An Exploration of the Gendered Culture of Mountain Biking in Nova Scotia

by

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For All of My Families

My immediate family, the Withers and the Arbuckles, who love and support me like no others. For my family of friends who add to the enjoyable moments I treasure. For my mountain bike family who understand my passion.

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ABSTRACT

Inclusiveness and safety are two key values recognized by Canadian Sport Policy to be the foundation of participation in sport. Despite these values, inequitable participation and risk-taking practices are attributed to the masculinization of mainstream sport. Less is known about the culture of alternative sports, and more specifically the sport of mountain biking and the gendered practices of mountain bikers. Using the qualitative methodology of hermeneutic interpretive phenomenology, this study explored the experience and practices of four women and four men mountain bikers in Nova Scotia, Canada to better understand the complex gendered culture of this sport. Data revealed that a masculine gender hierarchy with hegemonic masculinity being the most valorized ideal was the prominent gender order in this heterogeneous sport community. Participant narratives highlight practices that create and perpetuate patriarchal gender relations that contribute to the privileging and marginalizing of some participants, while also putting others at risk of injury. In contrast to such practices, some participants engaged in practices that challenged hegemonic masculinity. These alternative practices of masculinity allowed for inclusivity with the establishment of multiple styles of mountain biking and the creation of women-only and family-oriented spaces. These developments resulted in the culture of mountain biking becoming fragmented into subcultures. The gendered practices of each subculture can be placed along a continuum with highly competitive participants actively demonstrating hegemonic masculinity being at one extreme. At the other extreme are participants who are developing a welcoming, connected, non-competitive community and practicing alternative versions of masculinity. Specific mountain biking contexts are associated with practices that either maintain or challenge the masculine gender hierarchy and provide insight into the gendered culture of the sport and more specifically, the role of competition. The ideology of competition as conquest characterized hegemonic masculinity and perpetuated the masculinized culture of mountain biking. In contrast, the concept of flow was highlighted as an intrinsic performance that transcended the performance of gender. Findings led to recommendations on how sport providers can implement healthier conceptions of competition to maximize the enjoyment, participation and safety of sport through the achievement of flow as the optimal experience in sport.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"This sport is embraced as lifestyle and passion, not just as a quick

adrenaline fix or simply exercise." (Snider, 2011)

"Flow. The flow of a good piece of singletrack. Social flow, sometimes

lubricated with tasty bevvies. Spiritual flow that allows one to merge in

a meaningful way with the natural surroundings. Mental flow that encourages

the release of tension and negativity. Bodily flow, where you, the bike, and

the ground interact as a single unit. The shared appreciation of flow is mountain

bike culture. Simple." (Bikergrl, 2011)

As a mountain biker for over twenty years, these two quotes seen on the forum of

the popular Nova Scotian website, formerly known as *PedalTrout* (now ECMTB),

grabbed my attention and told me that I should know that this is what mountain biking is

all about. To me, these quotes represent mountain biking as a beautiful activity with its

own culture that can be shared by those who want to embrace it. The authors indicate that

mountain biking implicitly promises to be a harmless sport that can be enjoyed by all and

therefore be a positive addition to the repertoire of Canadian sports; a sport that can only

enhance the lives of all Canadians who decide to partake in its enjoyment.

As a researcher of sport participation and sport injury, I knew that I could not rely

solely on a couple of quotes from a website to tell me what the sport of mountain biking

is about. I also knew from a review of the scientific literature examining sports in Canada

that not all sports promise to be open and inviting to all and safe for everyone. Indeed, the

renewed Canadian Sport Policy (CSP) recognizes the need for inclusiveness and safety in sport to reach the Policy's vision of increasing the number and diversity of Canadians participating in sport by 2022. Inclusiveness and safety are two key values noted to be the foundation of participation in sport by all (Canadian Sport Policy, 2012). Understanding these values and the processes that underlie attainment of these ideals is essential for helping Canadian sport stakeholders achieve the CSP's vision. As a member, observer, and researcher of the alternative sport culture of mountain biking, I believe that a close examination of this sport could provide particular insights on processes and practices that overcome marginalization and risk and thus help to realize these key values of inclusiveness and safety needed for optimum sport participation. Indeed, it was a call made by Joanne Kay, a senior policy analyst and researcher with Sport Canada, for an investment by Canadian sport stakeholders into extreme (alternative) sports that spurred my interest in researching mountain biking to provide new insights into sport participation and safety (Kay, 2005).

Commenting on the goal of the original CSP to increase sport and physical activity levels by 10% in each province and territory by 2010 (Canadian Sport Policy, 2002), Kay (2005) noted that sport policy makers could no longer overlook the "extreme sport phenomenon". This notion is supported by evidence that major gains in sports participation have occurred in the extreme/alternative sports category (Kay, 2005; National Sporting Goods Association, 2009; Wheaton, 2010) whereas traditional/mainstream sports participation has been decreasing (Sport Canada, 2005; Wheaton, 2010). Further evidence for the need to improve sport participation can be found in the evaluation of the effect of CSP 2002. In this evaluation, participation was

one of four indicators used to measure the successful implementation of each of the goals of the CSP 2002. Using a number of data sources, it was concluded that the participation goal was not achieved due to the percentage of the population participating in sport having decreased over the life of the Policy (Sport Canada, 2010). While Kay (2005) extolled the need for investing in extreme sports to improve sport participation in Canada, she also questioned the cost of promoting these sport types. She warned of their marginal nature and suggested a need for the CSP 2002 to be more inclusive. She noted that an investment in extreme sports or alternative sports should involve maintaining the cultural identity of these sports while somehow reducing barriers for groups such as females. With the renewed CSP 2012 specifically calling for inclusiveness to increase the number and diversity of sport participants in Canada, I agree with Kay (2005) that policy makers need to invest in extreme or alternative sports. I also believe that the first step needed in order to invest in these sport types is to understand their unique cultures. When conceiving of this study, I felt that revealing a richly textured account of the experiences of mountain bikers living in Nova Scotia would be an important addition to the literature aiming to understand alternative sport culture and sport practices in general. My belief was, and still is, that examining the culture of the alternative sport of mountain biking would be important in helping to achieve the overall vision of the current CSP. In a special issue of the journal *Sport in Society* which focuses on the consumption and representation of lifestyle sports (also referred to as alternative, extreme*,* adventure, action, new, panic, and whiz sports), the guest editor, Dr. Belinda Wheaton, supports my notion that studying alternative sport cultures will benefit sport in general. She writes:

> This special issue is a testament to the steady stream of exciting work

that has emerged over the past three decades, research that has not only

contributed to comprehending the significance of these sporting activities,

their cultures and identities, but that has provided insights into understanding

the relationship between sport and society more widely. (Wheaton, 2010,

p. 1057)

Although my belief when conceiving of this project was that studying an

alternative sport would benefit sport in general, I also knew I needed to be able to

contribute to the research that examined more specific problems seen in Canadian sport.

The work of the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and

Physical Activity (CAAWS) helped provide a focus for this project. In supporting the

renewed CSP and the Canada Sport for Life (CS4L) movement, CAAWS has focused on

the underrepresentation of women and girls in sport and physical activity and has worked

towards an inclusive sport and physical activity system. The organization recognizes the

need for increased awareness about the experience of women and girls and notes that:

> Participation in or avoidance of sport and physical activity is linked to the social
>
> and cultural structures of society. Gender has been socially constructed in a way
>
> that discourages or prevents many women and girls from becoming physically
>
> literate (competent), pursuing their interests as a participant or athlete, or
>
> engaging as a coach, official, volunteer or leader (Johnstone & Millar, 2012, p.
>
> 18).

Furthermore, noting large gaps in knowledge and practice relating to the psycho-social

factors that influence the participation of women and girls in sport, CAAWS recommends

that:

A diverse representation of women and girls must be included in research in conjunction with appropriate research methods and tools…Research findings and best practices from the field need to be disseminated throughout the Canadian sport and physical activity system to enhance practice, and inform future research. (Johnstone & Millar, 2012, p. 26).

I agree with the recommendation by CAAWS to include women and girls in sport research and, when conceptualizing this study, I believed that examining their experiences in the alternative sport of mountain biking would provide unique insights about inclusiveness and how women and girls can overcome marginalization. As noted by Wheaton (2010), the "gendered cultures" of these alternative sports are worth examining to comprehend how females (and other marginalized groups) "challenge dominant attitudes to gender, space, risk and embodiment." (p. 1067-1068). I felt that this study would contribute to our understanding of the gendered culture of mountain biking and those factors that influence an individual's decision to participate in this sport. Having been a part of the mountain biking culture for over twenty years, I have witnessed practices of both men and women riders (including myself) that were clearly about gender and the performance of gender as a means of being accepted in this sport. Indeed, long before Joanne Kay's call to action sparked my interest in researching mountain biking, I wondered how a sport with so much promise for being open and inclusive could be so restrictive and closed to many. This study aimed to understand the questions surrounding marginalization of participants in the sport of mountain biking and has led to suggestions for inclusivity in sport (as is seen in Chapter 6) and can contribute to achieving the renewed CSP's vision of increasing the number and diversity of Canadians

participating in sport by 2022.

As noted above, the renewed CSP also describes safety as a key value for the foundation of participation in sport by all Canadians. Understanding practices that put mountain bikers at risk of injury offers insight into the gendered performance of members of a unique sporting culture. Year after year, I have watched men and boys taking extreme risks to do gender while mountain biking. In my observances, these gender productions were attempts to demonstrate their masculinity and desparate efforts to "man up". Although Wheaton (2010) suggests that there is an overemphasis on the risky aspects of lifestyle (alternative) sports and believes that the actual risks in many alternative sports are less than those in mainstream sports, research has provided information that demonstrates differences between male and female mountain bikers with regards to their rates of injury. Building on their review of quantitative evidence from various Canadian and international sources of sports injury and drawing on their qualitative research on the experiences of seriously injured males in Canada, Young and White (2000) stress the benefits of in-depth qualitative work to further understand the experience of risk taking and injury in sport. Emphasis has been placed on the importance of the voices of the participants in understanding the processes whereby athletes involve themselves in hazardous activities. Examing an under-researched sport that has its own culture and practices (Wheaton, 2010) will add to the limited knowledge currently available on the process of sport-related masculinization that is associated with physical risk among boys and men (Young & White, 2000).

In conceptualizing this study, two possible routes could have been taken. I could have continued to add to the studies generating data on participation and injury statistics.

This approach has merit and indeed more statistical data in this area would have added to our knowledge of mountain biking. However, this qualitative research took an approach not previously undertaken by exploring the lived experience of Nova Scotian mountain bikers. As the two quotes at the beginning of this chapter indicate, Nova Scotian mountain bikers have unique insights into the culture of this sport. Using the qualitative methodology of hermeneutic interpretive phenomenology, my aim was to gather a richly textured account of the experiences and practices of these mountain bikers to better understand the gendered culture of this alternative sport. Looking at this gendered culture of the sport of mountain biking through the lived experiences of Nova Scotian mountain bikers has the potential to generate a "vast array of narratives" (Wheaton, 2010, p. 1060). We can learn from these narratives. Indeed, we can learn as much about what attracts a person to this sport and what practices performed by mountain bikers make it, in the words of Bikergrl, "the shared appreciation of flow" (Bikergrl, 2011). The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences and practices of men and women mountain bikers living in Nova Scotia with the aim of better understanding the gendered culture of mountain biking. More specifically, I asked:

1. How do gendered practices marginalize as well as privilege some participants?
2. How do gendered practices put participants at risk of injury?

Ultimately, my goal was to discover how mountain biking can be a sport enjoyed safely by as many Canadians as possible. In an era when Canadian governments are trying to get more people physically active, there is merit in examining the sport of mountain biking and its potential to contribute to the health of Canadians. As is seen in Chapters 4 and 5, the descriptions and interpretations provided by Nova Scotia mountain

bikers has resulted in a better understanding of marginalization and risk taking practices within the sport and thus provides insight for improving inclusiveness and safety which are two important values noted by CSP 2013 to be part of the foundation of participation in sport by all Canadians.

In the following chapter, Chapter 2, I provide a review of the literature to further contextualize this study by situating it within Canadian sport experiences in general and, more specifically, the experiences of alternative sports including mountain biking. This literature highlights the need to study the culture of the alternative sport of mountain biking in order to further understand the differing experiences of women and men who engage in this sport. Most importantly, this chapter notes the insufficient nature of the cultural descriptions of mountain biking. In particular, a gap in the literature is described and situates this study as the first systematic examination of the experiences and practices of mountain bikers.

In Chapter 3, I begin by acknowledging the worldview I brought to this study by describing my ontological, epistemological, theoretical, and philosophical predispositions. I outlined the questions I used to address the purpose of this study as well as guide the methodological decisions made. This chapter then explains the Heideggerian tradition of phenomenology in which meanings embedded in common life experiences are interpreted. This chapter explains the philosophical assumptions underlying Heidegger`s interpretive phenomenological tradition and how they fit well within my own philosophical positions. I continue by describing my choice of interpretive phenomenology and its philosophical underpinnings as a guide to the methods and approaches used to generate and interpret the data. Most notably, this

chapter provides an explanation of the appropriateness of following the Heideggerian tradition of interpretive phenomenology in carrying out this study and how efficacious this methodology was in fulfilling the purpose of this study.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I present the findings of this study. In Chapter 4, narratives concerning the gendered nature of the sport of mountain biking are provided. Participants brought rich, thick descriptions into our conversations of what they perceived to be a gendered ideal of a mountain biker. A variety of practices that mountain bikers perform to achieve this gendered ideal were recounted and revealed the involvement of competition in some manner. For some community members, glorifying winning has reflected as well as perpetuated a masculine hierarchy with the hegemonic version of masculinity being the idealized mountain biker. Narratives of this gender hierarchy provided rich descriptions of the dominance of some men over other men and the subordination of women. In this chapter, some specific practices that are involved in creating this gender hierarchy are examined. The process of social embodiment of the performance of masculinity by mountain bikers is described by participants whose bodies sustain and reproduce the gender hierarchy. As well, this chapter discusses the role of women mountain bikers in maintaining a traditional patriarchal gender order within this sporting culture. Narratives describe ways in which men's as well as women's practices maintain a culture of masculine dominance.

This discussion is furthered in Chapter 5; however, rich accounts of the practices of men and women mountain bikers that challenged hegemonic masculinity and the patriarchal gender regime of the sport are provided. The notion of an ideal mountain biker is reexamined and new narratives describe a subculture less concerned with

masculine traits and masculine hegemony. Alternative forms of masculinity being

constructed by some men members of the mountain biking community are explored with

descriptions of men "doing gender" differently by allowing for fun and inclusivity.

Narratives of new spaces opening up for women and girls are provided along with

women-only rides being a challenge to the patriarchal gender order. A discussion of the

mountain biking culture being seen as a family-oriented sport in some contexts is

explored as well as the importance of mother's being involved to challenge the notion

that it is a sport for men and boys. This chapter then examines mountain biking as a

welcoming, connected community that focuses on fun and flow. Positive riding

environments free from hegemonic masculine gender performance are described. The

chapter ends by suggesting that attaining flow while riding may transcend everything else

including the performance of gender.

In Chapter 6, I discuss these findings in relation to the literature and the

contributions of this work. The findings of this study are compared to those of studies of

other alternative sports. It is noted that a unique contribution of this study is found in the

challenges to hegemonic masculinity made by women and men mountain bikers. The

fracturing of the mountain biking community in Nova Scotia into subcultures through

practices that either sustain or challenge the patriarchal gender order is discussed. The

complexity of the gendered culture of mountain biking is considered through a discussion

of the contextual nature of gendered performances. The contexts of social processes

maintaining and challenging the masculine gender hierarchy in this sport are recounted

and provide guidance on how to shift the focus of this gendered culture away from long-

established masculine hegemony associated with sport in general. Competition as

conquest is presented as the most prominent context in which hegemonic masculinity is performed and maintains the gendered culture of mountain biking and sport in general. The problematic ideology of sport as conquest which permeates and sustains gendered sport cultures is discussed and suggestions for changing this ideology are provided. A discussion of the concept of flow being an intrinsic performance that transcends everything else including the performance of gender is presented. This notion leads to a discussion of why fun and flow need to be emphasized in sport policy and development. This chapter provides recommendations on how sport providers can implement healthier conceptions of competition in order that flow, the optimal experience in sport, can be attained. Areas of research are suggested to further our understanding of social conditions that help maintain the notion of competition as conquest which contributes to unhealthy gendered sport cultures. The complexity of gendered sport cultures and the difficulty in effecting change is again noted. The chapter ends by presenting young athletes as offering hope for far-reaching ideological change in gendered sport cultures that will result in sport becoming more inclusive and safe.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I locate the research problem in the area of Canadian sport experience in general and more specifically, experiences of alternative sports including mountain biking. This chapter provides very brief overviews of large bodies of literature. In writing these overviews, I acknowledge that I am simplifying data and the concept of sport types in order to compare the experiences of male and female sport practitioners for my purpose, which is to situate this study by identifying a need in the literature.

Beginning with a brief overview of recent conditions, as well as some historical aspects of sport in Canada, the different experiences of men and women regarding participation and injury rates and patterns are described. Following this description, alternative and mainstream sports are briefly defined. The subsequent sections of this literature review compare alternative sports with mainstream sports by examining the historical and theoretical links between participant gender, risk taking, and injury as it applies to each of these sport types. The gendering of these two sport types is revealed using Hall's (1996) description of three different levels of analyzing the gender processes that take place in sport. Sociological explanations using relational analyses of sports will be discussed further with an in depth look at the literature concerning gender practices and masculinizing processes and how these practices and processes are related to marginalization and risk taking in sport. A more comprehensive review of the literature that examines the alternative sport of mountain biking will follow and will examine the available information on participation and injury patterns and rates seen in mountain biking. This demonstrates a need to better understand the culture of the alternative sport of mountain biking and the different experiences and lived realities of women and men

participants. Noting the insufficient nature of the cultural descriptions of mountain biking, this chapter will end with a description of the merits of providing a richly textured account of the experiences and practices of men and women mountain bikers living in Nova Scotia, Canada.

2.1 SPORT EXPERIENCES OF CANADIANS

Sport in Canada is experienced differently by groups of participants as a result of factors such as gender, sexuality, social class, race, age, disability, and heritage (White & Young, 1999). White and Young (1999) contend that the experience of young, white, heterosexual, non-disabled, male sport participants is not the same experience for all Canadians involved in sport. Indeed, this group of Canadians is privileged over others when considering sporting opportunities. For Canadian women participating in sport, the past few decades of struggle have resulted in them achieving greater yet limited parity, and not without difficulty (White & Young, 1999). Examples, including the Canadian women's ski jumping team's fight for inclusion in the Olympics whereby they took their case all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada (Spencer, 2011), can attest to the difficulties women encounter in Canadian sport. More recently, women soccer players filed a lawsuit with the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario arguing against the proposed use of all artificial turf fields being used in the 2015 Women's World Cup. With the 2015 Women's World Cup taking place in Canada, both FIFA and the Canadian Soccer Association have been named in this complaint and accused of discrimination as the Men's World Cup has always been played on grass fields. The use of artificial turf is seen as dangerous, changing the game, and in this case demeaning to the women players (Rubin, 2014). These two examples attest to sport in Canada being a male-dominated

practice and thus necessarily experienced differently by women and men (Young &

White, 1995).

Evidence of male dominance in sport can be seen in sport participation rates in

Canada. In 1998, more males (43%) than females (26%) were regular sport participants

in the over 100 sports reported, with the gender gap being particularly evident among

teenagers 15 to 18 years of age (80% versus 55% respectively) (Sport Canada, 2000). In

2004, men continued to be much more likely than women to be active participants in

sport with 39% of all Canadian men taking part in sports compared to 23.4% of all

Canadian women (Sport Canada, 2005). This significant difference is similar to the

earlier findings (Sport Canada, 2000) and thus the gender gap does not appear to be

closing. With many Canadian activists working for the women in sport movement over

the past 50 years (Demers, Greaves, Kirby, & Lay, 2013), the question of why greater

equity of participation has not been accomplished still remains to be answered.

In the past thirty years, the number of sports open to women has expanded

considerably (White & Young, 1999). Having denounced the notion that some sports are

inappropriate for females, Canadian women have challenged gender barriers to play in

tough and physically demanding sports (Demers et al., 2013; Young & White, 1995).

Women and girls in Canada are now seen participating in traditionally all-male sports

such as ice hockey, rugby, boxing, and wrestling (White & Young, 1999; Young &

White, 1995). Although women have crossed gender barriers and entered traditionally

male-dominated sports, it has not been without struggle and their involvement remains

constrained and marginalized (Demers et al., 2013; White & Young, 1999). The

successful 2011 fight by the Saint Mary's University (SMU) women's hockey team to

reverse the decision to have their program removed from the SMU athletic department (CBC News, 2011) certainly demonstrates this continued struggle for women in Canadian sports.

Not only is the sport related experience of Canadian women different from men's experience with regards to barriers to participation, their experiences in sporting activities also differ from those of men. Studies show that greater numbers of injuries, as well as more severe injuries, are incurred by men and boys in high-risk sports and physical contact sports (Backx, Beijer, Bol, & Erich, 1991; Emery, Meeuwisse, & McAllister, 2006; Kujala et al., 1995). With women's increased involvement in these traditionally men-dominated sports and the additional opportunities to apply their physicality, it would be expected that the pattern of injuries for women athletes would be similar to those of men athletes. Although studies show the importance of physicality and injury in the lives of Canadian women athletes (Young, 1997; Young & White, 1995), it has been suggested that sport injury remains a primarily masculine problem (White & Young, 1999; Young & White, 2000).

Evidence of this gendering of sport injury is provided by studies demonstrating differences in rates of injury and severity of injuries incurred by male and female athletes. Canadian male athletes succumb to disproportionately high levels of incapacitation. In a study of sports injuries among young Canadians (ages 5 to 19), males incurred 68% of the 37,169 visits to hospital emergency rooms with injured males outnumbering injured females at all ages (Statistics Canada, 2010). Comparatively, males comprised 57.8% of patients treated for non-sport injuries (Ellison & Mackenzie, 1993). Furthermore, Ellison and Mackenzie (1993) also found that males incurred more severe

injuries than females with injured males being more often admitted to hospital or held for observation. These findings are consistent with another Canadian study examining 1,594 cases of catastrophic sport and recreation injuries (Tator et al., 2000). This study found that 83% of those killed or severely injured were male with the most frequent decade of injury being between 11–20 years of age. This gender difference in sports injury is attributed to males being more often involved in sports as well as playing sports more aggressively than females (Messner, 1990; Young & White, 2000).

The different experience of men and women Canadian athletes leads to fundamental questions regarding why there is a gender gap in the participation and injury rates of Canadian athletes and whether this gender gap exists for all types of sports. Of the nearly 100 sports played in Canada, participation is strongly concentrated in about a dozen sports (e.g., ice hockey, golf, soccer, baseball, basketball, volleyball) (Sport Canada, 2005), most of which are traditionally male-oriented, organized sports (Rinehart, 2005). In recent years, alternative sports have emerged which are primarily moderated by private concerns. As such, these sports (e.g., skateboarding, snowboarding, mountain biking) are not educationally based (i.e., they are not a part of the Canadian Interuniversity Sport System) and thus sport possibilities are not guaranteed through gender equity laws found in the Canadian Charter of Rights. As well, these emergent sport forms have an alternative ethos with major ideologies that are opposed to those of mainstream, organized sports (Rinehart, 2005). The differences between these two categories of sports, mainstream sports and alternative sports, may provide answers to some of the questions regarding gender issues in Canadian sport. To help understand the gender gap in participation rates and injury rates of Canadian athletes, subsequent

sections of this literature review will compare alternative sports with mainstream sports by examining the historical and theoretical links between gender, participation, risk taking, and injury as it applies to each of these sport types. Prior to this comparison, an explanation of the two sport types, mainstream and alternative, will be provided.

2.2 DEFINING ALTERNATIVE SPORTS AND MAINSTREAM SPORTS

Before proceeding with a review of the literature comparing alternative sports with mainstream sports, it is important to clarify some of the terminology. Wheaton (2004) argues that to understand the *meaning* of alternative sports, we need to consider more than simple and constraining dichotomies such as alternative versus mainstream. I agree with Wheaton's (2004) approval of Rinehart's suggestion that "the difference between, and within, these sport forms is best highlighted by a range of debates, concerning their meanings, values, statuses, identities and forms" (p. 3). However, the intent of this section is to briefly note the central characteristic of alternative sports that differentiate them from activities that constitute 'mainstream' sport. The primary purpose of this section is not to provide long debates on how sport types should be conceptualized, but rather to distinguish alternative sports from other sport types in order to help situate this study and identify a need in the literature that pertains to alterative sports.

The term "alternative sport" is purposely used and is my choice from the multifarious terms for these types of sports. Alternative sports are variously known as "extreme" sports (Rinehart, 1998), "action" sports (Bennett, Henson, & Zhang, 2002),"whiz" sports (Midol, 1993), as well as "adventure", "new", "panic", or

"lifestyle" sports (Wheaton, 2010). I prefer the term "alternative sport" as I feel that, not only does it provide a way to distinguish these sports from mainstream sports (see below for a definiton of these sports), but the term "alternative sport" captures the notion that there are other sports that can be enjoyed along with those sports that are regularly offered in our society. Rinehart (2000) defines alternative sports as those that "either ideologically or practically provide alternatives to mainstream sports and to mainstream sports values" (p. 506). More specifically, alternative sports are relatively new sports having emerged in the 1960s and 1970s (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011; Midol, 1993; Rinehart, 2005). This genre of sports is an eclectic mix of primarily non team-based, individual sports such as skateboarding, snowboarding, in-line skating, BMX biking, and mountain biking (Bennett et al., 2002; Bennett & Lachowetz, 2004; Rinehart, 2005). Contrary to mainstream sports, alternative sports take place in less institutionalized and mediated contexts (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011; McKay, Messner, & Sabo, 2000). Furthermore, alternative sport values differ from those of mainstream sports. Where mainstream sports are characterized by competition and physical domination, studies of skateboarding, snowboarding, and surfing found that these alternative sports emphasize an individualistic, anticompetitive, and hedonistic ethos (Humphreys, 2003; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). Newer alternative sports such as wake boarding, kite surfing, and parkour are also characterised as being less rule-bound, competitive and regulated (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011). Finally, Wheaton (2004) notes that alternative sport ideology promotes "flow". Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) theory of "optimal experience" is based on the concept of "flow" which is a state of pure joy whereby people become so totally absobed in their activity that no other thoughts or emotions enter their minds.

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Alternative sports practitioners seek flow and thus their prime reason for taking part in the sport is for the "sheer sake of doing it" (Csikszentmihalyi,1990, p. 4).

To further understand what is meant by alternative sports, I will also provide an explanation of the term "mainstream sports". Mainstream sports are those sports that people consider to be dominant, mainstream, and highly engaging. These sports typically privilege fitness parameters such as strength, speed and power. Although these parameters are key to less notable mainstream sports (e.g., figure skating, synchronized swimming), the mainstream sports referred to here are those which Rinehart (2005) would consider more celebrated and more dominant in North American society (e.g., ice hockey, basketball, baseball). Along with the above mentioned physical parameters, these dominant forms of mainstream sport are characterized by combative competition, aggression, courage, and toughness (Richman & Shaffer, 2000; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). In Canada, six of the top eight competitive sports (ice hockey, baseball, volleyball, soccer, basketball, and football) belong to this category of mainstream sports (Sport Canada, 2005). As well, this category of mainstream sport also tends to receive more media attention as they are formally institutionalized and association-based activities that have been highly commercialized (Rinehart, 1998, 2005).

