



n=460 **I prefer to compete against other people rather than against myself (by gender)**

My qualitative and quantitative findings, although partially at odds with other published literature, indicate that irrespective of gender competition either against another or against oneself plays a major part in the performance of these sports at amateur level.

4.4.5 Mindfulness, or living in the moment.

During their interviews, many of my participants described that when performing their sport, they feel as if they are “living in the moment”. What living in the moment felt like while riding his motorcycle was succinctly articulated by Barry:

You're not thinking about your problems at work, your problems at home, your financial problems, your relationship problems. You're not thinking about any problems you're just thinking about the moment of riding the bike⁴⁵⁹.

Living in the moment, a core component of mindfulness, is described as ‘feelings of being alert to what is occurring in the here-and-now. It is often described as a feeling of being fully present and *alive in the moment*’ (Bishop et al., 2004, p. 232 my emphasis). There is a significant body of evidence which suggests mindfulness enhances mental health by helping to reduce work-based and emotional stress thereby enhancing personal and/or sporting performance (Baltzell & McCarthy, 2016; Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004; Josefsson et al., 2017). Furthermore, the British National Health Service (NHS) suggests that mindfulness can be a useful therapy in combating depression (National-Health-Service, 2018).

Sophia has struggled in the past with bouts of depression. I asked if riding her motorcycle has helped reduce her depression. She confided that:

Yeah, I think it has, I think it has because you know, when I'm out on the bike if I've done a particularly good road, I feel as if I've nailed it. I've just got a massive grin on my face and it's like yeah, I just love it, absolutely love it⁴⁶⁰.

Horse rider and health professional Sherry has a busy working life and considers being on horseback as an important time she carves out of her stressful day. ‘I put everything else that is going on out of my mind and just enjoy being in the

⁴⁵⁹ 14/11/17

⁴⁶⁰ 11/10/17

moment'⁴⁶¹. Moreover, when Sherry is riding she reports feeling 'just peaceful, calm, free just like nothing else really matters'. For office manager Chloe horse riding provides 'fitness and also it is relaxation, it helps you switch off'⁴⁶². How a physical activity such as horseriding can be relaxing is counter-intuitive but relaxation is central to school teacher Ella who explains how horse riding helps her de-stress:

Two days a week I only work till lunchtime and I can come away with my teeth clenched and be... and I get on my horse and it just starts to dissolve and I feel relaxed and yes, I feel every time I'm on a horse I feel I'm lucky to have that experience. (...) If I think of the calming effect it has on me, you know it's almost the same as stroking a cat⁴⁶³.

I asked Jenny if she found horse riding exhilarating she replied it made her:

[M]ore calm yeah. I spend all day, especially at work, stressed you know really busy. Everyone's like at me for things and then when I go out on a hack I don't have to think about anything I can just relax⁴⁶⁴.

Monica makes the connection between skiing being an intensely physical sport and its calming effect after a stressful workday. 'It makes me feel calm. I think it's strange, isn't it? Because skiing is such an adrenaline sport but there is a real calming element to it'⁴⁶⁵. Drilling deeper Monica disclosed:

[It's] just escaping like daily life. Like when you're working here you can get sucked into this bubble where everything seems ridiculously important and you get really stressed out about whether the guests have got the right type of orange squash or whatever, but when you go skiing it's like "oh this is why I'm here". It doesn't matter you could just pootle around and have a nice time and not worry about it⁴⁶⁶.

As discussed earlier, when riding a motorcycle the rider is at least fifty-seven times more likely to be killed or seriously injured than the occupants of a car. This is

⁴⁶¹ 3/12/17

⁴⁶² 25/11/17

⁴⁶³ 25/11/17

⁴⁶⁴ 3/12/17

⁴⁶⁵ 3/11/17

⁴⁶⁶ 3/11/17

despite the fact that motorcyclists represent only one percent of UK road traffic (Department-for-Transport, 2015). It is, therefore, surprising that engaging in the ‘foolhardy’ (Bellaby & Lawrenson, 2001, p. 368) activity of motorcycling could relax the rider. However, Brian reports that:

If I’m en route to somewhere and you get that sensation, you know everything is happening right, everything at that point in time where it’s all coming together, you just feel really at ease with yourself, at peace⁴⁶⁷.

Brian’s experience of being relaxed on a motorcycle is not an isolated case. All of my motorcycling participants expressed some level of relaxation when riding their motorcycles. Barry also reported that ‘there’s the physiological things, faster heart beats, you feel more aware, more in the moment’⁴⁶⁸. Laura reports that ‘If you’re stressed it de-stresses you, clears your head’⁴⁶⁹ while Kurt confesses that ‘it just makes me feel good. If I’m in a bit of a foul mood I can get on a bike and by the time I’ve have a ride I feel a lot calmer, I feel happier’⁴⁷⁰. The physiological effects of motorcycling, such as the increase in heart rate reported by Barry, are being examined along with other physiological effects associated with motorcycling in an as-yet-unpublished study by neuroscientist Don Vaughn. He concluded that riding a motorcycle ‘saw significant changes in stress relief, sensory focus, alertness, adrenaline, and heart rate (...) It looked like the types of changes in adrenaline and heart rate that you might expect from going for a morning jog (Thomas, 2019).

Due to the frequency of interview respondents reporting that their sport elicited feelings of ‘living in the moment’ I wanted to understand if this was a common feeling

⁴⁶⁷ 25/10/17

⁴⁶⁸ 14/11/17

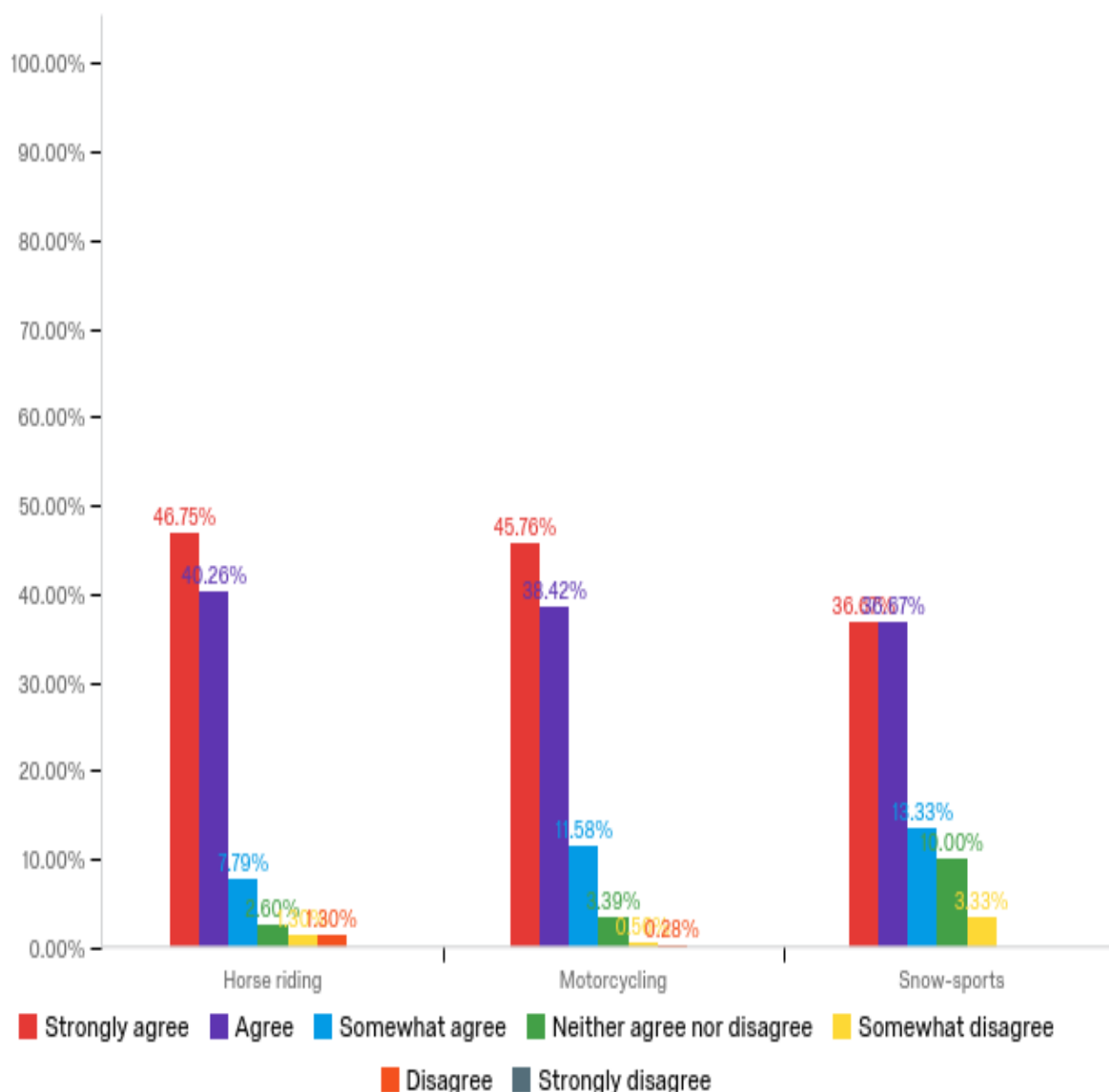
⁴⁶⁹ 31/8/17

⁴⁷⁰ 23/7/18

among a larger sample. Results from the survey statement 'when performing my sport I live in the moment' are presented below.

Figure 4.45

When performing my sport I live in the moment



n=460

When performing my sport I live in the moment (by sport)

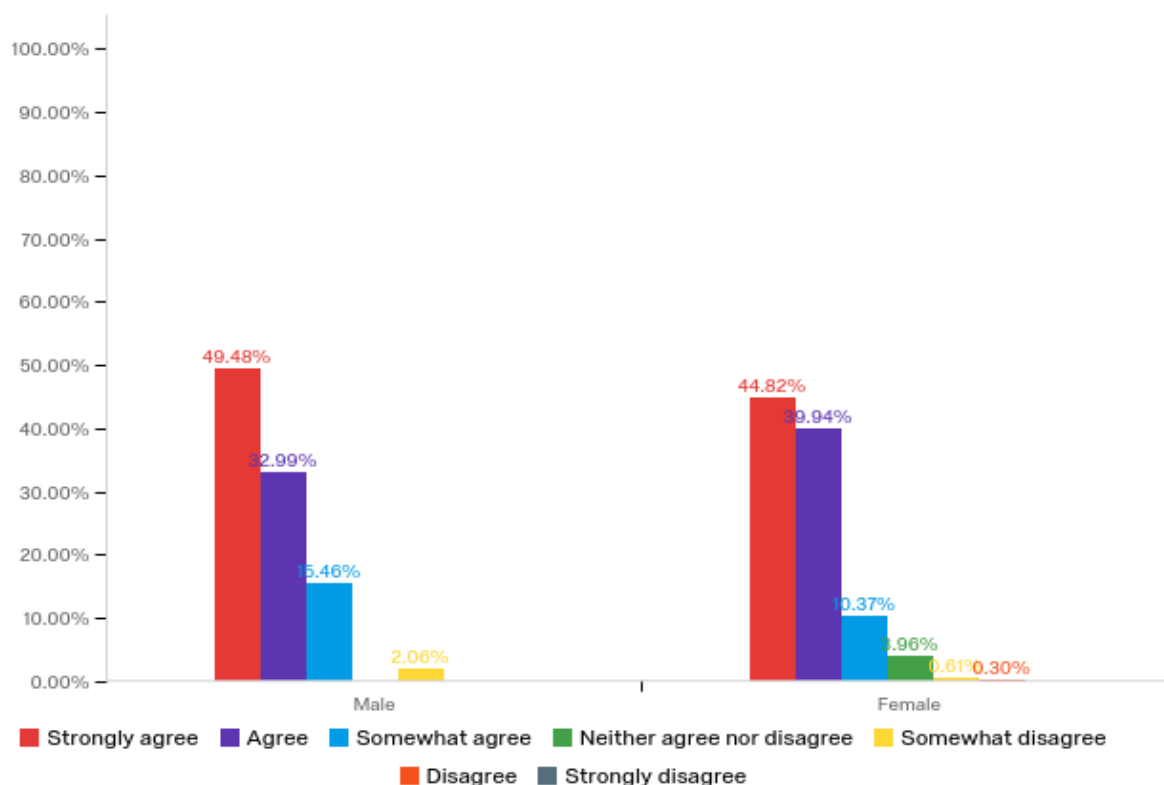
Figure 4.45 indicates a clear agreement, within and across all three sports, with the statement. Nearly forty-seven and forty-six percent respectively of horse riders and motorcyclists and nearly thirty-seven percent of snowsports participants strongly

agree with the statement. When all levels of agreement are considered over nine out of ten horse riders and motorcyclists and nearly nine out of ten snowsports participants agree that when they perform their sport they live in the moment. Conversely, none of the horse riding or motorcycling sample registered strong disagreement with none of the snowsports sample either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing with the statement. These findings suggest that individuals performing these sports have periods of time when they are totally focussed on their sport they exclude any concerns outside the immediacy of their activity. Therefore, in keeping with the tenets of mindfulness, performing these leisure sports may benefit an individual's mental health.

Although the findings present a clear agreement with the statement within and across the three sports, when participants' gender is accounted for in figure 4.46 below once again there is a clear agreement with the statement. Forty-nine percent of males and nearly forty-five percent of females strongly agree that they live in the moment when performing their sport. When all levels of agreement are considered, nearly ninety-eight percent of males and ninety-five percent of females live in the moment when engaged in their sport.

Figure 4.46

When performing my sport I live in the moment (by gender)



N=460

When performing my sport I live in the moment (by gender)

These findings suggest that all three sports allow their participants to live in the moment and, therefore, enable access to some of the widely published benefits of mindfulness. Furthermore, the findings indicate that gender is not a barrier to this aspect of mindfulness as it appears to play an almost insignificant part as evidenced by the closeness of the results.

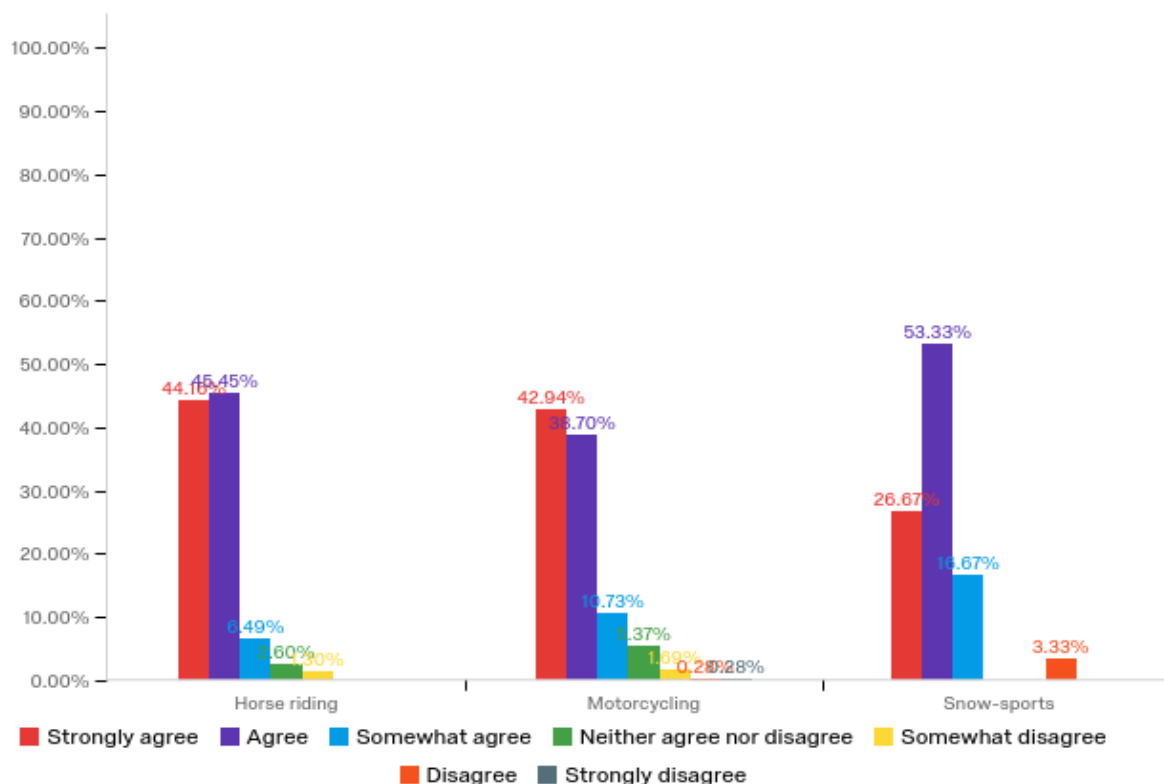
However, it would be impractical, even reckless, for the participants of leisure sports to live in the moment for long periods while actively engaged in their sport. Nonetheless, short periods of living in the moment while performing their sport could have a beneficial influence on mental health and wellbeing. Feelings associated with living in the moment could, therefore, provide a compelling factor in why individuals continue their engagement in risky leisure sports.

4.4.6 Calm and relaxation.

The calming or relaxing effect of performing their sport reported by many participants within and across the three sports is an unexpected finding. At various times, all three sports require immense concentration to prevent potentially serious injury or even death and the physical fitness and strength to help manoeuvre a three quarter tonne horse, a quarter tonne motorcycle, or a set of skis travelling at forty miles an hour down a mountain slope. As presented later, the excitement and exhilaration triggered by the release of adrenaline when performing their sport is an emotion widely reported by my participants. Moreover, adrenaline release is generally associated with the highly arousing “fight or flight” response. Results from the survey statement ‘performing my sport relaxes me’ presented in Figure 4.47 below overwhelmingly indicates that nearly ninety percent of horse riders, eighty-two percent of motorcyclists and eighty percent of snowsports participants either strongly agree or agree that their sport relaxes them. There is almost no disagreement among horse riders or motorcyclists and just over three percent of disagreement among snow sports participants.

Figure 4.47

Performing my sport relaxes me



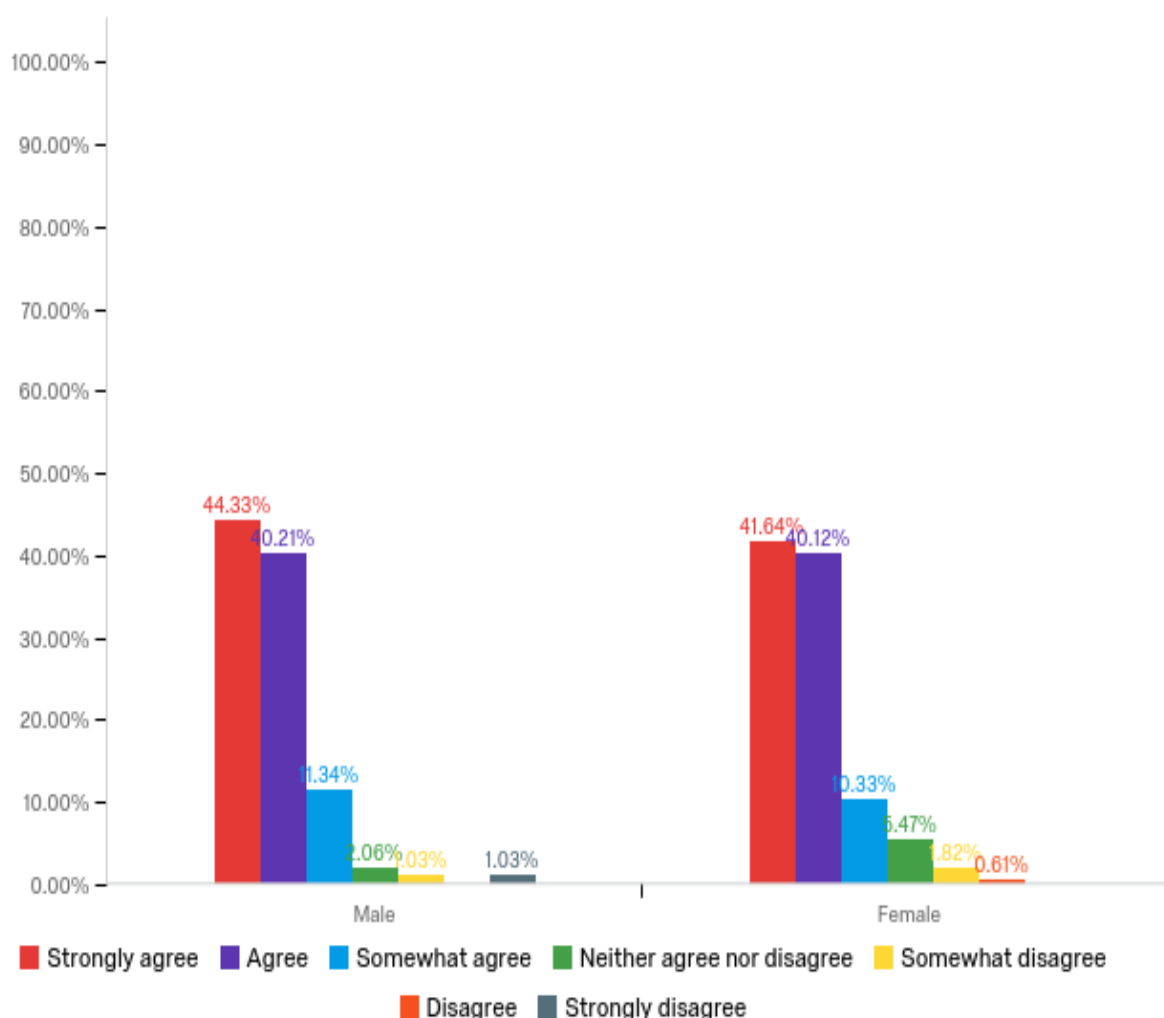
n= 461

Performing my sport relaxes me (by sport)

Figure 4.48 below indicates that the gender of the participant appears not to be an important factor. Eighty-four percent of males and eighty-two percent of females reported either a strong agreement or agreement that their sport relaxes them. When all levels of agreement are aggregated, nearly ninety-six percent of males and ninety-two percent of females report some level of agreement. The evidence suggesting that more than nine out of ten males and females find relaxation when performing their sport must be considered a factor in why individuals participate in these sports.

Figure 4.48

Performing my sport relaxes me (by gender)



n=461

Performing my sport relaxes me (by gender)

4.4.7 My sport is like a drug: Adrenaline and exhilaration.

Extreme sports are more often associated with an exhilarating rush of adrenaline while performing them than less extreme risky leisure sports. In fact, some thinkers suggest that 'an adrenaline rush' allows participants engaged in those extreme sports to 'escape the bounds of the rational mind and controlled body' (Tulloch & Lupton, 2003, p. 35). However, my findings indicate that a similar rush of adrenaline

is often actively sought out by participants of less risky leisure sports perhaps in the same, transcendental, quest of those more extreme protagonists. I presented earlier the fundamental importance to my qualitative and quantitative participants, within and across the three leisure sports, of the potential mental health benefits of mindfulness or living in the moment, whereby an individual lives in the immediacy of the here-and-now to the exclusion of any negative outside influences. This phenomenon has been expressed by surfers, considered to be an extreme sport, as feeling 'one with the wave' (Tulloch & Lupton, 2003, p. 35). Kurt describes a '[m]assive adrenaline buzz when you open up a large bike or a large capacity high-performance bike'⁴⁷¹. While Frank, also a motorcyclist, reported that 'it's exhilarating (...) I just love it. I don't get a buzz like that out of anything else I've tried (...) I just find it a great, really exhilarating experience'⁴⁷².

The release of adrenaline is not restricted to male motorcyclists; When Susan is focussed on her riding:

I'm not thinking about anything else other than riding. I don't actually feel much really apart from sort of a little bit of adrenaline that's perhaps rushing around and it's kind of like a happy type emotion I guess yeah. Kind of mood-lifting, definitely⁴⁷³.

The serial quest for adrenaline release has become almost addictive for motorcyclist

Pam and horse rider Nora who 'needs that fix'⁴⁷⁴. For Pam:

it's that... the adrenaline and I think you get that from riding a motorbike, that natural adrenaline rush, that natural boost and sometimes it only lasts for a couple of (...). It's just getting that natural high with your endorphins and just that... the adrenaline that excitement and then it goes down and then you start again⁴⁷⁵.

⁴⁷¹ 23/7/18

⁴⁷² 8/11/17

⁴⁷³ 2/10/17

⁴⁷⁴ 3/12/17

⁴⁷⁵ 25/9/17

Ski chalet company director Victoria reports that skiing makes her feel ‘exhilarated. It’s an amazing feeling and when you go out for the first time in the season and you haven’t skied for six months. It’s the best feeling ever’⁴⁷⁶. Twenty-two-year-old postgraduate student Daniel and lover of all so called adrenaline sports confesses that ‘as you get better at skiing you go faster and you do more jumps so the more adrenaline you get (...) it’s all about the adrenaline it gives you’⁴⁷⁷. However, not all participants reported that their sport was exhilarating. Forty-seven-year-old Joan has been motorcycle riding for four years after a twenty-year break while her children were growing up. Joan is well aware of the risky nature of motorcycling and explained her break in riding was due to not wanting to orphan her children if she had a fatal motorcycle accident. After getting her motorcycle Joan admits she ‘spent a year being terrified and wondering if I’d done the right thing. And it’s only this year that I’ve really become happy again on it’⁴⁷⁸. When I asked her if riding her motorcycle was exhilarating, she replied ‘I don’t know that I feel exhilaration because I think there’s always a slight tinge of fear for me (...) it’s not exhilaration but it’s pleasure. I wouldn’t put it as stronger than pleasure but it is pleasure’⁴⁷⁹.

I asked experienced snowboarder Chris, who has been snowboarding several times a year for ten years and who attended his interview with a broken arm, if he considered himself to be an adrenaline junkie. His unequivocal answer was ‘no that’s not how I identify, that’s not how I would describe myself’⁴⁸⁰. However, Chris explained that in his workplace he is considered by many colleagues to be the person most likely to be an adrenaline junkie. Being labelled an adrenaline junkie by

⁴⁷⁶ 22/1/18

⁴⁷⁷ 27/3/18

⁴⁷⁸ 2/10/17

⁴⁷⁹ 2/10/17

⁴⁸⁰ 16/4/18

his work colleagues clearly makes Chris uncomfortable. In my earlier analysis of risk management Chris considered that he saw risk on the slopes as clear and identifiable and while he recognised risky behaviour in others, he considered himself to be a rational and calculated person, perhaps not the attributes of a stereotypical risk seeker. Supporting evidence for Chris' rejection of the adrenaline junkie label can be found in Kidder's (2017) ethnography *Parkour and the City: Risk, Masculinity, and Meaning in a Postmodern Sport*. Kidder announces that although some free runners describe themselves as adrenaline junkies, 'this type of discourse is thoroughly tempered by the much more ubiquitous discussion of safety and responsibility' (Kidder, 2017, p. 174).

Although Chris finds the notion of being an adrenaline junkie troublesome he clearly derives great pleasure from his sport reporting that he feels 'exhilarated. I just love it. It's an amazing feeling snowboarding (...) it's really exciting and exhilarating'⁴⁸¹.

Feelings associated with the release of adrenaline when performing their sport, excitement and exhilaration, form important sections in my participants' narratives. To further understand the importance of these feelings in a larger sample I asked the survey statement 'participation in my sport is exhilarating'.

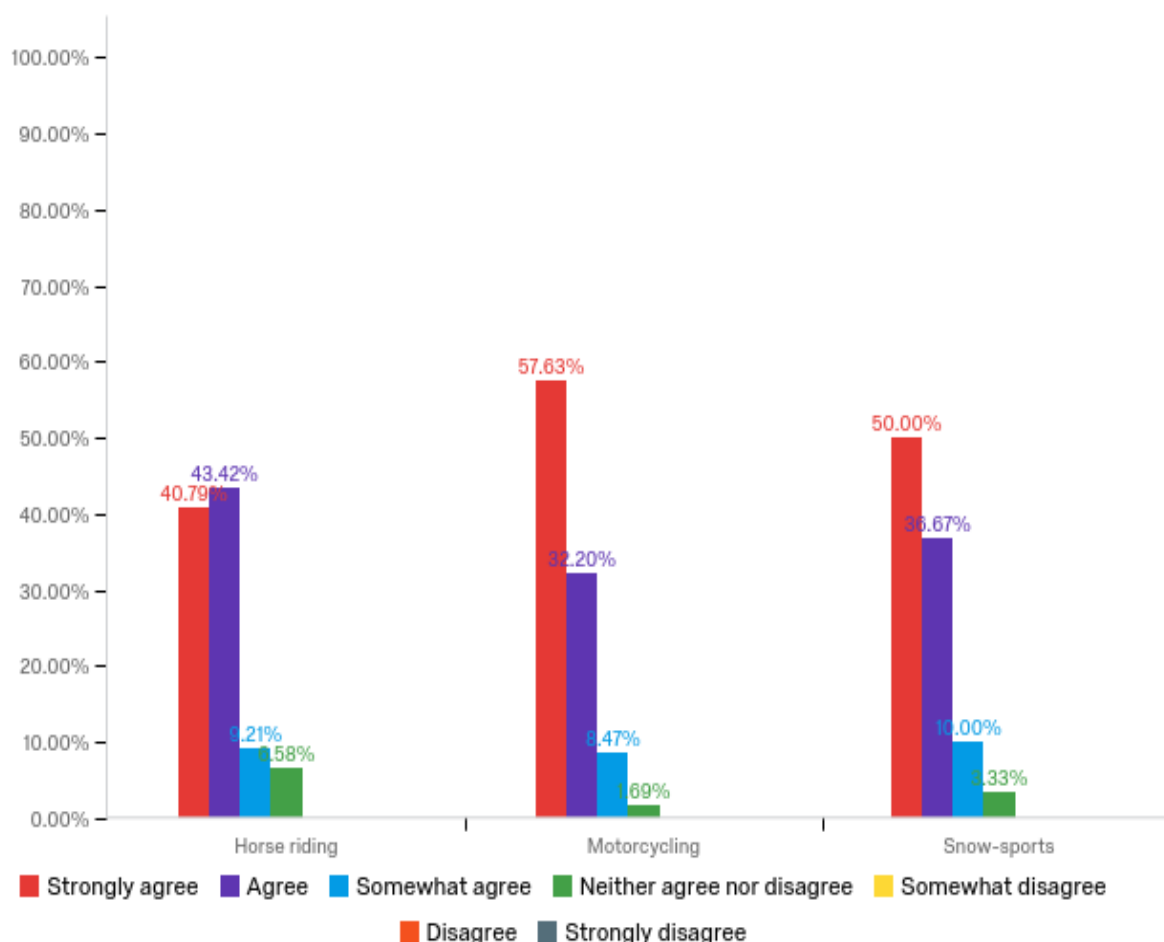
Figure 4.49 below shows convincing evidence across all three sports to support the notion that participating in these sports is exhilarating. Eighty-four percent of horse riders either strongly agree or agree that their sport is exhilarating. Nearly ninety percent or nine out of ten motorcyclists felt the same way. Eighty-seven percent, nearly nine in ten, of snow sports participants also strongly agree or agree that their

⁴⁸¹ 16/4/18

sport is exhilarating. In common across the other sports, there is no disagreement with the statement at any level.

Figure 4.49

Participation in my sport is exhilarating



n=460

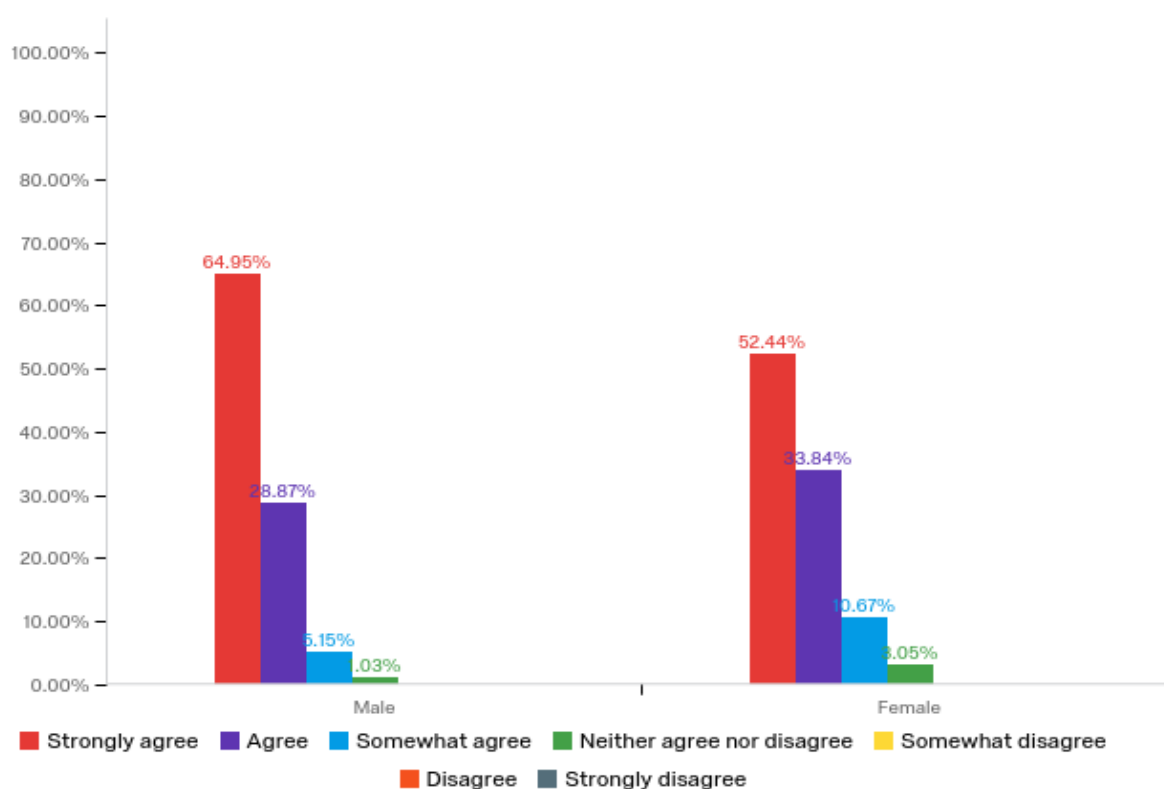
Participating in my sport is exhilarating (by sport)

When participants' gender is considered in Figure 4.50, both males and females find their sports exhilarating in similar measure. Nearly sixty-five percent of males and fifty-two percent of females strongly agree. A further twenty-nine percent of males and thirty-four percent of females agree. When all levels of agreement are combined, ninety nine percent, well over nine out of ten males and ninety-seven percent, again well over nine in ten of females agree that their sport is exhilarating.

As found earlier across sports, there was no gendered disagreement with the statement at any level.

Figure 4.50

Participation in my sport is exhilarating (by gender)



n=460

Participating in my sport is exhilarating (by gender)

For Chris and all other participants, the feelings of exhilaration and the release of adrenaline can be considered as powerful motivators, independent of gender, to continue in their sport. However, for those who seek excitement, these findings suggest that an individual with a lower calibration to their risk thermostat do not have to engage in so-called extreme sports to achieve exciting levels of enjoyment. Similar levels of excitement and exhilaration appear to be available to those performing less extreme, although still risky, leisure sports. Moreover, the exhilaration felt from the release of adrenaline specifically due to motorcycling has

also been reported in North American motorcyclists by North American neuroscientist Don Vaughn in an as yet unpublished study (Thomas, 2019).

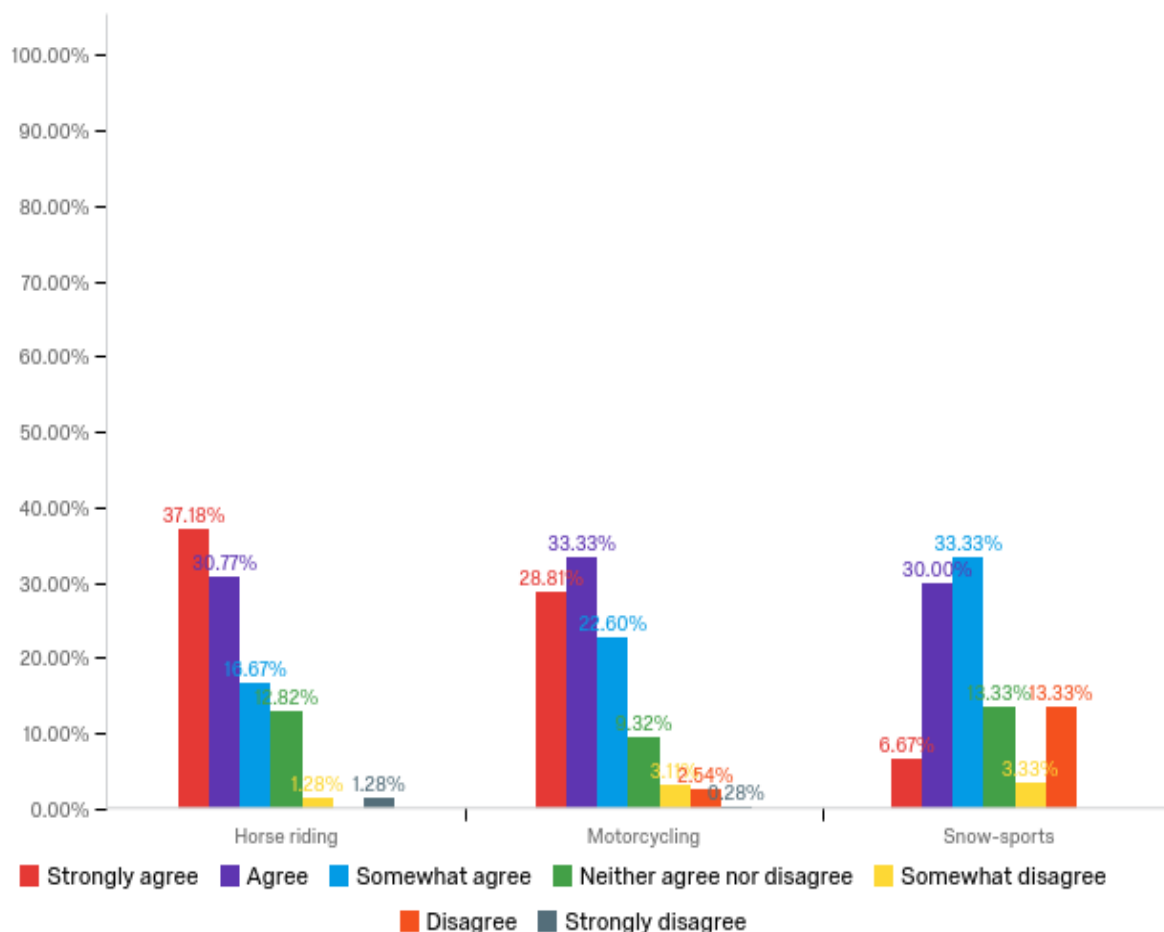
So many of my interview participants, within and across the sports, used the phrases “buzz”, “addictive” “exhilaration” or/and “adrenaline rush” to describe their feelings while participating in their sport. I found it interesting that these descriptors, generally associated with drug use, have found their way into the lexicon of leisure sports. To examine the notion of the meanings of this language use in a wider sample I asked the survey statement ‘my sport is addictive, almost like a drug’. I deliberately refrained from using the words “adrenaline”, “exhilaration” “exciting” or “buzz” but did allow participants to freely associate their feelings within notions of a perceived addictive drug-like experience. Figure 4.51 clearly shows that horse riders and motorcyclists identify more strongly with the statement than participants of snowsports. Nearly sixty-eight percent of horse riders, or more than two in three, strongly agree or agree with the statement. Sixty-two percent of motorcycles strongly agree or agree as do thirty-seven percent of snow sports participants. When all levels of agreement are considered, the attitudes of horse riders and motorcyclists become closer with both reporting eighty-five percent with snowsports recording an overall seventy percent agreement. There are far fewer snowsports participants, nearly seven percent, who strongly agree that their sport is addictive, almost like a drug. This may be a reflection on the infrequency of participation of some of those surveyed, the small sample size or of the vocabulary used by those occupying a higher socioeconomic social space⁴⁸². However, as the overall result for snowsports is so different from the two other sports, especially horse riders, who also occupy

⁴⁸² See appendix 5 for the socioeconomics of my qualitative sample of participants.

similar socioeconomic spaces, this may require further examination which is currently beyond the scope of this study.