Categorizing sports into two general types, alternative and mainstream, is important in describing this study. However, the practitioners of various sports including mountain biking may be uneasy with the phrase 'alternative sport' and may have their own preferred terminology. The language used by participants to refer to themselves and their sport has been carefully noted throughout the findings and discussion chapters of this study.

2.3 THE GENDERING OF SPORT

In order to compare alternative sports with mainstream sports through an examination of the historical and theoretical links between gender, participation, risk taking, and injury as it applies to each of these sport types, this section of the literature review will utilize Hall's (1996) description of three different levels of analyzing the gender processes that take place in sport. These three levels of analyses, distributive research, categoric research, and relational research analyses provide distinct methods for comparing alternative sports with mainstream sports. Furthermore, with this comparison, the level of relational research analyses is demonstrated as the most auspicious level for analyzing the gendering of sport and it is a part of the theoretical underpinnings that guided this study.

2.3.1 Gendering of Mainstream and Alternative Sports – Distributive Research

Distributive research looks at the distribution of resources and examines disparity in opportunities, access, and financial resources. Research in many countries has examined every aspect of inequality including inequality in participation, competition, leadership, and media representation and has provided useful information regarding the gendered nature of sport and how women's experience in sport is different from that of men (Hall,1996).

Many studies have examined participation trends in Canadian sport. Membership statistics of provincial and national sport governing bodies have allowed for comparisons between women and men participation in mainstream sports to be assessed for a number of years (Hall & Richardson, 1982). In 1925, the Women's Amateur Athletic Federation

of Canada (WAAF) was formed which provided a uniform system of administration to seven sports including ice hockey, softball, and basketball. In 1935, the total membership of WAAF was one-fifth of the membership recorded by the male counterpart, the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada (AAU) (Kidd, 1996). However, at the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the total membership of the WAAF exceeded that of the AAU (Kidd, 1996). The upsurge of women's sport participation in the 1920s and 1930s has led some to call it the "Golden Age" of sports activity for Canadian women (Hall & Richardson, 1982).

Following the Second World War, fewer resources, including leaders and money, were available to the WAAF and thus provincial representatives amalgamated with the AAU. Having joined the men's body, women lost their singular voice in sport (Hall, 1999; Kidd, 1996). However, the 1960s brought with it second-wave feminism that led to women's voices being heard once again in sports. In 1961, the Canadian federal government enacted the Fitnesss and Amateur Sport Act which committed the government to ensuring that sport and fitness opportunities would be available to all Canadians (Hall, 2002).

Along with this call for more opportunities in sport for all Canadians, came a number of distributive research projects examining participation trends in the 1970s (Hall, 1996). By the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, participation statistics were gathered from provincial and national sport governing bodies, surveys conducted by Statistics Canada, and provincial surveys (Hall & Richardson, 1982). Hall and Richardson's (1982) examination of these statistics led them to conclude that,

although opportunities for girls and women to participate in sport had increased in the 1970s, equality of participation still did not exist for Canadian females in the 1980s.

In the early 1980s the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport (CAAWS), known today as the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity, was established. The issuing of Sport Canada's Policy on Women in Sport came in 1986, which called for, among other things, equal opportunities for women and men to compete (Hall, 2002). By the 1990s, participant statistics began to show remarkable growth in sport for women, particularly team sports including hockey, soccer, softball and basketball. However, although sport opportunities for women have expanded considerably, equality of participation still does not exist for women (Sport Canada, 2000, 2005). Statistics cited at the beginning of this chapter note that male athletes outnumber female athletes by approximately 15% (Sport Canada, 2005). The 2009 Physical Activity Monitor examining sport participation rates among Canadians confirms that women and girl athletes are still outnumbered by men and boy athletes by 15% (Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 2010). Furthermore, when looking specifically at the top five mainstream sports for men (i.e., ice hockey, baseball, basketball, volleyball, and soccer), there are almost 2.7 million more men and boy participants (aged 15 and older) than there are women and girl participants (aged 15 and older) with approximately 3.9 million total men and boys and 1.2 million total women and girls (Sport Canada, 2000). Clearly women and men experience mainstream sport differently when participation is considered.

Less distributive research examining participation in alternative sports is available. The emphasis of an individualistic, anticompetitive ethos in alternative sports,

as well as the relative infancy of these sports, results in many participants engaging in these activities in an unorganized environment (i.e., outside of leagues or sport clubs). Indeed, in Canada 83% of all physical activity and sport participants engage in their sports in unorganized environments (Cameron, Craig, & Paolin, 2005). Participation statistics gathered from provincial and national sport governing bodies therefore would not include many practitioners of alternative sports.

Surveys of sport participation have also overlooked practitioners of alternative sports in two ways. Firstly, participant statistics of alternative sports collected in these surveys are often not reported due to the lower numbers of practitioners. For example, snowboarding and in-line skating were added to the 1998 report on sport participation in Canada as a result of each of these sports reporting overall participation rates of 0.3 % of the adult population (Sport Canada, 2000). Rates for male and female participants in these sports were also not reported whereas the more popular sports in Canada did have sex statistics listed (Sport Canada, 2000). Secondly, analyses of sport participation in alternative sports are made difficult by surveys placing more than one sport into the same category (Bourdieu, 1988). Such is the case with cycling in the 1998 report on sport participation in Canada. Participant statistics for all types of cycling were included in the same category making it impossible to determine rates for the alternative cycling sports such as mountain biking and BMX riding (Sport Canada, 2000).

With these problems associated with collecting participant statistics of alternative sports, distributive research has limited utility. The addition of snowboarding and in-line skating to the 1998 report on sport participation in Canada provides some evidence that more Canadians are participating in alternative sports. Reports that include the sex of

those taking part in these sports are scarce. Gilchrist and Wheaton (2011) note that "evidence" about *who* participates in most lifestyle (alternative) sports is practically non-existent. American studies relying on market research have stated that young men are the primary consumers of these sports; however, actual rates of participation are not cited (Anderson, 1999; Bennett et al., 2002). This statement is supported by the Canadian Ski Council's report of snowboarders being primarily young men (70% of all snowboarders) (Canadian Ski Council, 2004). As well, Canadian injury studies of alternative sports have a preponderance of male subjects and are thought to reflect the higher participation by men and boys in these sports (e.g., Kim et al., 2006). These indications, along with Canadian interview studies that report lower women and girl involvement in alternative sports (e.g., Young, 2004), suggest, as with mainstream sports, that women and men experience alternative sport differently where participation is considered.

Distributive research examining gender differences in sport injuries have also been conducted. Young and White (2000), however, note a general paucity of data on gender differences in rates and types of sports injury. A few nationwide studies of Canadian athletes do provide information concerning gender differences in sport injury. Two such studies described at the beginning of this chapter (Ellison & Mackenzie, 1993; Tator et al., 2000) note that Canadian men and boy athletes succumb to disproportionately high levels of injury, as well as more severe injuries. Data collected in the 2009 Canadian Community Health Survey show that men and boys incur a much higher level of injury while taking part in sports and physical activity. Of all the men and boys taking part in these activities, 40.7% incurred activity limiting injuries whereas 27.5% of women and girls taking part in sports and physical activity received injuries.

This gendered nature of sport injuries with men and boys experiencing disproportionately more injuries can be compared with injuries incurred in non-sporting activities. For men and boys engaged in other activities including chores, work, and recreation, 13.2% incurred injuries whereas nearly as many women and girls (10.6%) taking part in these activities received injuries (Statistics Canada, 2010). These studies clearly demonstrate that sport injury, particularly in mainstream sports, is gendered.

Distributive research of injuries incurred in alternative sports has not been as limited as it has been for participation statistics concerning these sports. In Canada, studies have been undertaken to examine the epidemiology of injuries in alternative sports including mountain biking and snowboarding. Studies of both of these sports report findings similar to those found in mainstream sport where young men experience disproportionately high levels of injury, as well as more severe injuries (Geddes & Irish, 2005; Hagel, Pless, & Platt, 2003; Kim et al., 2006). The Canadian Institute for Health Information (2013) reported that in 2010-2011, 83.8% of hospitalizations for major bicycling injuries (all forms of bicycling) involved men and boys. Hospitalizations in 2010-2011 for snowboarding were primarily men and boys with a proportion of 89.0%. These data clearly show that the rate of injury in alternative sports is also gendered with men and boys incurring a higher level of injury.

Distributive research in Canada has provided valuable information concerning gender differences in sport participation as well as sport injury. Useful information concerning unequal participation rates for women and men in both mainstream and alternative sports has been uncovered through this research. As well, valuable data regarding the gender gap in sport injury have also been identified through distributive

research. Hall (1996) notes, that although this type of research produces useful information, it is only a beginning and other forms of research are necessary for understanding gender issues in sport. Further research has been carried out in Canada using two other levels of research, categoric research and relational analyses, to analyze the gender processes in sport. Both categoric research studies and relational analyses have been utilized by researchers to understand why women have experienced unequal access to sport and why men have experienced disproportionately high levels of sport injury as well as more severe injuries.

2.3.2 Gendering of Mainstream and Alternative Sports – Categoric Research

Categoric research examines the differences between categories (e.g., male versus female, male sex hormone versus female sex hormone) and attempts to explain these differences through biology and socialization. This type of research focuses on the individual and examines topics including gender differences in sport involvement and risk taking (Hall, 1996; Lenskyj, 1994).

Biologically-based sex differences research became popular in the 1970s when advancements were made in understanding the genetic, hormonal, and neurodevelopmental processes involved in sexual differentiation (Hall, 1996). Hall (1996) notes an early attempt in 1972 by Money and Ehrhardt to explain why some females were more inclined to be involved in sport. They found that females who were exposed to higher levels of prenatal androgen in utero became masculinized and were more likely to engage in sport. This study, as well as other biologically-based sex differences research, has since been criticized for its reductionism. Critics of this type of

research contend that a dichotomous view of gender (e.g., male versus female, male sex hormone versus female sex hormone, etc.) overlooks the variety of hormonal conditions and gene types found in people and fails to recognize that bodies are made up of a "continuum of difference" (Hall, 1996; Kane, 1995).

Recent biological explanations for the differences between women and men in sport can be seen in risk taking research. With the discovery of the D4DR gene, researchers have confirmed a genetic basis for sensation-seeking and risk-taking behaviour (Zuckerman, 2004). Studies of mainstream sports (e.g., Jack & Ronan, 1998; Rowland, Franken, & Harrison, 1986), as well as alternative sports (e.g., Hughes, Case, Stuempfle et al., 2003; Schrader & Wann, 1999) have explained the higher risk taking of male athletes using Zuckerman's sensation seeking scale. The reductionism of this biological explanation for sensation seeking and risk taking has also been criticized (Donnelly, 2004). The genetic basis for risk taking does not explain why the gender gap for this behaviour has been growing significantly smaller over time. Therefore, additional explanations are needed (Byrnes, Miller, & Schafer, 1999).

Psychological explanations for the differences between women and men in sport have also been examined. Many studies conducted in the 1970s of women and sport as well as men and sport were "mired in the largely ahistorical, static, and categorical language of sex role theory" (Messner, 2005). Within the proliferation of sex roles and sex identity research of the 1970s was a large amount of research challenging the concept of "role conflict". This concept assumes that women athletes are in conflict as a result of the incompatibility between femininity and athletic competence and thus psychologically unhealthy. To combat this assumption, sport researchers in the 1970s began to conduct

studies which showed that female athletes were more androgynous, more masculine, less feminine, and less sex-typed than female non-athletes, yet were as psychologically healthy (Hall, 1990; Hall, 1996; Lenskyj, 1999). Critics believe that these types of studies involve an unavoidable reification in which abstract concepts (e.g., cross-sex-typed, sex-role identity) are made into real behaviours. As a result of this reification, the lower participation rates of women in sport are assumed to be caused by something within the individual (Birrell, 1988).

Psychological categoric research, with its focus on the individual, continues to be conducted primarily with mainstream sport athletes. Examples concerning sport participation include a study conducted by Matteo (1986) in which it was concluded that sex-typed females were less committed to masculine sports than cross-sex-typed females. Another study by Andre and Holland (1995) found that male and female athletes identified with the masculine gender role more so than non-athletes. A later study, also examining sex role identity and sport participation, found that masculine persons reported higher levels of athletic identity than did feminine or undifferentiated persons (Lantz & Schroeder, 1999).

Both biological and psychological categoric research has been subject to criticism. As previously noted, critics have concerns with reductionism and the dichotomous view of gender as well as the tendency towards reification of analytical concepts that this type of research brings with it. In addition to these concerns, critics also object to the focus on the individual which is characteristic of categoric research. Although role theory focuses on the social basis of personality, attention is paid more to

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individuals rather than social structures (Hall, 1996; Messner & Sabo, 1990). As noted by

Messner and Sabo (1990):

> Role theory often assumes a false symmetry that ignores the existence of power
>
> inequities between men and women. In defining masculinity and femininity as
>
> separate (and often complementary) social scripts, role theory ignores the extent
>
> to which gender is a dynamic relational process through which unequal power
>
> relations between women and men are constantly constructed and contested. (p. 7)

With these criticisms many researchers (e.g., Birrell, 1982; Hall, 1982; Sabo, 1985) in the

1980s began to call for a shift from the traditional categoric research to a more

theoretically informed relational analysis of gender issues in sport.

2.3.3 Gendering of Mainstream and Alternative Sports – Relational Analyses

Relational analyses assume that "sporting practices are historically produced,

socially constructed, and culturally defined to serve the interests and needs of powerful

groups in society" (Hall, 1996, p. 11). Examined through relational analyses, sport is

believed to be a representation of social relations including gender, class, and race (Hall,

1996).

Feminist scholars examining women and sports as well as men and sport began to

lay the foundation for a relational study of gender issues in the 1980s. During this period,

these scholars (e.g., Bryson, 1987; Messner, 1988) began to draw on Connell's theorizing

of masculinities and the gender order (Connell, 1987) to examine gender relations in

sport. A new conceptual tool, one that avoided the limitations of categoric research,

became widely accepted and continues to be utilized by scholars of both men's sports and women's sports.

Within Connell's (1987, 1995) theoretical framework is the assumption that gender is better conceptualized as a process rather than as a fixed entity. Women and men construct gender through dynamic, dialectic relationships based on their concepts of masculinity and femininity that they adopt from their culture (Connell, 1995; Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1994). Gender is constructed from cultural meanings that constantly change depending on the time and the place. With this social constructionist understanding of gender, masculinity and femininity are no longer seen as singular concepts but rather plural ones (Kimmell, 1995).

Understanding the plurality of masculinity involves recognizing the power relations between men and women as well as between men and other men. With this recognition of power relations, one is able to understand Connell's (1987, 1995) notion of a hierarchy of masculinities. Connell (1987, 1995) theorized that at any given historical moment there are competing masculinities that give rise to dominant or hegemonic forms and subordinate forms. Hegemonic masculinity, being the "the prevailing, most lauded, idealized, and valorized form of masculinity in a historical setting" (Sabo, 1999, e1), is also constructed as that which is not feminine, not gay, not working class, and not immigrant (Messner, 2005).

Within Connell's (1987, 1995) theoretical framework, researchers now see sport as one of the central sites for the social production of hegemonic masculinity (Whitson, 1990). Scholars using this relational framework have examined sport and the ways in

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which sport affirms men's power over women. Whitson (1990) comments on the importance of this research by noting that:

> Sport is beginning to be interrogated for its contributions to historical patterns of male empowerment and female disadvantage, and feminist analysis seeks to explicate the role of sport in the reproduction and/or transformation of contemporary relations between (and indeed within) the sexes. Such relational questions are of more far-reaching significance, both theoretically and in practice, than the distributional issues (though they are not, of course, disconnected). (p. 20)

Historians and sociologists are among the many scholars who have adopted this relational approach to examining gender issues in sport. Canadian researchers using a feminist cultural perspective have reconstructed the historical experiences of both women and men in sport (Hall, 1996; White & Young, 1999). These theoretically informed analyses provide a clearer understanding of why women and men experience sport differently with regards to participation.

2.3.4 Hegemonic Masculinity and Sport Participation in Mainstream Sports

As an institution created by and for men, sport serves "to bolster a sagging ideology of male superiority and has thus helped to reconstitute masculine hegemony in the 19th and 20th centuries" (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 9). Bryson (1994) notes that there are a number of social processes that contribute to this maintenance of hegemonic masculinity and effectively marginalize women's participation in sport. Such processes include: 1) direct control of women's sport; 2) men's ignoring and trivializing women's

sport; and 3) men's defining of women's sport. Evidence of these processes can be seen throughout the history of sport in Canada.

The first process that marginalizes women's participation in sport is direct control of women's sport. Kidd (1996) argues that the amalgamation of the WAAF with the AAU in 1953 was disastrous for the interest of women in sports. With this advocate and national network of women's sport gone, sportswomen in newspapers, radio, and television were marginalized, if not completely eliminated. With the enactment of the Fitness and Amateur Sport Act in 1961, women lacked leadership to represent their issues as very few women participated in making major decisions and those who did were discouraged from providing a woman's point of view (Kidd, 1996).

Even with women losing their singular voice in sport as a result of the collapse of the WAAF, second-wave feminism helped girls and women in Canada win new opportunities to participate in sport. However, second-wave feminism's rejection of "separate spheres" for women and men contributed to women losing positions of leadership. The once-separate university Physical Education degree programs for women were brought under male leadership and men obtained the jobs created by the increased number of women athletes (Kidd, 1996). This inequality of female leadership continues today despite the creation of the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Girls in Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS). One notable area lacking female leadership is in coaching. Only a handful of national sport federations meet the federal government's expectation of having women as 25 % of their coaches (Mercier & Werthner, 2001). Furthermore, Own the Podium reported in 2011 that only 14% of

national team coaches are women (Croxon, 2013). With an absence of female leadership, men remain in control of sport (Croxon, 2013; Kidd, 1996).

The second process that marginalizes women's participation in sport is men ignoring and trivializing women's sport. The media plays an essential role in the growth of sport through its portrayal of sports and athletes. From the earliest days of Canadian women in sport, female athletes were under-represented if represented at all in newspapers. Even during the 'Golden Age' of women in sport when news reporting of female sporting activities and accomplishments were reported daily, women athletes were patronized in newspaper articles and photos (Kidd, 1996).

Many recent studies have demonstrated the continued under-representation of women athletes by the media. Two notable studies examining Canadian news sources demonstrate how women's participation in sport is ignored and trivialized. Urquehart and Crossman (1999) examined the *Globe and Mail's* coverage of the Winter Olympic Games from 1924 to 1992 and found male athletes to be written about four times as often and photographed three times as often as female athletes. Furthermore, women were more frequently depicted in "sex appropriate" sports than in "sex-inappropriate" sports. These results are supported by another study of selected newspapers in Canada (Vincent, Imwold, Johnson, et al., 2003). The results of this study found that female athletes competing in "gender-appropriate" sports (i.e., swimming, gymnastics, tennis, and diving) received more newspaper coverage than female athletes competing in "gender-inappropriate" sports (i.e., soccer, softball, field hockey, and volleyball). In addition, the "gender-appropriate" athletes were over-represented in the average number of photographs, the average number of photographs on the first page, and the average

number of photographs on the top of the pages. Clearly, the media contributes to the continued social construction of mainstream sport as a male domain.

The third process, which is men defining women's sport, has contributed to the marginalization of women in sport since the earliest beginnings of sport in Canada. The notion of Christian manliness that emerged in the 19th century, defined sport as something in which men and boys took part (Wamsley, 1999). In order to rationalize the exclusion of women from sports, the idea of female physiological inferiority was endorsed. The medical community, in warning of the many dangers that would be incurred by women engaging in physical activity, presented many myths of women's frailty. The distinction between the "strong man" and the "weak woman" was maintained through such practices and provided justification for women's restricted access to sport (Hall, 1999; Wamsley, 1999).

Women began to challenge the restricted access to sport at the end of the 19th century and eventually attitudes concerning women's physicality began to change. Women not only began to play sports that maintained "ladylike" behaviour (e.g., croquet, figure skating, lawn tennis), but also engaged in mainstream sports such as hockey, basketball, and baseball (Kidd, 1996). Even with changing attitudes toward physicality, the biological issue still remained and continues even today. Women and men did not (and mostly still do not) play mainstream sports together. As well, for many sports women were (and are) subject to playing by different rules than men (Hall, 1999; Kidd, 1996). These practices maintain the traditional definition of sport as something that is appropriately done by men and contribute to the marginalization of women in sport (Bryson, 1994). Furthermore, the notion of women being weaker than men contributes to

mainstream sport's celebrated emphasis on the physical parameters of strength, speed and power and the hegemonic masculine ideals of aggression, courage, and toughness.

2.3.5 Hegemonic Masculinity and Sport Participation in Alternative Sports

Clearly the social processes described above have contributed to the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity in mainstream sports and effectively marginalized women's participation in those sports. One primary research area for alternative sports has examined whether alternative sports have challenged the gender constructions and power relationships seen in traditional mainstream sports (Malcolm, 2008). As previously noted, there are multiple constructions of masculinity between and within a given cultural setting with power structures influencing which gender practices become dominant (Connell, 1987, 1995). Do alternative sports, as Wheaton (2004) aptly questions, "offer *different* and potentially more *transformatory* scripts for male and female physicality, than the hegemonic masculinities and femininities characteristic of traditional sports cultures and identities" (p. 16)? Alternative sport, with its differing ethos, may be a site for new constructions of masculinity (Anderson, 1999; Beal, 1996; Rinehart, 2005; Wheaton, 2000; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998; Young, 2004). Instead of performing a physically dominating hegemonic masculinity that is associated with exclusion processes, newer or alternate constructions of masculinities that subvert the traditional form and allow for egalitarianism of participation may take place in alternative sports.

Studies have shown, however, that even in alternative sports, inequalities exist and gender is central in creating exclusionary practices. Beal (1996) found that skateboarding in the United States was still constructed as a masculine practice even

though this subculture's stated values did not reflect mainstream masculinity promoting an ideology of male superiority. Beal's study concluded that in skateboarding patriarchal relations resulted in females being marginalized and discouraged from participation. In a later study of skateboarders, Beal and Wilson (2004) found that this sport was "still being held to masculine standards" (p. 31) with maleness required for "immediate access to legitimacy" (p. 39) and insider knowledge. Similarly, in a Canadian study of skateboarders and snowboarders, Young (2004) found that male participants maintained an ideology of a physical dominance which led to limiting female access and involvement in both of these alternative sports. Kelly, Pomerantz, and Curry (2005) found in their study that female skateboarders established their own subculture and were hopeful that it could challenge dominant gender attitudes seen in skateboarding including the "culturally valued discourse of emphasized femininity" (p.245).

Studies of the alternative sports of windsurfing (Wheaton, 2004), climbing (Robinson, 2004, 2008), adventure racing (Kay & Laberge, 2004), snowboarding (Russell & Lemon, 2012; Thorpe, 2005), surfing (Booth, 2001, 2004; Olive, McQuaid & Phillips, 2015; Thompson, 2004, Waitt & Warren, 2008), and ultimate frisbee (Thornton, 2004; Crocket, 2013), have found challenges to the masculine gender order through constructions of femininities and more diverse masculinities that possibly challenge the physically dominating masculinity of mainstream sports. Wheaton (2004) describes a "lived masculine subjectivity" (p. 17) in windsurfing in the United Kingdom that was less excluding of women. However, this 'ambivalent masculinity' was not the only masculine construction and the described 'laddishness' of young male surfers was noted to include a masculine production created through the subordination of women. Similarly, Robinson

(2004) found a diverse range of masculine identities of male climbers and "evidence to support the argument that men have diverse and often contradictory attitudes to more female climbers entering the sport" (p. 127). Like Wheaton (2004), Robinson (2004, 2008) agrees that traditional/dominant notions of gender roles, identity, and power may not be challenged but rather re-invented in alternative sports. In support of this, Kay and Laberge (2004) also found that men in adventure racing praised the more feminine attributes of the sport yet at the same time, in practice, this sport is a site that "naturalises women's weakness and thus legitimates male domination" (p. 172). Women snowboarders, in practicing jibbing (a style that uses obstacles such as rails and tables), demonstrated the possibilities of renegotiating gendered power relations; however, this sport continues to privilege males (Thorpe, 2005). Through practices of men snowboarders viewing girl jibber as less skillful than boy jibber, male dominance was reinforced (Russell & Lemon, 2012). In surfing, Booth (2001, 2004) examined the possibility of a new gender order and found a plurality of surfing masculinities, but concluded that the evidence was superficial and that "fraternal bonds" in this sport "have roots deeply embedded in the broader social structure of gender relationships" (p.17). Waitt and Warren (2008) found "fluid qualities" of masculinities such that young men surfers do not always subscribe to a hegemonic ideal; however, their strong commitment to caring for each other constrained their surfing masculinity "within norms of a patriarchal ideal" (p. 364). Thompson (2004) also found that even when white surfing femininities were made more prominent by the surfing industry, men surfers held onto the values of hegemonic masculinity practiced by professional male surfers. More recently, Olive, McQuaig, and Phillips (2015) found that men surfers used the shared

experience with women surfers to "highlight female differences from the established, mainstream, male, surfing norm" (p.270). Finally, continuing with the notion that alternative sport practitioners perpetuate a traditional hegemonic form of masculinity rather than transgressing the traditional gender hierarchy, Thornton's (2004) study of ultimate frisbee finds that this alternative sport is also "not immune to old issues" (Young, 2004, p. 80). Thornton (2004) found that male ultimate frisbee players, despite being concerned with creating a new sporting culture that was gender-sensitive, egalitarian, and all-inclusive, failed to "produce practices and meanings that are beyond the dominant structures, ideals and practices of existing sports" (p. 175). More recently, Crocket's (2013) examination of ultimate frisbee found multiple forms of masculinity being practiced that he classified as hyper- and moderated masculinities. He added that it was the small player base and not the acceptance of the women's ability to play that required men players to adopt inclusive practices.

These "old issues" possibly result from some of the same social processes that have limited the participation of women in mainstream sport. Rinehart (1998, 2005) notes that as the newer, alternative sports are appropriated and commodified by the media, mainstream values are reintroduced and reinforced. Nelson (2010) does an extensive analysis of BMX magazines and notes how media can change the way participants consume alternative sports. He believes that it is possible that "BMX-freestyle has moved too far into the mainstream to still be considered "alternative" (p. 1164). Rinehart (2005) found advertising images in skateboard magazines to reinforce the male domain of sport as were the images in windsurfing and skateboarding magazines examined by Wheaton and Beal (2003). Anderson (1999) found snowboarding magazines helped construct and

reinforce notions of gender difference and masculine hegemony. Research I have conducted with one of my PhD committee members, Dr. Lori Livingston, on mountain biking magazines concluded that the magazine *Mountain Bike Action* portrayed this alternative sport as a male-domain and painted a narrow picture of masculinity similar to the physically dominant one found in mainstream sports (Huybers-Withers & Livingston, 2010). We speculate that with media playing an essential role in the growth of alternative sports, the prevalence of mainstream values in the alternative sport media legitimizes male dominance resulting in the marginalization of female participants.