Figure 4.51

My sport is addictive, almost like a drug



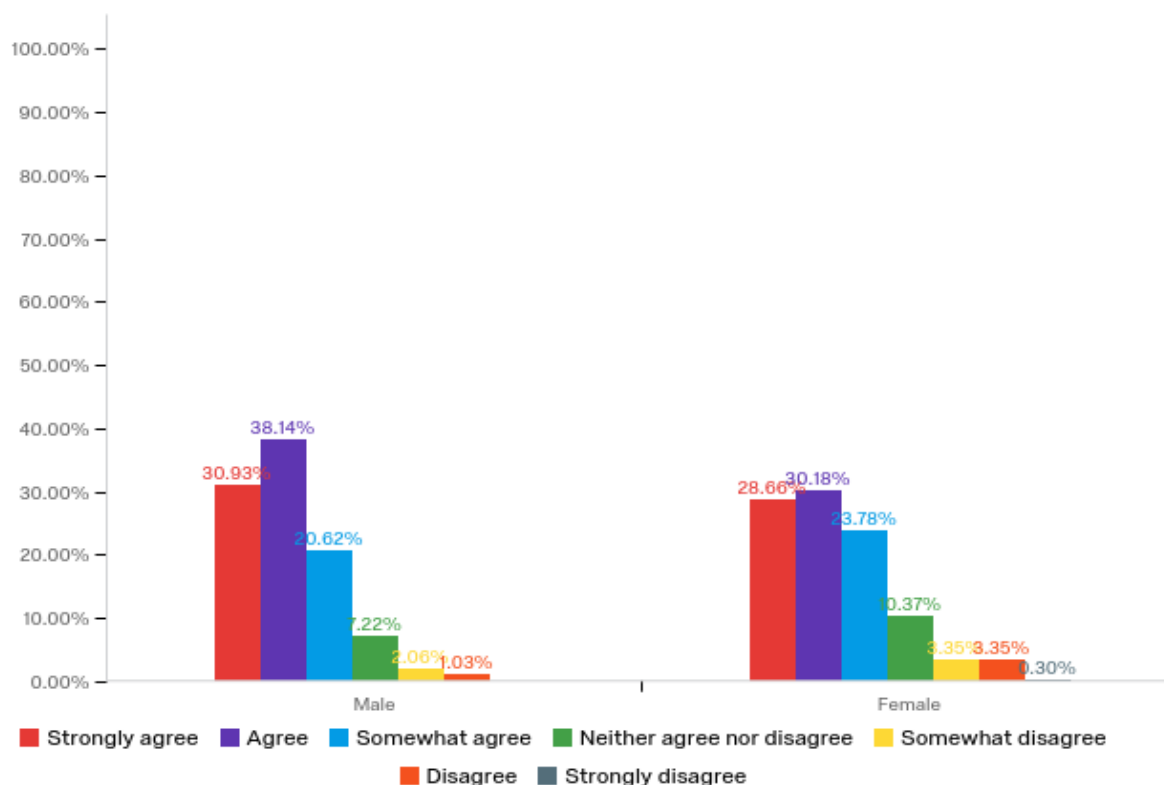
n=462

My sport is addictive almost like a drug (by sport)

When participants' gender is considered in Figure 4.52 sixty-nine percent, or more than two in three males, and fifty-nine percent, or more than one in two females, either strongly agreed or agreed that their sport was addictive. As before, when all three levels of agreement are considered together, nine out of ten males and well over three in four females, recorded some level of agreement with none from either gender strongly disagreeing that their sport is addictive, almost like a drug.

Figure 4.52

My sport is addictive, almost like a drug (by gender)



n=462

My sport is addictive almost like a drug (by gender)

The findings indicate that the horse riders and motorcyclists surveyed both identify, to a greater or lesser extent, with their sport being addictive and likened to their perceptions of drug use. Snowsports participants identify somewhat less which is interesting as my qualitative data suggests the contrary. This anomaly in the data could be re-examined as part of a future study. Although males identify with the statement to a greater extent than females the gender difference is within ten percentage points (90% vs. 83% respectively).

4.5 Own time, freedom and independence.

4.5.1 Own time.

Mindfulness allows an individual to experience the world about them at that point in time and space. It follows, therefore, that to be mindful an individual needs to put

aside regular time in their otherwise busy lives. Many of my participants expressed that performing their sport in this personal time allowed them to escape the pressures of their normal working or emotional lives. The positive effects of own time on an individual's mental health may be particularly beneficial to my female participants many of whom may be subjected to the triple burden of shouldering the responsibilities of paid full-time employment, running the household and the emotional obligations to partners and possibly children. Self-employed snowboarder Louise, who is also a wife and mother, articulates how important carving out time for her snowboarding is to her:

When I first started taking snowboarding seriously if you like and investing money and time my daughter was less than two years old. And you know, that's probably looking back maybe no accident because I wanted to have time away for me where I wasn't a wife and mother or worker. I could do my own thing, it was part of who I was where I haven't got to think about those other roles in life and I could just do, be me⁴⁸³.

Several of my female participants talked about their regular use of own time to escape the pressure of their stressful working life. Among them health professional Sherry confides that:

I'm quite selfish about that really. But I think my family now knows that Sherry's got to go and do the horse so they sort of accept it now (...) I use it as a bit of downtime. If I've had a stressful day at work I don't have to think about what happened at work⁴⁸⁴.

Caroline, a fifty-year-old a senior manager has carved out some personal time after work reporting that she feels 'relaxed, happy, generally. It's part of it sort of part of my day really, if I don't do it then it's a bit like something is missing. (...) it's downtime it's like when I can clear my brain before I come home'⁴⁸⁵.

⁴⁸³ 24/11/17

⁴⁸⁴ 3/12/17

⁴⁸⁵ 16/2/18

Office manager Chloe uses her own time to prepare herself for the stress and rigour of her working day, allowing her to:

Switch off from any problems you've got at work or relationships. You can just get on your horse go off out for an hour, hour and a half and just enjoy the countryside, the outside, you and your horse (...) and afterwards you feel really good and then you can go to work and have a stressful day, but you've started off really good⁴⁸⁶.

The positive effects of regular own time appear independent of when in the day own time occurs. Caroline uses it to relax after her days work while Chloe uses it to preempt another stressful day in the office.

Motorcycling is an unforgiving pastime, mistakes are often swiftly punished and the need to concentrate and be in the moment has been discussed previously. Sofia considers the time she spends at the moment while motorcycling as therapeutic explaining:

For me, it's that me time. I can't be thinking about anything else. I can't be getting anxious about stuff because I'm on the bike and I'm doing what I enjoy. That for me is kind of medication I suppose yeah. So that personal need for me really is, I don't know, clearing out my headspace I suppose⁴⁸⁷.

Although recognising that setting aside specific time is difficult and, therefore, needs careful organisation, Pam, who supports clients with alcohol and mental health-related issues, considers time spent riding her motorcycle is beneficial and analogous to:

[S]witching off from the world, it's me time. It's allowing me time which is sometimes hard in life to actually take that time out for yourself and when I get on my bike that's me time. (...) whether it's on my own or whether it's in a group or whether it's with my partner, it's still like me time. It's just switching off from the world I'll come back to everything when I get back⁴⁸⁸.

⁴⁸⁶ 25/11/17

⁴⁸⁷ 11/10/17

⁴⁸⁸ 25/9/17

The need for horse owners to look after their horse(s) and their tack and to perform duties such as mucking out were cited previously as barriers to greater male participation in equestrian leisure sports. Males want to ride, not to perform the mundane daily chores of their animals care. Perhaps surprising then is Bert's willing acceptance for performing these chores as part of his me time away from his working life as a professional musician. Bert uses me time as a space where he can plan his workload:

I find it really useful professionally as well because while I'm mucking out a horse or cleaning tack or doing something like that I can be thinking about things to do with my work that need planning. (...) it certainly does feel like time away from work and quality time. (...) [B]ecause I sometimes do jobs at the riding school I can't remember the last time when I felt that I was doing something like that under sufferance and not really enjoying it⁴⁸⁹.

Own, or me time, is clearly important for those participants who live busy and often stressful working lives. However, my youngest participant, sixteen-year-old student Robert, finds the solitude of skiing gives him sufficient own time to escape the many life pressures associated with the transition from childhood to adulthood:

I feel quite alone, but I like that alone because it's kind of just me and everything is nice and it's quiet and it's, especially when it's quiet slopes early in the morning, that's really nice. Just kind of relaxed, relaxed and isolated⁴⁹⁰.

4.5.2 Freedom and independence.

Those who participate in risky leisure sports often cite freedom as a motivator in their participation. Several of my participants defined what they meant by freedom. According to Student and skier Daniel, freedom is 'not having a care in the world'⁴⁹¹. Motorcyclist Kurt expressed a similar definition, 'freedom is probably a cliché, but you do get a little sense of freedom. You do get that feeling I've not got a care in the

⁴⁸⁹ 11/4/18

⁴⁹⁰ 16/6/18

⁴⁹¹ 27/3/18

world'⁴⁹². At age sixty-two, local government worker Brian defines that freedom for him means:

[T]o be in control of your own destination for as long as you've got it. In that moment you're in control at that moment in time and you know it's up to you to make the decisions, there's nothing else to influence it⁴⁹³.

Brian's notion of freedom as being the ability to control their own immediate destiny was also expressed by other participants within and across the three sports. Susan, a forty-one-year-old employment consultant with two years of motorcycling experience, sees motorcycling as an escape, or even a rebellion, from traditional, socially private sphere⁴⁹⁴, female gender roles. 'I think it was just like the freedom of it all. Being something different, doing something different than the average woman'⁴⁹⁵. Using their sport as a vehicle for rebellious liberation and freedom against coercive patriarchal gender roles was also a feature of several other female participants.

Leisure sports such as those examined here could, therefore, provide brief periods of personal liberation, particularly for females, from the coercive effects of external social influences and paternalistic gender-role expectations.

In *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* Robert Pirsig (1999 [1974]) chronicles a motorcycle, and philosophical, journey across parts of North America. Pirsig (1999)[1974] notes that when travelling by car the traveller is observing the environment mediated through the lens of the car window, much as the same traveller would watch a television nature programme. However, when travelling by motorcycle the traveller is immersed in the myriad of country sounds and smells;

⁴⁹² 23/7/18

⁴⁹³ 25/10/17

⁴⁹⁴ Feminist perspective sees males dominating socially public sphere (culture) with females relegated to socially private sphere (family). Thus preventing politicisation of women's issues.

⁴⁹⁵ 2/10/17

instead of the disinterested regarding of nature through a window, the motorcyclist is an active *part* of nature. Pirsig's (1999) [1974] observations of travelling through nature by car vs. motorcycle resonate with Sofia's experience whilst motorcycling. '[Y]ou're kind of cocooned in the car whereas being on the bike you're kind of out there you're in the elements whether it's, you know sunny, raining, windy whatever, you feel what's going on around you'⁴⁹⁶.

Sixty-year-old motorcyclist Barry further exemplifies Pirsig's (1999) [1974] thesis by suggesting that freedom is borne out of 'being out there. You're part of the environment instead of cocooned in a box [car]'⁴⁹⁷. By drilling deeper into Barry's notion of freedom he was able to express his feelings of freedom. 'It's very trite to say, happy, carefree, pleased to be away from the daily grind, optimistic you know? What's over the next hill, what's over the horizon? Yeah, I guess all of those things'⁴⁹⁸.

Being free from everyday life and living as part of the countryside rather than merely observing it also motivates horse rider, Jenny. She confided that 'I love the countryside and having a horse lets me spend time out in the countryside and [to] see things I wouldn't normally see otherwise'⁴⁹⁹.

Thirty-year-old Naval submariner Cliff's professional life is very disciplined and structured. Cliff considers that the freedom he experiences when horse riding provides a brief escape from his workday pressures where he can be alone with nature:

[it] probably makes me feel a bit liberated from the monotony of everyday life I think. It's probably 90 minutes of freedom I think is a fair way to describe it. Yeah, it's 90 minutes without having a care about anything else (...) the 90 minutes or an hour of enjoyment, independence, alone time out and about in

⁴⁹⁶ 11/10/17

⁴⁹⁷ 14/11/17

⁴⁹⁸ 14/11/17

⁴⁹⁹ 3/12/17

the countryside⁵⁰⁰.

Snowboarder Louise perhaps provides the most succinct explanation of how being immersed in nature makes her feel while also providing a compelling reason for engaging in her sport. '[B]eing in these beautiful mountain places as well, that feeds me as an individual. I need to have that beauty'⁵⁰¹.

⁵⁰⁰ 3/8/18

⁵⁰¹ 24/11/17

Chapter Five

What does it mean? Discussion of research findings

This chapter discusses the major research findings, what they mean and how they relate directly to the research questions and evidence presented in the review of the literature. The presentation of the discussion follows the order of themes examined earlier: (1) belonging; (2) risk and (3) wellbeing. A summary is provided after each theme. As the writing up phase of this research was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of another layer of risk to participation in their sport, provided by COVID-19, is discussed post-script.

5.1 Theme of Belonging.

How individuals are initially socialised into their particular leisure sport, which then imbues in them an enduring sense of belonging to that sport, speaks to this research's first two questions: (1) What factors influence the individuals' interest/engagements in risky undertakings in general? And (2) what factors influence the individuals' continuing engagement in risky leisure sports activities such as motorcycling, skiing and horse riding? There are significant social benefits provided to individuals through the process of socialisation into a subculture. Among those benefits, Georgian and Lorand (2016) suggest that friendships are forged with those having common interests, verbal and non-verbal communications are developed and a sense of cooperation with other members subsequently leads to increased social health.

All participants' narratives describe the influence of family, friends or significant life events as being responsible for the introduction to their sport. This resonates with the work *Bikers Culture, Politics and Power* by McDonald-Walker (2000) who found that, with one exception, all of her participants were exposed to the pre-existence of motorcycles within their social *milieu*. Similarly, in this research, it was the influence of Kurt's motorcyclist friend, rather than a pre-existing subcultural *milieu*, which formed the catalyst for his love of motorcycling. Many participants in this study consider that there was an expectation to join the sporting community through family tradition considering that they were "born into" their sport. The notion of subcultural membership of a risky sport being socially taken-for-granted in both McDonald-Walker's (2000) and this research is articulated by Lupton's 'pre existing knowledges and discourses' thesis (Lupton 1999, p. 29). This provides a compelling explanation for the dynamic nature of socially constructed sporting subcultures. The concept of (re)birth, perhaps the most primal and evocative example of socially constructed human society, is found in the description of "Born again Bikers" (Bonnett, 2005, p.5). For a variety of reasons such as financial pressure, childcare or family responsibility these individuals have returned to their sport after an, often prolonged, absence. Their continued active and willing acceptance of risk illustrates the centrality of their sport to their subculturally approved individual life world. As a result of being removed from the equestrian subculture due to the sudden death of her horse, Caroline's identity was compromised by a lack of subcultural affirmation she would normally expect from her equestrian peers describing the period of non-horse ownership as 'that eight months where I didn't ride I was in a very peculiar place'⁵⁰².

⁵⁰² 16/2/18

Donnelly and Young (1988) indicate that maintaining a subcultural membership is (re) confirmed by other members.

Socialisation into, and subsequently belonging to, a subculture appears more complex than merely a childhood process only amenable, like language acquisition, within certain temporal limits during an individual's initial social development (Smith & Allott, 2016). Kurt's journey of socialisation into the motorcycle subculture began when he was aged twenty-four. As a young male adult Andrew, along with his brother, reacted to the positive stories of their skiing friends '[s]o we literally packed our bags, put them in the car and drove down to Austria'⁵⁰³. The notion of *carpe diem* also helps explain Nora's involvement with horses at age forty-six. Although she had no prior experience of the equestrian subculture it was always an ambition. Her divorce left her thinking 'I just felt I had nothing else in my life I thought it's now or never'⁵⁰⁴.

Once an individual has committed to their particular sport, commonly being described as having 'been bitten by the bug', participants socially (re)construct their subcultural values often, although not exclusively, through social interaction in a motorcycle club or at other popular meeting venues. Motorcycling, overwhelmingly dominated by males, can be a difficult space for female motorcyclists to negotiate. Many British women motorcyclists have formed local branches and/or joined the *Curvy Riders* motorcycle club. This exclusively female club, and its equally exclusively female internet Face-Book page and forum which prohibit male membership, provides a haven from hyper-masculine displays of machismo often exhibited by male members at usually mixed-gender motorcycle clubs. This research

⁵⁰³ 16/6/18

⁵⁰⁴ 3/12/17

shows that, away from the influence of hegemonic masculinity, *Curvy Riders* provides its membership with a non-judgemental safe space to jointly construct their motorcycling identity. Whereas mixed-gender motorcycle clubs would be dominated by males who valorise masculine traits, *Curvy Riders* member Joan considers her club a safe space to admit to others that “I did a stupid thing the other day” or “I found this out” or “I learned that” or laughing at ourselves really, having a giggle⁵⁰⁵. *Curvy Riders* members regularly discuss motorcycle related topics among themselves, often being quite open about their lack of knowledge but demonstrating their willingness to learn more about motorcycles and the subcultural tribal language. For many *Curvy Riders* members, as Liz Jansen (2011) found in *Women, Motorcycles and the Road to Empowerment*, motorcycles provide a vehicle for them to develop their self-identity not only as confident women motorcyclists but also their general self-confidence. The positive effect of sporting engagement on individual self-confidence will be discussed in greater detail later in the theme of wellbeing.

Continued belonging to their sporting subculture appears not to be dependent on club membership. Few snowsports or equestrian participants were members of organised clubs. Several who were club members reported that they had only joined the national club of their specific sport as it is a requirement to be either riding instructors, (British Equestrian Association) or ski instructors (British Association of Ski Instructors). Others considered that unless they wanted to compete in amateur competitions they had ample opportunity to socialise, and thus to reinforce their belonging while participating with their peers. The apparent lack of maintaining belonging through club membership, certainly in the case of the narratives of equestrian and snowsports participants, was quantified by the survey statement ‘I

⁵⁰⁵ 2/10/17

am a member of a club'. The responses of motorcyclists and horse riders display similarly polarised profiles, with forty-nine percent of motorcyclists and forty-five percent of horse riders strongly agreeing or agreeing that they were club members; thirty-four percent of motorcyclists and thirty-five percent of horse riders were not (see fig 4.3). The more solitary pursuits of motorcycling and horse riding may account for the polarisation of responses; however, nearly half of the respondents were club members, far more than were not, indicating that these participants like to engage in their 'individual' sport, together.

In contrast, only seventeen percent of snowsports participants either strongly agreed or agreed that they were club members, while seventy-six percent disagreed or strongly disagreed (see fig 4.3). When gender is examined in relation to club membership the responses from males and females were broadly similar. Fifty-three percent of females and forty-seven percent of males were club members (see fig 4.2). Therefore, organised clubs, perhaps a more traditional route to subcultural membership, are not the exclusive means of maintaining feelings of belonging to a subculture. The internet, a relatively recent but important resource for social science, is a gateway to social media and sport-specific forums. For those who access it social media offers a much further-reaching medium than traditional local clubs for the (re) formulation of subcultural norms and values. The ability to transcend the parochial offers internet-based platforms almost limitless opportunities for subcultural development. The internet was widely featured in all participants' narratives within and across the three sports; therefore, the internet can be a viable alternative to club membership. Individuals must, however, be cautious as to the veracity of any knowledge claims made by others. Motorcyclist Kurt and horse rider Nora have both reported negative experiences from so-called 'experts'; a sentiment succinctly

articulated by very experienced horse rider Stuart who stated ‘I just can’t stand to listen to the bilge that they talk on them’⁵⁰⁶.

A quantitative examination of the survey statement ‘I participate on sport-specific social media’ reveals that over eighty-five percent of motorcyclists and seventy-five percent of horse riders use the internet in some way to reinforce and consolidate their place in their sporting subculture and is another factor in continuing their engagement (see fig 4.4). However, at odds with the snowsports narratives, whose respondents reported often using social media as a way to keep their finger on the pulse of local activities within their sporting *milieu*, less than a third of survey respondents in the snowsports sample use the internet while nearly fifty percent do not. This result could be due to a relatively small snowsports sample or simply a reluctance to use social media and should, therefore, be treated with caution.

When gender is considered, seventy-eight percent of males and eighty percent of females surveyed strongly agree or agree that they regularly participate in the social media specific to their sport (see fig 4.5). These results demonstrate that gender appears to play no significant part in this type of internet use. Consequently, social media can be considered as central to the (re)formation of the subculture’s *milieu*, surpassing the traditional but still important local clubs, and is a major factor in participants’ continuing engagement in their sport.

Sports specific media titles provide another means to (re)formulate the subculture and an individual’s bonds of belonging to it. Although many titles are now available as digital downloads, print versions remain a popular, although decreasing, resource⁵⁰⁷. Nearly forty percent of horse riders and thirty-six percent of motorcyclists surveyed purchase print media from a wide range of available titles.

⁵⁰⁶ 4/12/17

⁵⁰⁷ See independent media circulation auditor ABC <https://www.abc.org.uk/>

However, perhaps indicating the lack of snowsports titles, fifty-one percent of snowsports participants admit to never buying snowsports titles (see fig 4.6). Although briefly discussed earlier, the notion of 'being apart together' for participants of these often individually performed sports, is socially important. When individuals meet socially, conversations which often start as being centered on their sport, and often using the sports-specific technical language codes, can quickly move on to other non-sports specific topics. This could be considered analogous to the social grooming behaviour widely reported by zoologists found in primates and commonly thought to (re)affirm bonds of (hierarchical) membership to the particular family or social group (Hinde & Stevenson-Hinde, 1976). Once an individual has been accepted back into the social group through this often elaborate behaviour, the business of a normal day can continue. The importance of their social *milieu* to respondents was strongly articulated in their respective narratives. Triangulation of this into the wider surveyed population by testing attitudes to the statement 'the social side of my sport is important to me' showed high levels of agreement. Horse riders, motorcyclists and snowsports participants registered seventy-seven, eighty-one and seventy-nine percent agreement respectively (see fig 4.8). Again, when gender is considered in fig 4.9 there is overwhelming agreement that the social side of their sport is important. Eighty-seven percent of males and seventy-nine percent of females agree, with just over five percent of males and just over ten percent of females disagreeing. It appears that males valorise the social side of their sport more than women who, due to the gendered inequality seen in two of the sports researched, are perhaps sometimes partly socially excluded.

This research indicates that belonging to a sporting subculture has significant social benefits for the participants. Although the three sports featured are popular,

the research assessed the personal commitment required to maintain their subcultural membership. Some participants make significant personal and/or financial sacrifices in other areas of their lives to pursue their sport. Sherry admits that 'whatever I do in life the horse has to be considered first (...) unfortunately for my husband'⁵⁰⁸. Frank's need for a motorcycle was prioritised over his education preferring employment to pay for a motorcycle rather than attending sixth form. Skiers Victoria and Poppy consider that their sport is more than leisure; it is a way of life. They both spend considerable time and financial resources on their pursuit. Conversely, for those who engage more sporadically their sport is considered as just another, expensive, leisure activity. There appears to be a correlation between the amount of time or money spent engaged in their sport and their commitment to it - the more time or financial resources that an individual spends performing their sport, the greater their commitment.

The three sports featured in this research are widely available to those with the financial resources to fund them. This research goes beyond financial considerations by also examining potential barriers to belonging. This is especially salient for leisure motorcycling and horse riding as both display significant gender bias to either males or females respectively. Snowsports, although more gender equal is, nonetheless, sixty-four percent biased towards males (Ski club of Great Britain, 2019). As large numbers of potential participants are, therefore, dissuaded and thus excluded from these sports a deeper understanding of the barriers to belonging could have commercial benefits as well as providing directions towards gender equality.

⁵⁰⁸ 3/12/17

5.1.1 Barriers to belonging: Gender equality in motorcycling.

Historical images of hyper-masculinity and female objectification still pervade throughout motorcycling, often being perpetuated by some titles in the motorcycle press⁵⁰⁹. The British 1960's youth subculture of Mods and Rockers, the subject of Cohen's (2002) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, highlights the part the mass media had in disseminating the aggressively macho image of motorcyclists to the British public during an otherwise un-newsworthy wet bank holiday. Many of my respondents consider that there is still a degree of machismo displayed by mainly male, but interestingly, occasionally female riders possibly attempting to conform to Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) concept of hegemonic masculinity whereby maleness subjugates the feminine. This is articulated by Susan who considers 'there's very much a stigma still that it's a man's sport, a man's leisure rather than a female you know? (...) If they've got a partner that will encourage them to do so then great, brilliant, but there's not a lot of men out there that do'⁵¹⁰. Some British motorcycle dealers and clothing manufactures are also considered by research participants as barriers to belonging for aspiring female motorcyclists. Joan cites the surprise exhibited by a motorcycle salesman when she wanted to buy a large capacity motorcycle rather than the small scooter he expected her to want. North American manufacturer Harley-Davidson has made some progress towards gender equality in their home market by appointing a female lead responsible for female engagement. Several Harley-Davidson motorcycles, although large and heavy, carry their weight close to the ground and often have lower seat heights than many other manufacturers' models. This makes them much more amenable to the generally smaller female physique. This manufacturer also offers regular women-only training

⁵⁰⁹ See *Back Street Heroes*, *Easyrider*, *Superbike*.

⁵¹⁰ 2/10/17

days in the United States. At the time of writing, no British manufacturer or importer of motorcycles offers female-only on-road training⁵¹¹. The gendered discrimination found in motorcycling, as cited in the female participants' narratives, was examined in the survey statement 'my sport is quite sexist'. Seventy percent or seven out of ten of the sample expressed some level of agreement believing that motorcycling is sexist while less than twenty percent believe motorcycling is not sexist (see fig 4.12). Consequently, the common perception of gender discrimination, partly fuelled by the influence of social constructionism, is possibly the biggest barrier to greater female participation. Female only motorcycle clubs such as the *Curvy Riders* and the successful world record attempt for the largest all-female motorcycle meeting, held at London's world-famous Ace cafe in August 2015 (Rayner, 2015), provide a safe space within the motorcycle subculture to engage in their sport in a mutually supportive, non-judgemental way. Following the success of the event, the Ace cafe now hosts an annual summer ladies day. Dilution of British motorcycling's hyper-masculine image can possibly be achieved by motorcycle and clothing manufacturers, along with dealers actively targeting British females in their marketing campaigns. Furthermore, the continued rise in the popularity of women-only motorcycle clubs and motorcycle meetings, leading to significant increases in North American female motorcycle ownership⁵¹², will further help to remove the gendered barriers to participation within British motorcycling. Finally, an often articulated view in respondent narratives was the lack of suitable female motorcycling role models. Although there are female riders in motorcycle sport they have yet to approach the level of success achieved by women in snowsports, or by males in equestrian sport. There are currently no female riders in the major televised motorcycle sports of Moto

⁵¹¹ BMW Motorrad only offers British women off road training.

⁵¹² 14% in 2016 up from 8% in 1998 (Motorcycle Industry Council, (2016).

GP, World Superbikes or British Superbikes⁵¹³. There are some female competitors at the prestigious annual Isle-of-Man Tourist Trophy races; however, to date the most successful British female motorcycle racer, Maria Costello MBE, is yet to score a victory in any class. The survey asked for responses to the statement 'successful female role models would encourage greater female participation'. Figure 4.14 indicates that a conclusive eighty-five percent of the sample agreed that female role models would encourage more women to become motorcyclists. Less than five percent disagreed.

5.1.2 Barriers to belonging: Gender equality in horse riding.

Although once considered a masculine occupation, and to a large extent competitive use of the horse in horse racing events still is, seventy-four percent, or nearly three-quarters of British leisure riders, are women (British Equestrian Trade Association, 2015). Several participants contend that males do not have an interest in equine husbandry, surprising given that the etymology of the term has male connotations. This disdain for the day-to-day care for horses is expressed by polo player Cliff whose polo pony is fully liveried and, therefore, he takes no part in its care.

Despite significant numbers of aspirational male role models throughout the equestrian subculture competing at the highest levels, many participants reported that accentuating the fun side of horse riding would do much more for gender equality. Riding instructor Mia, who has a young son, suggests masculine games such as play jousting against inflatable 'knights' and playing 'cowboys and Indians' although perhaps not considered as being 'politically correct' are ways to encourage more boys to ride. Extending the notion of horseriding fun, spectator sports such as

⁵¹³ I have focussed on motorcycle racing as generally Humans valorise speed above all else.

'horse ball', which has a wider gender mix and the more masculine polo are possible ways to promote increased male participation.

Just as the motorcycle clothing industry has been generally slow to cater to the female minority, the horseriding clothing industry generally caters for female or adult male riders. This is a particularly difficult barrier to overcome as volume manufacturers need to focus on their core business segment. Most volume manufacturers of motorcycle clothing, although still catering for males, now offer an ever-increasing range of female-specific clothing in response to greater female participation. However, small volume manufactures could emulate some of the smaller, generally bespoke, British manufacturers of motorcycle clothing. Equestrian specific media titles are criticised by Sherry, 'magazines that we were talking about earlier like *Pony* magazine always portrays little girls, so I think probably the media always portray it as a little girl sport'⁵¹⁴. Female-specific motorcycle clubs such as *Curvy Riders* have introduced many hundreds of British women to motorcycles. Sadly to date, no male-specific horse riding club exists for British men.

5.1.3 Barriers to belonging: Gender equality in snowsports.

Although there is some gender inequality, the snowsports industry has made significant inroads into its reduction. Many more female ski instructors and resort mountain guides have encouraged more female participation, as has the French resort snowboarding initiative *She Rides*. A similar scheme aimed at British female snowboarders could be held at the Scottish resorts and the many artificial ski slopes and snow domes situated around Britain. The snowsports clothing and equipment manufacturers have been proactive in acknowledging the difference between male and female physiology, also catering for boys and girls. Harry suggests that 'there

⁵¹⁴ 3/12/17

are now women-specific everything, helmets, rucksacks. Not just the clothes but ski poles, ski boots everything now there is a women-specific version for all the different elements of skiing'⁵¹⁵. Finally, and in common with the other sports, suitable aspirational role models are seen as critical to achieving gender equality.

5.1.4 Summary.

As McDonald-Walker (2000) found in her study *Bikers* many, but not all of my participants in the three sporting subcultures were introduced to it through being born into pre-existing, usually familial, social milieus. Others found membership in later life through the influence of friends or a significant life event providing the catalyst to achieve a long-held ambition. When an individual participant is, or has been, sufficiently embedded in the subculture, membership of that subculture forms an intrinsic part of their identity. The performance of their sport is often then prioritised over other social/ financial responsibilities and obligations. The (re)formulation of a participants position within a subculture, and indeed the subculture itself, is often facilitated by the membership of a pre-existing local club or by the many online social media pages, or print/digital titles in the case of equestrianism and motorcycling, dedicated to that particular sport. Local clubs and social media pages, e.g. *Curvy Riders* club and Face-Book forum are established in response to a lack of entrenched spaces for female motorcyclists to congregate. Often, my participants are members of both physical and virtual clubs.

Gender plays a significant factor in the sense of belonging to a sport. Many female motorcyclists have negotiated a space within the overwhelmingly male-centric motorcycle subculture by either forming or joining exclusively female motorcycle clubs. These safe spaces allow increasing numbers of female motorcyclists to

⁵¹⁵ 7/12/17

develop their self-identity. Here they can admit their riding mistakes or lack of specialised mechanical knowledge, learning from each other without any threat of male ridicule. Members are then free to construct a similar but nuanced version of the overall British subculture thereby causing a subtle shift towards female inclusivity as is being seen in North America (Motorcycle Industry Council, 2016). Successful role models could also encourage those females who harbour an ambition to ride the justification to do so. Leisure horse riders and snowsports participants in this research are often not members of organised clubs unless they want to participate in amateur competitions. However, my participants in these two sports significantly use social media. The lack of physical or virtual male horse riding clubs possibly, in the same way they expedite females into motorcycling, possibly prevent potential British male horse riders from entering the female-dominated leisure equestrian subculture. Popular equestrian media titles also shoulder some responsibility for supporting gender bias. A brief examination of any popular title at the newsagent confirms to the reader that, although some men do feature, leisure horse riding is a female sport. Likewise, a perusal of some titles in the popular motorcycle press, Such as *Back Street Heroes* or *Easyrider*, in objectifying women, they do nothing to help reduce the perception that motorcycling is a sport for men. However, they have to be commercially focussed on their business model which caters for the (male) gender of the majority of readers.

The specialist clothing industry continues to be important in welcoming females into motorcycling and snowsports. As reported by my participants, historically, females engaging in these leisure sports had to select their sporting clothing from ranges designed for the male physique. This often meant that clothing did not fit well

and that the armour⁵¹⁶ in jackets and trousers was too big, in the wrong place and was thus, uncomfortable. Skis, ski poles and helmets were often solely designed and manufactured for taller and heavier male skiers and were unwieldy for smaller headed, shorter, lighter female skiers. Evidence that volume clothing manufacturers are offering an increasing range of female-specific clothing, not just cut-down male clothing, can be seen in their online sales literature (Ladybiker, 2021). Many more female ski instructors, combined with successful female skiers and snowboarders wearing more suitable and comfortable clothing, appears to have reduced the male gender bias of snowsports participants.

5.2 Theme of Risk

Participating in these leisure sports carries a risk of physical injury as evidenced by the published literature. Risk, with some notable exceptions such as that found in capitalist financial markets (Douglas, 2003b), is generally considered undesirable in our culture. It is professionally objectified, quantified, managed and mitigated through inferential statistical data analysis of past risk events and by carrying out, and documenting, an assessment of any risks pertaining to a specific event. Any identified risk is disseminated by professional risk assessors to the population as undesirable. Risk in the workplace is legislated for by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and enforced in the UK by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). There is, however, a disconnect between professionally objectified risk and the subjective risk perceived by the general population. Although a 1992 debate by the Royal Society attempted to provide a distinction between objective and subjective, or perceived, risk Adams (2001) argued that they failed to provide a suitable definition.

⁵¹⁶ Knee, hip, back, elbow, shoulder and back armour are now commonly used in motorcycle clothing and to a lesser extent in ski clothing.

At the time of writing there still appears to be confusion between objective and subjective risk. This is potentially accounted for by O'Sullivan's (2015, p.12) notion of Optimism Bias more popularly known as "always looking on the bright side of life". O'Sullivan (2015) proposes that Optimism Bias occurs as a result of an individual's lower *perceived* risk of their activity to culminate in a positive experience so that 'in visualising an uncomplicated future, we rise above the myriad of possible outcomes to focus on a simplified positive endpoint (2015, p. 14). The Royal Society may have found at least a partial connection between objective and perceived risk if they had considered that an individual's subjective vision of positive outcomes resting on an uncomplicated future is largely socially constructed.

The objective risk (measured by death or injury) in all three leisure sports researched here have, although mainly quantitatively, been widely available. The British Government's injury report, *Facts on Motorcyclist Casualties* (Department for Transport, 2015), indicates that although accounting for only one percent of road users, motorcyclists account for nineteen percent of those killed or seriously injured on UK roads. The report goes on to indicate that '[t]he risk of death for a motorcyclist is at least 57 times than that for a car occupant' (Department for Transport, 2015, p. 3).

Horse riders are particularly vulnerable with injury statistics often using motorcyclists as a comparator. Firth (1984, p. 432) contends that horseriding is '20 times more dangerous than motorcycling'. This figure has also been cited by others (Silver, 2002; Newbigging, 2007; Milne, 2014); however, due to a lack of scholastic rigour this may be a sensationally high and misleading figure. Nonetheless, supporting the notion that horse riders are at greater risk Ball et al, (2007), propose that horse riding is three and a half times more dangerous than motorcycling.

There are currently no comparisons between snowsports injury and motorcycling or equestrian injury. However, the objective risk for those participating in snowsports is often highly visible⁵¹⁷ but has reduced over time. Posch et al (2020) report that the incidence of injury to recreational alpine (downhill) skiers has decreased from five to eight injuries per 1000 skiing hours in the 1970s to two to three per 1000 skiing hours in the 1990s. Moreover, in 2014 the injury rate in Austria was even lower at less than one injury per 1000 skiing hours (Posch et al, 2020). Over four series the Independent Television series *The Jump*, saw sixteen personalities and British Olympian athletes including Sir Steve Redgrave, Rebecca Adlington, Linford Christie, Beth Tweddle and Sir Bradley Wiggins suffer an injury which, for some athletes was life-threatening and potentially career-ending.

The participants in this study appeared aware of the risky nature of their sport, though many hold the belief that the risk they face comes from external factors beyond their control. This view mirrors that of Bellaby and Lawrenson's (2001) motorcycling participants.

5.2.1 'I do not consider my sport to be risky'.

When asked if they agree with the survey statement 'I do not consider my sport to be risky' seventeen percent of motorcyclists do not consider motorcycling to be risky. However, supporting the respondents' narratives, seventy-three percent of motorcyclists do consider that motorcycling is a risky activity. Just over eighteen percent of horse riders do not consider their sport to be risky whereas seventy-one percent do consider horse riding to be risky (see fig 4.16, n=440). Although a small sample when compared to the population of 1.3 million British leisure Horse riders (British Equestrian Trade Association, 2015) and 1.355 million motorcyclists,

⁵¹⁷ Participant Chris was wearing a plaster cast on his arm at his interview due to a snowboarding accident.

(Department for Transport, 2016) these results are remarkably similar to each other. Given the well-documented injury statistics for both sports, these data provide plausible support for the effects of Optimism Bias within the sizable minority who deny the known and objectified risk inherent in their sport. With some individuals always looking on the bright side, there appears to be a credibility gap between published objectified risk and their subjective perception of risk. The credibility gap could help to explain why the Royal Society was unable to identify a suitable distinction between them. Snowsports research participants, against a population of 1.2 million active British skiers (Ski Club of Great Britain, 2019); display the greatest polarisation of attitude. Ten percent of the survey sample (n=35) considers at some level that their sport is not risky. However, an overwhelming eighty-nine percent agree that their sport is risky. These results found accord with snowsports participant interview narratives (n=14).

5.2.2 Risk awareness.

A measure of the possible magnitude of the effect of Optimism Bias on these research participants can be gauged by considering if their personal risk awareness is higher or lower than that of others engaged in the same sport. Optimism Bias posits that individuals should be unrealistically optimistic about achieving positive outcomes due to having a lower perception of risk when compared to that of their sporting peers (O'Sullivan, 2015). As discussed above, although most participants thought that their sport was risky, there was a sizable minority who thought it was not. Weber et al, (2002) found that their participants who engaged in risky behaviour did so because they believed their behaviour was not risky or that it provided high benefits. Furthermore, their research found that '[v]ery few of our respondents indicated [a] willingness to engage in behaviors that they considered to be risky'

(Weber et al, 2002, p.277). Consequently, if individuals perceive greater risk, they should correspondingly expect lower positive outcomes. However, participant narratives in this research indicate that, although some initially considered their risk perception was similar to others, within and across all three sports they then generally reconsidered they have a higher awareness of the risks in their sport when compared with others, but that they also derive significant benefits which are discussed later. This attitude was tested by responses to the survey statement 'my understanding of the risks in my sport is higher than other peoples'. Sixty-two percent of horse riders and seventy-five percent of motorcyclists strongly agree or agree that their risk perception is greater than that of their peers. This mirrors participant narratives for motorcyclists and horse riders. In contrast, thirty-eight percent of the snowsports sample reported either a strong agreement or agreement (see fig 4.22). Interestingly, forty-five percent of snowsports participants appear ambivalent, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. This is at odds with snowsports interviewees who consistently believe that they have a higher perception of risk. Several female interviewees considered that their risk perception was greater than males participating in the same sport (see fig 4.23). Snowboarder Louise stated that 'I don't think they [males] generally think about the risks as much'⁵¹⁸ while motorcyclist Pam believes that male motorcyclists 'like to show off sometimes, they like to race each other, they like to drive stupid'⁵¹⁹. Perhaps they were basing this belief and consequently, reinforcing, the commonly held stereotype of masculine risk-seeking. As will be seen below, this research found that participants' gender appears to be independent of risk-seeking behaviours within these sports. The same statement was controlled for gender to ascertain whether gender difference played

⁵¹⁸ 24/11/17

⁵¹⁹ 25/9/17

any part in an individual's risk assessment belief. This may also highlight the veracity of the gender stereotype. Eighty-nine percent of males and eighty percent of females strongly agree or agree that they have a greater perception of risk compared with their peers (see fig 4.23). The extra nine percent of males believing they have a higher perception of risk when compared with their peers is of interest and seems to, at least partially, support the stereotype that males seek risk.

Psychological experimental studies indicate that men are more likely to take risks than women (Byrnes et al, 1999; Weber et al, 2002). Researching gender differences in risk-taking behaviour, Harris et al (2006, p. 57) indicated that '[W]omen reported a lower likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors' but went on to suggest that 'when there is no risk of severe negative consequences, but rather a possibility of predominantly positive consequences in exchange for some small fixed cost, women more than men will engage in such behaviors'.

To establish the credibility of this claim within the survey sample, results were controlled for gender. Males and females responses are similar. Just over seventy percent of males and seventy-six percent of females disagree that their sport is not risky. Conversely, eighteen percent of males and sixteen percent of females do not consider their sport to be risky (see fig 4.17). Perhaps the two percent difference between males and females suggests that some of the females engaged in these sports are anticipating greater rewards from participating than the males. Consequently, this research tentatively rejects any notion in the significance of male essentialism when engaging in any of these three sports. However, the non-probability sample in this research is small, therefore, larger scale, experimental research using probability sampling, should be considered for any future research.

5.2.3 Is risk or fear important to sporting enjoyment?

Why do individuals persist in performing their sport, irrespective of gender, when they appear well aware of the risks, objective and perceived, to personal injury? Paul Slovic's (2010) *The Feeling of Risk* provides an interesting explanation. Slovic (2010, p. 92) contends that 'for many hazards, the greater the perceived benefit the lower the perceived risk'. This is articulated by Slovic (2010, p. 92) as the 'Affect Heuristic'. According to Slovic (2010), the inverse also applies; if individuals perceive the risk to be high they expect lower benefits. Interestingly, and seemingly at odds with Slovic's model, participants in this research potentially see themselves benefitting more rather than putting themselves at high risk when engaging in their sport, even though they perceive their sport as risky.

The influence of risk and/or fear relates to the research question 'what factors influence the individuals' continuing engagement in risky leisure sports activities such as motorcycling, skiing and horse riding?'