Connell (2012) has noted that sport is still a "central feature of the imagery of masculinity, and an important mechanism of gender hegemony" (p. 177). She goes on to ask these important questions:

Why has the liberating potential of sport not been realized? Why is it masculine force, skill and daring that dominates the airwaves, the media, the institutions, and the popular imagination? Why is sport still enmeshed in arrangements and assumptions that deliver privilege to men not only attention, but hard advantages of money and institutional power? (p. 177-178).

In answering these questions, Connell notes that sport is still a part of a patriarchal culture in which active human practices result in gender inequality. Furthermore, Connell (2012) explains that:

Organized sport has been taken over by business, and its own institutions have been radically corporatized. … As sport has become part of the neoliberal corporate world, its gender regime also has been changed; sport comes under the

influence of corporate management, one of the most heavily masculinized arenas

in contemporary society. (p. 178)

2.3.6 Hegemonic Masculinity and Risk Taking and Injury in Sports

The previous two sections clearly demonstrate the constraints on women and girls

participating in sports as a result of hegemonic masculinity practices. However,

traditional gender practices can also have adverse effects on men and boys participating

in sport. Within both mainstream sports and alternative sports, men use their bodies to

promote the traditional ideologies of hegemonic masculinity. Their bodies become agents

of social practice through demonstrations of aggression, strength, and risk taking in sports

(Kimmel & Messner, 1998). By sustaining the hegemonic model of masculinity through

their sporting practices, men can continue to benefit from the patriarchal dividend.

However, research on men and sport has pointed out an important paradox within the

practice of sport as sport can be both liberating and constraining for male players.

Aggressive play in sport is liberating for males as they are rewarded with

camaraderie, recognition, prestige, scholarships, and pro contracts. White, Young, and

McTeer (1995) also note that,

> The constraints of hegemonic masculinity limit sport experiences for many males
>
> to a rationalized performance orientation that involves the demonstration of
>
> gameness and courage in the face of physical risk. (p. 162)

Men and boys, through their acceptance of risk and tolerance of pain in demonstrating

hegemonic masculinity, have conformed to what Sabo (2004) calls "the pain principle".

Through this process, it is natural for male athletes to play hurt and risk their long-term

health. Those who choose not to play by the pain principle, and thus take fewer chances

with their health, risk compromising their masculinity and losing the rewards provided to those who subscribe to this principle. However, those who play by the pain principle also risk demonstrating their masculinity by not being able to play as a result of injury and compromised health (White, Young, & McTeer, 1995).

As previously noted, the distributive data collected on sports injuries in Canada provide evidence that indicates men and boys are more susceptible than women and girls to sports injury. In a feminist cultural analysis of Canadian women participating in traditionally men dominated sports, Young and White (1995) found that these women subjected themselves to risk, even playing while injured and suffering from pain. An important conclusion by Young and White (1995) is that women accepted the pain principle to a lesser degree than that of men but also presented striking similarities to men in their attitudes to physical danger, aggression, and injury. Therefore women practicing traditionally men dominated sports "contribute to a male-defined sports process replete with its violent, macho, and health-compromising aspects" (p. 45). Young and White (1995) believe that for both women and men:

Although women may also "contribute to a male-defined sport process", the gender order of sport is not immune to contestation and in the past thirty years the number of sports being open to women has expanded considerably (White & Young, 1999). As Whitson (1990) notes, just the presence of women in sport helps to weaken the association between sport and masculinity. As well, there is the potential for alternative sports, with their opposing values to those of mainstream sport, to play a role in disrupting hegemonic masculinity. If practitioners of these sports can resist such influences as the commodification efforts of mass media corporations, then more spaces

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for alternative gender relations can be created. Connell (2012) adds, that although challenges are difficult, gender is not fixed and is open to change resulting in new spaces opening up for women.

Further research efforts examining the different experience of women and men in sport is necessary to better understand the processes that maintain the current male-defined sporting culture as well as those that contest hegemonic masculinity in sport. An examination of the sport of mountain biking, one of the more popular alternative sports practiced in Canada, provides an opportunity to further explore gender processes and practices in a young sport that has seen considerable growth and development since its introduction in the late 1970s. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences and practices of men and women mountain bikers living in Nova Scotia with the aim of better understanding the gendered culture of mountain biking. More specifically, this study asked "How do gendered practices put participants at risk of injury?" and "How do gendered practices marginalize as well as privilege some participants?". The published literature on mountain biking injuries provides data that support the need to answer these questions.

2.4 THE GENDERING OF MOUNTAIN BIKING

This section will begin by examining the sport of mountain biking and the gender differences regarding the rates and types of injury seen in this sport. A discussion concerning the insufficient nature of these distributive studies to provide a complete explanation for gender differences concerning mountain biking injuries will then be provided. The tendency to overlook the gender gap in participation rates of mountain biking as part of the explanation for injury patterns will be presented followed by an

overview of these participation rates. This section will then present the current literature

on the culture of mountain biking and note the necessity for a systematic investigation

into the sporting practices of both men and women mountain bikers. It will be argued that

this study which includes an examination of gender practices, will increase our

understanding of the unique experiences of male and female mountain bikers, particularly

in regard to their differing injury and participation patterns.

2.4.1 Gender, Mountain Biking Injuries, and Mountain Biking

Participation

Since the sport of mountain biking began in the 1970s, there has been a

substantial increase in the incidence of injuries with young males being most commonly

affected (Kim et al., 2006). As noted prieviously, earlier studies of mountain biking

injuries found that up to 85% of mountain bikers sustain injuries with most studies

finding males comprising approximately 75% to 85% of the injured bicyclists (Chow,

Bracker, & Patrick, 1993; Chow & Kronisch, 2002; Jeys, Cribb, Toms, & Hey, 2001;

Kronisch & Rubin, 1994; Rivara, Thompson, Thompson & Rebolledo, 1997). These

earlier descriptive studies are all cross-sectional prevalence studies and therefore have

inherent limitations as part of their design, one of which is they are unable to draw causal

inferences (Grimes & Shulz, 2002). Without further research, these earlier studies

examining mountain biking injuries are not able to explain why substantially more male

mountain bikers incur injuries. As will be seen below, it may simply be the

disproportionate number of men and boys practising this sport. However, there may be

other reasons such as men and boys displaying a different riding style that results in more

injury. Furthermore, this riding style may be a gender practice and require research to

understand a possible relationship between gender practises of mountain bikers and injury rates.

Like previous research, cross-sectional prevalence and case-series studies have found that among recreational mountain bikers (by far the largest segment of the mountain bike population), young males are more prone to injury (Aitken, Biant, & Court-Brown, 2010; Dodwell et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2006). However, one cross-sectional study of trauma registries found that, although boys and men were more likely to sustain an injury, a greater proportion of female riders than male riders were hospitalized (Nelson & McKenzie, 2011). As well, in a comparative cohort study, there is evidence that in competitive mountain biking (a relatively small segment of the mountain bike population), the risk of injury is 1.94 times greater for women (Kronisch, Pfeiffer, Chow, & Hummel, 2002). Again, these descriptive studies provide more information about the risk of injury for male and female mountain bikers, however, further research with "more sophisticated research designs" is needed (Grimes & Shulz, 2002, p. 145) to understand factors that contribute to these different injury patterns.

In a review article by Kronisch and Pfeiffer (2002), studies report that rider-related variables such as errors in judgement and riding technique contribute to mountain biking injuries. An early cross sectional survey questionnaire of 208 mountain bikers in Germany found that women and men mountain bikers attribute their accidents to differing rider-related causes with women blaming their crashes on overexertion and not knowing their limitations. In contrast, men ascribe their mishaps to risk taking and excessive speed (Dingerkus, Martinek, Kolzow, & Imhoff, 1998). As well, a survey of 3873 mountain bikers in Germany, Australia, and Switzerland conducted by Gaulrapp,

Weber, and Rosemeyer (2001) asked riders to describe what they might consider

dangerous situations leading to their injuries. The study noted that riding styles in general

led to their injuries, although no specific styles were described.

　　More recent studies have attributed the disproportionate high levels of injury

incurred by young male mountain bikers to the greater likelihood that they engage in

aggressive and technically demanding riding styles (Aitken, Biant, & Court-Brown,

2010; Dodwell et al., 2010; Gaulrapp, Weber, & Rosemeyer, 2001; Kim et al., 2006).

However, these studies appear to only speculate on the riding styles of mountain bikers.

The chart review studies by Dodwell et al. (2010) and Kim et al. (2006) make no mention

of riding style information being provided in the patient charts. The survey of riders at a

single event notes only biker demographics, use of safety equipment, bike type, and the

trail used as the data collected (Aitken, Biant, & Court-Brown, 2010).

　　With researchers of more recent studies only speculating that differing riding

styles of men and women mountain bikers result in distinct injury patterns, it is therefore

necessary to rely on the earlier studies that note differing riding styles of men and women

mountain bikers as an explanation for the patterns of injury between the two sexes

(Dingerkus, Martinek, Kolzow & Imhoff, 1998; Gaulrapp, Weber, & Rosemeyer, 2001).

These descriptive studies provide valuable information that raise further questions to be

explored. For example, if the riding styles of men mountain bikers are indeed different

from women riders, why is there this difference in riding style?

　　Interestingly, many of the above noted studies have tended to overlook the

participation rates of men and women in mountain biking as part of their explanation of

injury patterns. Although demographic characteristics of recreational mountain bikers are

not well documented, the available information does indicate that mountain biking is practiced more by men and boys. An industry study done in the United States estimated that from 2001 to 2009, only 35.1 % of mountain bikers were female (National Sporting Goods Association, 2009). Furthermore, membership data from the National Off-Road Bicycle Association (NORBA) indicate that only 11% of the licensed competitors in this sport are female (Kronsich & Pfeiffer, 2002; USA Cycling, 2001). Similarly, in Canada, the percentage of female mountain bikers does not equal that of their male counterparts. In a study examining the Sea to Sky Corridor in British Columbia, only 23% of the over 53,000 mountain bikers observed were females (Western Canada Mountain Bike Tourism Association, 2006). Correspondingly, in a 2006 profile of travelers who participated in mountain biking activities while on a pleasure trip to British Columbia, only 25.5% were female (Tourism British Columbia, 2009). Unfortunately, in Nova Scotia, no studies have been conducted to determine the demographics of mountain bikers, however, the popular web forum for mountain bikers in Nova Scotia, *PedalTrout* (now known as *ECMTB.com*), has about 20% female membership of the approximately 500 members (S. Earl, personal communication, October 20, 2012). Results posted on the Bicycle Nova Scotia (the provincial sporting organization for bicycling) website for the 2013 and 2014 mountain bike race seasons indicate that only 17% of the cross county racers and 10% of the downhill racers were female. This demographic information clearly illustrates that males are far more likely to practice this sport which could account for some of the differences in injury rates of male and female mountain bikers.

When considering the differences in injury patterns of men and women mountain bikers along with the variation in participation with men far outnumbering women

mountain bikers, it is clear that more studies are needed to explain these differences. The information that is currently available is primarily from large retrospective surveys that are limited in causal explanations and speculative only (Carmont, 2008; Grimes & Shultz, 2002). With the gold standard of the randomised, prospective, controlled study being impossible to perform as mountain bikers will always change their riding practices to avoid injury (Carmont, 2008), explanations need to be pursued through other research designs. Researchers of mountain bike injuries note that the extreme nature of competitors must be considered (Carmont, 2008), as should mountain bikers' social and economic characteristics and possible "risk personalities" (Gaulrapp, Weber, & Rosemeyer, 2001, p. 52).

2.4.2 Studying the Culture of Mountain Biking

The quantitative descriptive research on mountain biking has provided information that definitively demonstrates differences between men and women mountain bikers with regards to injury and participation patterns. However, what this research fails to address are the underlying causes of such differences or "account for the complexities of social structure and power relations" (Hall, 1995, p. 266). Hall adds that research needs to include a critical analysis of the cultural and ideological practices seen in sport.

Since sport is a site of "cultural struggle", some sporting practices predominate while others are marginalized (Hall, 1995, p. 288). As noted previously, sport is one of the central sites for the social production of hegemonic masculinity (Whitson, 1990). Hall (1995) explains that sport is viewed as a "masculinizing project" which is a "cultural practice in which boys learn to be men and male solidarity is forged." (p. 289). There is

now a body of work that uses cultural studies to "theorize what is seen as a problematic relationship between sport and masculinity (more accurately, masculinities)" (p. 293). As noted earlier, the cultures of some sports systematically produce high injury rates because of a connection between aggression and the process of masculinization (Courtenay, 2000; Young & White, 2000). Young and White (2000) concluded from their qualitative research on the experiences of seriously injured males in Canada that dominant forms of masculinity resulting from social processes interacted with sport practices to produce injury.

It remains to be seen if there is a similar relationship between sports injury and gender processes within the sport of mountain biking. Does mountain biking, with its own particular culture, provide a site for dominant forms of masculinity? What other "problematic relationships" (Hall, 1995, p. 293) might exist in this sport as a result of gender practices and constructions of masculinities? Is the difference in participation and injury rates for men and women mountain bikers a result of a systematic marginalization of women through gender practices? Clearly cultural studies of mountain biking are necessary to answer some of these questions.

It has been noted that mountain biking is an under-researched sport that has its own culture and practices (Wheaton, 2010). Although the cultures and sporting practices of other alternative sports (including skateboarding, snowboarding, windsurfing, and adventure racing) have been examined, there is a paucity of research that explores mountain biking culture (Wheaton, 2010). There are a few systematic studies, including one study I conducted with one of my committee members, Dr. Lori Livingston, on mountain biking magazines that provide some insight into mountain biking culture.

However, no systematic research of the lived experiences of mountain bikers fully examines the practices, including gender practices, of these alternative sport practitioners.

The limited number of formal research studies that have examined mountain biking have built on cultural descriptions documented through less formal observations of this sport. It is commonly said that mountain biking had its beginnings in California in the 1970s (Midol, 1993; Rinehart, 2005). However, Charlie Kelly's statement about the birth of mountain biking may be more accurate. Kelly, considered one of the founders of mountain biking, states that:

> Marin County is not the only place where the mountain bike was invented, but it is the birthplace of the *sport* of mountain biking. People had ridden bikes on dirt long before the first mountain bike went on sale in San Anselmo in 1979… It was the downhill racers in an insane competition on a hill with a unique name who made the invention of the modern mountain bike a necessity. The Repack Downhill initiated the biggest change in cycling of the 20th Century, and helped turn a quaint hobby into an Olympic sport. And that was only the beginning.
>
> (Kelly, Charlie Kelly's mountain bike hubsite, n.d., para. 3, 4, 5)

Three aspects of mountain biking highlighted by Kelly are: 1) there is a unique relationship between the mountain bike and the biker, 2) it was racing that began the sport of mountain biking, and 3) there is something "insane" about this sport.

2.4.3 Evolving Equipment and Developing Subcultures

The above statement by Kelly indicates that the sport of mountain biking is largely associated with the bike itself. Kelly further states that "The story of mountain biking is partly about the bike, but that does not explain the phenomenon." (Kelly, n.d.,

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para. 2). Indeed, Kelly's observation of mountain biking being a phenomenon strongly

associated with the equipment used has been confirmed by others through sytematic

studies. Midol and Broyer (1995) note that equipment utilization is central to an

alternative sport and its culture. Rosen (1993) confirmed the notion of equipment being

tied to a subculture in his study that demonstrated companies now produce a wide range

of bikes and equipment to meet the needs of relevant social groups involved in this sport.

The mountain bike and the technology associated with it are constantly changing. Rosen

(1993) concluded that this constant shifting in mountain-biking technology "lies outside

of the technology itself, but rather in the culture of the cycling world" (p. 493). Indeed

equipment and technology associated with the sport has continued to rapidly evolve and

change with a wide range of bikes and equipment being produced to meet the needs of

each social group that develops in mountain biking.

Although difficult to determine exact dates, it is recognized by members of the

mountain biking community that, by the mid 1990s, the participants of mountain biking

stratified into a number of distinct subcultures (Amici Design, 1999; Cunningham, 2004;

Eller, 2005; Worland, 2003). The development of many styles of mountain biking as a

result of new equipment technologies helps confirm one of the defining characteristics of

lifestyle (alternative) sports described by Wheaton (2004). Wheaton notes that

technological advancements have resulted in rapid developments in many lifestyle sports

and resulted in fragmentation and diversification of the culture, new activities and scenes.

These "new scenes" and "new activities" performed by distinct subcultures can be

best described as styles or disciplines of mountain biking. Taking into consideration

Wheaton's (2004) suggestion that "we must be attentive to the ways sport subcultural

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identities temporally and spatially shift and change" (p. 296), currently there are as many as nine (e.g., Hamilton, 2013), and as few as four styles (e.g., Corporate Research Associates, 2010) of mountain biking described. If we were to consider where the current styles of mountain biking take place (spatially), then Nova Scotian mountain bikers have stratified into the four main disciplines of riding (or four main subcultures) that have been outlined in a market report prepared for Parks Canada (Corporate Research Associates, 2010). These four styles (subcultures) are: cross country/trail riding, freeriding, downhill, and dirt jumping. The four styles/disciplines of mountain biking in Nova Scotia have their own unique activities that appeal to those practicing them. The members of these disciplines or subcultures are defined by how and where they ride as well as the type of bike needed to withstand the particular terrain ridden (Corporate Research Associates, 2010; Cunningham, 2004; Hamilton, 2013; McAfee, 2012).

The first and largest group, cross country/trail riders, are considered the least "extreme" subculture as they ride long stretches of unpaved trails consisting of fire roads, and slow and fast technical single track with light to moderate terrain such as roots and light rock gardens. Cross country is the most popular type of mountain biking likely as a result of the greater number of trails available and the ease of trail accessibility. The cross country riders will also ride some harsh natural terrain. The cross country bike is lightweight, quick handling, and designed for optimum pedaling performance meaning they are excellent for climbing, which is a major characteristic for this discipline. These bikes can be either hardtail models with only front suspension or dual suspension bikes. These bikes are not designed for big jumps or big drops as the travel in the suspension systems is minimal, thus these types of riders tend not to take part in the more "extreme"

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stunts, performing only small jumps and drops. It is more likely the distance travelled (i.e., long rides) that determines the "extremeness" or rather, what makes this type of riding more challenging (Corporate Research Associates, 2010; Cunningham, 2004). However, two other subgroups seen within the cross country category, singlespeed riders and all-mountain riders, use bikes with some minor differences to make their style of riding more challenging. The singlespeed riders use cross country bikes with only one gear thus making all the terrain ridden more difficult. The all-mountain riders use bikes that are more durable and have longer travel in their suspension systems, thus making the bikes somewhat heavier (26 to 35 pounds or 12 to 16 kilograms compared with 18 to 25 pounds or 8 to 11 kilograms for cross country bikes). This style of cross country compromises the speed at which the rider can climb but allows for a more aggressive riding style that would include larger jumps and drops (Cunningham, 2004; Hamilton, 2013).

The second group of mountain bikers, the downhillers, are described as a more "extreme" subculture compared to cross country. Although mountain biking evolved into an "up-and-down" sport (i.e., riding up and down hilly or mountainous terrain) with cross-country being developed, it started as a downhill sport in the early 1970s with riders going as fast as they could down local mountains in Marin County, California (IMBA, 2002, p. 6). As suspension technology evolved, higher speeds have been obtained, as well as increasingly more technical descents on rough terrain that includes large rocks, gaps, jumps, and drop offs (drops). With the goal of this style of mountain biking being the fastest descent down a mountain or steep hill on rough technical terrain, downhill bikers usually wear full-face helmets, goggles, and full-body armour. The

downhill bike, with limited gearing, lots of travel in the suspension systems, and the heavy weight (typically over 40 pounds/18 kilograms), is designed to only be ridden downhill and thus climbing is not a part of this discipline (Corporate Research Associates, 2010; Cunningham, 2004). In Nova Scotia, most of the downhill riding has taken place at Ski Wentworth, Ski Martock, The Gorge near Kentville, and Keppoch Mountain near Antigonish.

The third group, freeriders, may also be considered an "extreme" subculture of mountain biking as these riders have been described as "pushing the limits of technical mountain biking" (IMBA, 2002, p. 8). The International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) defines freeriding as "a style of mountain biking that celebrates the challenges and spirit of technical riding and downhilling" (IMBA, 2002, p. 7). Freeriders emphasize performing tricks and stunts more so than downhillers and enjoy "creative freedom" (McAfee, 2013, para. 5) riding down unique trails that have "good flow" (Corporate Research Associates, 2010, p. 6). The uniqueness of the freerider's terrain is a result of not only riding the natural elements such as rocks, jumps, and drop offs, but incorporating man-made jumps and drops along with other elements such as bridges, teeter-totters, skinny ladders and wood beams. Although freeriding trails primarily flow downwards, there can also be sections that rise along the way, unlike downhilling trails which maintain steep downhill grades. This flow of descending and rising along with maneuvering over and around small objects requires the freeride bike to be somewhat lighter (30-plus pounds/40 kilograms) with more gearing and a more flexible frame design than that of the downhill bike. However, like the downhill bike, freeride bikes must have extremely strong frames and long suspension systems as freeriders will

perform jumps and drops as high, as or even higher, than those performed by downhillers (Corporate Research Associates, 2010; McAfee, 2013). The more extreme nature of this style of mountain biking was demonstrated at the first major freeriding competitons in the early 2000s with riders jumping off of 50-foot/15-meter cliffs and ramping 25 feet/8 meters into the air when hitting jumps (Huybers-Withers & Livingston, 2010). At the 2013 Red Bull Rampage freeriding competition near Virgin, Utah, Cam Zink performed "the biggest freeride mountain bike step-down backflip on record" at 78 feet/24 meters (Barness, 2013, para 2). As with downhilling, protection is important, thus these riders usually wear full-face helmets, goggles, and full-body armour. In Nova Scotia, freeriding has taken place at Ski Wentworth but has mainly been confined to private land areas.

The fourth major subgroup of mountain bikers is that of the dirt jumpers. Although downhillers and freeriders include jumps in their styles of riding, the equipment and terrain used by dirt jumpers results in this division of mountain bikers being their own unique subculture. Dirt jumpers ride over man-made mounds of dirt in an attempt to stay airborne for a long period of time. While airborne, dirt jumpers perform a variety of stunts (tail whips, supermans, cross-ups, etc.) which can be done on a solo jump or a series of lined up dirt jumps. There are many types of jumps with some being quite steep which helps in performing and developing unique airborne tricks. Riders are attempting to perform the best tricks with the best style. Dirt jump bikes generally have smaller frames than all other types of mountain bikes, however, the strength of the frame is comparable to free ride and downhill bikes as dirt jumpers typically reach 3 to 4.6 meters (10 to 15 feet) in the air. Often these bikes have no suspension or a very short travel front suspension and a few gears only with many having a single speed. Dirt jumpers are also

distinct in clothing and equipment with many choosing to wear street clothes with little to no equipment. There are dirt jumpers who will choose to wear equipment such as helmets, full-face protectors, shin and elbow pads and gloves. In Nova Scotia, dirt jumping primarily takes place on private land; however, there have been many dirt jump specific parks built by municipalities in recent years (e.g., 11 parks in Halifax Regional Municipality, one in Wolfville, one in Kentville, and one in New Glasgow).

As described at the beginning of this section, the members of these four disciplines or subcultures are defined by how and where they ride as well as the type of bike needed to withstand the particular terrain ridden. It should be noted that Nova Scotian mountain bikers often belong to one or more of these subcultures as indicated in a survey conducted in 2012 by the Nova Scotia Mountain Bike Trails Association. This survey was intended to collect information on the types of trails Nova Scotia mountain bikers used in order to make a proposal to the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources. In the survey of 100 mountain bikers, 86% of respondents rode smooth well-groomed singletrack (i.e., cross-country riders), 32% rode downhill-specific trails (i.e.,downhillers), and 36% rode trails with man-made stunts (i.e., freeriders and dirt jumpers) (S. Earl, personal communication, March 22, 2012). These numbers indicate that more than one style of riding or subculture can appeal to some Nova Scotian Mountain bikers and thus there will be those who identify with and belong to one, two, three, or all four subcultures.

2.4.4 From Grass Roots to Institutionalization

As suggested by Charles Kelly (Charlie Kelly's mountain bike hubsite, n.d., para. 3, 4, 5), it was downhill racing that made mountain biking a sport. In the early 1970s, the

pioneers of modern mountain biking (including Kelly) began modifying regular bicycles in order to race one another down local mountains in Marin County, California. If grassroots sport is defined as "a broad term covering non-professional activity, sometimes referred to as 'sport for all'" (Euroean Union Committee, 2011, p. 5) and enjoyment is the primary reason for participation, then this early form of mountain biking can be classified as grassroots given the following description:

> When mountain biking began in the mid 1970s, it was all about freedom. Many of the pioneers were free-spirited Northern California road racers, looking to escape the rules, regimented training, and black-shorts-only conformity of sanctioned road competition. (IMBA, 2002, p. 6)

The first regularly scheduled, timed downhill mountain bike races, the Repack races in California, began in 1976 as an informal assemblage of rogue riders trying to determine who was the fastest descender (Berto, 1999; Kelly, n.d., Repack page, para. 1). Twenty-two Repack races took place bewteen 1976 and 1979 with riders attempting to see who could get down the 2.1 mile Pine Mountain fire road on Mount Tamalpais in Marin County, California the fastest (Berto, 1999).

Repack was critical to the development of the mountain bike. The weak-framed, one-speed standard bikes in the 1970s needed improvements for racers to have a technical advantage. These informal races began the continual technical development of the mountain bike starting with stronger frames and with the addition of derailleurs for better gearing beginning during this time period. As Berto (1999) notes, "without the Repack proving ground, the mountain bike would probably have developed differently and it certainly would have taken longer" (p. 42). The Repack racers became the pioneer

builders of the mountain bikes we see today. Indeed, their addition of derailleur gearing as an advantage for downhilling was also determined to be what was needed to ride across many types of off-road terrain. In 1977 on the second annual outing of the "oldest [cross-country] mountain bike event", the 39-mile ride from Crested Butte over Pearl Pass to Aspen, Colorado, these new geared bicycles with stronger frames proved to be much better than the standard single-speed bikes first used by the Repack riders. (Mountain Bike Hall of Fame, 2013, Pearl Pass tour info, para. 3). These bikes also led to the very first cross-country race which took place in September of 1977 in Marin County, California (Kelly, Charlie Kelly's mountain bike hubsite, n.d., para. 17).

Not only were the Repack races critical for the development of the mountain bike, these races also led to the sport of mountain biking becoming more organized, or more specifically, an institutionalized activity. Coakley and Donnelly (2009) note four characteristics of an institutionalized sport: 1. Rules become standardized; 2. Rule enforcement falls under official regulatory agencies; 3. Organizational and technical aspects become much more important; and, 4. Learning the skills of the sport becomes formalized. Mountain biking moved closer to institutionalization in 1979 when one of the participants in a Repack race broke his arm and tried to sue a TV station filming the event. That ended the Repack races until it was possible to obtain insurance for racing (Kelly, n.d., Repack page, para. 30). Charlie Kelly helped form the National Offroad Mountain Bike Association (NORBA) in 1983 which allowed races to be sanctioned and insured and also provided rules for competitions. Two more Repack races followed in 1983 and 1984 - the first two sanctioned races in the world. The questions of land use and permits came next thus ending the Repack races; however, NORBA had been formed

which led to highly organized, sanctioned, permitted, and insured races being attended by highly trained athletes competing on ever-evolving, technologically advanced bikes (Kelly, n.d., Repack page, para. 32, 33). At this time, mountain biking became a fully institutionalized competitive activity. In 1990, the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI), the official authority on cycling with respect to professional events and competitions, sanctioned the first World Mountain Biking Championships that took place in Purgatory, Colorado. In 1996, cross country mountain biking became an official Olympic sport at the Atlanta Olympics (Corporate Research Associates, 2010).