Adams (2009, p. ix) proposes that a 'risk-thermostat' is innate in every individual. Risk-thermostats, which are graduated on a continuum from low risk to high risk, mediate an individual's predisposition to engage, or not, in risky behaviour. Therefore, individuals who engage in so-called adrenaline sports potentially have a higher 'setting' compared with those who engage in lower-risk sports. Moreover, Brymer & Schweitzer (2012) have previously established a link that those individuals engaging in high-risk sports do experience fear in a positive life-affirming way and harness it in a transformative way. If, as Adams (2009) suggests, risk-thermostats are innate, then they also reside in those engaging in the less extreme sports featured in this research. Robinson (1992) has interpreted the fear felt through

engaging in less extreme sports as being beneficial to an individual's personal growth. Many participant narratives in and across all three sports indicated that they also feel and embrace fear while engaged in their sport. Some use fear to reduce their level of perceived risk. Horse rider Sherry, states 'I think you have to have a certain amount of fear because that's what keeps you safe, isn't it?'⁵²⁰. The link between fear and the resulting feeling of excitement and how it motivates individuals to persist in performing their sport is articulated by skier Victoria who proposes that 'if there wasn't any fear at all then it wouldn't be as exciting'⁵²¹. Survey results from the statement 'sometimes fear or being slightly scared is part of the excitement of my sport' indicate that seventy-six percent, or over three-quarters, of sampled horse riders agree that being scared adds to the excitement of horseriding. This is mirrored by seventy-seven percent of motorcyclists and eighty-nine percent of snow sports participants (see fig 4.18). It seems that fear, or being slightly scared, is fundamental to the enjoyment of these three sports. The research also considered if sporting enjoyment was affected by participants' gender. As discussed above, Harris et al (2006) considered females to be less willing than males to engage in risky behaviours unless they feel that the rewards, in the sense of positive outcomes, outweigh a small cost to achieve them. The survey sample indicated that gender is not a factor in the link between fear and/or risk and enjoyment. Eighty percent of males and seventy-seven percent of females agree that fear, or being slightly scared, adds to the excitement of their sport (see fig 4.19). Females, therefore, appear to engage in their chosen sport possibly due to their lower perception of risk versus their higher expectation of positive outcomes. This is of interest as females' lived experience narratives indicate that they are well aware of the risk involved in

⁵²⁰ 3/12/17

⁵²¹ 22/1/18

their sport, as Laura said about motorcycling, 'I don't know the numbers involved but I know that it's a very dangerous thing to be involved in'⁵²². This attitude is supported by the survey data which shows that seventy-six percent of females disagree to some extent that their sport is not risky (see fig 4.17). Consequently, the positive outcomes for nearly three-quarters of the female sample must be considerable when compared to the significant level of objective risk, especially among horse riders and motorcyclists. Csikszentmihaly's (1990) concept of flow may provide an explanatory link between risk and positive outcomes. He suggests that 'the most important step in emancipating oneself from social controls is the ability to find rewards in the events of each moment' (Csikszentmihaly, 1990, p. 19). Moreover, Birke and Brandt (2009, p. 196) assert that forging a bond of 'oneness with the horse' allows a female rider to concomitantly, perhaps by sitting astride the horse rather than side-saddle, emancipate herself from historical notions of feminine subordination allowing her to use that bond to positively experience being female.

5.2.4 Reduce the hazards or manage the risk?

For many, risk and fear are positive and important components in how individuals experience and enjoy participating in their sport. Nonetheless, sporting risk has to be mitigated. Fuller & Drawer (2004, p. 349) propose that '[t]he acceptability of risk within specific sports, however, is dependent on the perceptions of the participants involved'. How individuals negotiate risk is subjective and closely linked to the calibration of their personal risk-thermostat. Individuals, therefore, need a balance to enable management of their subjective perceptions of what constitutes an acceptable risk and how to negotiate the properties of whatever creates the risk, otherwise known as a hazard. Frey (1991) proposes that if individuals feel in control

⁵²² 31/8/17

of the risk that then minimises any negative outcomes. Thus feelings of control may help to promote O'Sullivan's (2015) Optimism Bias in an individual. Motorcyclist Susan voices many participants narratives who overwhelmingly indicate that, given the choice, they would rather manage the risk than remove the hazards associated with their sport. She believes that 'as there are more and more cars on the roads every single day I don't think you're ever going to get rid of the hazards. I think you've just got to be more aware of the risks'⁵²³. Participant narratives are supported by the responses to the survey statement 'I would prefer to manage risk rather than reduce the hazards'. When controlled for the specific sport, sixty-eight percent, or more than two-thirds of motorcyclists, prefer to manage risk over reducing the hazards. Horse riders come very close with nearly sixty-seven percent preferring to manage the risks. Sixty-two percent of snow sports participants, very nearly two thirds, prefer to manage risk (see fig 4.20). When the same statement was controlled for gender over seventy-eight percent of males compared with sixty-six percent of females prefer to manage risk over hazard reduction (See fig 4.21). This is of interest as the popular stereotype sees males seeking more risk regardless of the consequence.

Further training is a popular strategy described in many participant narratives to manage the inherent risk in their sport. Most motorcyclists report attendance of, with at least some level of success, advanced riding courses organised by the emergency services or by road safety organisations such as the Institute of Advanced Motorcyclists (IAM) or the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). This is corroborated in the survey results which indicate that fifty-one percent of the sample motorcyclists have engaged in further training during the past twelve months

⁵²³ 2/10/17

(see figs 4.28-4.30). This is contrary to research carried out by the IAM who propose that only one percent of motorcyclists engage with voluntary training (Grinsell, 2020). Furthermore, Grinsell (2020, p. 4) states that voluntary 'training is a vastly underexplored area, demonstrated by the low number of bikers who actually take part in advanced riding'. This suggests that either the small overall research sample may not represent the motorcycling population or that, knowing the subject of this research; social desirability bias has prompted interviewees and the survey sample to present in a favourable, pro-training, way. Seventy-two percent of horse riders and forty-eight percent of snowsports participants also report having taken voluntary riding/skiing lessons in the past twelve months (see figs 4.28, 4.29). When controlled for gender, forty-eight percent of males and fifty percent of females strongly agree or agree that they have taken extra lessons within the past twelve months (see fig 4.30). Undertaking further voluntary training to manage risk is, therefore, a popular strategy irrespective of gender.

5.2.5 Discussing risk or fear with peers?

We have seen that for many who engage in these sports, risk and fear are important elements which add to sporting excitement and are a factor in their continuing participation. We have also considered that individuals are aware of the statistical risks in their sport and often manage them through voluntary training or experience, what Bellaby and Lawrenson (2001, p. 375 emphasis in the original) refer to as '*road craft*'. We have also discussed the importance of sporting clubs and social media in the continuing (re)formulation of the sports subcultural *milieu*. Given that an intersubjective sharing of a common subcultural 'stock of knowledge' (Schutz, 1967, p. 80) exists within each subculture those risks could be expected to be communicated and disseminated throughout the subculture via its members.

However, it seems, from participant narratives, that the discussion of risk among individuals could be likened to the elephant in the room metaphor; everyone knows it's there but nobody talks about it. This view is expressed by many within and across all three sports with typical responses like motorcyclist Sam's who, when asked if he talks about motorcycling risk with friends, answered 'Yeah, occasionally we do speak about the risks but probably 95% of the time they're put very much to the back because no one wants to talk about coming off a bike'⁵²⁴. However, when friends, highly visible celebrities, athletes or sportspeople have accidents related to participation in their sports individuals do discuss them among themselves. Often this discussion relates to how they could vicariously learn from the unfortunate experience of the friend or professionals feeding back that information into the common stock of knowledge. The head injury sustained by World Champion racing driver and experienced skier Michael Schumacher while skiing, although he was wearing a helmet at the time, was widely discussed among the snowsports subculture. Although helmets are used extensively off-piste his accident has prompted greater use of helmets on-piste. Ski instructor Harry has used Schumacher's example to introduce the risk of head injury, encouraging his students to always wear a helmet over the historical bobble hat. Schumacher's widely publicised and communicated accident, and the importance of appropriate head protection on-piste, as well as off-piste, has, albeit slowly, been added to the stock of common knowledge.

To examine whether the lack of risk communication found in participant narratives is a common feature throughout the subcultures, the survey asked if the risks in their sport are ever discussed. Thirty-four percent of horse riders agree that they never

⁵²⁴ 23/7/18

discuss sporting risk among themselves with an almost equal thirty-two percent indicating that they do discuss risk. Forty percent of motorcyclists rarely discuss the risk whereas thirty-six percent do. The snowsports sample communicate risk the least. Fifty-five percent rarely discuss risk against the thirty-five percent that do (see figs 4.24, 4.25). The similarity of the attitudes across the three sports who do discuss risk is interesting. A third of each sporting sample acknowledges the elephant in the room by discussing the risk. The two thirds that do not are, potentially by looking on the bright side, conforming to O'Sullivan's (2015) notion of Optimism Bias. The known risks though are not discussed due to an ignorance of their existence, participants are cognisant of them. The gender of participants appears not to be a factor in whether or not the risk is discussed. The responses to the survey statement 'I rarely, if ever, talk to other people about the risks to personal injury in my sport' shows a similar spread across the seven attitude points. As these research findings indicate no obvious headline attitude from either gender, the mean of those points may be a more useful comparator⁵²⁵. A mean score for males of 3.83 compared to the female score of 3.84 suggests that the gender of the survey participants is not a major factor in discussing sporting risk (see fig 4.27). Although the risk is discussed, males and females generally prefer not to discuss the risky nature of their sport.

5.2.6 Changing risk perception over time.

O'Sullivan (2015, p.12) proposes that Optimism Bias 'transcends gender, race, nationality and age'. To ascertain the veracity of this claim, specifically concerning age and gender within those who partake in leisure sports, interview and survey participants were asked if their perception of risk had changed over their sporting career. Many participants across all sports reported changes with some reporting

⁵²⁵ The mean of seven attitude points is 3.5

significant changes in their risk perception often linking a heightened perception of risk to an increase in their sporting confidence. Gender, subsumed as participant gender, did not appear to be a factor in changing risk perception. The survey indicated that fifty percent of males and fifty-one percent of females agreed that their risk perception had changed over their sporting career (see fig 4.32). What is of interest, and at odds with participant narratives, is that thirty-nine and forty-two percent respectively of those surveyed across the three sports feel their risk perception is unchanged (see fig 4.31). The disparity between qualitative and quantitative results seen here is potentially caused by sampling error, misunderstanding the question, age differences within the sample or a manifestation of what Robson and McCartan (2016, P.26) describe as an 'incompatibility thesis' which stresses an inability to combine two epistemologically different and, therefore, incompatible research paradigms. Consequently, any future research should consider these points in its methodology.

If an individual's perception of risk has changed over time it is plausible to conclude that social constructionism has added to the subculture's common stock of knowledge specific to that sport. These additions can potentially be expressed through personal experience, peer interactions and/ or published statistical evidence of objective risk. Moreover, a change in risk perception as the participants age could support O'Sullivan's (2015) proposition as participants in this study persistently engage in their sport as they age, even though their risk perception has increased. Consequently, as individuals progress through their sporting career their Optimism Bias is potentially reinforced through gaining confidence and their successful management of risk. This can be aided through voluntary training and/ or becoming more experienced in their sport. This is of interest because our society normally

associates risk-taking behaviour with youth and risk aversion with maturity. An increase in Optimism Bias as an individual's progress through their sporting career could account for the effect of 'risk compensation' (Adams, 2001, p. 14) which is discussed below.

5.2.7 Risk compensation.

An increase in an individual's Optimism Bias, facilitated by increased knowledge and perception of risk, provides an illusion of personal immunity from injury. This may account for experienced Scottish motorcyclists who despite looking on the bright side suffer greater injury, albeit with less frequency to those less experienced (Genderton et al, 2004). Similar findings were also presented by Dischinger et al (2006) who noted that, due to their experience, older North American motorcyclists rode larger motorcycles than younger motorcyclists, and although the frequency of their accidents was lower, their injury rate increased.

As discussed above, participant narratives generally report changes to their perception of risk over their sporting career. Some motorcyclists consider that motorcycle engineering technology, such as antilock brakes (ABS⁵²⁶), has reduced some risk while those horse riders involved with one-day eventing consider that frangible shear pins, rather than the historically solid pins used to secure obstacles and jumps, have made eventing safer. However, Purvis (2019) indicates that the compulsory fitment of motorcycle ABS has had little or no effect on motorcycle accident rates over the period 2013-2017. Consequently, compulsory ABS has given motorcyclists the illusion of risk management. Inappropriate speed is a factor widely accepted and associated with the motorcycle accident rate. The British government

⁵²⁶ ABS is compulsory in the EU on all new motorcycles over 125cc from 2016

have presented many safety campaigns some using the aphorism “Speed Kills”. The latest ‘Think’ road safety campaign argues that ‘[s]peed is one of the main factors in fatal road accidents’ (Department for Transport, 2020, p. 1). Further underlining the effect of speed on motorcycle fatalities, U.K Government figures indicate that although rural roads, where average speeds are higher, account for forty percent of motorcycle traffic, they account for sixty-eight percent of fatalities (Department for Transport, 2015). Although a contributory factor in accident statistics, speed can be seen as an important factor in motorcycling. Downhill skiing, whereby the individual with the fastest time down the slopes wins, is popular winter television viewing, as are the many televised equestrian events. Therefore, speed is central to the enjoyment of these three sports. Participants who gain confidence and experience through performing their sport and trusting the technology potentially internalise greater Optimism Bias as they subjectively consider that they successfully manage the risk. However, they may also be compensating for their perceived risk reduction with a desire to go faster which, in the case of motorcyclists, results in the higher accident rate reported on rural roads. Therefore, they appear to rebalance their risk-thermostat to maintain their acceptable level of risk. This rebalancing of the risk-thermostat to maintain a homeostatic acceptable level of risk, although going faster than before, is described as ‘risk compensation’ (Adams (2001). Interestingly, although some snowsports participants’ narratives admitted helmet wearing makes them feel safer and, consequently, ski faster, research by Scott et al (2007) found that, although helmet wearing was an increasing factor in the risk reduction strategy of skiers and snowboarders, there was no statistical evidence supporting the effect of risk compensation in helmeted participants. This inconsistency appears to

exemplify McCartan's (2016) incompatibility thesis which exists between positivist and interpretivist epistemologies.

5.2.8 The importance of speed.

To ascertain the importance of speed, participants were asked how important speed was to their sporting enjoyment. Motorcyclist Barry admitted that 'I like speed, I like acceleration and I guess there is also an element of the excitement of it'⁵²⁷. Laura described speed as being 'lovely. It's nice; it's desirable, it's important'⁵²⁸. Although motorcycles are potentially faster than either horses or skiers, speed is valorised in both of these sports, too. Although initially nervous, Nora found riding a galloping horse to be a liberating experience confessing that 'I was really nervous, I had a dry mouth (...) but I so wanted to do it, I really wanted to do it. (...) it was fantastic and I was like screaming "yippee" (...) I said can we do it again? (...) I've have had a couple of gallops since then'⁵²⁹. The excitement expressed when discussing speed is found frequently in participant narratives. It is the sensation of speed, rather than the outright speed, that drives participants, irrespective of gender, to engage in their sport. This sensation has been described by some participants as being like a drug and provides an interesting insight to discuss more fully in the next section.

The central importance of speed found in participant narratives was also significant in those surveyed. The survey asked the sample to score the statement 'I don't enjoy going fast'. Seventy-two percent of motorcyclists generally disagreed with the statement; over a quarter of which strongly disagreed. Sixty-four percent of horse

⁵²⁷ 14/11/17

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⁵²⁹ 3/12/17

riders generally disagreed with the statement, out of which, twenty-one percent strongly disagreed. Fifty-three percent of snow sports participants sampled disagreed or strongly disagreed (see fig 4.34). The same question controlled for gender indicates that males enjoy speed within these sports significantly more than females. Over sixty-eight percent of males disagreed or strongly disagreed compared with forty-five percent of females who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Conversely, only ten percent of males do not enjoy speed compared with twenty-two percent of females (see fig 4.35). Speed is, therefore, for males more than females, a cornerstone of sporting enjoyment. Without speed, their sport becomes pedestrian and unexciting. Consequently, speed is seen as a major factor in why research participants continue in their sport. Perhaps speed is seen as a medium to reject constraints imposed on individuals by their perceived over-bureaucratisation of UK society. Moreover, the confidence and drug-like euphoria inculcated in individuals through speed not only enhances their Optimism Bias but may in part also trigger risk compensation, to maintain acceptable levels of risk. The corresponding increased setting of their risk-thermostat is a plausible explanation for why experienced practitioners of these sports, and certainly motorcyclists, sustain more severe injury, but less often, than those less experienced.

5.2.9 Summary.

Interview and survey participants are aware of at least some of the risks inherent in their sport. Eighty-nine percent, nearly nine out of ten, agreed that their sport is risky. Risk and injury are, however, rarely major topics of conversation among participants unless it relates directly to them, their friendship group or a celebrity. When the risk is discussed participants display an attitude of fatalism; although many participants, irrespective of gender and across all three sports, report taking extra training to

manage their perceived risk they often believe that the risk is external and thus out of their control. However, in the case of motorcyclists, research by the IAM indicates that only one percent of motorcyclists actually engage with voluntary training. Due to possible social desirability bias, participant responses relating to extra training should, therefore, be treated cautiously.

Risk and fear often have a negative association. However, seventy-six percent of horse riders, seventy-seven percent of motorcyclists and eighty-nine percent of snowsports participants agree that risk, and the fear that sometimes accompanies it, adds to the excitement of their sport. Gender was not a major factor. Eighty percent of males and seventy-seven percent of females agree that fear, or being slightly scared, adds excitement to their sport. Some interview narratives indicated that if there was no risk or occasional fear, their sport would not interest them. In the case of these leisure sports, risk and fear are associated with positive outcomes. The expectation of a positive outcome when performing their sport shields individuals from the objectified risk provided by statistical evidence. Snowsports participants face significant risk, while motorcyclists are fifty-seven times more likely to be killed or seriously injured than car drivers. Horse riders are at least three-and-a-half times more likely to be injured than motorcyclists. If participants expect a positive outcome every time they perform their sport, they are potentially being influenced by Optimism Bias where the expectation of a positive experience outweighs any potential perceived risk. Many participants across all sports reported changes, with some interviewees reporting significant changes, in their risk perception during their sporting career. They often linked a heightened perception of risk to an increase in their sporting confidence and ability. Gender did not appear to be a factor in changing risk perception. An increase in confidence, underpinned by a greater

understanding of inherent risk, potentially increases levels of Optimism Bias within an individual. Fortunately, Optimism Bias is mediated by an innate, internal risk-thermostat. Every individual has a uniquely calibrated risk-thermostat set at their perception of an acceptable level of risk. Some individuals' risk-thermostats have a higher setting than others. This difference potentially accounts for some individuals performing so-called high risk "adrenaline" sports that some others consider far too risky and frightening.

Optimism Bias appears to be linked to the phenomena of risk compensation. Although an individual has their own risk-thermostat setting, this setting appears to be potentially increased through repeatedly experiencing positive, rather than negative outcomes. The resulting behavioural reinforcement of receiving only positive experiences potentially increases Optimism Bias which then moves the thermostat needle up to maintain acceptable levels of risk. The increased setting of the risk-thermostat potentially accounts for more experienced participants suffering fewer, but more serious, injuries than those less experienced. Sixty-four percent of horse riders report the thrill of an occasional gallop while fifty-three percent skiers enjoy the exhilaration of carving down a mountainside. Seventy-two percent of motorcyclists reported enjoying speed. However, speed for motorcyclists can be seen as problematic. Significantly more motorcycle accidents occur on rural roads where average speeds are higher (Department for Transport, 2015). Conforming to the common male stereotype, which suggests males valorise speed more than females, over sixty-eight percent of males compared with forty-five percent of females surveyed reported that they enjoy speed. These are not sedentary sports and the sensation of speed, if not outright speed, is an important, but not exclusive, factor in why participants persistently engage in their sport. Some participants

associate the sensation of speed to that of what they believe to be an addictive drug. It is potentially the effect of Optimism Bias and risk compensation combined with the drug-like euphoria caused by the sensation of speed which encourages individuals to continually engage in their sport.

5.3 Theme of Wellbeing

The positive links between sporting engagement and personal wellbeing, although having been well documented, have mainly focussed on adventure sports or more extreme so-called “adrenaline sports” such as sky-diving, rock-climbing, parkour and white water rafting (Allan et al., 2020; Brymer & Schweitzer, 2012, 2017; Kidder, 2017). In contrast, this research examines the benefits to personal wellbeing for those engaged in less extreme sports. Individuals engaging with the three sports featured, although not necessarily requiring a similar risk-thermostat setting to those engaged in extreme sports; report that the benefits to personal wellbeing are similar and substantial. As this thesis was written during England’s second COVID-19 lockdown, the mental health benefits of leisure sports to those engaged in them cannot be overstated. Consequently, the negative effects on individual mental health due to lockdown restrictions placed on their participation are potentially severe.

5.3.1 Self-identity through sport.

Sociological notions of self-identity initially emerged from the symbolic Interactionist work of William James and George Herbert Mead. The development of a self-identity is considered to be a uniquely human ability, allowing individuals to reflect on their experience and the social world via communication and language (Scott & Marshall, 2009). Schutz (1967) considers self-identity as a bi-directional feedback loop, consisting of a synthesis of an individual’s lived experience and their

current understanding of a common stock of social knowledge. Their lived-experience adds to their personal stock of knowledge subsequently adding to the wider social stock of knowledge through communication, verbally and non-verbally, with their peers. As the social stock of knowledge grows through the addition of their and other's lived-experiences, the now enlarged stock of knowledge becomes internalised by the individual further developing their self-identity. Therefore, central to the development of self-identity is the notion that actors create meanings derived from previous interactions with other actors and/or social structures who then formulate new actions to maintain a consistent self-identity (Rogers & Smith-Lovin, 2012). Donnelly and Young (1988, p. 237) contextualise this socially constructed and dynamic process in individuals with regard to the development of their sporting self-identity within their subculture concluding that 'subcultures are constantly undergoing revision and change due to a variety of processes both within and outside the subculture'. When Susan felt that her local *Curvy Riders* group membership had stagnated she used her vigorous and charismatic self-image as a female motorcyclist to inject new passion into its members. Her *Curvy Riders* group is now vibrant with many new members. Laura, who has been riding for four years, initially considered that riding a motorcycle was going to be just another passing activity 'like I go to Zumba classes and I do yoga. It's changed; it's definitely part of me now'⁵³⁰. Membership of a sporting subculture can thus be seen as intrinsic to the development of a positive self-image within an individual. The central importance of their sport in the development of their self-identity is a reoccurring feature in participant narratives. Even those, such as horse riding Nora and motorcyclist Kurt, whose previous self-identities had not been influenced by their sport, consider their

⁵³⁰ 31/8/17

subcultural membership to now be a comfortable place essential to their positive self-identity. Many participants revel in the knowledge that they are seen by non-members as belonging to a particular, perhaps socially desirable, subculture. Ski company director Victoria states that ‘I love it. I’m glad that that’s my life (...) and that is how people know me’⁵³¹. Motorcyclist Joan, who initially rejected the influence of motorcycling on her self-image, began to enjoy the attention of non-motorcyclists describing that ‘I quite like the fact that I’m a girl and I ride a bike. I guess I like the surprise factor when people go “oh you ride a bike do you?”’⁵³² Snowboarder Chris illustrates how the snowsports subculture can be changed from external influences. Chris is a passionate advocate for his sport and regularly encourages non-snowboarders to try snowboarding. These neophytes to the subculture bring their existing lived experience as a non-member, thereby adding to the common stock of knowledge alongside modifying their self-identity as a snowboarder. Structural influences provide a further example of how Donnelly and Young’s (1988) external processes modify the subculture. Monica, an operations manager for a ski chalet company based in a snowsports resort, considers that her self-identity as a skier is a consequence, and also a requirement of her work. Therefore, for Monica to be identified as a skier from within the snowsports subculture has commercial and personal value stating ‘it’s quite important here but yeah, I didn’t think it ever would be’⁵³³.

5.3.2 Self-esteem and self-confidence.

The widely used Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSS) is a quantitative tool which indicates that positive self-identity is closely linked to global self-esteem, defined by

⁵³¹ 22/1/18

⁵³² 2/10/17

⁵³³ 3/11/17

Harter (2012) as overall feelings of self-worth. Furthermore, those individuals possessing high self-esteem are generally more satisfied with their lives (Moksnes & Espnes, 2013). The positive effects on an individual's self-esteem through the participation of, generally team, sports are widely reported in the literature (Pedersen & Seidman, 2004; Pluhar et al, 2019; Vealey et al, 1998). Collins et al, (2018) contend that individuals who are competent in their sports score higher on the RSS. Rubli et al, (2020) found a positive association between sporting competency and self-esteem in schoolchildren. Brymer and Schweitzer (2012, p. 485) propose that extreme sports are life-fulfilling promoting psychological well-being in those who engage in them. Similarly, Collins et al (2018) indicate that if individuals are not competent, then self-esteem is lower. Individuals possessing low self-esteem can potentially descend into negative life experiences such as substance abuse (Fisher et al, 2017) or delinquency and other anti-social behaviours (Farrington et al, 2017).

Lirgg (1992) proposes that although self-confidence is sometimes fragile, evidenced by Jenny who is rebuilding her self-confidence after owning a difficult horse, once (re)gained through achieving sporting competence it further enhances global self-esteem. The adult participants in this research, although valuing social aspects of their sport, perform them individually but still appear to benefit from increased self-confidence and its associated self-esteem through achieving sporting proficiency. The pathways to self-esteem appear, therefore, not restricted to those performing team sports, extreme sports or children. Interestingly, many interview participants across all three sports report that their enhanced self-confidence, achieved through sporting proficiency, is transferable into their everyday lives. Horse rider and college lecturer Sherry considers that overcoming the challenges of occasional fear and anxiety and not always being in control of a headstrong horse

has allowed her to believe that ‘if I can cope with that, I can cope with most other things really’⁵³⁴. Sherry demonstrates how confronting and overcoming challenging situations has augmented her self-confidence and global self-esteem, much like those engaging in more extreme sports, enabling her to confidently face future life challenges. All three leisure sports can provide some significant confidence-building challenges to be overcome. Motorcyclist Frank describes psychological benefits provided by the challenge of ‘[r]iding overnight, pushing yourself to do the 540 miles and that’s about keeping going, keeping going all the time’⁵³⁵. The often intensely physical challenge of skiing gives Jane the ability to escape what she considers to be comfortable normalcy describing that ‘you just push yourself harder than you would do normally, and the discomfort is more than worth it’⁵³⁶.

An increase in self-confidence through performing their sport was also found in the survey responses to the statement ‘engaging in my sport has increased my self-confidence’. Eighty-seven percent of horse riders and motorcyclists and eighty-one percent of snowsports participants agree that their sport has increased their self-confidence. None of the snowsports participants strongly disagreed, disagreed or somewhat disagreed, whilst horse riders and motorcyclists either recorded none, or negligible levels of disagreement with the statement (see fig 4.41).

When controlled for gender, sixty-six percent, or two-thirds of males and seventy-nine percent, over three-quarters of females strongly agree or agree that their sport has increased their self-confidence (see fig 4.42). These data suggest that significantly more females than males consider that their self-confidence is boosted by their sport. Although this research measures an increase in self-confidence rather

⁵³⁴ 3/12/17

⁵³⁵ 8/11/17

⁵³⁶ 16/6/18

than self-esteem, the close correlation between them has been established and discussed earlier. However, contrary to this study's findings, Kling et al, (1999) contend that it is males, rather than females who possess greater self-esteem adding that the differences are small. A tentative explanation for these differences may be due to the type of leisure sports engaged in by female participants in this study. Two of the three sports are biased towards males, which, consequently, require females to be self-confident enough to overcome occasional male hostility. Horseriding, although female-biased, requires significant self-confidence to influence the behaviour of a potentially seven hundred kilo horse.

However, when all agreement ratings are examined, the gap between genders, although still favouring females, is reduced. Eighty-seven percent of females compared with eighty-one percent of males report increased self-confidence. As before, levels of disagreement with the statement are either absent or so minor as to have little or no effect (see fig 4.42). This is more in-line with the negligible gender differences found by Harris et al, (2018) in their Lifetime Self-Esteem scale. Similar benefits to those engaging in extreme and team sports can, therefore, be enjoyed by those who perform the individual sports of this research. Moreover, although marginally more females than males benefit, self-confidence of both genders, and corresponding self-esteem, are significantly enhanced through performing their sport. The positive effects of an increase in self-confidence and self-esteem on a participant's life-world provide compelling explanations for why they continue their participation in a risky leisure sport.

5.3.3 Leisure sports as competition with self or others.

Although the three sports are performed competitively, participants in this study mainly enjoy them as a leisure activity. Except for Cliff, who participates in amateur polo matches, other equestrian and snowsports competitions, such as show jumping, one-day-eventing and downhill slalom are time trials against the clock and/or obstacles. Competitive motorcycling on public roads is however, prohibited by law in the UK and voids motor insurance with offenders facing severe penalties for infringement.

The psychologist Abraham Maslow's (1943) taxonomy of human needs originally placed self-actualisation, or a need for self-fulfilment, at the pinnacle of a multi-level hierarchy all levels of which rest on the premise that baser human needs have been previously fully met. For example, the need for an individual to belong or to be loved is built on a foundation of personal safety, which itself builds on the satisfaction of more basic physiological needs such as food, water, shelter and sleep. Self-actualisation has been defined by Maslow as being 'What a man (sic) *can* be, he (sic) *must* be' (1943, p. 378 emphasis in original). Maslow further insists that his theory operates unconsciously 'upon ends rather than means to these ends (...) via 'various cultural paths to the same goal' (1943, p. 370) rather than Weber's value-rational actions, (*wertrational*) where the deliberate achievement of goals, the ends, are justified by the means of achieving them. Building on Maslow's perhaps simplistic model, Tay and Diener (2011) found that rather than being a universally ordered hierarchy, needs can be simultaneously addressed and accomplished out of order in the quest for subjective wellbeing (SWB). Moreover, SWB is considered by Tay and Diener (2011) to be contingent on an individual's country of residence.

The path to SWB is, therefore, not a simple one. Motorcyclist Barry confessed that although not generally competitive, 'I am quite competitive with myself. I can be quite hard on myself in terms of wanting to do a good job'⁵³⁷. The frustration of trying to self-actualise appears not to be gender-specific. Female motorcyclist Sofia revealed that:

If I can't do something myself I get angry with myself so I am competitive with myself (...) it doesn't bother me what other people are doing but if I can't do it I feel as if I've let myself down⁵³⁸.

Snowboarder Chris pits himself against the environment in his quest to self-actualise admitting that 'it's me against myself. It's me against the conditions, the mountain, things like that, but it's testing myself'⁵³⁹. In their study of older participants in competitive leisure sports, Heo et al, (2012, p.450) found that their quantitative model predicted positive outcomes for their participants in levels of 'personal enrichment, self-actualization, enjoyment, and self-fulfilment'. These outcomes are similar to those found in participants of previous, mainly qualitative, studies of leisure activities such as bird watching, playing chess, cycling, quilting and coin collecting (Heo et al, 2012). Common to both competitive and non-competitive leisure sports is that the positive benefits mentioned above are available to those, like the participants in this study, who make a substantial effort and who demonstrate perseverance to attain competence in their sport (Heo et al, 2012).

Attitudes to competition were examined by the survey question 'I prefer to compete with other people rather than against myself'. At odds with interview participants whose preference was self-competition, nearly forty percent of horse riders in the sample prefer to compete against others while thirty-two percent, prefer at some

⁵³⁷ 14/11/17

⁵³⁸ 11/10/17

⁵³⁹ 16/4/18

level self-competition (see fig 4.43). This discrepancy may be due to how the question was interpreted or to the popularity of amateur equestrian events among the survey sample. Perhaps responding to the illegality of on-road competition over fifty-three percent of motorcyclists prefer self-competition compared with nearly eighteen percent who preferred competition with others. Snowsports participants clearly choose self-competition. Forty-five percent of skiers disagree or strongly disagree with a preference to compete against others while just over six percent agree with a preference for competition with others (see fig 4.43). Although Coren et al, (2017, p. 136) notes that self-competition 'embodies notions of self-improvement, progress, and mastery' they conclude that '[w]hile women are less willing than equally able men to compete against other people, we find no gender difference in the willingness to compete against one's own, previous score' (Coren et al, 2017, p. 139). However, this research survey data indicates that although, as Coren et al, (2017) found, females are less willing than men to compete against others, a gender difference in the willingness for self-competition does exist. Just over thirty-three percent of males versus fifty-six percent of females prefer self-competition (see fig 4.44).

Unlike the professionally competitive forms of these sports, which are publicly valorised and financially rewarded, the smaller personal wins achieved by leisure participants and/or their ambivalence towards competition may also provide positive outcomes. When built upon a foundation of more basic needs being successfully met, achieving personal success, or seeing an improving performance, satisfies Maslow's (1943) original injunction to be the best they can be. Consequently, a sporting participant's need to attain SWB is a persuasive factor in the participants continuing commitment to their sport.

5.3.4 Living in the moment.

Common to many participant narratives are feelings of “being in the moment”. This occurs when individuals are totally focused on their current task. Bishop et al (2004, p. 232) define the phenomenon as ‘feelings of being alert to what is occurring in the here-and-now. It is often described as a feeling of being fully present and alive in the moment’. The phenomenon was conceptualised by the psychologist Csikszentmihalyi, (1990, p. 89), as ‘flow’ whereby the lived-experience of an individual single-mindedly interacting dynamically with the environment or others can lead to intense concentration which in turn optimises their experience.

Being mindful of one’s own lived-experience in the here-and-now and feeling alive to the moment is also a therapeutic technique known as mindfulness (Oxford Mindfulness Centre, 2020). Mindfulness therapy is shown to deliver significant positive mental health benefits able to combat several forms of mental illness such as depression, stress and anxiety (Oxford Mindfulness Centre, 2020). Furthermore, mindfulness therapy is recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) for adults suffering reoccurring episodes of depression (National Health Service, 2018). The efficacy of mindfulness techniques to combat workplace and emotional stress has previously been established (Baltzell & McCarthy, 2016; Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Grossman et al., 2004; Josefsson et al., 2017). Mindfulness programmes such as *Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement* (MSPE) have been shown by Kaufman et al, (2009) to increase the performance of golfers and archers. Another mindfulness programme, *Mindfulness Meditation Training for Sport* (MMTS), was used by Baltzell et al, (2014) to promote wellbeing in the coaches and players in a first division varsity women’s soccer team. Mindfulness is also advocated by Baltzell and McCarthy, (2016) as a therapy to boost athlete’s performance.

Mindfulness, in the form of living in the moment, also appears to be a major benefit for those, irrespective of gender, engaged in the sports examined here. The narrative of Motorcyclist Barry encapsulates an essence of mindfulness saying ‘you’re not thinking about your problems at work, your problems at home, your financial problems, your relationship problems. You’re not thinking about any problems you’re just thinking about the moment of riding the bike⁵⁴⁰. Horse rider Sherry has a similar experience reporting that ‘I put everything else that is going on out of my mind and just enjoy being in the moment’⁵⁴¹. Motorcyclist Susan agrees with Sherry who says when riding ‘I’m not thinking about anything else other than riding’⁵⁴².

Living in the moment held an important place in all participant narratives within and across all three sports. Examination of the survey question ‘when performing my sport I live in the moment’ reveals clear agreement across all three sports. When all levels of agreement are considered over nine out of ten horse riders and motorcyclists and nearly nine out of ten snowsports participants agree that when they perform their sport they live in the moment. None of the sample in any of the sports reported strong disagreement or disagreement (see fig 4.45). When controlled for gender ninety-eight percent of males and ninety-five percent of females live in the moment when performing their sport (see fig 4.46). This research, therefore, suggests that the mental wellbeing of individuals engaging in these sports is positively affected during the performance of them and provides compelling evidence for why males and females persistently engage in their risky pastime. By the same token, the lockdown restrictions that COVID-19 has placed on actively participating in skiing and motorcycling, which have been particularly affected⁵⁴³, can be

⁵⁴⁰ 14/11/17

⁵⁴¹ 3/12/17

⁵⁴² 2/10/17

⁵⁴³ Horse riders are allowed to exercise their animals by rota, riding lessons have generally been suspended

considered as detrimental to mental wellbeing. The adverse effects of both lockdowns on those engaging in leisure sports, although outside the scope of this research, should be considered for future research.

5.3.5 My sport is like a drug: Adrenaline and exhilaration.

The analogy made between addictive drugs and the enjoyment of their sport in some participant's narratives when attached to what are, on-the-face-of-it, historical modes of transport, was unexpected. Drug abuse, is generally considered to be unacceptable in Western society as evidenced by a significant corpus of research into its negative aspects. However, the analogy powerfully articulates the immense satisfaction that individuals feel when engaging in their sport. It should perhaps be no surprise that as English is a living language, as opposed to a language of antiquity such as Latin, it becomes an ever-evolving, social construction influenced by the agents, or groups of agents, who use it. Consequently, words once associated with drug use, such as "buzz" , "hit" , "rush" and "fix" have become repurposed and assimilated into mainstream English and in particular, the lexicon of exciting leisure sports.

Griffiths, (1996) indicates that far from being universally negative, addictions can provide positive benefits to the addict. Some of those benefits are described by Griffiths (1996, p.20) as the 'positive experience of pleasure, excitement [and] relaxation'. The release of adrenaline, the fight or flight hormone manufactured in the body, is associated with so-called adrenaline sports allowing those engaging in them to 'escape the bounds of the rational mind and controlled body' (Tulloch & Lupton, 2003, p. 35). A systematic review of the research involving sports considered to be at most risk of causing physical addiction was performed by Di Lodovico et al,

(2019). Although unable to provide conclusive results they indicate that endurance athletes followed by ball games, gymnasium members and power disciplines, such as weight lifting, were at greatest risk of developing physical addiction.

Participant narratives attest to the release of adrenaline in their leisure sports. Adrenaline release is, therefore, not the exclusive preserve of extreme sports but accessible to those individuals with a potentially lower setting on their risk-thermostat. Motorcyclist Frank describes the feeling of riding as ‘it’s exhilarating (...) I just love it. I don’t get a buzz like that out of anything else I’ve tried (...) I just find it a great, really exhilarating experience’⁵⁴⁴.

The analogy with addictive drugs, where the addict has to continually repeat ingesting the substance to maintain their sense of normality, is made by skier Daniel and motorcyclist Pam who describe the cycle as ‘getting that natural high with your endorphins and just that... the adrenaline that excitement and then it goes down and then you start again’⁵⁴⁵. For Daniel the quest for adrenaline lies in his skiing competence, ‘as you get better at skiing you go faster and you do more jumps so the more adrenaline you get (...) it’s all about the adrenaline it gives you’⁵⁴⁶.

Survey results show a strong association between feelings of exhilaration and sporting participation.

Eighty-four percent of horse riders either strongly agree or agree that their sport is exhilarating. Nearly ninety percent or nine out of ten motorcyclists felt the same way. Eighty-seven percent, nearly nine in ten, of snowsports participants also strongly agree or agree that their sport is exhilarating. There was no disagreement with the statement at any level in any sport (see fig 4.49).

⁵⁴⁴ 8/11/17

⁵⁴⁵ 25/9/17

⁵⁴⁶ 27/3/18

When the same question is controlled for gender, ninety-nine percent, well over nine out of ten males, and ninety-seven percent, again well over nine in ten of females, agree that their sport is exhilarating. As found above, there was no disagreement with the statement at any level (see fig 4.50).

As several participant narratives considered their sport analogous to drug taking, the survey examined the analogy between perceptions of possible feelings obtained through substance abuse and the performance of leisure sports in a larger sample. The statement 'my sport is addictive, almost like a drug' resulted in eighty-five percent of motorcyclists and horse riders agreeing at some level with the statement. Snowsports participants recorded an overall seventy percent agreement (see fig 4.51).

When all three levels of agreement are considered together eighty-nine percent of males and eighty-three percent of females recorded some level of agreement with the statement (see fig 4.52). Neither gender strongly disagreed that their sport is addictive, almost like a drug. Such high levels of agreement in the survey sample provide further compelling evidence for why individuals continually participate in their sport.

When elevated to a position of a leisure sport rather than as mundane transport, these three sports appear to provide high levels of arousal to both males and females and, much like substance abusers chasing their next fix, possibly compels them to persist in their sport in the quest for excitement and its positive mental health benefits. Had Di Lodovico et al, (2019) included these leisure sports in their review they may have found them to be as physically addictive as endurance running. Consequently, any future research into the physically addictive nature of sports should also consider including leisure sports such as these.