In Nova Scotia, a path similar to that laid out in Marin County, California was followed in that mountain biking began with grassroots racing and evolved to be a fully institutionalized competitive sport. The first races held in Nova Scotia coincided with the mass production of mountain bikes. In 1982, 5000 mountain bikes were sold in the US and sales jumped dramatically to 50,000 in 1983 (Berto, 1999; Corporate Research Associates, 2010). Although the sales in Canada at this time are unknown, enough mountain bikes were owned by Nova Scotians for the first cross country race which was held in Wentworth in 1984. In 1987 the first downhill race was held, also in Wentworth. These early days of mountain bike racing in Nova Scotia, from 1984 until 1990, were representative of grassroots racing as indicated by descriptions given by Bruce Roberts, attendee and organizer of these events (personal communication, October 31, 2013). These races held in the 1980s, although established by clubs and bike shops, were not highly organized, sanctioned events but were instead Sunday gatherings of practitioners of a new sport to see who was the fastest and the best (B. Roberts, personal communication, October 31, 2013). It was not until 1990 when the Union Cycliste

Internationale (UCI) recognised the sport of mountain bike racing that mountain bike races in Canada and Nova Scotia became sanctioned events through the Canadian Cycling Association and Bicycle Nova Scotia, organizers and promoters of cycling in Canada and Nova Scotia respectively (Corporate Research Associates, 2010; B. Roberts, personal communication, October 31, 2013). Since 1990, mountain bike races in Nova Scotia have been highly organized, sanctioned, permitted, and insured events with provincial points series and championships being held in the disciplines of cross country and downhill racing. With highly trained Nova Scotian racers, coaches and officials competing and working at provincial, national and international levels, racing in Nova Scotia has evolved from grass roots events into highly institutionalized, competitive, events.

2.4.5 Extreme Reality or Not

Kelly's statement about the "phenomenon" of mountain biking indicates a third aspect of mountain biking culture, that there is something "insane" about this sport. Mountain biking has been noted in the lay literature for its wild, extreme identity (Amici Design, 1999). Through a more systematic approach, Rinehart (1998, 2005) demonstrated that the "extreme" identity associated with mountain biking has resulted from Entertainment Sports Programming Network's (ESPN) introduction of "The eXtreme Games" (later renamed "The X Games") in June 1995. Rinehart (1998, 2005) argues that as newer, alternative sports are appropriated and commodified by the media, mainstream values are reintroduced and reinforced. Combative competition, aggression, strength, power, courage and toughness, the characteristics of the idealized masculinity of

mainstream sports that legitimize male dominance, are introduced into alternative sports including mountain biking by mass media corporations.

Two systematic studies of mountain biking magazines, found that this niche media form portayed mountain biking in a manner similar to that seen in "The X Games". A small study by Taysom (1998) concluded that in the late 1990s mountain-biking magazine discourses presented the sport as a masculine domain which marginalized women. As noted earlier, Huybers-Withers and Livingston (2010) found similar results to those of Taysom (1998) in a review of *Mountain Bike Action (MBA)* from 2000 to 2008. In particular, we found:

> The increase in photos of men flying through the air on their bikes would make readers wonder if the tires of mountain bikes ever touched the ground, and the photos that did show mountain bikes making contact with land were now often images of the spectacular crashes incurred by these bikers. (pp. 1211-1212)

The trend of big stunt and crash photos continued throughout the 2000s and are still seen in current issues. These photos have become even more stunning today as freeriders continually attempt bigger and more dangerous stunts.

Dr. Belinda Wheaton, the editor of the special issue of *Sport in Society* in which our study was published, noted that there is "remarkably little research" about the gendered culture of this sport which merits an examination of mountain bikers' perceptions and practices (Wheaton, 2010). This examination would help to determine if the narrow portrait of masculinity portrayed in *MBA* along with the focus on extreme stunt riding is truly the lived reality of the majority of practitioners of this sport and not perhaps a limited few who are invited to compete at freeriding competitions and/or pose

for magazine articles. "It is only through engagement with lived cultures, that we can assess if this aggressive 'hardcore' hyper-masculinity is also the dominant lived subjectivity" (Wheaton, 2010, p. 1069).

A systematic investigation of mountain bikers' perceptions and their practices can determine if the representations provided in the lay literature and the few systematic studies available are accurate descriptions of mountain bikers, their sport, their practices and their culture. The current literature on mountain biking culture indicates that this sport has its own distinct culture and practices and in particular its own gendered culture (Wheaton, 2010).

A systematic investigation into the sporting practices of both men and women mountain bikers that includes an examination of gender processes can help us understand the unique experiences of men and women mountain bikers particularly with regards to their differing injury and participation patterns. To add to the limited knowledge currently available on the culture of mountain biking, the present study provided a richly textured account of the perceptions and practices of mountain bikers living in Nova Scotia, Canada. This account gave a unique glimpse into the gendered culture of this sport and its importance to the men and women who take part in it.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I begin by acknowledging the worldview I brought to this study by describing my ontological, epistemological, theoretical, and philosophical predispositions. Next I outline the questions I used to address the purpose of this study as well as guide the methodological decisions made. I continue by describing phenomenology as a form of qualitative inquiry and my choice of interpretive phenomenology and its philosophical underpinnings as a guide to the methods and approaches used to generate and interpret the data.

3.1 ORIENTING THE RESEARCH STUDY

Guba and Lincoln (1994) contend that a researcher must be "clear about just what paradigm informs and guides his or her approach" (p. 116). Scheurich (1995) adds that a researcher needs to orient the reader to the "baggage" that he or she brings to their research and to their interpretations of the data. In this section, I acknowledge the worldview I brought to this study and, I will describe the ontological, epistemological, theoretical, and philosophical assumptions that guided the research.

3.1.1 Paradigmatic Position

As noted previously, knowledge gained through quantitative research on mountain biking has certainly provided information that indicates that men and women experience the sport of mountain biking differently. Kleinman (1995), however, argues that although aggregate statistics may satisfy reliability concerns, they may not necessarily be valid as a result of inter-cultural diversity. Davis (1986), from her study of cultural and local meanings of menopause, also agrees that cultural meaning is ignored in an etic approach and emphasizes the necessity of acknowledging context by studying

naturally occurring behavior (an emic approach). When considering sports, Hall (1996, p. 11) notes that "sporting practices are historically produced, socially constructed, and culturally defined to serve the interests and needs of powerful groups in society". Wheaton (2010) agrees with Hall (1996) and suggests that the lived cultures of mountain bikers need to be studied to assess the practices of this subculture. I concur with Kleinman (1995), Davis (1986), Hall (1996), and Wheaton (2010), and therefore would have been remiss if I had conducted this research within a positivist paradigm. My worldview requires that I search for truth using a paradigm that believes truth is contingent upon specific circumstances at particular times rather than a paradigm that sees truth as unchanging (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

With paradigm being defined as a "basic set of beliefs that guides action" (Guba, 1990, p. 17), it is necessary for me to disclose my research paradigm and its associated concepts that guided this project. Mayan (2005) explains that "the research paradigm is the net that holds the researcher's ontology, epistemology, and theoretical position/perspective" (p. 24). She continues to explain that:

When we consider these concepts, we are obliged to think about how

we understand and appreciate research in general and our own research

in particular, how we do it, and even how we write it up. (p. 24)

3.1.2 Ontological, Epistemological, Theoretical, and Philosophical Positions

Where I am situated ontologically and epistemologically presents my paradigmatic predisposition as constructivist-interpretive (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Within this constructivist-interpretive perspective, my ontological position is rooted in relativism. I therefore believe there are multiple realities as

individuals construct their own realities by incorporating their own experiences, knowledge, and opinions resulting in different interpretations (Mayan, 2005; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Although there are multiple realities and multiple truths, as a researcher I can present a possibility; a text that is "historically, culturally, and socially constructed" (Mayan, 2005, p. 25). I believe this resulting text is a co-created understanding between the researcher and the participant, thus I believe in a subjectivist epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Mayan, 2005).

In order for a researcher to clarify and describe her/his ontological and epistemological stance, Mayan (2005) notes that a researcher needs to consider her/his theoretical positions or perspectives. "In other words, the researcher can be positioned or take a perspective through a particular lens, philosopher, theory, or some sort of combination of all three." (p. 25). I have aligned myself with from social construction theories and concepts of gender; a theoretical position which demonstrates my ontological view that individuals construct their own reality. The concept of gender being something that one does in social transactions with others (West & Zimmerman, 1987) is one that I believe in. Women and men construct and practice gender through dynamic, dialectic relationships based on concepts of masculinity and femininity adopted from cultures that are constantly changing depending on the time and the place (Connell, 1995; Kimmell, 1995; Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1994).

Further to the notion of gender being practiced through social transactions with others is the concept of multiple masculinities and hegemonic masculinity formulated in the 1980s (Connell, 1987). This concept was subsequently confirmed through numerous studies in a vast variety of fields including education, criminology, and sports sociology

(Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). International social science research on masculinity has concluded that there is no one pattern of masculinity but rather multiple constructions between and within a given cultural setting. It is therefore likely that in any given place or time there are different understandings of masculinity and different ways of performing masculinity. Along with this notion of multiple masculinities, some masculinities are more honoured than others. Hegemonic masculinity is the idealized form of masculinity that is culturally dominant in a given setting. Although highly visible, hegemonic masculinity is not the most common form of masculinity, and this concept of a hierarchy of masculinity provides a motive for certain practices and behaviours of those men who strive to measure up to the hegemonic ideal (Connell, 1987). It is this understanding of multiple constructions of masculinity (or more generally multiple constructions of gender) as well as a hierarchy of masculinity that informs the research process of this study.

Although the social constructionist theories and concepts of gender that I align with were present within the research process of this study, they were not the theoretical positions that primarily guided the methodology and method. As the purpose of this study was to explore the experiences and practices of men and women mountain bikers living in Nova Scotia with the aim of better understanding the gendered culture of mountain biking, phenomenology, as a tradition of qualitative inquiry and research design that is concerned with understanding lived experiences (van Manen, 1997), was an appropriate methodology for this study.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences and practices of men and women mountain bikers living in Nova Scotia with the aim of better understanding the gendered culture of mountain biking. In order to do this, two central questions were explored:

1. How do gendered practices marginalize as well as privilege some participants?

2. How do gendered practices put participants at risk of injury?

3.3 PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Methodology involves a theoretical or philosophical position and the fundamental assumptions associated with that position (Koch, 1995; Mayan, 2005). The theoretical or philosophical position/framework houses the procedures that guide the inquiry (Koch, 1995). Therefore, methodology, guided by theoretical or philosophical underpinnings, "involves thinking through method, data collection strategies, analysis techniques, and the production and presentation of findings." (Mayan, 2005, p. 31). Koch (1995) points out that the necessary starting point of an inquiry is for a researcher to clearly understand the philosophical assumptions underlying their method and to be sure those assumptions are consistent with their own world view.

The phenomenological method is the study of lived experience and "aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences" (van Manen, 1997, p. 9). As my purpose was to gain insight into the experiences of Nova Scotian mountain bikers, phenomenology was an appropriate choice of methodology and methods. However, there are various schools of phenomenology with each following different philosophers along with their interpretations of their work (Lopez & Willis,

2004; Mayan, 2005). Furthermore, the research findings that result from a phenomenological study depend on the particular school of phenomenology followed by the researcher (Lopez & Willis, 2004). As there are multiple philosophical traditions of phenomenology, it is necessary for me to describe the two main phenomenological approaches currently used in human science studies that I considered for this study. These are descriptive (Husserlian) phenomenology and interpretive (Heideggerian) phenomenology (Koch, 1996; Lopez & Willis, 2004). Principal differences of these approaches concern how data and findings are generated and how these findings are used in practice (Lopez & Willis, 2004). The following sections will examine these two philosophical traditions and their key tenets, values, and constructs. I will also explain which of the two traditions I chose as the philosophical underpinnings that guided my methodology and method. As noted by Koch (1996), "excursions into the philosophical literature provide the soundness (rigour) of a methodology." (p. 175). Although Koch (1996) believes in the necessity of researchers having a clear understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology" (p. 175), she suggests that:

> These amorphous philosophical areas are a potential minefield and
> guidance from an experienced scholar familiar with them is required.
> Wrestling with obscure German texts is not the objective, but rather
> guided reading of some of the metaphysical arguments which have the
> potential to increase understanding of the processes of interpretive
> research (p. 175)
> For this reason, I will look to the interpretations of others in my explanations.

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3.3.1 Descriptive (Husserlian) Phenomenology

In the late 19th century, phenomenology grew out of Husserl's philosophical ideas about how science should be conducted. According to Husserl, phenomenology is the study of human consciousness (Koch, 1999). He believed in the value of human consciousness and the need for scientific study of it (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Husserl's phenomenology became the study of phenomena as they appear "through the consciousness" and a central notion of his approach is that experience is the absolute meaning of knowledge." (Koch, 1995, p.828).

Husserl introduced the concept of the "life-world" or "lived experience" (Koch, 1995, p. 828). He believed that the life-world was not easily accessible because humans take for granted their everyday life with no critical reflection of their experiences. It was Husserl's belief that a scientific approach could reveal the essential components of the lived experiences of people. Husserl's phenomenology thus seeks to explain the nature of the meaning of human lived experience (Koch, 1995, 1996, 1999; Lopez & Willis, 2004). One of Husserl's intentions for phenomenology was for it to be a descriptive psychology. Koch (1995) believes that an emphasis on description of experience is an "empiricist conception of knowledge." (p. 828). Central to this notion of description is the voice or actual words of the person having the experience. It is a story from the participant's life that is to be read and thus it is essential that the researcher eliminate all prior personal knowledge including expert knowledge and personal biases (Koch, 1995, Lopez & Willis, 2004). The researcher is to achieve the Husserlian concept of transcendental subjectivity whereby she or he constantly assesses her or his impact on the inquiry to eliminate biases and preconceptions so that they do not influence the participant. The

specific technique to accomplish transcendental subjectivity is bracketing. The practice of bracketing "involves the researcher holding in abeyance ideas, preconceptions, and personal knowledge when listening to and reflecting on the lived experiences of participants" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 728). Husserl's desire for scientific rigour is evident in the bracketing technique.

The Husserlian approach to phenomenology also assumes that commonalities in the lived experiences of the participants need to be identified to produce a generalized description. These are known as universal essences and it is assumed that the essences result in a single correct interpretation of the experiences of participants. Husserl also believed that reality is objective and independent of history and context. He believed in the idea of radical autonomy whereby humans influence their own environment and culture with society having no impact on their freedom to choose. The determination of a single interpretation without consideration of context, including culture and society represents "Husserl's attempt to make phenomenology a rigourous science within the prevailing tradition" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p.728).

Given Husserl's desire for rigour and his positivist world view (Koch, 1999), many of the philosophical underpinnings of his approach to phenomenology do not align with my paradigmatic position. With my ontological position being rooted in relativism and my belief in a subjectivist epistemology whereby multiple realities and truths can result in a text co-created between the researcher and the participant, it was interpretive (Heideggerian) phenomenology and its philosophical underpinnings that I chose to guide this research study.

3.3.2 Interpretive (Heideggerian) Phenomenology

The ontological position of Husserl's philosophy was built upon and modified by the more existentially oriented phenomenology of his student, Heidegger (van Manen, 1997). Where Husserl's phenomenological approach was a focus on what humans consciously know and perceive about the human world through an examination of their experiences, Heidegger`s approach was to focus more on the experiences of humans and on human existence (Lopez & Willis, 2004; van Manen, 1997). Lopez and Willis (2004) note that the Heideggerian tradition of phenomenology goes beyond the description of core concepts and essences to look for and interpret meanings embedded in common life experiences.

Heidegger`s conception of life-world differed from Husserl`s in that Heidegger used the term *lifeworld* to express the idea that individuals' realities are "invariably influenced by the world in which they live" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 729). Heideggerian phenomenology is thus a study of "being-in-the-world" which reflects the premise that humans are not able to abstract themselves from the world (van Manen, 1997, p. 184) but "are embedded in their world to such an extent that subjective experiences are inextricably linked with social, cultural, and political contexts" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 729). These contexts influence an individual`s choices; however, they are still free to make choices. Heidegger referred to this notion as situated freedom which is in direct opposition to Husserl`s concept of radical autonomy whereby humans influence their own environment, culture and society, and have no impact on their freedom to choose. Therefore, Husserlian phenomenologists are seeking from participants only their descriptions of the real, perceived world. In contrast, the meanings of an individual`s

lifeworld and how these meanings influence choices are examined in the Heideggerian

tradition. As pointed out by Lopez and Willis (2004), it is the interpretation of the

narratives provided by participants in relation to various contexts that is foundational

with each participant's narrative being a construction of their reality. As van Manen

(1997, p. 31) notes, "A phenomenological description is always *one* interpretation, and no

single interpretation of human experience will ever exhaust the possibility of yet another

complementary, or even potentially *richer* or *deeper* description."

This notion of each participant constructing their own reality is congruent with

my constructivist-interpretive perspective and my ontological position that there are

multiple realities based on individual experiences, knowledge, and opinions over time. As

this study involved hearing and interpreting the narratives of a number of mountain

bikers who practice this sport in various contexts, and with the belief that each described

their own reality, I felt it appropriate to follow the Heideggerian tradition of

phenomenology. For example, when the participants of this study described the ideal

mountain biker, each described their own experiences that led to their current

notion/reality of what makes an ideal mountain biker. Each participant's interpretation of

the ideal mountain biker including my own interpretation provided many rich and deep

descriptions of what it is to be an ideal mountain biker.

Other philosophical assumptions underlying Heidegger's interpretive

phenomenological tradition that fit well within my ontological position of relativism and

my belief in a subjectivist epistemology helped guide the methodology and methods of

this study. I found important direction in the assumptions of interpretive phenomenology

that helped answer the question of "How does the lifeworld inhabited by any particular

individual in this group of participants contribute to the commonalities in and differences between their subjective experiences?" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p.729)

One assumption that guides the inquiry of an interpretive phenomenology researcher and thus my study is that the background knowledge and understandings of the researcher cannot be eliminated or held in abeyance. This assumption brings into question the plausibility of the practice of bracketing that is central to the descriptive phenomenology tradition of Husserl (Koch, 1995, 1996; Lopez & Willis, 2004). Within the interpretive tradition of phenomenology, the researcher as interpreter inevitably brings background expectations and frames of meaning that inform understanding (Koch, 1996). As noted in a previous example, my interpretations based on my life experiences provided an additional rich description of what it is to be an ideal mountain biker. It is therefore necessary for the researcher to describe her/his situatedness or location and make explicit how they will use their presuppositions and prejudices in the research project (Lopez & Willis, 2004). My own experience with and preconceptions of mountain biking are discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter.

Another important concept outlined by Heidegger was that of co-constitutionality which Koch (1995) defines as the "philosophical assumption of indissoluble unity" (p. 831). We are all "self-interpreting beings" and we interpret ourselves through our practices, that is, through our being-in-the-world (Koch, 1995, p. 831). Both the researcher and the participant engage in an a priori world thus each has a wealth of experiences and meanings that they bring to the research (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Gadamer, a student of Heidegger used the metaphor "fusion of horizons" to explain that the act of interpretation results from the blending of separate horizons (or ideas,

assumptions, meanings, and experiences) of the researcher and participant. (Lopez &

Willis, 2004). As a result of the fusion of horizons, there can be more than one

interpretation of the narratives and no one true meaning is produced in an interpretive

study. Lopez and Willis (2004) do note that the meanings reported in the research

findings need to be logical and reflective of the realities of the participants.

In this study, I examined the cultural world of mountain biking and in doing so

included the interpretations of the participants along with my own interpretations. As the

participants provided narratives of their meanings of their lifeworld, I attempted to

describe and interpret these meanings while maintaining depth and richness. Through a

fusion of horizons, I followed van Manen's (1997) advice. For example, the narratives of

my participants that described their meaning of the phenomena of an ideal mountain

biker were interpreted along with my own understanding of what makes an ideal

mountain biker. In this example, the participants gave rich descriptions of a variety of

gendered practices performed by someone considered to be an ideal mountain biker. My

own experiences as a part of the mountain biking culture as well as my background in

gender studies combined with the participants' experience and knowledge in articulating

a description of the gendered practices of the idealized form of a mountain biker. This

"fusion of horizons" resulted in a phenomenological description of an ideal mountain

biker; that which is *one* interpretation based on a number of complementary, rich and

deep descriptions. The final research account as written in chapters 4, 5, and 6, is a story

constructed by the participants and myself that furthers our understanding of the gendered

culture and practices of mountain biking. However, I realize that this final description

and interpretation is open to multiple interpretations by the various readers and "remains

continually ready to alter its construction when better insights come along." (Koch, 1999, p. 33).

Another central notion followed by interpretive phenomenologists is that of dialogue. Gadamer noted that genuine questions are necessary for true dialogue to take place. This true dialogue takes us in several possible directions and to new discoveries, thus interviews and conversations with participants must be non-directive. This open approach allows participants to control the flow of conversation and be able to tell their stories in their own way (Koch, 1996). This study aimed to achieve true dialogue in order to gather full and rich descriptions of the experiences of mountain bikers. A comprehensive description of how this study maintained the open nature of the discussion and allowed participants to lead discussions is provided in the *Methods* section of this chapter.

The three Heideggerian concepts of preunderstandings/prejudices, co-constitutionality/fusion of horizons, and dialogue described previously are central to another essential notion of interpretive phenomenology - that being the hermeneutic circle (Crist & Tanner, 2003; Koch, 1995, 1996, 1999). The word "hermeneutic" is a derivative from the Greek god Hermes who was responsible for *interpreting* messages between the gods (thus interpretive phenomenology is also referred to as hermeneutic phenomenology or simply hermeneutics). The notion of the hermeneutic circle emphasizes the non-linear process of interpretive phenomenology and affirms the position of the researcher in the process (Crist & Tanner, 2003; Koch, 1995). The researcher brings her/his preunderstandings and prejudices into the circular process while recognizing, acknowledging, and explicitly stating their assumptions and taking note of

their influence on the research process (Crist & Tanner, 2003). Dialogue through open questioning and conversation takes place so that each participant can provide her/his own narrative with full and rich descriptions. These narratives as participants' interpretations of their own experiences/world are then fused with the researcher's interpretation and subjected to reinterpretation throughout the research process. The non-linear aspect of the hermeneutic circle may result in these procedures overlapping (Crist & Tanner, 2003). The following section explains how I undertook the hermeneutic circle process in this study.

3.3.3 Situating Myself in the Research Process

As noted above, the hermeneutic circle and the concept of pre-understandings and prejudices affirms the researcher's position in the research study. As Koch (2006) notes, "the hermeneutic circle cannot be avoided, rather it is a matter of getting into it properly." (p. 100). The purpose of this study was to explore the gendered perceptions and practices of men and women mountain bikers living in Nova Scotia with the aim of better understanding the gendered culture of mountain biking. In order to provide a constructed reality of the experiences of these mountain bikers, along with the study participants, I was also a participant in the final construction as I brought my pre-understandings and prejudices into the process. Koch (2006) notes how valuable and necessary this knowledge is to the inquiry by stating that:

> Prejudices are not necessarily erroneous or necessarily distortions of truth. Our situatedness as interpreters, our own historicity, do not constitute an obstacle. Prejudices are the conditions by which we encounter the world as we experience something. We take value positions with us into the research process. These

values, rather than getting in the way of research, make research meaningful. (p. 92)

Stating and understanding my experience with mountain biking at the outset of this study situated me within the research and provided a starting point for the inquiry (van Manen, 1997).

Like the participants that I interviewed, I too am a Nova Scotian mountain biker. My history with this sport brought an abundance of pre-understandings and prejudices into the hermeneutic circle process. I have taken part in this sport since the early 1990s as a recreational participant, competitor, coach, and commissaire (i.e., referee). Through my own personal experiences of mountain biking as well as conversations with and observations made of other members of this community, I have experienced a vast array of personal narratives. I have also reflected on these narratives and come to understand that each of us mountain bikers has our own unique experiences and our own constructed realities of what it is to be a mountain biker. Furthermore, I have noticed that my own personal experiences and practices within this culture have changed over time thus varying my understandings and interpretations of this sport culture.

Within my *lifeworld* of mountain biking, I have always had a keen interest in what makes a person participate in this sport. The reality that I had constructed at the onset of this study was that men are more likely to participate in mountain biking with a bigger gender gap in formalized competition. Having served on the Board of Directors (BOD) for Bicycle Nova Scotia (BNS) as the Athlete Development and Coaching Coordinator in the early 2000's, I observed that women were marginalized in various ways in this sport. I was part of a group of women who fought for equity through

important issues such as equal prize money and seemingly trivial issues such as who would get the race plate (a square piece of plastic with a number that attaches to the bike in order to identify the racer) with the number one on it, the top ranked man or the top ranked woman? In our battles with the men, we often noted the gender equity policy that BNS was required to have to receive government funding. Furthermore, as the Head Coach for the Nova Scotia Provincial and Canada Games Teams, I always held a coaching philosophy that involved inclusiveness and fairness. Athlete development was open to everyone. Anyone could try out for the women's and men's teams and all members received an equal amount of attention by the coaching staff, as well as an equal amount of resources. With all of these advances toward achieving gender equity for bicycling in Nova Scotia, there still remained a large gap with more men than women taking part in mountain biking. I knew women were marginalized through gender practices that I did not completely understand.

Although I knew in the early 2000s that there was a need to understand gender practices of men and women mountain bikers in order to help overcome the gender gap, I did not pursue any path to a clearer understanding of our mountain biking culture in Nova Scotia. I actually stepped back from holding a BOD position with BNS and team coaching to focus on raising my children. I sat back and watched BNS athlete development become centered on the men with no attempts at developing any women's teams. Bicycling was the only sport in Nova Scotia that did not send a women's team to the 2009 Canada Summer Games. For me, that was appalling and needed to be corrected. By 2010, the battle for gender equity between me and the BNS BOD began. Although still an ongoing battle, women's road and mountain bike teams representing Nova Scotia

were reinstated for the 2013 Canada Summer Games. My fight for gender equity has been difficult (e.g., I have been threatened with lawsuits by BNS members) thus I wanted to truly understand why there is such resistance to women participating in bicycling and, in particular, mountain biking. This study put me on a path to understanding the gendered culture of mountain biking in Nova Scotia.