5.3.6 Sport as relaxation.

It is paradoxical that these leisure sports, where the margins between life and death can be slim, are, at the same time, exhilarating and relaxing. Allan et al, (2020, p. 1) provide a plausible explanation suggesting that ‘immersion in nature provides the unique opportunity to relax and gain perspective on life’. Furthermore, Allan et al, (2020) propose that outdoor and adventure sports can positively impact an individual’s wellbeing, over and above that provided by nature, through the experience of learning and becoming competent in their sport. Additionally, in their study to determine what high-level wellbeing is and how individuals attain and maintain it, Allen et al, (2019, p. 1045 my emphasis) conclude that ‘[h]appy, healthy people seem to attain and maintain this way of being over time, through a series of *self-initiated experiential learning cycles*’. The self-initiated nature of an individual’s entry into their sporting subculture, along with their experiences of continually learning how to belong and to become competent in it, was discussed earlier. The leisure sports featured in this research are all usually performed outside and all require varying degrees of experiential learning. The many participants who mention their energetic and exhilarating sport as offering relaxation could be considered to be some of Allen et al’s (2019) happy, healthy people. Monica makes the connection between skiing being an intensely physical sport and its calming effect after a stressful workday ‘It makes me feel calm. I think it’s strange, isn’t it? Because skiing is such an adrenaline sport but there is a real calming element to it’⁵⁴⁷. For office manager Chloe, horse riding provides ‘fitness and also it is relaxation, it helps you

⁵⁴⁷ 3/11/17

switch off”⁵⁴⁸. Schoolteacher and horse rider Ella considers that ‘the calming effect it has on me, you know, it’s almost the same as stroking a cat’⁵⁴⁹.

The unexpected calming effect provided by performing these sometimes intensely energetic sports was further examined by the survey statement ‘performing my sport relaxes me’. Nearly ninety percent of horse riders, eighty-two percent of motorcyclists and eighty percent snowsports participants either strongly agree or agree that their sport relaxes them. There is almost no disagreement among horse riders or motorcyclists and just over three percent disagreement among snowsports participants (see fig 4.47). The relaxing effect of these sports appears to be independent of gender. Ninety-six percent of males and ninety-two percent of females report some level of agreement, the majority in both cases strongly agreeing (see fig 4.48). Research evidence suggests that more than nine out of ten males and females find relaxation when performing their sport. This must be considered a factor in why individuals participate in these sports and helps provide evidence of how regular participation in these sports, perhaps even more so during a COVID-19 lockdown or high tier level, promotes positive mental health.

5.3.7 Freedom own-time, and independence.

When associated with leisure activities, freedom can be considered as a situation when an individual is free to engage in the desired activity in a place and at a time of their choosing. The ability to choose the time and place to engage in the desired activity is thought to enable individuals to develop a greater sense of self-motivation and competence leading to happiness (Eskiler et al, 2019; Yalcin, 2020). The associations between achieving sporting competence and attaining self-confidence

⁵⁴⁸ 25/11/17

⁵⁴⁹ 25/11/17

and high global self-esteem were presented earlier. The powerful therapeutic benefits of wellbeing, both physical and psychological discussed earlier as living-in-the-moment; therefore, require an individual to set aside that moment in time specifically to engage in their chosen leisure sport. Setting aside sufficient time to engage in their sports, while also facing the need to accommodate everyday domestic and work-related tasks, often caused time management issues with some participants. Health professional Sherry treats the need for own-time as a *fait accompli* with her family saying 'I'm quite selfish about that really. But I think my family now knows that Sherry's got to go and do the horse so they sort of accept it now⁵⁵⁰. Horse rider Caroline normalised her riding time by merging it into her normal working day 'It's sort of part of my day really if I don't do it then it's a bit like something is missing'. Professional musician Bert, while accepting that active riding requires his full concentration, finds the mundane, but necessary, tasks of mucking out his horse enables him to plan his professional workload. Therefore, effective time management can sometimes be achieved by doing one thing while thinking of another. Submariner Cliff, who spends a great deal of time restricted to a stressful and strictly regimented life under the sea, considers own-time and the freedom it brings as being:

[L]iberated from the monotony of everyday life I think. It's probably 90 minutes of freedom I think is a fair way to describe it (...) the 90 minutes or an hour of enjoyment, independence, alone time out and about in the countryside⁵⁵¹.

The therapeutic effect of allocating own-time on an individual's mental health is a common thread which appears to bind all my participants together. Moreover, the benefits appear to present irrespective of age, within and across all three sports.

⁵⁵⁰ 3/12/17

⁵⁵¹ 3/8/18

Furthermore, it appears that the need for own-time is independent of participants' gender; males and females seem to derive similar benefit from taking time out from their busy professional or domestic lives. The liberating effect of these leisure sports on the mental health of participants is potentially not confined to a monotonous everyday life. Own-time potentially allows free expressions of dissatisfaction with physical and mental constraints imposed by government responding to an overcrowded island state. Although no participants admitted to attending any formal mindfulness courses, own-time, to *be* in the moment, is seen as central when practising mindfulness. Therefore, the benefits of own-time might be informally and continually communicated, not necessarily verbally but conceivably vicariously, by individuals occupying the social spaces throughout the three sporting subcultures.

The importance of own-time to mental health emerged *a posteriori* from the qualitative data analysis. Due to the time and resource constraints of being a lone PhD researcher own-time data was not collected quantitatively. It would, therefore, be useful to collect such data for any future examination of leisure sports.

5.3.8 Summary.

Positive mental health benefits, similar to those provided by extreme or “adrenaline” sports, are apparently available to individuals, irrespective of gender, participating in the leisure sports featured in this research. Moreover, those benefits are accessible to those with a lower risk-thermostat setting than those who participate in extreme sports. Developing a robust sporting self-identity as they become incrementally more competent in their sport through experiential learning helps enable individuals to inculcate high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem which coalesce into feelings of self-worth. These transferable traits can then enhance their domestic and/or working life. The need for an individual to self-

actualise, providing all prior psychological and physiological needs are met, is placed at the pinnacle of Maslow's (1943) taxonomy of needs. This research indicates that subjective wellbeing does not require individuals to compete with others for example with team sports; it can be achieved through individual self-competition. However, subjective wellbeing (SWB) through competitive sports and leisure sports possess a common point of departure. They both require individuals to attain a level of competence in their sport (Heo et al, 2012). This, as Heo, et al, (2012) notes, requires expending substantial effort and perseverance on the part of the individual. It appears that the path to self-actualisation is gained through pain. The quantitative study by Coren et al, (2017, p. 139) who, while indicating many positive aspects of self-competition, suggest there are no gender differences 'in the willingness to compete against one's own, previous score'. In contrast, my survey data indicates that a gender difference in the willingness for self-competition does exist. Just over thirty-three percent of males versus fifty-six percent of females prefer self-competition (see fig 4.44). The conflict between these findings is interesting and should be further examined in a larger sample.

Key to achieving good mental health is the requirement for individuals to carve out periods of own-time where they can freely engage with their sport divorced from any other external distractions. Own-time promotes feelings of being-in-the-moment, a central tenet of mindfulness therapy which has shown to combat depression, anxiety and stress, thus greatly enhancing an individual's mental wellbeing. Although the leisure sports featured in this research may not be generally considered as "adrenaline" sports, when they are in-the-moment, many participants, independent of gender, report feelings of exhilaration and euphoria comparing those feelings with those of addictive substance abusers. Interestingly, and counter-intuitively, although

all three sports sometimes require intense levels of physical exertion many participants feel that their sport relaxes them. This may be accounted for, as Allan et al, (2020) suggest, by the effects of performing their sports outside and consequently, influenced by immersion and interaction with the natural world.

The net result of engaging in the three leisure sports is that those who participate in them become some of Allen et al's (2019) happy, healthy people.

Postscript.

5.4 Wellbeing and the possible impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on motorcycling, skiing and horseriding.

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic some research has been undertaken to assess the impact of the enforced quarantine lockdown on mental health. An online self-completion quantitative survey (n=18147) was administered to the Italian population by Rossi et al (2020) they found that '[b]eing [a] woman and younger age were associated with (...) PTSS [post-traumatic stress symptoms], anxiety and ADS [adjustment disorder symptoms]'. They conclude that 'We found high rates of negative mental health outcomes in the Italian general population 3 weeks into the COVID-19 lockdown measures'. Although methodologically flawed due to sampling error (the sample comprised 79.6% women) and was fully acknowledged by the research team as a limiting factor, the research clearly demonstrates that an individual's gender is a factor which could be negatively impacted during periods of lockdown especially for women's self-esteem and consequent mental health. During the first enforced COVID-19 lockdown the efficacy of World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations for individuals aged eighteen to sixty-five to engage in 150 minutes of physical activity weekly (WHO, 2011) has been assessed. López-Bueno

et al's, (2020) quantitative study on a sample of the Spanish adult population, (n=2250 54.8% female), found that women's mental health more than men's, in particular their anxiety and mood, was particularly negatively affected by periods of enforced COVID-19 lockdown quarantine when deprived of weekly physical activity.

These findings conflict with those of Harris et al, (2018) who concluded that gender is not a factor in their proposed new Lifetime Self-Esteem scale (LSE) scores presented as part of their new measure of an individual's global self-esteem. Consequently, further research which supports Rossi et al's (2020) and López-Bueno et al's, (2020) findings of the effects of COVID-19 on women's mental health could potentially be a confounding factor when interpreting LSE scores, particularly during the pandemic.

This research has established that engaging in leisure sports results in perceived positive mental and physical health outcomes in both men and women. Furthermore, belonging to their sporting subculture has become, for many, a major part of their self-identity. Due to time and word count limitations imposed on PhD research, although collecting interview data surrounding how participants would feel if they were prevented from participating in their sport, it was not used. However, due to the imposition of a second and third period of lockdown in the UK these data have now become prescient. These data, a sample of which follows, may therefore, form the basis for future research. Asked how horse rider Chloe would feel if she were not able to ride. She replied she would be 'quite depressed, quite frustrated and fed up (...) horses have been part of your life for a long time'⁵⁵². Riding instructor Mia said 'I would miss it terribly'⁵⁵³. This research has highlighted the considerable expenditure of financial and emotional resources required for many to participate. Jenny believes

⁵⁵² 25/11/17

⁵⁵³ 25/11/17

that she would 'be very miserable. I'd give up a lot to have my horse. I'd give up an awful lot'⁵⁵⁴. Stuart, a lifelong horse rider, is pragmatic about being prevented from riding due to becoming unfit to ride saying that 'I suppose I sort of miss it a little bit but I probably don't miss it as much as I should. I could perhaps do more about it but I don't, I don't know you just move on to other things'⁵⁵⁵. Skier Daniel also alludes to pragmatism confiding that 'yeah [I'd] be very sad because I love it yeah. But you just make the most of it while you can, that's why I try to go so much'⁵⁵⁶. Lifelong motorcyclist Mark, who owns two motorcycles, considers that if he sold his motorcycles for any reason, he 'probably wouldn't go back'⁵⁵⁷.

Although not being prevented from engaging in their sport by COVID-19, Stuart, Daniel and Mark potentially demonstrate why males' mental health is less affected than that of females such as Chloe, Mia and Jenny, when faced with not being able to ride out socially during enforced lockdowns.

During the UK lockdowns of 2020, only essential travel has been allowed. Recreational motorcycling is not considered as being essential. This is potentially due to the UK government, in recognising the risky nature of motorcycling, wanting to further protect the National Health Service and other Emergency Services. Consequently, most UK motorcyclists have been prevented from riding. Due to measures introduced to practise social distancing, club meetings and other events, such as the annual 2020 *Motorcycle Live* exhibition, have been suspended or cancelled. Overseas travel restrictions have prevented individuals from engaging in snowsports activities and the annual 2020 snowsports show has also been

⁵⁵⁴ 3/12/17

⁵⁵⁵ 4/12/17

⁵⁵⁶ 27/3/18

⁵⁵⁷ 19/8/17

cancelled. Although social distancing is readily achievable for snowsports, the resorts are closed to tourism. Leisure horseriding has been allowed to continue due to the need for owners to care for and exercise their animals. However, as with the other sports, the annual *Horse of the Year* show has been cancelled in 2020. To maintain social distancing, owners can attend the yard featured in this research on a rota basis. Caroline reports that as she is not responsible for organising the rota her time at the yard has been restricted, while some others, in particular the rota organiser, have, unfairly, had more access.

As our world confronts and adapts to new social challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic future research into the positive effects of belonging to a leisure sports subculture, and how participation in them can be compromised by enforced lockdowns, is warranted.

Chapter Six

Conclusion. What has the data taught us?

This chapter concludes the research by first revisiting its four objectives. These research objectives, posed as questions, guided the analysis of three themes comprising of belonging, risk and wellbeing. The chapter is presented in three sections:

1. Research objectives including a summary of research findings and their resulting conclusions.
2. Contributions that this research adds to the existing sociological knowledge surrounding risky leisure sports.
3. Some suggestions for future research.

6.1 Research objectives – a summary of findings and the resulting conclusions

This research has been led by the following four research objectives. Each objective and its contribution to the three themes will be summarised in turn.

1. What factors influence the individuals' interest/engagements in risky undertakings in general?
2. What factors influence the individuals' continuing engagement in risky leisure sports activities such as motorcycling, snowsports and horse riding?
3. Why is there a gender disparity in the pursuits of recreational motorcycling, snowsports and horse riding?

4. Can an identification of Schutz's (1967, p. 185) 'ideal types' be established in leisure motorcycling, snowsports and horseriding?

6.1.1 What factors influence the individuals' interest/engagements in risky undertakings in general?

Being an active member of the equestrian, motorcycling or snowsports subculture can form an essential and positive part of an individual's self-identity. An individual's entry into their particular subculture, although often encouraged by family members who are themselves embedded in the pre-existing subcultural milieu, can also be facilitated by friends or a major life event. The frequency of participation does, however, appear to affect how strongly self-identity is influenced by subcultural membership. Those who participate infrequently or invest little time or financial resource consider their sport as just another, albeit expensive, activity. The route into a subculture of risk is also eased by the settings of an individual's innate risk-thermostat. Those whose risk-thermostat is set higher generally accept more risk than individuals whose risk-thermostat is set lower. For example, participants of so-called adrenaline sports potentially have a higher setting than those who participate in more pedestrian sports. It is, however, often the individual's *perception* of how risky their sport is, rather than the professionally quantified objective risk, that sets this thermostat. The unreliability of an individual's subjective *perception* of risk when compared with *objective* risk is illustrated by published UK government accident statistics. Motorcyclists, although only making up one percent of road users, account for nineteen percent of those who are killed or seriously injured on Britain's roads. Furthermore, motorcyclists are fifty-seven times more likely to be killed or seriously injured than the occupants of cars. The accident statistics for horse riders are higher still than that of the motorcyclists often used as comparators in the published

literature. The literature indicates that horse riders are between three and a half and twenty times more likely to suffer injury than motorcyclists. However, these data often do not differentiate between equestrian disciplines such as eventing, show jumping, dressage or just “happy hacking”. Perceived risk and its effect on the risk-thermostat are not static but plastic and can thus be reset both up and down. When individuals persistently expect, and achieve, positive outcomes while participating in their sport, often by becoming more experienced, proficient and confident in their sport they begin to take more risk. This results in a corresponding upwards resetting of their risk-thermostat. This phenomenon conceptualised as risk-compensation occurs due to the need for an individual to keep their risk-thermostat in a homeostatic balance between their subjective assessment of what constitutes acceptable and not acceptable risk. The process of re-appraising down their perception of inherent risk in their sport, and consequently taking greater risks, is influenced through the action of Unrealistic Optimism or Optimism Bias. This type of bias centres on the aphorism that people often unrealistically “look on the bright side of life”. Even though individuals are generally aware of at least some of the objectified risk in their sport they persist in a belief of optimistically experiencing only positive outcomes from their sporting engagement. The combination of risk-compensation and Optimism Bias potentially accounts for those experienced and confident sportsmen and women often sustaining a greater injury, albeit with less frequency, than those less experienced.

Discussing the risks faced by those engaged in the three sports rarely forms a major topic of conversation during either face-to-face or virtual social gatherings. Risk is generally only overtly discussed when a friend or celebrity is injured performing a similar sport. However, this adversity can have positive benefits. The

head injury sustained by Formula One World Champion Michael Schumacher while skiing has led to increased helmet wearing and re-affirming that snowsports are inherently risky.

Some of the factors influencing the participants, irrespective of gender, in this study to first be interested in and subsequently engage in a risky leisure sport can, therefore, be identified as:

- Primary or secondary socialisation into a pre-existing subculture.
- A life event enabling the fulfilment of a long-held ambition.
- The need to maintain a level of risk determined by an individual's variable perception of inherent risk.
- The social discussion of the risks being considered as taboo.

6.1.2 What factors influence individuals' continuing engagement in risky leisure sports activities such as motorcycling, skiing and horse riding?

Perhaps considered as counter-intuitive in a society which, with a few exceptions, discourages and politicises risk, positive mental wellbeing can be considered as a primary factor in why participants in this research persistently engage in a risky leisure sport. As discussed above an individual's self-identity is greatly influenced by their subcultural membership. A positive self-identity can be inculcated in an individual through their continuing engagement with their sport through the effects of social desirability bias. Equestrian and snowsports appear stereotypically elitist. This is possibly due to their long association with royalty and celebrity. Motorcycling continues to become more gentrified as machines have become more reliable,

expensive and are also associated with the British royalty and celebrity⁵⁵⁸. Due to their risky nature, these sports require a level of competence to become proficient in them. Those who are prepared to invest sufficient personal resources to become competent are rewarded with, more so in women than men, feelings of global self-esteem and self-confidence. Their sports become life-fulfilling. Furthermore, the self-esteem and self-confidence gained through engaging in their sport are durable and transferable traits. Contrary to other research findings, this study suggests that it is women, more so than men, who benefit from developing greater self-confidence through participating in their sport. This is possibly due to female participants in this study belonging to two male-dominated subcultures. Those women armed with their often hard-won self-confidence are then empowered to overcome challenging workplace scenarios.

Living in the moment is considered by this research to be a factor that drives continuing engagement in risky leisure sports. This is often cited as part of why participants of extreme, or adrenaline, sports engage in them. Although extreme sports may require an individual's risk-thermostat to be set higher than those engaged in the leisure sports of this study, those engaging in the less extreme sports featured in this research report similar feelings. Nine-out-of-ten horse riding and motorcycling participants and nearly nine-out-of-ten snowsports participants, irrespective of gender, reported feeling being in the moment when they were performing their sport. Living or being in the moment is a central tenet in mindfulness therapy. Mindfulness is shown to deliver significant positive mental health benefits and is recommended by the British National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

⁵⁵⁸ Princes William and Harry both rode motorcycles to help escape from constant public gaze. Footballer David Beckham, actor Ewan McGregor and T.V chefs Paul Hollywood, Gordon Ramsay and James Martin are all keen motorcyclists

(NICE) to be a useful therapeutic tool in the treatment of depression, stress and anxiety. Several mindfulness programmes have been specifically formulated to target stress and to promote feelings of wellbeing in team sports or individual athletes.

Paradoxically, leisure sports which require at times strenuous physical exertion can be considered, by those who engage in them, as calm relaxation. However, these sports are generally performed outside while immersed in the natural world. Being immersed in nature has been shown to provide individuals with opportunities to relax from the stresses of their everyday life allowing them to look at life differently. As the adage suggests, a change is as good as a rest. Moreover, performing their sport allows individuals to practice experiential learning thus adding to their sporting competence and self-confidence. Although this may, as discussed earlier, impact their perception of risk, it also positively affects their wellbeing expressed by Allen et al, (2019) as becoming happy, healthy people.

The mental health of participants is further enhanced by their freedom to choose the time and place of their participation. Freedom of choice, expressed as own-time, allows individuals to become more motivated to engage in their sport and, at the same time, more competent and happy while performing it. Own-time thus provides a positive feed-forward loop adding two robust elements, motivation and competence, to their global self-esteem. The importance of allocating own-time to specifically engage in their sport free from any other external influence was a constant feature in all participant narratives across and within all three sports in this research. Although no participant in any sport admitted to attending any formal mindfulness course, the wellbeing benefits of own-time may have been

communicated either verbally or non-verbally through social interactions with other subcultural members.

This research has established several wellbeing factors provided, or at least augmented, by their leisure sport therefore, potentially influencing thus encouraging participants to continually engage in them.

- Formation of a positive self-identity.
- Increased self-confidence through becoming competent in their sport.
- Elevated global self-esteem.
- Living in the moment.
- Own-time to transcend the stress of everyday life.

6.1.3 Why is there a disparity between the genders in the pursuits of recreational motorcycling, skiing and horse riding?

As presented earlier, there is a significant disparity between the genders of those participating in recreational motorcycling, horse riding and snowsports. To address the third research objective, inequality between the genders in each sport will be discussed in turn.

Motorcycling in Britain is overwhelmingly dominated by male riders by as much as ninety percent. Women motorcyclists are though, year-on-year, closing the gender gap as large-capacity modern motorcycles become lighter in weight, become more reliable and require less maintenance. Female participation in the UK, therefore, seems to be following a similar upward trajectory as in North America. Younger North American women motorcyclists now account for seventeen percent of motorcyclists in North America.