Not only have I felt the need to understand the marginalization of women in mountain biking, I have also wondered why some practitioners take undue risks while riding a mountain bike. I observed that men and boys were more inclined to take greater risks while mountain biking. As with the marginalization of women in mountain biking, I knew that risk taking in mountain biking was also a result of gendered practices. Having watched many of my friends suffer injuries to various degrees as well as enduring pain from my own mountain biking mishaps, I felt a need to understand the gendered perceptions and practices that influence mountain bikers in their decisions to put their bodies at extreme risk of injury. After watching a friend fracture a cervical vertebrae in an attempt to perform a stunt I had just completed, the guilt and regret I felt at the time had not diminished much at the onset of this study. Although it was quite fortunate that my friend recovered well enough to be able ride again, the outcome of that incident could have been more serious. Carrying out this study was, in part, a personal endeavour to help me understand what happened that day.

Knowing that each individual creates his/her own reality concerning their mountain biking lifeworld, my aim for this study was to explore the experiences of these other mountain bikers and come to an understanding of their realities. I wanted to understand if other mountain bikers also perceived the gendered practices of members of

this sporting culture in a similar way as me or if their understandings were different. My belief that social, cultural, and political processes influence an individual's choice to take part in this sport as well as influence the practices of those who do take part in mountain biking, was also part of this study's process of the hermeneutic circle. I agreed with van Manen's (1997) suggestion that "it is the extent that *my* experiences could be *our* experiences that the phenomenologist wants to be reflectively aware of certain experiential meanings." (p. 57). It was necessary for me to carry out this systematic study to determine the lived realities of other mountain bikers and understand their meanings and interpretations of their experiences and practices. Through this phenomenological research project I was able to search for what it means to be in the world as a mountain biker "taking into account the sociocultural and the historical traditions that have given meaning to our ways of being in the world." (van Manen, 1997, p. 12)

Finally, immersing myself in the mountain biking culture for over two decades has resulted in my own personal love of this sport. It is my extreme enjoyment of this sport that also led to my need to understand how barriers to this sport could be reduced as well as how this sport could be made safer and even more enjoyable.

3.4 METHODS

In order to fulfil the purpose of this study and answer the research questions, I conducted in-person interviews. These interviews allowed me to provide an examination of the complex interactions of the experiences, lived realities, knowledge, subjectivities, and discourse of eight Nova Scotian mountain bikers.

3.4.1 Participant Selection

Phenomenological research is the study of lived experience with the goal of

gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of an individual's everyday experiences (van Manen, 1997). Selection of participants in this research study was therefore purposeful and included those who have lived experience as a mountain biker These participants were willing to talk about their mountain biking experience and were diverse enough to provide rich and unique stories of their experience. This type of sampling involves selecting individuals based on their expert knowledge and experience of a particular phenomenon which allows for rich and in-depth insights into what an experience or phenomenon means to a particular group (Creswell, 1998; Crist & Tanner, 2003). For this study, the criteria to be satisfied through purposeful sampling included both men and women participants who self-identified as mountain bikers, were 16 years of age or older, and who were residents of Nova Scotia. Additional criteria such as style of mountain biking (i.e., cross country, downhill, and free ride), and experience and skill level of the mountain biker were included to obtain a richer and more in-depth insight into the lived experience of mountain bikers.

In this study, participants were also theoretically sampled and thus selected in response to the data that were collected. The sampling followed Morse and Field's (1995) advice to be open and reflexive based on early or previous interviews. As each interview was conducted and analyzed, new narratives, concepts, ideas, and themes emerged that required the recruitment of participants with other/additional criteria. For example, an early participant noted that the behaviours of teenaged boys that race to be different from older men. In response to this discovery, I wanted to further explore these ideas by interviewing a teenage boy racer and include his narrative. Although Sandelowski (1986) suggests that participant interviews should continue until a point of saturation is reached

(i.e., the point at which further discussions with participants do not provide a clearer understanding of the experiences and lived realities of mountain bikers), I felt that a clear determination of this point was not possible. After I had interviewed eight diverse mountain bikers, I had enough rich data for an in-depth analysis into practices and the culture of mountain biking in Nova Scotia. The experiences and perspectives of these mountain bikers provided a unique lens into the culture of the sport. Their richly textured accounts of their experience and practice revealed the gendered nature of this sport and answered the central questions to address the purpose of this research.

Eight Nova Scotian mountain bikers took part in this study, four women and four men. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 43 and their riding experience ranged from 6 to 25 years. All eight self-identified as recreational cross country riders and all have raced. One man and one woman currently do not race. All four women have ridden downhill recreationally and have raced downhill; however, only one still takes part in any form of downhilling. Two of the men have ridden downhill recreationally and have raced downhill; however, only one still takes part in any form of downhilling. One woman and one man currently free-ride while one woman and one man have taken part in freeriding in the past. One woman and one man take part in dirt jumping. One man rides single-speed (i.e. rides a bike with only one gear) Two participants ride as a family with either their children or their parents. One participant used to ride as a family (see Table 1).

Table 1   Participant Information

Pseudonym	Age	Sex	Style of Riding	Years Riding
Ned	Late 30s	male	XC* rider. Very little to no DH* or Free riding. Primarily a recreational rider but does some racing. Has ridden single-speed.	25
Elladee	Early 40s	female	Currently a recreational XC rider. Has raced extensively in the past both XC and DH. Did DH riding prior to 2000 when equipment and trails changed.	23
Roland	Mid 30s	male	Currently a recreational XC rider. Has raced XC and DH a fair amount in the past. Has done a fair amount of free riding in the past.	10 to 15
Alison	Mid 20s	female	Primarily an XC racer. Rides XC recreationally. Has raced at a very high level (Worlds). Has raced DH and has done a fair amount of free riding.	14
Julianna	Mid 30s	female	High level XC racer in NS. Rides recreationally. Has done an extensive amount of DH racing.	10
Myles	Early 30s	male	Key person in DH scene in NS. Races and runs DH races. Has built many of the DH trails. Races XC. Rides recreationally XC, DH, free riding, and dirt jumping.	21
Ruthie	Early 40s	female	Middle aged mother of 2 who rides extensively in XC, DH, freeriding and dirt jumping. Races in XC and DH.	6
Bart	Teen	male	Middle to high level XC racer.	10

*XC = cross country   *DH = downhill

3.4.2 Recruitment Strategies

The recruitment strategy for this study was voluntary recruitment of mountain bikers living in Nova Scotia. Two main recruitment methods were used: website notices and posters (Appendix A). A notice was placed on a popular mountain bike website in Nova Scotia, *PedalTrout*. I also placed this notice on a number of Nova Scotian bike store websites (e.g., Hub Cycle, Pictou County Cycle), as well as displayed recruitment

posters within these stores. As an active mountain biker and a member of the mountain

biking community, I also relied on personal contacts, including mountain bike clubs and

mountain bike trail building associations, and asked members to refer this study to

potential participants (i.e., a networking process for recruitment). Additional participants

were obtained through snowball sampling by asking already recruited participants to refer

this study to other mountain bikers who they thought might be interested in taking part in

the study (Ulin, Robinson, & Tolley, 2005). Potential participants were able to obtain my

telephone number and email address from the notices and posters, my contacts, and other

participants if they were interested in knowing more about the study. Once contacted by a

potential participant, I provided him or her with a brief description of the study including

the purpose. The expectations of participation were explained as well as the limited risk

of harm. A time and interview location were also arranged with mountain bikers who

agreed to take part in the study (Appendix B). No incentive or honorarium was offered as

there were enough mountain bikers who enjoyed being interviewed for this study.

3.4.3 Data Collection and Management

According to van Manen (1997), "the data of human science research are human

experiences" (p. 63). One approach van Manen (1997) describes for "gathering lived-

experience material" (p. 53) is the conversation interview. The interview takes place

within the context of a relationship, as van Manen (1997) notes, "the interview may be

used as a vehicle to develop a conversational relation with a partner (interviewee) about

the meaning of the experience" (p. 66). When participants are asked to describe their

experiences in detail, Koch (1996) notes that openness is critical. Questions should be

open in nature with the follow-up discussion being led by the participant and not so much

by the researcher. Koch (1996) also notes that there may be very few direct questions asked in order to keep the interview process as close to the lived experience as possible. van Manen (1997) suggests that it is helpful to ask the participants for concrete examples such as asking the person to think of a specific instance or situation to help describe what the experience is like. For example, in following Koch's advice, an open question I posed to participants was, "Can you tell me about a day that you had a really good ride?". This question allowed the participant to lead the follow-up discussion with a rich description of their account of an enjoyable ride. As well, I used van Manen's suggestion of having participants think of a specific ride that helped with describing how mountain biking is enjoyable.

The interview guide (Appendix C) for this study was developed within the framework of van Manen (1997) and Koch's (1996) interpretive phenomenology and their above noted suggestions. Further advice from van Manen (1997) concerning the interview process is that it "needs to be disciplined by the fundamental question that prompted the need for the interview in the first place" (p. 66). Following van Manen's advice, the interview guide explored areas that reflected the purpose of this study, that is, to explore the experiences and practices of men and women mountain bikers living in Nova Scotia with the aim of better understanding the gendered culture of mountain biking. Each area of inquiry began with an open question, asking the participant to describe his or her experience regarding the topic being explored. After this starting point, the follow-up questions and probes were intended to explore the participant's full experience with the area of mountain biking being examined. These follow-up questions asked the participant for particular examples to help keep the conversation at the "level of

concrete experience" (van Manen, 1997, p. 68). For example, the question "What words would you use to describe this ride?" was asked when to further explore the topic of what makes a ride enjoyable. Few direct questions were included in the interview guide in order to maintain the open nature of the discussion and allow the participant to lead the conversation. After the first initial interview, I began to follow van Manen's (1997) advice to use silence as a prompt. I also provided verbal prompts by repeating a participant's last sentence or thought. In some instances, a rewording of the question or acknowledgement of my understanding of their stories helped participants to continue. For example, when talking about enjoyable rides I often stated that I knew exactly what they were talking about in order to keep the discussion going and become more in-depth.

Over a period of twelve months, eight participants each took part in one in-depth face-to-face interview. Interviews took lasted approximately 30 minutes to two hours and interviews were conducted at various locations where the participants felt most comfortable. For some participants this was in their home, for others it was in a quiet eating establishment. Efforts were taken to ensure privacy and confidentiality during the interview. For example, in more public places such as eating establishments, the interview was held at a table where others could not hear our conversation. After the study was explained to the participant and written consent was obtained (Appendix D), the interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed verbatim. Additional clarifications or elaborations were required of five participants following the interview. All of these participants gave prior written consent to be re-contacted, thus all were contacted either in person or by email following their initial interview.

Verbatim does not capture all of what is being said in an interview and van

Manen (1997) notes the importance of paying attention to what is not spoken in an interview. Vocal intonations, physical expressions, and gestures should be included in field notes as another source of data to be incorporated into the texts and analyzed (Crist & Tanner, 2003). I followed this suggestion by keeping a field journal throughout the study as another source of data. Not only were the actions of participants during interviews noted in this journal, my thoughts and reactions were also recorded as additional sources of data. My decision trail for this study was also laid out in this journal, as well as descriptions of my reflections, prejudices, preconceptions, interpretations and experiences during the research process. The following is an example from my field journal that I wrote after interviewing a teenage boy racer:

> Great interview with Bart. Spoke with such excitement and enthusiasm throughout the interview. He definitely loves this sport.
>
> Spoke truthfully about wanting to see more girls and women be involved and he had great respect for the women and girls that mountain biked. This was odd. Interviewing teen boys in the past (master's thesis) was different. They saw girls as too weak to do this sport.
>
> Why is Bart different? Is it his confidence in his own abilities? He doesn't seem to need to marginalize women and girls to attain recognition, status in the community. Are young men who are getting stronger and better different from older men who are becoming less and less capable of keeping up with the younger guys? Need to reread other participant transcripts to interpret any differences. Follow-up on this idea of younger guys more accepting and older guys having greater need to maintain a gender hierarchy.

In this example, my journal notes helped me to remember this participant's excitement during the interview and how he talked with passion and honesty. I was surprised by his support of women as my preconceived ideas and previous experience led me to believe that many teen boys were not supportive of women and girls in mountain biking. These notes also helped me decide to further explore age differences as a reason for maintaining a masculine hierarchy.

Finally, as part of data collection and management, all hard copy data collected from the interviews, follow-up contacts and field notes were locked in a filing cabinet when not being used. In addition, all electronic data were password protected. Two hired transcribers were required to sign a confidentiality agreement (Appendix E). Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants was further protected by cleansing the transcripts of identifiers. Names were removed from the interviews with the names of the participants being replaced by pseudonyms that I created. Any contact information was also removed from the transcripts.

3.5   DATA ANALYSIS

To fulfil the purpose of this study and answer the research questions, phenomenological reflection and analysis was undertaken through the process of the hermeneutic circle. Qualitative software aided in maintaining and organizing the data for analysis. Finally, van Manen's (1997) guidelines for determining the essential themes were followed in this study.

3.5.1 Getting Into the Hermeneutic Circle

Heideggerian hermeneutics locates the unit of analysis in the transaction between the participant and the researcher as the participant. van Manen (1997) adds that

phenomenological reflection and analysis requires eliciting a more direct contact with the lived experience and thus "reflecting on lived experience then becomes reflectively analyzing the structural or thematic aspects of that experience" (p. 78). While I collected the data (viewed as textual products by Heidegger), understandings needed to be made of these data. Through the process of the hermeneutic circle, the narratives were examined simultaneously with the emerging interpretations. I continued to interview and observe participants throughout this nonlinear ongoing process of observation, interviewing, reading, writing, and interpreting (Crist & Tanner, 2003, Koch, 1996). As well, my background and journal data influenced the analysis of the participant interviews. Following the framework of the hermeneutic circle, I attended to my own presuppositions/prejudices as best I could, as well as to the narratives of all the participants focusing on the dialogue and language. Additionally, I followed the notion of a "fusion of horizons" by interpreting key themes and experiences that represented shared experiences with the participants and my own unique experiences. In my above journal sample, it demonstrates the process of the hermeneutic circle that I used. In this example, I considered what the young man was saying and identified a theme of some men maintaining a masculine hierarchy. I considered who I thought took part in marginalizing women to maintain a gender hierarchy; however, I acknowledged that the reality of others was different from mine. By rereading and interpreting the transcripts of other participants as well as following-up with more participants, I was able to follow a "fusion of horizons" to combine the narratives of all the participants as well as my own. In this way, I was able to provide an interpretation of who maintains a masculine hierarchy in the mountain biking culture in Nova Scotia.

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There was full immersion on my part during the data analysis in order to focus on the data or "textual products" (van Manen, 1997) generated from the interviews, follow-up contacts, and my field notes and journal. Transcripts were read and re-read, and audio recordings were listened to and replayed to identify commonalities and differences between experiences of the participants and between participants and myself. Initial interpretations guided the subsequent interviews as well as the sampling of participants in order to gain a deeper, richer understanding. I engaged in writing and re-writing throughout the analysis to help develop the interpretation. Initially, I wrote summaries of interviews and observations of participants identifying my central concerns, thoughts and ideas of possible codes. Comparing and contrasting each participant's narrative as well as my own helped in the coding of the transcripts. As suggested by Koch (1996) re-reading the coded transcripts and repeatedly reviewing my field notes helped me to identify common and unique experiences. If new codes appeared in later interviews, I returned to earlier ones to determine the relevancy of the new code. As well, some codes were re-coded or removed. In this way, the process of analysis was not linear but dialogical and iterative (Crist & Tanner, 2003).

3.5.2 Organizing the Data

Qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software ATLAS.ti 7 was used to assist in organizing the data as it is a comparative analysis examining all the above noted data sources. I realized that not all information is captured when translating audio to text, such as voice inflections, body language, etc. To capture all data during analysis, strategies were used, such as reviewing the transcript along with the audio and using the information recorded in the field notes throughout the coding process. As previously

noted, the recording in my journal of the teen boy's enthusiasm in his voice throughout the interview is an example of how I captured as much data as possible.

Once the data were imported into the QDA software, analysis began by identifying a topical set of codes. These topical codes were groups of quotes that concerned a single topic. For example, a number of participants spoke about mountain biking in relation to the social aspects of riding, competitive riding, recreational riding, and riding styles. The topics that emerged in this step of coding came directly from the participants' narratives. This step in the coding process helped organize data that concerned a single topic and allowed a more complex analysis of the data.

Once the topical coding was completed, shared concepts that occurred across codes were identified. For example, if 'positive family involvement' was discussed in numerous topical codes, then sub-codes would be created. Thus, if participants spoke about positive family involvement when talking about boys with sisters, men with children, women with children, and men with partners, then the sub-codes were called 'Positive Family Involvement: Brothers Involving Sisters', 'Positive Family Involvement: Focus on Daughters', 'Positive Family Involvement: Dads Involving Children', 'Positive Family Involvement: Mothers Involving Children', and 'Positive Family Involvement: Men Involving Partners'. When this conceptual level of coding was completed, the codes were placed into the ATLAS.ti 7 feature called 'Code Families'. Topical codes associated with 'Positive Family Involvement', such as 'Men Teaching Women', 'Women Encouraging Women' were placed into a code family called 'Female Inclusiveness'.

The next step involved organizing codes and code families using a concept mapping technique offered with a feature of ATLAS.ti 7 called 'Networks'. With this feature, relationships between different codes and code families are identified. For example, if the code 'men riders respecting women riders' is linked to the code 'alternative masculinities', then the relationship between the two could be considered as 'men riders that respect women riders practice an alternative masculinity'. In this study, two primary networks or essential themes (van Manen, 1997) were created. These two essential themes, Sustaining the Gender Hierarchy and Challenging the Gender Hierarchy lead to the writing process. How I came to these two themes, or the creation of these themes, will now be discussed.

3.5.3 Apprehending the Essential Themes

van Manen (1997) provides a guideline in determining the essential themes that develop the interpretive product of the study and suggests that a "concern is to discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is." (p. 107). van Manen's (1997) recommendation for determining the essential themes allows for an elaboration of the narratives of the lived realities of a phenomenon such as mountain biking. However, the researcher requires guidelines to go about "apprehending" the essential themes, thus a theoretical orientation or framework assists in determining the essential themes and is used to interpret the findings (Lopez & Willis, 2004; van Manen, 1997).

Theory in interpretive phenomenology is not used to generate hypotheses to be tested as in quantitative research, nor is it used in the same way as the qualitative methodology of grounded theory where the goal is to generate theory (Creswell, 1998;

Lopez & Willis, 2003). A theoretical framework in interpretive phenomenology is used to focus the inquiry and interpret the data. However, this theoretical framework must not bias the narratives of the participants and the researcher must make clear how the framework is used to interpret the data and generate findings (Lopez & Willis, 2003).

This study used van Manen's (1997) "lifeworld existential" as a guide to reflection (p. 101). van Manen (1997) has identified four fundamental existential themes that are a part of the lifeworlds of all human beings. These "lifeworld existentials" are: lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality or communality). Following van Manen's (1997) recommendation for methodological processes, these four categories provide fundamental questions to enhance understanding of experience. These lifeworld existentials were used in this study to guide my reflections throughout the research process and help recognize and situate the structure of experiential meanings (i.e., essential themes) within the multiple and different lifeworlds of the participants. For example, the lifeworld existential of "lived space (spatiality)" provided insights into understanding the relationship of the built environment created by mountain bikers (e.g. stunts, trails) to gender performance and maintenance of a gender hierarchy.

Another theoretical orientation I used to frame the analysis of the data was the notion of gender being practiced through social transactions with others and the concept of multiple masculinities and hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987). While reflecting on the data generated by each of the participants in this study, these concepts of gender as practice and a social construction provided a frame of reference for me. Although my recognition of the use of this framework makes explicit how I interpreted the data, I took

measures to ensure this framework did not bias the narratives of the participants. For example, when I interpreted a particular mountain biking practice as being a way of practicing gender, I followed-up with the participant(s) who described this practice and asked for their interpretations. For example, when one participant described older men racers being inconsiderate to women racers, I asked her why she thought these men performed inconsiderate behaviours towards women racers.

A final note as to data analysis and interpretation concerns the ongoing nature of interpretation. This study aimed to approach the interpretive process as systematically as possible through the nonlinear approach of the hermeneutic circle. However, Koch (1999) notes that "a final research product is only a pragmatic one" (p. 32). It should be noted that interpretation is an unending process and that the readers of the final report of this study make the final interpretation (Crist & Tanner, 2003; Koch, 1999; van Manen, 1997).

3.6 ENSURING RIGOUR

The readers of the final report bring their own horizons and thus are also interpreters of the research study. Readers therefore may not share the researcher's interpretation, but as noted by Koch (1994), they should be able to understand how the researcher came to that interpretation. There has been much critical appraisal of qualitative criteria of rigour for phenomenological studies which centers around the use of a generic set of criteria. It is argued that a generic set of criteria is philosophically inconsistent with the methodology and prevents full expression of rigour in research studies (Koch, 1996; de Witt & Ploeg, 2006). Koch (1996) contends that "the issue regarding the most appropriate criteria is one that must be resolved by the

individual…researcher" (p. 178) and that the researcher must select or develop the most appropriate criteria for their particular study. Elements of the criteria of rigour outlined by Koch (1994, 1996) in her interpretive phenomenological research in the field of nursing, as well as the expressions of rigour described by phenomenological scholar van Manen (1997), were considered to be appropriate for this present study. Koch (1996) notes that rigour is dependent on showing that the study is trustworthy and believable. The use of these criteria and expressions aimed to fully demonstrate the trustworthiness and believability of this study.

The characteristic of the criterion of credibility is for the findings of the study to produce recognition of an experience by the reader (Sandelowski, 1986). van Manen (1997) adds that the experience must also be felt by the readers. Guba and Lincoln (1994) note that to enhance credibility, the researchers must describe and interpret their experiences while conducting the research study. Koch (1994) suggests that self-awareness is essential for credibility and this can be obtained by keeping a journal. By maintaining a journal, I was able to record all my interactions with participants and reflect on the conversations and interchanges we had. I was able to reflect upon and describe my relationships with the participants and my reactions to the interactions I had with each participant. For example, in my above journal sample I recorded my feelings about the honesty and enthusiasm of the teenager I interviewed. I also recorded my differing thoughts to those of this participant.

Not only does self-awareness enhance credibility, consulting with the participants about the interpretations also established credibility. Re-contacting five of the participants to discuss my interpretations and to ask for elaborations allowed for a

corroboration of the data as well as different interpretations from mine. Readers of the findings are presented with interpretations other than my own that help them to both recognize and feel the experiences of the interviewed mountain bikers.

Koch (1994) uses fittingness as a criterion for ensuring rigour in interpretive phenomenology. The criterion of fittingness is met when findings are described adequately to enable judgments in that study of transferability to be made by readers (Koch, 2006; Sandelowski, 1986). Sufficient contextual information is needed in order to make such judgments (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The findings of this study include thick, rich and full descriptions that provided the necessary contextual information for the reader to decide if these findings transfer to other settings. Providing quotations and examples, as well as interpretations other than my own, helped to render sufficient contextual information. Although some quotations were edited by removing fillers and speech disfluency, they remained true to the intent of what the participant was saying. Also, by incorporating my journal notes, a richer context was provided as these notes include information about vocal intonations, physical expressions, and gestures of the participants. The criterion of fittingness in this study has invoked a rich depth of insight by reading the study findings, a hallmark of interpretive phenomenology (van Manen, 1997).

Trustworthiness and believability can also be established if the reader is able to clearly follow the decision trail made by the researcher (Koch, 1996, 2006; Sandelowski, 1986). Clarifying the research process of this study involved recording in the journal the decisions made throughout the study. Following Koch's (1996, 2006) advice, my decision trail has included philosophical, theoretical, methodological, and analytic

choices. Consistent with the notion of a decision trail is van Manen's (1997) concept of orientating the reader to the phenomenon being studied. The researcher maintains and makes clear their own orientation throughout the research process. I have done this by being open about my deep interest in mountain biking as the phenomenon examined in this study. Furthermore, to ensure this openness and my decision trail was recorded accurately, external audits (peer review) took place. My graduate committee audited the research process as a way to provide guidance and ensured that my openness and decision trail were clearly stated.

Along with the above noted need for a decision trail (dependability), trustworthiness and believability can be ensured through confirmability, or freedom from bias of research findings (Sandelowski, 1986). However, a defining characteristic of interpretive phenomenology is that the researcher's preconceptions, biases and assumptions are an integral part of the study findings (Koch, 1996, 2006; van Manen, 1997; Lopez & Willis, 2003). For Koch (1994), confirmability "requires one to show the way in which interpretations have been arrived at via the inquiry" (p. 92). Koch (1996) suggests that meeting the criterion of confirmability can be done by demonstrating the fusion of horizons. Throughout chapters 4 and 5, my own preconceptions, experiences and background with mountain biking explicitly interact with the participants' narratives. Presenting these multiple data sources has demonstrated the fusion of horizons. The interviews and follow-up contact that I had with participants along with my journal entries on my thoughts, feelings, and experiences as well as the contextual information I obtained from interacting with the participants, has provided a trustworthy and believable account of the mountain bikers' experiences.

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3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical approval was obtained prior to the beginning of this study from the Dalhousie University Research Ethics Board. This Ethics Board follows the ethical guidelines set out by the Tri-Council Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans. Each participant was required to sign an informed consent form prior to participation (Appendix D). Permission was also sought for the use of direct quotations from interviews and discussions with the participants (Appendix D). A copy was provided to each of the participants.

CHAPTER 4: "A PECKING ORDER" - COMPETING TO BE THE COCK OF THE RIDE

In seeking to understand the culture of mountain biking in Nova Scotia, it became immediately apparent that gender practices permeate the sport of mountain biking as they do other sports. Even without me introducing the subject of gender, every participant brought rich, thick descriptions into our conversations of what they perceived to be a gendered ideal of a mountain biker. A variety of practices that mountain bikers perform to achieve this gendered ideal were recounted in the narratives of each and every participant regardless of age, sex, style of riding, amount of riding experience, etc. Although not all participants agreed on the characteristics of this idealized form of a mountain biker, all had in the past or were currently actively pursuing practices they envisioned as being the idealized form. These practices, that helped them to measure up to the idealized mountain biker, involved competition in some manner.

Given that sports are often defined as involving competition (Coakley & Donnelly, 2009), competing to demonstrate the idealized version of a mountain biker is not surprising. The participants' narratives depicted differing goals and values to be achieved through competition. Competing to win and striving for excellence through competition were two distinct objectives expressed by participants in order to attain the ultimate goal of being an ideal mountain biker. The practices undertaken in competing to win were distinct from those which solely focused on excellence through competition. Indeed, the gendered practices of those with winning as the focal point clearly demontrated a culture concerned with masculine traits and masculine hegemony. For some community members, glorifying winning through strength, power, dominance, and

doing whatever it takes to beat one's competitors has reflected as well as perpetuated a masculine hierarchy with the hegemonic version of masculinity being the idealized mountain biker. Narratives of this gender hierarchy within the mountain biking community in Nova Scotia provided rich descriptions of the dominance of some men over other men and the subordination of women.

The quest to be a true mountain biker results in gendered practices that divide the mountain biking community in Nova Scotia. Narratives of the gendered practices of those competing to win glaringly demonstrate a strong need to maintain a traditional patriarchal gender order. Even though mountain bikers who are competing to win also claim that they are striving for excellence through competition, there is a group who state that striving for excellence is their prime reason for mountain biking with winning not being a necessity. With their focus on improving their mountain biking abilities and their overall fitness, the narratives of these mountain bikers do not obviously portray a cultural dominance of masculinity. Indeed, many of these members desperately want mountain biking to be viewed as an all-inclusive alternative sporting culture. However, in striving for excellence, competition is often introduced. Even within recreational riding environments the goal of striving for excellence is no longer mutually exclusive from the goal of competing to win. This group needs to demonstrate that they are an ideal mountain biker by competing with other members of this community. With the hegemonic version of masculinity being the idealized mountain biker, those striving for excellence do so through competition and therefore contribute to and perpetuate a masculine hierarchy.