The current gender disparity is grounded in the largely post WW2 use of motorcycles as utilitarian transport for the working man⁵⁵⁹. Although a plentiful supply of war surplus motorcycles provided cheap transport, they were heavy, unreliable and not having electric starters, often difficult to kick-start. Their weight and unreliability, therefore, required their owners to be physically strong and to spend considerable time maintaining them. Men, rather than women, possessed the physical strength and often the mechanical and operator training, obtained in the armed forces, to operate these sometimes capricious machines. Men were also largely freed from the time-consuming responsibilities contained within the, predominantly female, domestic sphere. The motorcycle, and its associated working-class image, subsequently evolved into the machismo 60's "Rocker" youth subculture of Britain⁵⁶⁰. As discussed earlier in barriers to motorcycling, artefacts of this hyper-masculinity are still seen in some sections of the contemporary motorcycle subculture. Notions of biological essentialism thus pervaded post-war British motorcycling potentially fuelled by contemporaneous socially decided, but arbitrary, divisions of human attributes or gender roles.

Snowsports, although more gender equal than the other two sports, are dominated by males who make up sixty-four percent of participants (Ski Club of Great Britain 2019). Greater gender equality in this sport perhaps reflects its historical role of transportation. In the rural parts of an Alpine or Nordic winter, men, women and children relied on their ability to ski over their snow-draped landscape as they went about their everyday life. The current small gender inequality in leisure snowsports is potentially due to a lack of venues in the UK where, specifically, British

⁵⁵⁹ Many, generally élité, British women between WW1 and 2 used motorcycles for leisure see Alford and Ferriss' (2007) *Motorcycle*.

⁵⁶⁰ See Cohen (2002) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*.

women can engage and become confident, and therefore, self-motivated to participate in snowsports. This has been exacerbated by most worldwide snowsports resorts closing during winter 2020-21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although dry ski-slopes and so-called snow domes, where a more authentic experience is created using artificial snow, are to be found in Britain, they are scarce due to being expensive, in terms of finance and land, to build and operate. Their scarcity places geographic and financial barriers to participation. A further factor preventing more British women from engaging in snowsports are traditional, albeit socially constructed, gender roles allocated to women. Although greater gender symmetry exists in contemporary Britain, women in heterosexual relationships are still often the primary caregiver to children. Women also provide emotional support to their partner as well as domestic and often, paid employment (Duncombe & Marsden, 1995). Faced with these constraints on their time it is difficult for many British women and mothers to allocate sufficient own-time to develop their snowsports competence.

According to the British Equestrian Trade Association (2015), seventy-four percent of leisure horse riders in Britain are female. However, for centuries horses were used for the main male occupations of agriculture, warfare and transport. This is exemplified by popular Western cultural images of, for example, the American cowboy or gaucho, the bucolic British ploughman, the chivalrous knight the stagecoach and horse-drawn tram. As these largely male occupations became increasingly mechanised, using mechanical horsepower over traditional horsepower, the redundant horse became progressively used in leisure sport. It is the change in use from an animal used for work to an animal used for leisure that, according to Dashper (2016), has driven the feminisation of British leisure horse riding. Changes in the use of the horse consequently allow women to 'demonstrate their physical

capabilities, skills and prowess in what was once a strongly male-dominated milieu' (Dashper, 2016, p.351).

6.1.4 Can an identification of Schutz's (1967, p. 185) 'Ideal Types' be established in leisure motorcycling, snowsports and horseriding?

Schutz (1967) proposes that social scientists can construct generalisable second-order typifications attributable to an individual's first-order lived experiences. Summations of typifications from other individuals' first-order lived experiences coalesce. The act of becoming a homogenous mix, rather than being specific to an individual, results in the amalgam of individual lived experiences which provides a template for an 'ideal type' (Schutz, 1967, p. 185). This template can be subsequently employed to predict those individuals likely to fit the model of the ideal type. This research tentatively suggests that certain similar typifications are found within and across all three sports and genders. Consequently, a prediction can be inferred as to an individual's predisposition to engage in risky, rather than extreme, leisure sports. However, as the ideal type is a homogeneous amalgam of many others' first-order lived experiences, Schutz (1967) points out, that the ideal type is just an *illusion* of a real person.

This research cautiously presents the following second-order typifications as a potential template to identify Schutz's (1967) ideal type within the leisure sports examined:

1. The ideal type of individual who engages in risky leisure sports accepts a level of risk lower than that demanded of extreme sports but higher than that required by more sedentary leisure occupations.
2. The ideal type is generally introduced, by family or friends currently or previously engaged, into a specific pre-existing sporting subculture.

3. The ideal type prefers their leisure activity to be performed outside of the built environment where they can free themselves from their normal everyday responsibilities.
4. The ideal type engaged in these sports, although competitive, prefers competition against themselves rather than others.
5. Snowsports and horseriding ideal types are well educated, often possessing at least a bachelor degree.
6. In this research, female horse riders along with male and female snowsports participants generally enjoy higher incomes than male horse riders or motorcyclists.

6.2 Contributions this research makes to existing sociological knowledge.

This research adds to the existing, available studies concerned with an individual's voluntary participation in risky leisure sports in four areas. Firstly, as the review of the literature indicated, sociologists to date have not fully engaged with questions concerning individual motivations to voluntarily engage in risky leisure sports such as those examined here. The COVID-19 pandemic, with its attendant imposed social lockdowns, provides research opportunities to examine these motivations previously unavailable in a normally functioning society. Highlighting the need for a back-to-basics approach in leisure sports research, Atkinson (2019, p. 8) contends that the sociology of sport has become a 'hyperpolitically sensitive and ideologically engaged discipline'. My apolitical study, therefore, offers plausible suggestions as to why, in a risk-averse Western society, some individuals, irrespective of gender, choose to occupy their leisure time performing risky leisure pursuits. Second, an examination of the literature reveals that a discourse on the intersectionality of risk, gender and wellbeing, and how, through social interactions, they influence the social

(re)production and perception of risk in these leisure sports, has been largely overlooked. Thirdly, whereas the available literature has predominantly focussed on male and/or female participation in professional *competitive* sports, sports in general or certain extreme, and in some cases illegal sports, this research provides a comparative analysis of voluntary risk-taking and the psycho-social benefits between three *leisure* sports, motorcycling, horseriding and snowsports. Until now this specific comparison has remained unarticulated. Fourthly, this research aims to partly answer calls made by Giulianotti (2009) and Atkinson (2019) for more scholars to engage specifically in an ongoing analysis of sports risk and its potential as a pleasurable experience. Consequently, in answering their calls, my research adds to the ‘underutilized’ (Giulianotti, 2009, p. 541) resources available to sociologists of sport.

6.3 Some suggestions for future research.

Fieldwork observations made at two national trade exhibitions, *Motorcycle Live* and the *Telegraph Ski and Snowboard Exhibition*, and one equestrian one-day event revealed that whiteness was significantly overrepresented in the attendees. My observations, taken over forty-four years as a white male motorcyclist support those of my fieldwork. I have known only one Black motorcyclist and currently know only two Asian motorcyclists. The observed whiteness in equestrian sport is also noted by Dashper (2017). Stuart, a male horseriding research participant remarks that horseriding is ‘a very white biased sport and there’s absolutely no reason why it should be like that’⁵⁶¹.

⁵⁶¹ 4/12/17

The British Nationality Act (1948) provided legislation bestowing status as a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies (CUKC) on any individual born in any British colony. British society has thus, over the past seventy years, become multi-cultural and multi-ethnic. Future research into leisure sports should attempt to understand why whiteness still overwhelmingly pervades British motorcycling, snowsports and equestrianism. Furthermore, researchers should consider if non-white ethnicity influences the perception of risk thus acting as a potential barrier to their participation in these three sports.

Difficulties in recruiting male horseriding participants, despite the efforts of my gatekeeper and numerous social media posts, resulted in five participants, a shortfall of two compared with other sports. The difficulty in engaging male participants in qualitative research, especially when discussing the emotional aspects of their lived experience was encountered by Butera (2006) in her study of friendship in Australian males. Lee and Renzetti (1990) previously identified possible difficulties in recruiting male participants suggesting their reticence stems from a belief that the researcher will intrude into private and/or personal experience. Participant, particularly male, hesitation, is not generally a topic discussed in the research literature. Consequently, further research into male participation in leisure horse riding remains a challenge for research, particularly in terms of understanding how male identities are formed and displayed in horseriding.

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Appendix 1

CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project:

'Risk, is it the spice of life? Exploring Gender Differences in leisure sport Risk-Taking'.

Researcher: **Vince Eade**

This consent form should be read in conjunction with the participant information sheet version one dated June 2017. A signed copy of this consent form will be retained by both researcher and participant.

Please initial in the box

1. **I confirm that I** have read and understand the Information Sheet dated June 2017 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason and without penalty.

3. I understand that the identifiable data provided will be securely stored and accessible only to the members of the research team directly involved in the project, and that confidentiality will be maintained.

4. I understand that data collected in this project might be shared as appropriate and for publication of findings, in which case data will remain completely anonymous.

5. I agree for the data I provide to be archived by the researcher for possible future use in related projects.

6. I agree to take part in the above study.

Participant Name

Date

Participant Signature

Researcher Name

Date

Researcher Signature

Project contact details or for further information: Vince Eade, Department of Sociology, University of Essex.
Email veade@essex.ac.uk phone 07484 135151



Appendix 2

Information sheet for participants in my study 'Risk, is it the spice of life? Exploring Gender Differences in leisure Sport Risk-Taking'.

June 2017 version one.

My name is Vince Eade. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Essex. My contact email is veade@essex.ac.uk and my phone number is 07484135151.

My research, which is funded for three years by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and sponsored by the University of Essex, is concerned with understanding why individuals engage in the risky leisure sports of horse riding, skiing and motorcycling. I also want to understand why there are pronounced gender differences in their participation.

One of my research goals is to identify how these leisure sports may become more gender inclusive in the future. By participating in my study, you may play a part in achieving gendered equality in these leisure sports.

I would, therefore, like to learn what initially attracted you, and continues to motivate you to partake in your chosen leisure sport/s.

To help me learn I would like to interview you, probably once, at a time and location of your choice, for approximately forty-five minutes to one hour. If you agree to being interviewed I will record our conversation. I will then prepare a typed transcript for you to check that I have accurately transcribed your spoken words. This will give you and me a chance to discuss any errors or to expand on any particularly interesting experiences that may need a further conversation.

Should you wish, you will be free to decline to answer any question.

You can withdraw from the study, verbally or in writing, without providing a reason and without any penalty by using my contact details above.

If you decide to withdraw, up to the point of analysis, our recorded conversation will be erased and the transcript deleted.

Our conversation will be private and confidential and to guarantee your anonymity I will use a fictitious name in the transcript or, if you prefer, you can choose to use your own or a fictitious name.

To assure confidentiality, the recording of our conversation will be stored on a password protected file within my personal, password protected, lap top computer.

To ensure against possible data corruption, while also maintaining confidentiality, I will keep a copy of our conversation on the university's secure computer system. At no time will the recording leave the United Kingdom.

The data collected from your interview, along with many others, will be used to help prepare my doctoral thesis. I may also use parts of the data to write articles for inclusion in academic journals or to present my work at relevant conferences.

With your permission I may retain the data collected to help me with future, related studies, but the same level of confidentiality anonymity and data security will remain. Any future research using the data obtained from our conversation will be subject to obtaining new ethical approval.

If you have any ethical concern about any aspect of this project, you should contact me first, Vince Eade on my email veade@essex.ac.uk or by phone on 07484135151 or my supervisor Prof Ewa Morawska emorawsk@essex.ac.uk.

If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this by contacting the University's Research Governance and Planning Manager (sarahm@essex.ac.uk).

Have you any questions you would like to ask me about my research or discuss any concerns you may have before we start the interview.

Thank you for volunteering.



Appendix 3

Interview guide

Objectives

- To explore lived experience and perception of leisure sport risk
- To collect demographic details
- To gather reflections of risk events
- To understand risk awareness
- To understand the role of training in hazard/perceived risk
- To understand the needs and motivations of/for riding/snowsports

Introduction

- To understand perceptions of risk when engaged in chosen sport
- Digitally recorded
- Confidentiality
- Anonymity
- Timing, one hour.
- Informed consent, get it on tape.
- Withdrawal from, or refusal to answer, specific questions
- Access to finished document

Sociodemographic details

Age now

Gender identification

Education

Occupation

Horse/Motorcycle/Snowsports equipment

Age at which the motorcyclists gained their motorcycling licence

Age when first big bike (500cc) acquired

Type/s of motorcycles owned now/ past

How many bikes currently owned

Size of bike owned now/past

Types of motorcycle use, commuting, touring, sport, leisure

Solo use or pillion

Annual mileage

Accident history in last 12 months and perceived causes

Historical accidents, how caused

Ever consumed alcohol while riding?

Would you do that now?

Penalty point on licence and for what

Personal protective equipment used leather or textile

Quality of PPE used

Voluntary extra training undertaken, if not why?

Access to car/van

Importance of leisure sport in respondents life

At what age did you start your sport?

Why did you start motorcycling/horseriding/snowsports?

Who influenced you?

If motorcycling, when did you start, before obtaining licence? Where?

What attracted you to bikes, horse's snowsports?

Have your feelings changed for you sport? If so, how?

What needs does riding/skiing fulfil? (Possible answers: life enhancing, freedom, oneness with nature don't prompt wait for respondent)

What dangers do you think are involved with your sport, have you been involved in any of these yourself. Has it changed in any way your attitude to or practice of motorcycling?

Have you ever been scared while engaged in your sport? If so please elaborate what was the situation, how did you cope?

Is it OK to admit to ones sporting peers that one is sometimes scared while engaged in your sport, can you give me an example?

What part does fear play in your sport? Do you think fear is part of the excitement of motorcycling?

Is your sport part of your self-image/identity? Is it part of your identity as a wo/man?

If male motorcyclist What are in your opinion the 'manly' features of the motorcyclist? Is it a 'macho' activity? If so, elaborate (the meaning of the term, its realization through motorcycling.

If female motorcyclist how does motorcycling empower you?

Are you a competitive person? If so, is your sport a competitive activity for you? What are the rewards if you win? Penalties if you lose?

When you meet other people, do you tell them you motorcycle/ride ski If so, why/for what purpose?

If motorcycling Do you modify riding when carrying a pillion, how?

Sporting subculture

Are your close friends also motorcyclists/equestrians/snowsports?

Are you a club/riding school member? Which one/s

How often do you meet them and where? Are non participants in this group?

When you meet, is your sport the main topic of conversation?

Do you talk about the risks involved in your sport? If so tell me about the conversations, what are the common opinions, do you share them?

Is your sport a competitive activity, do you compete with your friends, tell me about how you might do this

What do you think can bring embarrassment to a participant in the eyes of his/her friends?

Is it OK to admit to ones friends that one is sometimes scared while riding? Can you give me an example?

Risk/Hazard awareness

Risk awareness lower or higher than peers? If yes why if not why?

Risk reduction strategies, only ride in summer/dry/on piste.

Hazard perception, what is a hazard?

Is speed/performance important to you, if so why?

If you ever exceed the speed limit, when, where? Do you, agree with the limits, if not why not?

If you speed, tell me why do you speed?

What do you think about filtering? Do you do it and how?

Has there been a change in your risk perception over time and if so, under what/whose influence?

Remember

- Thank you for your time
- Remind confidentiality
- Can I re contact for more detail

General questioning probes:

Tell me

How does that make you feel?

Could you tell me more?

What happened after that?

What, why, how,

Appendix 4

Self completion survey questionnaire

Personal experiences of leisure sports

Hello, my name is Vince Eade and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Essex. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey which asks questions regarding peoples personal experiences participating in the leisure sports of horse riding, motorcycling and snow-sports.

The survey should take about ten minutes to complete.

When you are ready to start, or to proceed to the next question, please click the arrow on the bottom right of the page. Please read each question and click on the answer which most accurately describes the way you feel. All responses will remain anonymous and you do not have to answer any question that you feel uncomfortable with.

This survey data will be combined with previously collected interview data.

Completion of the survey will be considered as providing your consent to participate.

I am happy to forward a copy of my project information sheet on request. This provides more detail about the study.

My email address is available on my University of Essex web page:
<http://www.essex.ac.uk/sociology/staff/profile.aspx?ID=5260>

Q10 Which leisure sport do you participate in? If you participate in more than one of these please select the sport that you enjoy the most.

- ☐ Horse riding (1)
- ☐ Motorcycling (2)
- ☐ Snow-sports (3)

Q1

How important to you is your sport?

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

Q7 Motorcyclists and horse riders only. Other participants please go to next question.

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat agree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly disagree (7)
I engage in my sport in all weathers (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 What is your gender identification?

- ☐ Male (1)
- ☐ Female (2)
- ☐ Straight (3)
- ☐ Gay (4)
- ☐ Lesbian (5)
- ☐ Bi (6)
- ☐ Trans M (7)
- ☐ Trans F (8)
- ☐ Other (9)

Appendix 5

Socio-economic details of interview participants

Sport	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Education	Income (1000s)	Employment
Motorcycling	F	56	W/B	PGCE	25-50	Prim sch tchr
Motorcycling	F	61	W/American	MA	<25	Retired USAF
Motorcycling	F	32	W/B	GCSE	25-50	Project wkr
Motorcycling	F	41	W/B	NVQ	<25	Eploymnt spclst
Motorcycling	F	61	W/B	Dip	25-50	unemployed
Motorcycling	F	47	W/B	O level	25-50	receptionist
Motorcycling	F	44	W/B	PG Dip	>50	Office mgr

Motorcycling	M	57	W/B	BTEC LVL 3	25-50	Retired factory wkr
Motorcycling	M	62	Asian	BA	25-50	Local Govnmnt
Motorcycling	M	81	W/B	None	<25	Retired
Motorcycling	M	60	W/B	BSC	25-50	Mcycle Storeman
Motorcycling	Trans Male	55	W/B	NVQ 4	25-50	Care mgr
Motorcycling	M	61	W/B	PhD	>50	Uni Lecturer
Motorcycling	M	53	W/B	O level	25-50	M/CSalesman

Horse rider	F	49	W/B	BSc	>50	Assistant dtrtor NHS
Horse rider	F	48	w/B	MSc	25-50	Mental hlth nurse
Horse rider	F	33	W/B	HNC/D	>50	Training coordinator
Horse rider	F	51	W/B	RGN	>50	Nurse
Horse rider	F	62	W/B	BA	>50	Teacher (state)
Horse rider	F	45	w/B	BA	25-50	Office mgr
Horse Rider	F	36	W/B	MSc	>50	Fin plannr/rdng inst

Horse rider	M	45	W/B	MSc	>50	Uni Lecturer
Horse rider	M	53	W/B	A level	25-50	Dental tech
Horse rider	M	61	W/B	A level	25-50	Retrd chart suvyer
Horse rider	M	37	W/B	BSc	25-50	musician
Horse rider	M	29	W/B	BSc	>50	Naval Officer

Snowsports	F	51	W/B	BA	>50	NHS Team Mgr
Snowsports	F	30	W/B	MSc	25-50	Operations Mgr
Snowsports	F	33	W/B	MSc	25-50	Speech Therapist
Snowsports	F	44	W/B	Pg Dip	>50	Company director
Snowsports	F	27	W/B	MA	25-50	Cust servs mgr
Snowsports	F	48	W/B	BSc	>50	Slf employed
Snowsports	F	38	W/B	PhD	>50	Uni lecturer

Snowsports	M	47	W/B	None	>50	Company director
Snowsports	M	32	W/B	BA	>50	marketing
Snowsports	M	22	W/B	BA	<25	student
Snowsports	M	41	W/B	MA	25-50	Ski instructor
Snowsports	M	18	W/B	A level	none	Student
Snowsports	M	49	W/B	GCSE	>50	cameraman
Snowsports	M	16	W/B	BTEC	none	Student

Appendix 6

Fieldwork observations aide memoir

- Have participants arrived by car or motorcycle? How busy is the car park. How busy is the motorcycle park
- Approximate ratio of female participants to male participants
- Approximate ratio of obvious female riders
- Is there a “gay biker” presence?
- Examples of either female or male of objectification either on trade stands or the general concourse environment
- Groups of males
- Groups of females
- Individual males
- Individual females
- female verbal and body behaviour (assertive, self-effacing, __)
- Ethnicity of participants
- Clothing worn by participants both in terms of motorcycle subculture identity or general fashions. Are females wearing female specific motorcycle clothing?
- Can social class be ascertained from the participants demeanour/language
- Are young people over/under represented?
- Are older, 40+ people over/under represented?
- Are members of trade stands exhibiting bias towards males in their discussions?
- Men/women interactions at this event (frequency, types, duration) as compared with same-gender engagement.
- Are females welcomed onto trade stands?
- Are there any specifically female trade stands?
- Do any trade stands appear to exclude females?
- Are traditional stereotypical gender roles exhibited in the food outlet queues i.e. are women being sent by men to get food /drink?