In this chapter, the objectives of mountain bikers including competition and

striving for excellence are discussed in detail. In achieving these objectives, the more organized mountain biking becomes (i.e., institutionalized) as seen in racing, the more the sport becomes a masculine domain. In the less institutionalized environment of recreational mountain biking, the traditional gender order is less protected, however, gender practices that help construct a more hegemonic masculinity are described once competitiveness is utilized as a method for striving for excellence. Riding for fun is also considered; however, participant narratives described how it takes competition and striving for excellence for mountain biking to be fun (a further exploration of riding for fun and riding for flow is discussed in Chapter 5). After clearly demonstrating that male mountain bikers in Nova Scotia systematically create gender inequality through continually competing with one another, some specific practices that are involved in creating this gender hierarchy are examined. The process of social embodiment of the performance of masculinity by men mountain bikers is described by participants whose bodies sustain and reproduce the gender hierarchy. Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion of the role of women mountain bikers in maintaining a traditional patriarchal gender order within this sporting culture. Narratives describe ways in which men's as well as women's practices maintain a culture of masculine dominance.

4.1 COMPETING FOR HEGEMONY

When talking with the participants of this study, descriptions of competition often emerged. When participants were talking directly about organized competition, the practices of many of the men mountain bikers are seen as uniquely different from those of women and some men. One of the study participants noted that racing had varying effects on individuals with some men needing to "prove something":

Once you put a clock to something it changes, sometimes it's not always for the best. I think he was trying to prove something and it's usually when, there's just certain types that go to the events. Those that are laid back and those that are trying to prove something. With the ones that are trying to prove something, it's like talking to a brick wall. Just forget about it. (Ned, Late 30s)

It is the descriptions of what these men mountain bikers need to prove and the practices they undertake that provide clearer insight of a gender hierarchy maintained in this community. The organized events and races and the actions of many of the men racers blatantly demonstrate a strong need to maintain a traditional patriarchal gender order. The more institutionalized an event or race, the more pressure there is for men racers to ensure that no unworthy man takes over the role of top male biker; the biker that wins the most and is closest to an idealized hegemonic form. The top male biker has to prove that he is the strongest and willing to do whatever it takes to win the race. For example, some races in Nova Scotia are considered more prestigious if racing conditions are more difficult and the strength of the competition is more challenging, such as when more out of province racers attend. Ruthie describes one such event and the strategy the top male racers in Nova Scotia use to maintain what they consider the proper order:

They lose their minds when the wrong person beats them. They're very much about a pecking order. They know who belongs where and when. When [a racer], who's usually in fourth, fifth, sixth, came first [in the *Prestigious Race*], they barely recognized it! They wouldn't! He ran the fastest race the *Prestigious Race* has ever seen and no recognition! He would have had to win two or three [more

times] and then they would have started acknowledging him. You have to really earn it, in their minds.

This narrative by Ruthie, which describes the actions of male competitors after a highly respected cycling event held in Nova Scotia, clearly demonstrates how organized competition is about comparison and measuring up and thus provides a glimpse into the masculine hierarchy or "pecking order". Not only is this gendered hierarchical structure within mountain biking defined by traditional masculine characteristics such as speed, strength, and endurance needed to beat one's competitors, men mountain bikers in Nova Scotia must also continuously prove they are the fastest and strongest, and can go the longest before there is a change in their perceived order of the hierarchy.

This glorification of winning and winners legitimizes competition and a masculine hierarchy in this sport. Myles points out that these men are aware that their practices are gender based and that men mountain bikers actively take part in them to demonstrate superiority and produce inequality. He describes why men need to produce and reproduce a gender inequality within this sport:

> I can speak from experience and say that if two guys or more are doing something, one guy does something, the next guy automatically has to show him up. Biker A wouldn't say shit if he had a mouthful, but there's no way he's going to let me beat him to the top of the hill on a mountain bike. And the same way I'm not going to let him beat me…I think it just comes back to the strongest, best looking, fastest, toughest guy gets the girl. Guys are more driven to be on top of the heap. I think they're all working towards sex. Somewhere in our little brain it's wired directly into, if you win, you get the girl.

Myles describes working as hard as possible to win, that is, to be at the "top of the heap". This constant competition among men subordinates some who simply cannot measure up. For those who can and do measure up, there are rewards. Although Myles specifically suggests that "winning the girl' is the reward, his account alludes to the sport of mountain biking being another social institution through which hegemonic masculinity and power become strongly linked.

4.1.1 Performing Masculinity to Gain and Maintain Status in the Gender Hierarchy

The strong need of men mountain bikers to maintain a traditional patriarchal gender order by racing each other and striving to win was heard in the narratives of all men participants. It was interesting to hear the accounts of a teenage racer (Bart) compared to older (late 30s and over 40 years old) men racers when describing the practices of those who compete in an easier race category. While Bart was quite content with knowing that he was not yet the best (i.e. the ideal) mountain biker, some of the easier-category racers and older racers tended to be more sensitive to not being able to measure up to the ideal mountain biker through competition. The following account from Bart shows his enthusiasm for striving for excellence by competing with (and not necessarily against) another male racer:

> There's always going to be that one person in a race that's going to push you in some way. Maybe they're a better technical rider and they're going to push you to do better technically on the downhill while maybe you're a better climber and you're going to push them up the hill. So there's always that person that just kind of keeps you on your toes…With mountain biking there's so many different

opportunities and so many different things that you can be good at. Racer G is a perfect example because I raced him at Keppoch and he can descend like something you've never seen before! But I can climb and he can't really climb. So I was 10 minutes ahead of him by the top of the hill, and he was right back with me by the bottom, that was our finish!…Just because our abilities are in different places!

While Bart is excited to have competition in order to push him to improve, he recognizes that there are other men racers who do not have a similar outlook. He understands that many of these racers have a need to win and be at the top. Bart also recognizes that the men most concerned with winning "put on an attitude". After having met some of the best mountain bike racers in the world while he was at an international competition, it became clearer to him why some men put on an attitude:

I think it's because they're not the best…I think it's because in their head they think they are [the best] but they're just those guys with excuses, you know, 'oh, well I'd be awesome if this had happened or I didn't get a fair chance [because] by the time I had my run, the course was all rutted out'. They're good but they're not the best. They just care too much…The winning has become everything to them and then they don't [win] and now they're just kind of bitter.

Bart describes the notion of striving for excellence and although this concept still requires competition as a way to determine improvements towards excellence, competition for him is not necessarily about proving that he is better than all the other riders. He sees his opportunity to improve by competing with others that are better than himself and he is excited about it. He does not feel the need to be at the top as he knows

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he is young and still has time to improve. He notes that those who are "not the best" and feel a great need to be the best are bitter and therefore make excuses. Bart has a different perspective than what he has observed with other men racers. He is not concerned with maintaining a masculine hierarchy; a topic that is further explored in Chapter 5.

Myles also observes the behaviours of men racers and their need to gain status in the masculine hierarchy. He recounts a story whereby a racer in his early 30s, who competes in an easier category (a lesser demonstration of hegemonic masculinity), becomes frustrated when he does not do well in a race:

> If you get off your bike and you're cursing and swearing and kicking things. Why are you there? If it's making you miserable, just go do something else, really. A guy finished a race and he was so mad about something, he drop kicked his helmet across the parking lot and hit the top of my truck. I forget what he was mad about even. I just remember as soon as he crossed the line, he was cursing and swearing and he had this go wrong and that go wrong and I was just saying come on buddy, let it go. Guys like that, they've gotten too wrapped up in you have to win.

This account by Myles clearly shows the frustration of some racers who fail to measure up, that is, those men who are subordinated in the masculine gender regime constructed within mountain biking. The younger racer (Bart) has hopes of becoming a better racer. He is striving for excellence and, in doing so, he will gain status as he climbs towards being a top racer in the masculine hierarchy. Those who race in an easier race category have a very long way to go to be considered a part of the community's elite and are therefore extremely discontented with their lower status position in the community.

Another group of male mountain bikers that can be seen as desperately trying to gain or maintain a position of power relative to women and other men are some of the older racers (i.e., those in their late 30s and over the age of 40). Ned, who is in his 40s, describes men's need to prove they are still worthy of being considered a highly capable mountain biker who can still demonstrate idealized hegemonic masculinity valued in this mountain biking culture.

> What I've noticed is the injuries I've seen at major events are usually led up to by dehydration or pushing beyond one's abilities. Last year at Gorefest, that's why so much water [was handed out]. Because the last two years was all dehydration and what I've seen is a forty year old rider trying to keep up with a 20 year old rider, thinking well I used to be able to do it. Well yes, but that was what it used to be. You know this is 20 years later and kids, family, mortgage, etc. You know what? You're not 20 years old. And even I get caught up in that [pauses] trying to keep up with a 16 year old. I think socially it is more common for men to have that need to have to kind of keep pushing, not in all cases, but predominately so.

Ned admits feeling this pressure to measure up and demonstrate hegemonic masculinity and is still capable of being at the higher levels of the masculine hierarchy created in the mountain bike racing culture in Nova Scotia. This group of men are aware of the gender inequality situation that is created through mountain bike racing and rather than focus on striving for excellence, they are doing whatever it takes (e.g., pushing beyond one's abilities and becoming dehydrated) just to demonstrate and prove they have earned their privileged position in the masculinity hierarchy (See also section 5.2 for a

further discussion of the link between risky behaviours and the masculine hierarchy). A subordinate position in this hierarchy is just not acceptable for some of these older men.

The awareness of gender inequality by the older mountain bikers within mountain bike racing is also apparent in how they behave towards others during a race. Having raced at the elite level in the past, I often encountered men in a race who had no respect for women racers and expected these elite level women to jeopardize their race by remaining behind them or by moving out of the man's way only to be stuck behind them when they slowed down. This practice still takes place as described by Alison, a young female in her 20s who races at an elite level. She recounts the total disregard some of the older men racers who compete in the master category (easier category based on age over 40) have for women and children who they think cannot measure up to the masculine ideal.

> [I see a guy's ego getting in the way] when I have raced with the older men. Kinda 40s and 50s, not all of them but some of them. I've been racing and have been like 3rd or 4th in my category and I started the same time as the master men and I've had one guy shouting, '15th [place] master coming throughhhh! Trackkkkk!'. I'm like buddy, I'm closer to the podium than you are. So, ah, chill out.

Alison provides a typical example of how the older men racers attempt to bully the women racers into ceding their positions on the race course and provides a deeper analysis of why these men perform this behaviour.

> I just feel that master men, it seems like they're working professionals so I think they feel that because they spend so much time and money having super

expensive gear and training a lot, they need to be taken so much more seriously

than the average person. Sometimes I'll see them yelling at kids to get out of the

way too. And, I think here, the master racers that do have kids, don't suffer from

that. I'm thinking of the ones I know. The ones that do have children are normal.

The ones that don't have children, are not.

This account of a master category racer demonstrates the strong need of some

older male mountain bikers to out-perform women, children and other men as a means of

demonstrating hegemonic masculinity. As Alison speculates, these men are professionals

in their working lives. It is quite possible that as working professionals, they enjoy

positions of power and respect which need to be perpetuated in leisure activities such as

sports. Whereas some older males may be content with masculinities constructed through

other facets of their lives (e.g., through having children as Alison suggests), others need

to prove their masculinity by competing in mountain biking and subordinating some other

racers, particularly women.

Alison also briefly identified an additional way that men racers compete with each

other. She noted a need for very expensive biking gear and the expected respect one

should receive by simply putting money into buying this gear. Myles also comments on

the role equipment plays as part of the overall competition male mountain bikers create to

maintain a masculine hierarchy.

I'm not saying that you can buy ability, but by God people will try. They want to

buy the talent, buy the ability, buy the envy of everyone else, you know. There is

a psychological thing to rolling up to the line with the nicest bike…Right up until

you see whether or not the person can ride…It's more so guys than girls…It just

comes down to that pissing contest, you know. Just got to have the brightest

feathers.

This "pissing contest" by male mountain bikers and competition to have the

"brightest feathers" is a performance of masculinity. They need to look and feel like

competent, masculine men. The men racers enhance their masculinity performance by

demonstrating financial success through their ability to purchase the best and most

expensive equipment. Through this demonstration of success, they feel they have higher

status in the masculine hierarchy.

4.1.2 The Neverending Story of Competition

Even though competition in Nova Scotia is clearly evident in the more

institutionalized aspect of mountain biking such as racing, men mountain bikers who ride

recreationally do not escape the need to compete for masculine hegemony. Bart provides

a comparison of racing and riding recreationally:

Like when you're racing it's just all out like 'til your brain is coming out your

nose! Like just, you hammer down but then when you're riding [recreationally]

you can do the same thing but it's not like that the whole ride so I think they're

both good in their own ways and they're both ways to stay fit and active.

It is clear that even though Bart eases up on a recreational ride, there is still the desire to

be always competing to be an ideal mountain biker. Similarly for Myles, he describes a

good recreational ride as one in which competition is necessary for it to be fun:

I think a good [recreational] ride is where I can go out and work hard for most of

the ride and be very competitive with whoever I'm riding against so we rarely

stop…We can battle back and forth a little bit and close enough that if someone

screws up just a little bit, the other person is going to go around them. And, you

know, when you finish the ride, you're good and tired.

For Myles, his ideal recreational ride is to be very competitive with everyone riding with him. His narrative starts with his choice of words being "riding against" even though he is not talking about racing but, his ideal recreational ride. His discourse around recreational riding captures the idea of competition being necessary when striving for excellence and the need to always be better than the others rather than winning, as in racing. For this mountain biker and his men riding buddies, comparison is important and a basis for judging their own excellence in riding ability. Myles has a strong need to be the ideal mountain biker and measure up through always working hard on the ride such that he is exhausted at the end of the "battle". Indeed he sees a recreational ride as a "battle" with the other male riders to prove who is at the top of the gender hierarchy; to be the one best demonstrating hegemonic masculinity.

The accounts of recreational riding practices provided by Bart and Myles reminded me of the gendered performances I have encountered during recreational rides with groups of men. My experiences included the men on the rides always having to compete to show who was the best rider (i.e., the rider showing the most hegemonic masculinity characteristics). During these rides, I would watch them sprint to the top of hills to be the top man, the idealized mountain biker. As I watched these displays of masculinity, I often wondered if they went on rides where they just relaxed; rides in which there is no need to compete to prove their masculinity. My conversation with Myles prompted me to ask him if he ever went on rides in which he was not competitive with other men. Myles responded by saying:

I have rides that are not too competitive only because whoever I'm riding with isn't strong enough to really challenge me. You know, I'm riding with someone and I'm showing them the trails, or they're new to it… I [prefer to] ride with people who are my ability and a little bit better [pauses]. And by my ability, I don't mean I don't want to ride with people who are not good, 'cause I enjoy introducing new people to the sport, but I have to be mentally prepared for that ride.

Myles' need to "mentally prepare" himself for rides that lack competition for him reveals his great need to continually better himself and his riding skills. Myles goes to great lengths to be able to always be improving, thus being closer to the ideal mountain biker. The best recreational rides for Myles are those where he is riding with other men who meet or exceed his ability and he is thereby push or challenge him. He provides an account of such a ride:

Some of the best rides I've had this year haven't necessarily been long rides, they've just been steady rides. Male Rider A and I had a really good ride a couple of weeks ago. We covered a lot of ground and only stopped maybe once the whole time. You know, just had a really good neck and neck ride. [When] going for a ride where I'm getting exercise, I want to go for a good fast ride, and know that Male Rider A is going to be right in front of me or right behind me on the uphills, and just pushing me as hard as he can. Then when we get to a downhill stretch, Male Rider A or Male Rider B, or somebody is right there on me and we're going elbow to elbow, going down the hills to try and stay with each other and work our way around one another. And there's a lot of fun in that.

In his description of his best recreational rides, Myles ranks riders (similar to the pecking order in racing described earlier) by noting which riding partner will be in front of him or behind him. Once again men mountain bikers' practices demonstrate the need to compete for masculine hegemony, that which is characteristic of the ideal mountain biker. With their focus on improving their mountain biking abilities and their overall fitness, the recreational members of the mountain biking community provided narratives that portray a masculinized culture characterized by competition, one-up-manship, strength and ability. In striving for excellence, competition is often introduced within recreational riding environments. This masculinization of the sport is perpetuated by mountain bikers who demonstrate hegemonic masculinity.

Finally, in striving for excellence and to be the ideal mountain biker, Myles raises the notion of fun. He notes that there is "a lot of fun" in competing with riding partners to be the best mountain biker and thus at the top of the gender hierarchy created in this sport. As such, there is a blurring of riding purposes in the recreational riding community that creates a division in this culture. Riding for "fun" for Myles is synonymous with striving for excellence and competing to win. Others in the mountain biking community, as will be seen in Chapter 5, engage in mountain biking because it is fun and not competitive. Myles describes a situation in which riding recreationally is not fun but annoying based on a division between the male recreational riders according to riding ability. He describes an annoying rider:

> I don't like to ride with a whiny person. Someone who is just complaining non-stop about the ride. I rode with a fellow once who was here visiting from BC. Wasn't a great rider, and all he did the whole time was make excuses about why

he was so slow. His excuse was, "It's different out West. There's not too much roots, and there's not the mud, there's not the sand, the hills are bigger. If there were bigger hills, I'd be [better]." It's like come on, just give it a rest buddy. I mean, you came here from BC and you thought you were going to be king shit on turd island and a bunch of Maritimers are putting it to you on these very small hills and here you are, you're just coming up with every excuse in the book as to why you're not doing so well. And, you obviously just thought you were going to be better than this cause you're from BC.

In this account, the recreational rider from British Columbia is aware of the need to ride well in order to measure-up whereas Myles is maintaining the gender order by placing this rider in a marginalized position because of his poor masculine performance. Fun for men mountain bikers in Nova Scotia involves competition with other men who are worthy competitors and measure up to the hegemonic version of masculinity.

4.2 THE EMBODIMENT OF MASCULINITY

Participant's narratives demonstrated that men mountain bikers construct a masculinized culture that values the performance of masculinity by continually competing with one another. This competition requires, strength, toughness, aggressiveness, and a willingness to take risks to be the ideal mountain biker and thus enjoy status in the masculine hierarchy. To not demonstrate these hegemonic masculine characteristics guarantees a marginalized position in the gender order. Since strength, toughness, stamina and aggressiveness are often proven when a male mountain biker engages in risky activities, many participant narratives recounted incidences of high risk practices and injury. As Myles pointed out:

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It's rough and tumble and you are going to get hurt sooner or later. I've broke my

sternum and dislocated my hip downhilling. Those are pretty sizeable injuries.

Ned describes that riding through pain and injury is valorized. He admires bikers who

continue riding despite older age and despite injuries.

Those folks just keep going and going and going and, like I say, Male Racer/Rider

A now has had a few bad injuries in the last little while….It kills him that he can't

do what he used to do but he's still out there! And that's a testament to a lot of

things. The type of person he is.

The type of mountain biker that Myles and Ned are describing is the ideal or

hegemonic version of masculinity that men strive to achieve. Through strength,

toughness, aggressiveness, and tolerance of pain the men mountain bikers use their

bodies to sustain and reproduce the gender hierarchy of this culture and sport. These

practices support Connell's (1996a) notion that gender is a "social practice that constantly

refers to the body and what bodies do" (p.159).

4.2.1 Bodies as Both Objects and Agents of Social Practice

The process of "social embodiment" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) is

common in the culture created by the men mountain bikers in Nova Scotia as their bodies

are both objects and agents of social practice that engage in risky stunts. Hegemonic

masculinity provides the conditions for new practices and more riskier behaviours which

address and involve the body in creating a social reality or biking culture (Connell, 1995;

Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This continuous process, known as "social

embodiment", is maintained by men mountain bikers and perpetuates the gender

hierarchy. Those bikers whose bodies allow for greater skill achieve greater status in the

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hierarchy. In an account provided by Bart, even those new to mountain biking use their bodies to exhibit the attributes, behaviours, and practices of hegemonic masculinity:

> There are people who don't know their limits and they don't have skills. I know I've heard stories of people who come upon stumps in the woods, never done a stunt, never practiced a stunt, and all of a sudden they're catching air off of this stump, and then they come-to 10 minutes later wondering what the heck happened. [They're] newbies who watch too many movies. They hear the local folklore about the riders, the bike shop, and they want to be like those guys…All males from all the stories I've heard…going from pre-teens to 40s.

This account by Bart demonstrates the need of men mountain bikers to use their bodies to take risks to achieve social recognition for "doing gender" appropriately. To prove they are strong and tough, men and boys who are new to the sport often start off by taking risks with their bodies by attempting dangerous stunts. Even though they are new to mountain biking, they have observed the more experienced men riders and learned what is needed for them to measure up and be a part of this masculine domain. Their first mountain bike ride is entry into the process of social embodiment.

This pattern of social embodiment involved in gender construction is continuous in maintaining and defining the masculine status hierarchy. In order to achieve greater skill and thus greater status, men find ways to put their bodies at greater risks. Myles describes how greater risk-taking was achieved when talking about a time (early 2000s) when freeriding became popular.

> I think we went through a bit of a fad where everybody had to have great big huge ramps and teeter totters that were fourteen feet off the ground. We were watching

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bike videos from out west where they were all riding ramps and bridges, huge big

elevated platforms. Geez I know I built my share of them. I think it was just very

much a taste of everyone's doing it you know and you watch the movie and you

see Wade Simmons [a popular freerider], and all these guys, doing these big huge

stunts, and you just say to yourself, "I want to do that!". So you go and steal 20

pounds of nails from your father's basement, you get a hammer and you head out

with the chain saw.

In this narrative, Myles sees Wade Simmons as being an ideal mountain biker,

thus his embodied practices form the standard for hegemonic masculinity against which

bikers' practices or gender performance is measured. Simmons is one of the founders of

freeriding and a winner of the Red Bull Challenge where it is common for riders to jump

off 50-foot (15 meter) cliffs and ramp 25 feet (7.5 meters) into the air when hitting jumps.

As an admired biker, he has set an extremely high standard for the performance of

hegemonic masculinity. The embodied practices that men mountain bikers in Nova Scotia

need to demonstrate are very risky if they are to achieve the standard set by Simmons. A

status hierarchy develops in this group with those who use their bodies to emulate and

come close to performing the stunts that Simmons executes achieving greater status than

those who demonstrate less skill and daring. The cycle of social embodiment continues as

male mountain bikers in Nova Scotia strive to attain the highest standard that is

constantly being reset in mountain biking culture.

4.2.2 The Materiality of Bodies in Social Process

The embodied practices that form the standard for hegemonic masculinity in

mountain biking in Nova Scotia do not only include the performance of risky behaviours,

but also involve stamina, the glorification of pain and injury, and the ability to achieve these despite discomfort. For Roland getting hurt is the cost of "doing business".

> You know that it's a risky sport…I've been hurt a few times. I've broken bones.

> If you get hurt, it's a great story to tell.

For Roland, getting hurt has a positive outcome in that it demonstrates his masculinity. He now has personal history and a story to tell that garners respect and admiration in the mountain biking culture. In Bart's narrative that follows, masculinity is demonstrated by his practice of downplaying his injuries, while providing rich descriptions that glorify his injuries and emphasize the danger.

> I've crashed in races and rides. I try and like just stand up and kind of let myself get shook out a bit 'cause I find any time I've crashed hard, my head spins a little bit. If you get the wind knocked out of you, just try and stand up and make sure you're not shaken too much. I find the shock of a crash will give you such an adrenaline rush that you're tempted to jump up and jump right back on sometimes, when really you should take a few minutes and kind of figure out if there's anything wrong. On group rides my worst crashes have been like tearing a couple of layers of skin off as opposed to breaking bones.

Allison, a young female mountain biker, suggests that sympathy and attention are why male mountain bikers glorify their pain and injury:

> It's kind of like the same show off instinct that might make them a bigger risk taker. Kind of like if I can't go as big as you, then I'm gonna get more injured or make a bigger fuss over myself and maybe make injuries the competition.

Not only are bikers competing to gain status in the masculine hierarchy by performing bigger and better stunts, the injuries they incur are visible demonstrations of their competitive spirit and hegemonic masculinity. Julianna feels that women mountain bikers "have a real obligation to keep ourselves healthy and safe", whereas men mountain bikers' practices of masculinity are often unhealthy and risky. Furthermore, traditional masculine traits such as strength, stoicism, and being in control result in male mountain bikers being less likely to seek help when it is needed. One account of a male mountain biker not seeking help when he was injured is provided by Bart:

> There's a guy that broke his wrist and he just, like his wrist hurt, but that was it and he rode it for three or four weeks. Didn't ever check it out. It was sore but it didn't hurt him too bad and then finally his wife hauled him to the doctor. At four weeks it should be getting better and they said it had healed wrong, so he had to go and get it tweaked. He's just one of those guys. He's stubborn and he thought oh well I've gotten hurt before and never seriously…Most girls will go to the doctor, get it checked out.

Bart likened men's reluctance to seek medical attention as a "macho thing" that links traditional beliefs of masculinity with unhealthy practices by men and boys in this sport. In Bart's account, it is a woman who finally convinces the injured man to see a doctor thus relieving him of the burden of admitting weakness and a need for help.

When the participants in this study were asked why there is a difference between men and women mountain bikers with regards to risk taking, conversations from the women often described the inability of men and boys to anticipate the consequences of their behaviours. Elladee suggested that "women assess better than men do." She added:

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I don't think men always think of the consequences as intensely. So I wouldn't say it's a matter of whether or not they are willing to take risks, I would say it's a matter of whether or not they are aware of the consequences of taking the risk. You don't see a lot of women jumping off 20 foot cliffs. I honestly think there's something in guys that doesn't take consequences into account…not just in mountain biking, but in everything. I think a lot of guys do things first and think later.

Julianna agrees with Elladee that male mountain bikers do not consider the consequences of risk taking in the same way as women and provides her insights as to why their assessment is different.

These guys didn't care how extreme it was and they were still hitting the stuff [attempting to do stunts/jumps]. I remember thinking they just don't assess risk in the same way that I do. I remember thinking about things like I have to get to work and these people [men] don't think about that. 'Cause I was really trying hard to understand why I was having such issues with it. Why their line was so much further ahead than mine was of what was acceptable risk and unacceptable risk. And I felt that it was just an expression of how I had been socialized… I think [for] the women, there's an implicit permission to not take risk.

Julianna's revelation that women mountain bikers are not expected to take risks attests to women not being bound by culturally imposed restrictions associated with the performance of masculinity. For men mountain bikers, the consequences of not measuring up to the hegemonic ideal include being seen as weak and afraid. These are more harmful than risking a bike crash and experiencing physical injury.

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Myles confirms Elladee's and Julianna's speculations that men do not think about the physical consequences of risk taking when they engage in an aggressive riding style and risk taking for the benefit of other male riders. He attributes men's higher rates of injury to showing off. His observation that "girls ride with finesse and guys ride with brute force ignorance" captures the gendered nature of biker practices and the sport itself.

4.2.3 Benefitting from the Patriarchal Dividend Without the Extreme

An aggressive style of riding (i.e., 'riding with brute force ignorance") by male mountain bikers is used to enact cultural prescriptions of masculinity and also distance men from women and femininity. This insight provided by Myles referred to mountain biking in general. Another finding in this study was the stratification of mountain bikers into a number of distinct subcultures based on disciplines of riding (i.e., cross country/trail riding, freeriding, downhill, and dirt jumping). The freeriding, downhill, and dirt jumping styles are all considered "extreme" styles of riding, whereas cross country/trail riding is regarded as the least "extreme" style. The more extreme the style, the greater the risk and the associated performance of hegemonic masculinity. Performing masculinity in mountain biking without performing the same risks as the three "extreme" subcultures can be seen with men cross country bikers who ride rigid bikes (bikes that have no suspension technology), single speeds (bikes that have only one gear) or rigid single speed bikes. These bikes are more challenging to ride, thus modifications in the equipment of cross country riders help men attain status in the masculine hierarchy. This is demonstrated by the respect Myles has for those who ride rigid and/or single speed bikes:

I think they're tougher than I am. I don't know, geez, [a rider in his late 20s], how

he does that. He rides a single speed from time to time, or he'll ride a rigid. I

don't know how he does it...I've never tried one. Maybe I'd get a kick out of it

too. I don't know. I think that would be incredibly difficult…Fixed gears, no

coasters, no brakes, you just got to hang on.

The challenge that makes a mountain biker want to ride a rigid and/or singlespeed bike is

confirmed by Ned who rides a rigid bike on a regular basis:

I have two mountain bikes at the moment. One that is fully rigid, it is my

favourite, just because it really challenges me to ride better… I have a dually

[front and rear suspension] because I was getting older and the rigid is a lot more

punishing to my body…So the dually I can just ride around, it's like riding a little

lazy boy…But the rigid is my favourite. Anybody can go out and ride a dually

through the woods with little skill. With the rigid, I feel like I belong there.

Not only does Ned like the challenge of riding a rigid, it's the type of cross

country mountain bike that makes him feel like a real mountain biker. It is "punishing" to

his body and thus demonstrates his masculinity and right to status in the gender hierarchy

of mountain biking culture in Nova Scotia. Roland also notes what he believes is a "true"

mountain biker when he states, "I feel better when I'm on a rigid. Just because it brings

me back to my roots." Despite engaging in cross country, the less extreme style of

mountain biking, Ned and Roland as rigid riders, are still able to benefit from the

patriarchal dividend without taking the same risks as riders who belong to the "extreme"

subcultures/styles of riding in mountain biking. They do this by demonstrating strength

and endurance of pain by riding rigid bikes that punish their bodies. Although they may

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not be demonstrating the most idealized version of masculinity, their gender performance reinforces hegemonic masculinity and the belief that the ideal mountain biker must demonstrate traditional masculine characteristics. Bikers' practices that perpetuate hegemonic masculinity and the gender hierarchy are further demonstrated through their perceptions that cross country riding is just as masculine. Despite its more effeminate attire (i.e., tight fitting spandex jerseys and shorts, helmet and gloves) as compared to the clothing and equipment worn by bikers in other subcultures of the sport (i.e., loose fitting durable shorts/pants and full sleeve jerseys, full face helmets, and body armour of downhillers and freeriders), the cross country subculture is still perceived as a strong masculine one rather than an effeminate style of riding. Bart points out that cross country riders are as tough, perhaps even tougher than downhill riders:

> You take away all the gear to protect you so when you crash, it's going to hurt a lot more because you're not really wearing anything. And I think a lot of people say , "Hey man, downhillers do some pretty gnarly stuff." But I think when you look at what cross country mountain bikers do, sometimes compared to what a downhill rider would do and the amount of gear and the bikes that they're on, I think some cross country trails are a lot tougher than maybe a twenty-foot gap on a downhill bike would be when you're wearing gear that will protect you.

Bart's reasoning that cross country mountain bikers are tough because they wear much less protection than downhill mountain bikers presents the cross country subculture as a hegemonic masculine one deserving of respect and status.

4.3 WOMEN AND THE GENDER ORDER

The previous sections of this chapter demonstrate how male mountain bikers

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systematically create gender inequality amongst themselves through continually competing with one another. More specifically, their performance of masculinity through embodied practices that form the standard for hegemonic masculinity provides a narrative of how male mountain bikers achieve status in the gender hierarchy. Not all men measure up to the hegemonic version of masculinity, thus some are subordinated or marginalized by other men. Practices that men mountain bikers engage in to maintain their status in the gender hierarchy result from the intrusion of these women into the masculinized mountain biking culture in Nova Scotia. Not surprisingly, the women encounter a myriad of strategies by men that often result in the social exclusion of women in this sport. Juliana "always felt like an interloper" and felt that women were viewed with suspicion when they took part in mountain biking activities. Finding camaraderie with the men was difficult as they often questioned her interest in mountain biking and made her feel unwelcome.

Defense strategies by men that exclude and limit the participation of women mountain bikers are implemented in many aspects of the sport. Women mountain bikers face strong opposition to their presence in both the realms of competition and recreational riding. This section begins with the exclusion strategies used by men mountain bikers to continually reproduce hierarchical gender differences. Following a description of the distinct mechanisms used by the men mountain bikers to avert the threat of women entering the male domain of this sport, there is an examination of how women themselves participate in practice that perpetuate the status quo and gender order. This discussion sees an interesting narrative emerge whereby women also play a role in the marginalization of other women in this sporting culture. Finally, this section examines the

specific embodied practices of women that challenge and attempt to overcome the masculine regime of mountain biking in Nova Scotia. These particular embodied practices, although they may be considered a way to challenge the gender hierarchy (as is described in Chapter 6), are included in this section because of the unhealthy nature of such practices. The motivation for these particular practices is explicitly connected to women mountain bikers performing dangerous activities to prove their worthiness and be accepted within the male-dominated culture of mountain biking in Nova Scotia.

4.3.1 Strategies of Social Closure

The social formation of masculinity in the mountain biking community in Nova Scotia is maintained by men mountain bikers' practices of marginalizing other men and limiting women's participation and ability to challenge masculine hegemony. As women encroach upon this male domain in both the racing and recreational aspects of mountain biking, the male domain itself is challenged. Distinct methods of opposition are practiced by those men who feel threatened by any challenge to the gender hierarchy. Narratives from both women and men interviewed recounted a resistance to change that exists within the male hegemony of both competitive and recreational mountain biking in Nova Scotia.

The exclusion of women from the sport as a means of maintaining masculine hegemony appears to be more prominent in the more institutionalized areas of the sport (i.e., racing and coaching). The social closure of the sport to women in racing is directly accomplished by men through practices of blatant exclusion such as ignoring some women and allowing only those they deem worthy enough to join them. Juliana provides a narrative about the racing worlds of downhill and cross country mountain bikers and

how it is the men who are in control of who is ignored and who is acknowledged:

> I'm not a person who ever really feels a natural sense of belonging…It probably would have taken an extreme effort on their part [men downhillers] to make really overt gestures of inclusion. And why would they? I wasn't one of the guys, so why would they? There's just no talking. You're just ignored. As one of only a few women in cross country [racing], people automatically know who you are, so you don't [get ignored]. People pay attention in cross country because they can see that you're a woman [due to the clothing and equipment differences between downhill and cross country racing]. But you're definitely an interloper and you definitely know that. There's always that sense that you're there because the boys are letting you play… it's definitely their game.

Not only does Juliana describe being ignored by the downhill male racers, she explains the notion of the sense that women cross country racers have that it's the men in control and that they are the ones letting you be there to race. Furthermore, even though some women are seen as worthy enough to race cross country, they are then utilized in the marginalization of other men. Julianna describes the terms men used to marginalize other men:

> If a woman beats a man in a race or even rides better than them, he's been "bitched". And if a guy's riding really weakly, poorly, he has, "bitch legs"!

The men who do not ride as well as a woman in a race have been shamed or "bitched". Juliana notes just how this language alienates women from the racing scene and she has questioned those who use such phrases:

You know, after one race, they're like, "you beat all those guys. They really

suck." And, I say, "listen to what you're saying! You're saying that, me being a

woman, I'm that boundary between someone who sucks and someone that's

okay." And I was like, "I take issue with that."

Indeed, what these men are saying to Julianna implies that any man who loses to a

woman is an unskilled rider thus degrading the skill set of women bikers relative to the

men's. When the ultimate failure of a man to measure up is by losing to a woman, and

that is made known to the women racers, it discourages women from wanting to compete

alongside the men.

Myles confirms the use of such phrases and notes that they are clearly used in

maintaining the masculine hierarchy when he states, "I think the only real reason a guy

would worry about [women racing] is because his buddies are going to tease him. You

got girled, that's what it's called. Getting girled."

The disrespect and minimizing of the women racers' abilities is not only

demonstrated by making sure all the men know they need to beat every woman in order

to be respected as a mountain biker, there are also direct comments by men concerning

the abilities of women racers. Juliana shared that she could allow herself to fumble in

front of other women racers, but does not give herself the same permission when racing

near men. She pointed out that, "Men expect you to fail…if a woman was riding, it was

like, 'Oh fuck, she's gonna be so slow!'".

Ruthie also notes men's fear of being bested by a woman in downhill racing

which spurs men on to outperform them:

If she [a woman downhiller] could beat the top male, then that would be an issue. He would be working real hard to beat her. But women are not even close [to beating the top male], like it's a minute difference so we're talking huge space. I can't even imagine. I'm usually within a minute of the top guy. But you know what? They actually use me as a test, they do! They'll look at my speed and they'll say, "Oh if I'm not a minute over her, I better get going faster." Yah, they're just like, "Oh shit! Ruthie's catching up."

Women's ability in downhill racing, as with cross country racing, is seen as substandard by the men. Again, men collectively work to maintain their status in the gender order by under-valuing women's riding abilities and marginalizing those men who fail at demonstrating hegemonic masculinity by being bested by a woman. In a sport that requires a great amount of skill and strength, women racers are still considered to be less skilled and weaker and not worthy when compared to men racers.

Practices of excluding and alienating women racers also include disrespecting women's races or not even acknowledging them. Julianna notes:

The way men talk about the women and women's racing is really deeply offensive. [The women's race] is not serious. They [the women] shouldn't get the same number [plate as the men], the same prizes. They don't have to work as hard [as the men]. It's exactly how they talk about women's racing.

Indeed, women mountain bike racers in Nova Scotia are continually faced with their races being discredited by men. My own experiences with mountain bike racing began when it was relatively new in Nova Scotia and there was not a separate category for women. As recently as 2013, women mountain bikers were still fighting for multiple

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categories based on ability as the men had four separate categories and the women had one.

An additional practice is to antagonize women racers only to erode their confidence and discourage them from racing. Juliana describes her experiences when another strong female mountain biker began to race.

> The way they pit women against each other…For example, I was just racing because I really liked it. And I was at the top because there were so few of us. I worked hard and I did it over a very short time. I made a very concerted effort to be as fast as I could be…So it started with [the men racers] saying things [to me] when [another female] started racing. It was, "oh, you're not going to win! Someone's here to challenge you." I was like, "No, she's just here to race." [The men racers would say], "You're not going to be number one forever and you think you're all that." And I was like, "I don't think I'm anything. I don't."

As a former top woman racer myself, I have also experienced men racers attempting to divide the women racers by verbally making direct comparisons of all the women racing. Juliana theorizes as to why men racers find it necessary to antagonize and undermine women racers:

> It's the beehive theory. There can only be one queen bee. And it's not that the queen thinks that she has to be the only one. It's that all the worker bees [the men racers] can't handle having more than one queen…The guys can't imagine that there's more than one strong woman out there…So you get your token woman. But if another one [female racer] is coming in, well, someone's gotta go. You are no longer good. We only get, she's good, the one that wins. And everybody else,

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why bother? I just got so tired of hearing the comments. They [men racers] harped on me endlessly. Comments about my weight. Really negative things like I was, "getting pulled off my pedestal" and, "See, here's your lesson. You thought you were all that."

Juliana's account of how women racers are treated by men racers provides examples of how mechanisms of social closure function to exclude and marginalize women who want to compete in mountain biking in Nova Scotia. Recognizing only the "top" woman racer discourages other women who race, as well as women who are contemplating racing. With fewer women racing, the masculine culture and status quo are less likely to be challenged.

In addition to Juliana noting that the men racers have no respect for the women's race, she described incidences characterized by a general disregard for women racers and the efforts they put into training and racing. One example is the ongoing issue of prizes for women and men racers. Despite there being gender equity policies regarding equal prizes there are still incidences of women racers not receiving equal prizes from men race organizers. My conversation with Myles provides a typical argument for women not receiving equal prizes that has been presented since mountain bike racing began in Nova Scotia.

Myles: You know there just aren't as many girls as guys. So it makes it very tough for organizers to hand out exactly the same amount of cash to the female winners as it does the male winners…So how do you justify losing the money [by giving equal prize money to the women]?

When I noted to Myles that it was the easier men categories with the most racers paying for the race and the cash prizes and they only receive medals, his response only concerned the men racers in which he explained that the top men racers should receive cash prizes provided by all the other racers as they were the fastest racers. I finally noted to him that women work just as hard as the men in training and racing and when they receive lesser prizes, it is discouraging. Myles responded by saying:

> Yeah. That's true. The last couple of years, the women's category were asked [by some race organizers] what they wanted for prizes. They were told they can't get as much [money] as there are many more guys. They were told that they can take the [lower amount of] cash or have first crack at all the draw prizes.

When I asked Myles if women had complained due to there being a gender equity policy for equal prize money, he was very surprised that there was such a policy.

The conversation Myles and I had was very friendly; however, discussions of gender equity issues with race organizers and the governing body of mountain bike racing in Nova Scotia (i.e., executive members of Bicycle Nova Scotia) have not always been so amicable. Juliana, Ruthie and I (as well as other women racers) have had direct experience with some male members of the Bicycle Nova Scotia Board of Directors ignoring gender equity issues. In our discussion of specific issues being brought to the Board of Directors (e.g., no women's Canada Games Team being developed and no female coaches being hired), Juliana makes note of the gendered practices of some of the men Directors:

> They (men Board Directors] know that by closing rank and shutting it down, it's not going to get pursued. It's the classic paramount of masculinity. They're going

to support the strongest man, or the perceived strongest man, so that they don't get tortured themselves. Because then they'll turn into pussies.

Even after involving the Board of Directors, equity issues that arose concerning the Nova Scotia Canada Games Cycling Team were overlooked and as a consequence, the masculine culture of mountain bike racing in Nova Scotia is maintained. Indeed, as pointed out by Julianna, women have been excluded from important administrative and coaching positions which only helps perpetuate the masculine gender hierarchy of competitive mountain biking. Juliana reflects on the effect of excluding women from these important positions:

> I take issue with this way of excluding women at certain levels. It becomes problematic when the only way women can be involved [in athlete development] is in administrative levels. Oh sure, you can be involved, but you're only going to be allowed to lead the beginner women's club ride. You're not going to be able to be involved with the top athletes. Those are things that I find problematic, because that excludes women like me. And that's just as much of an issue as excluding women all together because you're still excluding the ones that are threatening…If the men could have their way, the women would be in the feed zone [where racers receive food and drinks during a race]. They wouldn't be making so much trouble. And the young women feel isolated in mountain biking because we don't have the female coaches and female representatives.

Practices of exclusion that prevent or limit women's participation in higher levels of athlete development contribute to the marginalization of women in this sport. These

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practices remove the threat of women challenging the gender hierarchy that exists in competitive mountain biking.

Efforts that maintain masculine hegemony appear to be more prominent in the more institutionalized areas of the sport including racing and athlete development; however, recreational aspects of mountain biking are also closed to women. Ruthie describes the recreational community of mountain biking and the problem of some men feeling that their masculinity is threatened by better riders, and in particular, women who are good riders:

> It's a small-minded, small-penis thing. They would never want to invite a woman…I just get really annoyed and bogged down by, you know, who can play with who and who gets to play, and that drives me crazy. [A slower male rider] just couldn't imagine himself behind me. He just couldn't see himself behind a woman. It's a competition thing and it's a sex thing. These guys, they don't like being shown up ever… So right now I'm being alienated. They don't invite me to the rides. They organize a group ride for the next day, have everybody go, but don't include me… I know that over time, as I've gotten better, I'm less welcome.

In Ruthie's example, it is direct exclusion of women on recreational rides. Men that fear being emasculated as a result of not riding as well as a woman are able to abate this fear by simply not having women on the rides. Women are not given the chance to challenge the gender hierarchy.

Juliana also describes recreational rides with a club where the men have no respect for women riders or slower male riders. They do not want to wait for the slower riders. They want to drop them to discourage them from mountain biking. On one ride

with new bikers, a male rider complained about having to stop at each intersection to wait for the slower, new riders. Julianna argued with him by saying, "That's not the way we do this club. This isn't the way." However, she notes that recreational rides with her club are always controlled by the competitive men:

But really, that is exactly what it was [not waiting for new riders]. And, the more normal men on these rides aren't standing up to those few dominant men. They just let it happen.

The less competitive riders support the dominant male riders and are complicit in supporting practices of exclusion. The men riders of this particular club collectively work together to discourage women and weaker men from mountain biking. By not waiting for them on the ride, those deemed as not measuring up to hegemonic masculinity are systematically removed through practices that marginalize and alienate and thus perpetuate the gender hierarchy.

Another practice some men mountain bikers engage in to limit the participation of women is to temper their riding practices by making the ride easier when mountain biking with their female partners. Ned describes how this practice keeps women from learning what the men really do to be "ideal' mountain bikers:

I'm riding with my wife/girlfriend/whatever and you know what? We're not doing this type of ride today. In reality they [the women] are very much able to keep up and capable of doing it. Maybe it's also a way of saying, "You're riding with my friends now. I'm not going to show you all the good stuff."

The women do not get to observe or practice all of the technical skills that the men use to improve their riding skills and are therefore not able to challenge the masculine hierarchy within mountain biking.

Finally, an interesting practice utilized by men to negate the seriousness of women mountain bikers is to question their motivation for mountain biking. Two of the male participants in this study expressed the view that some women mountain bike solely to be around men or their male partner. Myles noted that women who take part in downhill mountain biking only do so to be with the men that downhill. Similarly, Roland believes mountain biking is attractive to women because it is a place for them to meet men. He notes:

> That's how I used to sell it to some [female] co-workers. I was like, "Hey, you want to meet a guy? Come to a bike ride." Some of them did and some of them didn't.

Discrediting women mountain bikers by suggesting they have an ulterior motive for riding, in this case to be with men and not really to ride, removes the threat of women upsetting the masculine gender order of this culture.

4.3.2 To Be or Not To Be Queen Bee

Along with the distinct mechanisms used by the men mountain bikers to limit the threat of women entering the male domain of this sport, some of the practices of the women mountain bikers support hegemonic masculinity and the existing gender order. When discussing the camaraderie that women mountain bikers have for each other, an interesting narrative was revealed whereby women were hesitant to offer their full support to other women riders. Ruthie has "experienced those feelings of being

threatened about having another girl present" which discloses a situation that some of the women mountain bikers in Nova Scotia ultimately face. Ruthie, myself, and other women mountain bikers who have been accepted by some of the men have had to deal with the fear of being displaced by other women. Ruthie describes this fear:

> I do find the female component more competitive. When there's only one or two of us, our position is threatened and we compete. If a new girl comes into the pod or whatever you want to call it, I wonder if she can ride. I love biking. There's some aspect of it that makes me feel good because I'm unique and I have my special little place, with my special little posse of men that I ride around with. I'm one of the guys and I feel like I'm a part of an elite group of people where only a few can go. And if I were to be threatened by another woman riding, she better be good!

Ruthie's fear is one that I, as well as some of my other women friends who ride, have experienced. The possibility of losing our coveted and unique position to another female rider has instilled fear into those of us who receive some recognition for our riding abilities. We do not want to lose this recognition and we definitely do not want to lose it to another woman who we consider to be less skilled. What our practices reveal is that by aligning ourselves with men, we reinforce the dominance of men over women.

One way women prove that they are the most skilled or best female rider, "queen bee", is to compete with each other in races. Competition among women is also threatening as women are not always supportive of each other. There are instances of women not supporting other women racers by speaking disparagingly of them. In

particular, the racer who is seen as the top woman is often the one who is belittled as is described by Ruthie:

> You know part of me wants to win the races, but it's true, [the top female racer] has to keep her act in gear or she will be forgotten or embarrassed in some way. People come up with reasons why she can't maintain the top position. It feels like a fall from grace. You hear more bad remarks from men but women do it too. I had one woman say it in an interesting way. [She said], 'I just rode with so and so, she's a really solid rider.' There's that undertone that you're not as good…I look at the displaced women and where they're at now. The women quit because we don't want to lose. That need for confirmation [from the men] by being at the top makes it really hard to stay in this sport. I remember thinking that [another woman] was a better racer than me. I wasn't able to just let it go and I was miserable.

Ruthie's narrative of women, including herself, undermining the abilities of other women racers is an honest account of the practices of women mountain bikers supporting the subordination of women to men. The women racers actually quit the sport once the fear of not being on top sets in. With fewer women in the sport, the men remain in control.

Julianna also provides an account of women not supporting other women in the sport.

> I feel lonesome and isolated because I'm in that middle road. I ride with a lot of guys but I get really annoyed by the comments that they make. Then I try to ride with the women but I'm not invited to go with the women. There's this story that goes around about me that I think I'm too good to ride with the girls because I'm

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too competitive. One woman in particular who has a real ability to shape other people's ideas would complain about me to other women. She would say that she didn't ride with me because I was always showing off. I was always trying to keep up to the guys and just showing off. And so there's that whole piece of it. You're not allowed to show off. You can't be too fast because then you're making people [other women] look bad. You can't say, 'Let's hammer, let's do a really hard ride and I want to be wasted afterwards.' You can't do that, because somebody's feelings might get hurt. 'Cause maybe they'll get dropped. There's that whole story about co-operation and support amongst women which I don't think is a true.

Some women mountain bikers attempt to keep other women from improving in the sport. Women have expectations of women bikers aligning with each other by not demonstrating behaviours typically demonstrated or expected of men. Julianna suggests that women use the idea of camaraderie among women as the method for holding other women back and thus not actually providing any real support. Supportive practices would be for the women to encourage and work with each other to be the best they can be at mountain biking. To undermine another woman's striving for excellence only helps maintain the masculine gender order of the mountain biking community.

Both Ruthie and Julianna provide narratives that describe practices by some women mountain bikers to undermine the abilities of women riders. Their accounts provide examples of women using verbal practices of belittling other women riders, particularly the strong, skilled riders. The result of such practices is that women quit the sport or are inhibited from improving as riders. These apparent practices of belittling and

inhibiting stem from the fear of losing the coveted spot of being the top female rider who is recognized and admired by the men.

A third more subtle practice of women mountain bikers supporting the subordination of women to men is the lack of activism on the part of women riders to create change that would benefit women. Julianna makes note of this problem in our conversation regarding the lack of support by some of the men members of the Bicycle Nova Scotia Board of Directors for a women's Canada Games Team:

> I find it frustrating that a lot of the women make it to the point in mountain biking where they are really good and are recognized for that, but they make it there by ignoring these issues [women not being supported by Bicycle Nova Scotia] and denying them so that they get to be the cool woman. And I was the cool woman as long as I didn't comment on these issues of bitch slapping or not letting girls play. It's very disruptive to call attention to these issues. You lose friends and you lose your position in the community and you make things very difficult for yourself. I think for a lot of women, they don't want to be the torch carrier.

In this account by Julianna, women again maintain the masculine gender order of the mountain biking community by ignoring the systemic gender inequity issues that stem from the organization level. For the few women who receive some recognition for their riding abilities, they fear losing this limited acceptance if they attempt any sort of activism that may result in gender equity in the areas of mountain biking that are under control by Bicycle Nova Scotia.

Another subtle practice that some of the recognized women engage in that avoids supporting other women mountain bikers is to distance themselves from other women. Ruthie talks about how women racers practice separation from the other women:

> When we raced together, she wouldn't even put herself in the same class as me. She raced with the men. She wouldn't even put herself in the female class. I always ride female, always, always, to encourage more women [into the sport]. She rode B-Men and I was like no, I want to make sure there's an F [female] category. But she didn't want to. That gets into territory and stuff like that. It's 'I'm riding with the boys!'

Ruthie's narrative highlights her frustration with women who race only with men. She interprets this as a self-serving attempt to be a part of the men's domain but does not help any of the other women mountain bikers receive recognition from the men.

4.3.3 Queen Bees Don't Cry

As described previously, male mountain bikers construct a masculinized culture that values the performance of hegemonic masculinity. Through strength, toughness, aggressiveness, and tolerance of pain the men mountain bikers use their bodies to sustain and reproduce the gender hierarchy of this culture and sport. That is, they use their bodies, often taking risks, to achieve social recognition for "doing gender" appropriately. Alison explains that women often want to be as good as men who embody the hegemonic masculine ideal when riding and they are thus willing to risk injury to do so. She states:

> "I think when women ride with guys, they ake more risks. I think we're trying to prove we're just as good as the guys."

For these women, "doing gender" appropriately is to take risks as noted by Julianna:

I'm strong and muscular but because I'm a woman, there's a perceived weakness. A lot of my motivators are about overcoming a perception of weakness and an expression of femininity. I needed to do something non-traditional and that's why I pushed the limits [of risk] for as long as I did.

For Julianna, risk-taking practices result in a non-traditional gender performance for her. Rather than riding in a cautious manner, Julianna took extreme risks in attempting to overcome the perception of feminine weakness and demonstrate gender practices that allowed her to align herself with men and the hegemonic masculinity ideal. Rather than subscribing to 'the apologetic' whereby women "apologize" for being in the masculine domain of sport by emphasizing femininity (Felshin, 1974), Julianna is unapologetic and distances herself from displays of emphasized femininity (Broad, 2001). She does not want to be seen as weak, thus she subscribes to risk taking practicess associated with hegemonic masculinity.

Ruthie provides reasoning for women's gender performance of risk taking:

I have my biking buddies, and that's my core. You know they're my posse. The guys, I see them once a week and we all take risks. For me, when I do hit stuff, it's to prove that I can do it, and yah there is wanting to show what I can do…I continue to ride even when dripping blood! It's awesome! I do it to prove I have mettle. In my mind I'm a bit of a warrior and I can't be a wussy. It's about what I'm able to go through, so I don't usually stop a ride. And I certainly would never cry on a ride! Do you have a no-crying policy? We [Ruthie and the men she rides with] actually do because there was a girl who used to cry every single time.

And we're like, 'You know what? You can't come out with us anymore. You're

not allowed to cry. Can't cry on your bike.'

Ruthie's narrative confirms that women mountain bikers experience the need to embody practices that reflect the idealized version of masculinity, that is to be a "warrior" who is more accepted by men. To show feminine identified traits such as crying, results in banishment from the masculine domain of mountain biking. Women's desire to maintain their "queen bee" or high status among men, often results in women blindly taking unnecessary risks as Elladee describes in her narrative:

Crashes are good because they make you feel like you're pushing yourself. You

know, a couple of bruises, a little bit of blood, it enhances it [the ride]… Probably

the worst crash I ever had was in a race. I hit a couple of little whoop-di-doos the

wrong way and caught some air and hit a big fence. I cracked my helmet, twisted

my handle bars and ripped all the skin off the right hand side of my body! From

my shoulder right down to my ankle. I still had three kilometers left to go in the

race, so I got back on my bike, it was pouring rain, and when I came across the

finish line, a woman ran up to me and said, 'Oh my god I can't believe you

finished that.' Apparently there was blood pouring all over my body. I finished

because I'm stubborn and that's common within women of the culture. I know

that mountain biking is or hasn't always been a women-oriented sport. And a lot

of the types of women who seem to do it are the types who have very tenacious

kinds of personalities.

Elladee's account shows the "tenacity" of women and the extreme amount of risk taken by some women. She does not question it. She continues her account with an interesting comparison of strength between women and men:

> What was funny is, in that same race, when I was finishing my last three kilometers, a guy was pushing his bike because he had a blister or something. He made some comment about how women are way tougher because they give birth and if men had to give birth we'd all be extinct.

Even though women are considered strong by some men, as in Elladee's account, there are women mountain bikers that believe extreme risk taking is necessary in attempting to overcome the perception of feminine weakness by other men. These women are demonstrating gender practices that resemble the hegemonic masculinity ideal. Through these risky practices, women mountain bikers help maintain while simultaneously challenge hegemonic masculinity and the gender order.

4.3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter began by acknowledging that gender practices permeate the alternative sport of mountain biking as they do in mainstream sports. These practices are an attempt by men mountain bikers to achieve what they perceive as the ideal mountain biker and thus the narratives described a culture concerned with masculine traits and masculine hegemony. The objectives of mountain bikers including competition and striving for excellence were discussed in the racing domain and the realm of recreational mountain biking. It was seen that the more organized mountain biking is (i.e., institutionalized), the more the sport becomes a masculine domain with men competing to achieve an idealized hegemonic form of masculinity. It was shown that the actions of

many of the men racers readily demonstrate a strong need to maintain a traditional patriarchal gender order. Men racers actively take part in gendered practices to demonstrate superiority and produce inequality. Furthermore, this chapter noted that some of the easier-category men racers and older men racers tended to be more sensitive to not being able to measure up to the ideal mountain biker through competition.

After examining the practices of men racers, the less institutionalized environment of recreational mountain biking was explored. It was shown that men mountain bikers who ride recreationally do not escape the need to compete for masculine hegemony once competitiveness is utilized as a method for striving for excellence. With their focus on improving their mountain biking abilities and their overall fitness, the recreational members of the mountain biking community provided narratives that portray a masculinized culture characterized by competition, one-up-manship, strength and ability. In their attempt at attaining the idealized hegemonic form of masculinity, the practices of men recreational riders put women and other men in marginalized positions of this masculinized culture.

After demonstrating that men mountain bikers in Nova Scotia systematically create gender inequality through continually competing with one another, the process of social embodiment of the performance of masculinity by men mountain bikers was examined. Men participants described practices that involved using their bodies to sustain and reproduce the gender hierarchy. Strength, toughness, aggressiveness, and a willingness to take risks are required characteristics to be the ideal mountain biker and thus enjoy status in the masculine hierarchy. Many participant narratives recounted incidences of high risk practices by men, sometimes resulting in injury, as a way of

"doing gender" appropriately and doing what it takes to measure up to the idealized form of masculinity. Additional embodied practices including stamina, the glorification of pain and injury, and the ability to achieve these despite discomfort were also described as methods in forming the standard for hegemonic masculinity.

The role of women mountain bikers in maintaining a traditional patriarchal gender order within this sporting culture was also examined in this chapter. Participants provided narratives of strategies by men that often resulted in the social exclusion of women in this sport. These accounts saw women mountain bikers facing strong opposition to their presence in both the realms of racing and recreational riding. Women and weaker men (i.e., those deemed as not measuring up to hegemonic masculinity) were shown to be systematically removed from mountain biking through practices that marginalized and alienated and thus perpetuated the gender hierarchy. Furthermore, narratives of the practices of the women mountain bikers that support hegemonic masculinity and the existing gender order were also included in this chapter. Fear of being displaced by other women resulted in practices by women bikers that helped maintain a culture of masculine dominance. As well, practices of extreme risks by women were described. Risk taking by women bikers was shown to be a method to overcome the perception of feminine weakness and demonstrate gender practices that allowed them to align themselves with men and the hegemonic masculinity ideal.

Finally, it was noted that through risky practices, women mountain bikers helped maintain while simultaneously challenge hegemonic masculinity and the gender order. Furthermore, there are accounts by one teenage boy rider, Bart, that allude to him not completely taking part in maintaining a gender hierarchy in mountain biking. Bart's

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practices can be considered a challenge to the masculine gender order. As well, this chapter briefly considered the notion of riding for fun; however, the narratives concerning fun in this chapter were a description of competing with riding partners to be the best mountain biker and thus at the top of the gender hierarchy created in this sport. As such, there is a blurring of riding purposes in the mountain bike community that creates a division in this culture. Riding for "fun" as described in this chapter is synonymous with striving for excellence and competing to win as a way to maintain the gender order. Others in the mountain biking community engage in mountain biking because it is fun and not competitive and thus not a way to measure up to the hegemonic version of masculinity. This form of fun as well as the notion of flow will be discussed in Chapter 5 as ways of challenging the masculine gender order.

CHAPTER 5: "RIDING BECAUSE THEY LOVE IT" – CHALLENGING THE GENDER HIERARCHY

Chapter 4 confirms the pervasiveness of gender practices in the mountain biking culture of Nova Scotia. In mountain bikers' attempts to demonstrate what they perceive as the ideal mountain biker, men and women participants described a culture concerned with masculine traits and masculine hegemony. In both areas of mountain bike racing as well as recreational mountain biking, the sport is revealed to be a masculine domain with men competing to achieve an idealized hegemonic form of masculinity. Men mountain bikers readily demonstrate a strong need to maintain a traditional patriarchal gender order by actively engaging in practices that maintain superiority and produce inequality. High risk practices and demonstrations of strength, toughness, and aggressiveness run the risk of injury but enable men mountain bikers to prove that they have what it takes to measure up to the idealized or valorized form of masculinity. Within this culture, women and weaker men were shown to be systematically excluded through practices of men mountain bikers that marginalized and alienated and thus perpetuated the gender hierarchy. These narratives affirmed Connell's (1987, 1995) notion that the subordination of women unites hegemonic, subordinate, and marginalized masculinities.

Although masculinities are united by gender inequality through the subordination of women, Connell (1996b) also recognizes that masculinity is dynamic, that is "particular masculinities are composed, historically, and may also be decomposed, contested, and replaced" (p.210). This notion is evident in narratives that highlighted practices by both men and women mountain bikers that challenged the idealized hegemonic form of masculinity and the traditional patriarchal gender order found in this culture. This chapter explores these practices of men and women mountain bikers that

"decompose", "contest", and "replace" hegemonic masculinity and the gender hierarchy of mountain biking in Nova Scotia.

The chapter begins by exploring the notion of an ideal mountain biker that is not as concerned with masculine traits and masculine hegemony. The possibility of alternative forms of masculinity being constructed by some men members of the mountain biking community is considered. Following the narratives of "doing gender" differently by allowing for fun and inclusivity, a shift in the mountain biking culture is examined. Greater opportunities for women and girls to be involved in mountain biking as a result of this shift in culture will be explored along with the benefits of women and girls creating their own space. The shift in the mountain biking culture of Nova Scotia to becoming a more family-oriented sport will also be explored, as will the importance of women as mothers and role models who challenge the notion that mountain biking is a sport for men and boys only. Finally this chapter examines mountain biking in Nova Scotia as a welcoming, connected community that focuses on fun and flow. The conditions for positive riding environments free from hegemonic masculine gender performances will be examined. The notion of achieving flow will be considered as transcending gender performance.

5.1 PRACTICING ALTERNATIVE MASCULINITIES

Men mountain bikers who are inclusive of women are practicing an alternative form of masculinity - a form that does not focus on the hegemonic masculine ideal. These men are carving out their own space which ultimately helps women and weaker men challenge the gender regime. The way they define the ideal mountain biker is different. In Chapter 4, Roland describes a true mountain biker as one who is capable of riding a rigid

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bike (i.e., one without suspension) thus the punishing aspect of riding this style of bike helps him demonstrate his masculinity. By riding a rigid bike he may not be demonstrating the most idealized version of masculinity; however, his gender performance reinforces hegemonic masculinity and the belief that the ideal mountain biker must demonstrate traditional masculine characteristics. Alternatively, Roland is also challenging the gender regime by engaging in cross country, the less extreme style of mountain biking. He is demonstrating that it is not necessary for men to engage in risky practices. He is able to create his own space by riding a rigid bike and thus practice an alternative form of masculinity that does not require taking extreme risks to measure up to a hegemonic masculine ideal. Furthermore, Roland is hesitant in defining an ideal mountain biker. When asked to describe such a mountain biker, he notes:

> My version of an ideal mountain biker is not a simplistic or cut and dry description. I don't think there is a real ideal mountain biker. I think the whole beauty of mountain biking is we're a very diverse breed. I ride with men and women, engineers, students, business owners, and myself, I'm a labourer. There's all kinds of us, so there's really no ideal mountain biker.

Roland is open to the notion of a broad definition of a mountain biker. He is inclusive of all who ride and therefore does not articulate characteristics or practices that need to be performed for a biker to be considered worthy of the mountain biker designation. For Roland, gender practices of mountain bikers are not a concern as he extols diversity in mountain biking culture.

5.1.1 The Ideal Mountain Biker, Ideally

Roland avoids assigning any specific characteristics when defining an ideal

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mountain biker. He maintains the notion of mountain bike culture being diverse with multiple versions of gender being practiced. Other men mountain bikers make distinctions as to what an ideal mountain biker is depending on the context. Throughout Chapter 4, the narratives of Myles captures his strong need to be the ideal mountain biker and measure up by always working hard in races and on recreational rides. His accounts demonstrate his continuous "battle" with other men riders to prove who is at the top of the gender hierarchy and best demonstrating hegemonic masculinity. Despite this, Myles also provides a description of an ideal mountain biker that is distinctly different:

> The ideal mountain biker in my perspective is someone who can go out and ride their bike and have fun every time. They can get off their bike at the end of the day and say that was a damn good ride. Every time! They're not riding to win every race and they're not there riding to be the fittest guy in the world. They're not there riding to be king shit on turd island, they're riding because they love it. They're genuinely having fun and spreading enthusiasm to everyone around and maybe there'll be some little kids around to motivate them to ride more. I think that's the ideal mountain biker.

Myles values being the ideal rider whose performance of hegemonic masculinity gains him status in the masculine hierarchy. He is also aware of the importance of inclusiveness and acknowledges that there are other mountain bikers who are worthy of admiration. He describes the characteristics of an alternative version of an "ideal" rider who is less concerned with "doing gender" and demonstrating hegemonic masculinity. By demonstrating an alternative gender the traditional gender hierarchy is not perpetuated. This version of an ideal mountain biker is not competing to win or competing for

excellence but rather focused on having fun and encouraging others to participate and be a part of the mountain bike community. For Myles, making the distinction between different versions of an ideal mountain biker satisfies his need to be politically correct and inclusive.

Unlike Myles, Bart does not describe two forms of idealized mountain bikers based on context. His perception is that an ideal mountain biker may or may not be competitive with others but must be having fun to be admired:

The ideal mountain biker doesn't have to be competitive. I race for entertainment you know. I don't race because I want to be the best, I race for entertainment. Even if a rider is not good, I admire them. As long as they're having fun and if they're out there trying their heart out, I think that's great. There's one kid [who] when he started riding was smaller than anyone else and the big kids would just leave him behind. He just kept on hammering away. He was happy just to get through and he thought that was the greatest thing ever. It was just fun, fun, fun. You know, he was riding his bike because he wanted to ride his bike.

As previously highlighted in Chapter 4, Bart does not fully subscribe to practices of hegemonic masculinity that support a gender hierarchy in mountain biking. He admires mountain bikers who are trying their best and motivated by a desire to have fun. He even sees the ideal mountain biker in a child who is new to the sport. An additional challenge to the masculine gender order is also evident in Bart's respect for women in the sports:

[A woman mountain biker] helped me out. I used to do morning rides with [a woman mountain biker] and she was really helpful when I was a young whipper snapper. She was really helpful to get me into it, teach me how to ride and be a

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better rider. I've had a lot of role models and people like [a woman mountain biker] have helped me for so long with all their tips on riding to get me to where I'm now.

Descriptions of women and children as role models were commonplace throughout my interview with Bart. His narratives describing positive and ideal characteristics flowed naturally as he spoke of a diverse group of mountain bikers that he perceives as ideal. Bart appreciates and respects women, men, teenagers, and children as being worthy of admiration. He is comfortable and accepting of a competitive and non-competitive version of an ideal mountain biker. Bart's ability to admire any mountain biker in varying contexts demonstrates his challenge to the masculine gender order.

5.1.2 "Doing Gender" Differently

In the previous section, some men described an alternative to the idealized hegemonic masculine mountain biker as one who is not competing to win, not competing for excellence, and not competing to gain status in the masculine gender hierarchy. These mountain bikers are performing an alternative masculinity thus creating space for fun and inclusivity. Ruthie talks about two men who introduced her to mountain biking:

I met this guy who is one of the best advocators for mountain biking. Basically I think every person he sees he says you should ride a bike. It starts with him, but he's kind of like the left-hand side of another guy. They work jointly in trying to change the world. [For them] bicycles can save the planet. The other guy started an email for the people he knows want to ride and he sends it to everybody. It's a whole open policy as opposed to only riding with other guys. These two guys put their heart and soul into everything they do, and live and breathe the sport. It was

them who brought that to me, and I love the sport.

The men who introduced Ruthie to mountain biking are not practicing the hegemonic version of masculinity that perpetuates a masculine hierarchy by marginalizing and alienating women and weaker men. In contrast, the gender practices of these men are inclusive and demonstrate respect for all mountain bikers. Ruthie's narrative provides an example of their appreciation of her as a skilled rider:

> When riding with newer guys you wait until they're off their bike, ride by them and then stay ahead of them. They get to the end of their ride and that's when the other guys say, "She's a great rider and instead of trying to kill yourself trying to keep ahead of her, you should just follow her line and learn from her."

The men with whom Ruthie rides are providing an alternate definition to the masculine ideal in the mountain biking community in Nova Scotia. There is no masculine gender hierarchy for these men. By pointing out that anyone can be a skilled rider and worthy of respect, they challenge hegemonic masculine gender practices (e.g., trying to get ahead of a woman rider) on their rides. Their comfort and respect for a non-competitive version of masculinity opens up the sport to a more diverse group that includes beginners.

As with Ruthie, all of the women interviewed, as well as myself, were introduced to mountain biking by men. With all of us, our first contact with the sport was positive and the men were very encouraging. Elladee was introduced by her boyfriend and a group of friends who believed that she would eventually love a sport that she initially thought was "stupid". Her boyfriend bought her a bike to help her get involved. Julianna was also introduced to the mountain bike culture in Nova Scotia by her boyfriend. Her narrative provides an account of immediate acceptance by other men as her boyfriend

was extremely supportive of her and continuously bragged about her riding abilities. Julianna believes that her boyfriend's support helped her to "skip all the hard work of trying to gain acceptance" and she "automatically belonged" to the riding community. Alison also felt instantly accepted among a group of men riders as a result of one man's confidence in her riding abilities. This man was a participant in this study. His support of Alison and other women challenged men's need to be dominant:

> Well I know Alison will beat most guys down the hill. She's very strong in downhill. And if a guy has a problem with a girl going around him, he just needs to get his head examined, you know what I mean. That's his problem and no one else's.

According to Alison, this man and the rest of the men in their riding group are truly accepting of her and all acknowledge that she is worthy of admiration.

Finally, my own introduction to mountain biking was extremely positive even though at the time I was the only woman riding with a group of men. Unlike the competitive one-up-manship characteristic of hegemonic masculinity, these men taught me everything they knew while being encouraging and confident in my ability to become a good rider, perhaps even better than themselves. At the time, this welcoming and encouraging environment took place in a recreational setting. A question this raises is if these alternative gender practices of the men I rode with recreationally could take place in a competitive context as well. Indeed, the men who raced maintained their alternative masculinity practices by interacting with me in the same way at a race as they did when we rode together recreationally. These men challenged the masculine gender order in various contexts of mountain biking unlike other men in racing (noted in Chapter 4) who

were compelled to measure up to an ideal hegemonic masculine mountain biker.

5.2 WOMEN AND FAMILY CIRCUMVENTING AND CHALLENGING THE GENDER REGIME

The previous section provides examples of men redefining the masculine ideal in the mountain biking community in Nova Scotia. By practicing a form of masculinity that is not concerned with maintaining a masculine gender order these men do not marginalize women and are often very encouraging of all those involved in the sport. The previous section discussed men friends and partners who introduced women to mountain biking. Indeed, many women are introduced to mountain biking by family members including their partners and brothers. Ned describes a young couple he rides with:

> On our group rides we have a couple in their 20s. [They're] just married and they seem to be much more equal in skill then say our generation. It's funny because looking back my mom was very strong and independent and my sister is strong and independent and my wife is strong and independent but my dad was also a typical male. I've seen both sides of it and I think it's definitely changing over the years and it's showing that women now take part in any sport they want to.

Ned makes the observation that there has been a shift over time in women becoming more involved in sports that were not always open to them in the past. In his example, a young woman and her husband have been involved in mountain biking for approximately the same duration of time and therefore demonstrate similar riding abilities. In the earlier years of mountain biking in North America (i.e., late 1980s and early 1990s), fewer women were involved as a result of the historical privileging of men in the sports domain. At that time if a husband or boyfriend went riding with his female partner, he was more

likely (or assumed to be more likely) to have greater experience and skill.

Although younger women seem to be choosing to participate in mountain biking more than they did when the sport was new, Bart describes trying to get his sister involved in mountain biking and reveals that it is not always straight forward for women to take up this sport:

I had to stop bugging her to ride. She never had any interest and then I stopped bugging her and then she finally started. She got out on her own, riding her bike and then she wanted to do Saturday morning rides and did a couple of those. She's just really excited to ride and she wants to race because she's always tagged along to my races. I wish I had known years ago that this is what it would take to get her into it. To encourage her to make that first step and start riding, that's what bugged her about it. I'd say, "Come do a Saturday morning ride!" and for her it was, "No, I don't want to do it." But then as I transitioned away from Saturday morning rides and I started doing the faster-paced rides, I wasn't really around that ride anymore and she picked up on it. It's awesome now because we can enjoy it together. She's going to be a great rider considering the time she's actually been on a mountain bike. Compared to me, she's miles better than I was after a year riding mountain bikes.

Bart realized it took a "non-confrontational way" for his sister to start mountain biking even though she wanted to all the while he was involved. He noted that "she wanted to ride but she wanted to do it on her own terms". Myles' experience with introducing his wife to mountain biking confirms Bart's observation that some women want to take part in their own way:

I don't hold back when I'm riding with her. I wait at the bottom and you know it's

hard. She just wants to be on her own right now 'cause she's so new to it. She just

wants to go to a dirt road and ride up and back. [She does] not want someone

hovering around telling her how to do it or what to do better. So I just let her go.

Although Myles wants his wife to go mountain biking with him, he continues to ride as

fast as he can. He still has a need to perform an idealized hegemonic form of masculinity

that excludes his wife as he has to wait for her to catch up. Bart, even as a teenager,

understands the problems that can result from some men trying to involve women in

mountain biking when he notes that "women are kind of pushed out of it by their husband

because he went too fast or whatever." Bart understands that Myles inadvertently

maintains a masculine gender order by riding fast and leaving his wife behind. Not

surprisingly some women reject riding under such conditions. Bart describes a solution

for women to start mountain biking that has become popular in Nova Scotia:

I think the women that aren't riding are a little bit shyer to jump in and she [the

organizer of a women's only ride group] got a lot of the wives of husbands that

ride. She goes up to them and says, "Hey you don't always have to ride like that,

come with us!"

Bart sees how women have created their own space for mountain biking that provides the

opportunity for them to choose the manner of riding.

5.2.1 Women Creating Their Own Space

Although there are men who are inclusive of women in mountain biking in Nova

Scotia, Bart and Myles highlight problems women have with some men introducing them

to this sport and then demonstrating a hegemonic masculine riding style. In the previous

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section, Bart mentions an all-women's mountain bike group that was started in his club. He describes what he observes about this women's group:

> I ride with a buddy of mine. He comes in with his mom and we ride the same night as the women. Women are going one way so we'll go the opposite way. We might see them but it leaves them to do their own ride. In a mostly male-dominated sport, even when there isn't a spot for them so to speak, they're happy to make their own and this is awesome! There's never been this many women riding. The funny thing is the women's ride [in the area that Bart rides] right now has actually had more people out on it than the men's.

For a young man, Bart understands the motivations and benefits for women to create their own style and space to mountain bike. By developing women-only rides, women are able to avoid the masculinized gender regime that is part of mountain biking in Nova Scotia. Alison provides a description of how women-only rides are different from riding with men:

> They [women-only rides] are a lot more social, a lot more stopping. I think women are more into making sure everyone's always on the same page, at the same level, wanting to do everything together. Women want to encourage other women and they don't want to always hammer hard…And I think the women I have been riding with usually learn better and become some of the stronger women riders.

Alison's account illustrates that when women ride with each other without men, practices of hegemonic masculinity do not limit their opportunities to improve on their riding abilities. As shown in Chapter 4, men spend much of their riding time competing to be an

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idealized mountain biker by continuously demonstrating strength, speed, and a willingness to take risks. This chapter has also described men riding with their wives and still needing to demonstrate hegemonic masculinity by riding faster and not staying with their partners. The gender practices of men do not always help women learn how to ride, whereas the practices of women mountain bikers provide a more favorable learning environment. Women stay together, help and encourage each other, and in the process, often become strong and proficient mountain bikers.

Julianna's narrative of her coaching experience with a group of young girls supports the benefits of women and girls creating their own space in mountain biking:

My feeling isn't of loyalty to give back, but it's to improve things and it's to make sure that, even though the people running the show don't want them there, to make sure that those girls feel entitled to be there. I always have a sense that there's so much more that's available for boys. So if I had to choose my time, I would always go with coaching the girls because they have less available. I wouldn't normally want to co-train boys and girls either because I see the way girls change their riding when they're around men and boys. I saw this with one girl. She would try harder when the men were not around. On the regular club ride with everybody going up a road and jockeying for position, she would concede, concede, concede the position 'til she was at the back. But if she was riding next to me without men and boys around, we'd duke it out. Without the guys, she had more fun, she was more vocal. But when she kept conceding positions to these guys, I said, "You don't have to give up your place. You can fight to get to the front." and she was like, "Oh, you know."

Julianna's narrative of her coaching experience with young girls demonstrates how important it is for women and girls to create their own space without men and boys being present. She notes how the girls have fewer opportunities than boys, as a result of the historical privileging of males in sport, to ride and work on their mountain biking skills. As well, the young girls lose confidence when they ride with men and boys resulting in them not trying their best and ascribing to the historical norm of females being submissive to males. By conceding to men and boys, some girls and women leave unchallenged the masculine gender regime that characterizes mixed rides. By allowing men and boys to best them, these girls can be thought of as practicing complicit femininities that support hegemonic masculinity and perpetuates patriarchal gender relations. Furthermore, they are "apologetic" in that their practice of conceding to men helps distance them from negative stereotypes associated with women who are perceived to be masculine (Felshin, 1974). In the absence of men, young girls and older women create their own style and space to mountain bike. Julianna also notes the camaraderie among the young girls that is similar to the older women riding together:

> The girls' skill level is always progressing. And that's exciting and interesting to see. But it's also watching the process as they talk each other through the hard stuff. Sometimes one of them will have a really difficult, crummy ride and the girls will coach her through the ride. They'd say, "That's alright, you can walk this section. Let's all walk it." Or they'll cheer each other on. They're so thankful that they have each other in this little group.

Unlike men and boys competing to be an idealized hegemonic masculine version of a mountain biker, young girls ride together to help each other improve upon their skills and

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see each other become better riders. Furthermore, Julianna talks about the importance of women as role models for young girls:

> They've expressed to me on a number of occasions how glad they are that they get to do their training rides with a woman because they don't see other women mountain bikers that often. I think what's happening is we're seeing the importance of female role models. Two of the girls that I ride with, their moms are both athletes. Since I race, they see me as a great role model for their girls. It's important for them to have their daughters be coached by a woman so that they don't get discouraged by always riding with men and boys.

Julianna's account of girls-only training rides led by a woman role model acknowledges the enthusiasm young girls have for the sport and these types of rides. Whereas riding with men and boys who are constantly competing to prove their masculinity (and superiority over women) may be daunting for girls, having their own space that is led by a woman mountain biker allows them more freedom to learn and develop skills. In a supportive environment, a woman role model, particularly one who is highly skilled at mountain biking, demonstrates what girls can achieve.

5.2.2 Moms and Their Mountain Biking Families

In the previous section, women-only riding spaces were described. By creating their own space through the development of women-only rides, women are able to separate themselves from the masculinized competitive culture of mountain biking in Nova Scotia. When women ride with each other without men, the gender practices of men do not interfere with their opportunity to improve on their riding abilities thus providing an optimal learning environment. This environment is one in which women are

supportive of each other as well as role models for young girls wanting to be a part of the sport.

As one of the women mountain bikers in Nova Scotia who began the first women-only club and rides, as well as a number of subsequent clubs throughout Nova Scotia, I have seen the impact that women-only riding has had on helping women feel they have a place in this male-dominated sport. Furthermore, these women-only spaces in mountain biking have contributed to an increase in the number of women becoming involved in the sport. More recently, I along with the participants in this study have recognized a change in the dynamics of participation in this sport whereby there are more mothers and their children riding. Julianna notes the importance of mountain biking becoming a more family-oriented sport:

> You now see two clubs both having this whole big family thing going on. So if we can get it more towards a family-oriented sport, maybe these girls will feel like they belong more and will continue to mountain bike.

Julianna would like to see mountain biking become a more family-oriented sport so that all members of a family, including moms and daughters, will want to take part in it. Elladee provides insight into how mountain biking has been moving towards being family-oriented:

> Mountain biking used to be more of an extreme culture, but I think now it's really a more family-based culture. And it's based on people who want to get out and have fun and ride bikes. I think when it kind of fell out of media popularity as an extreme sport and once there was free ride and downhill as separate disciplines, that gave more license to regular cross-country mountain biking as a less extreme

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form. I think when it was all lumped together people saw that as something you had to do – extreme mountain biking. But now that they're separate disciplines, people see that you can go out and mountain bike and not jump off cliffs. Before, if you didn't [ride in an extreme manner], you weren't a mountain biker.

Elladee's observation of the fracturing of mountain biking into separate disciplines explains how a sport that at one time was considered only to be extreme and dangerous can now also be seen as safe and fun. Cross-country mountain biking, as a separate discipline, is now regarded as a sport appropriate for young people and families. Myles confirms Elladee's explanation for mountain biking becoming more family-oriented:

Cross-country is more family-friendly than downhilling. You can go to Victoria Park and you can ride the gravel trails with a five year old and then you can duck into the woods on a little bit of single track here and there. And certainly things like the short track racing [cross-country race trails that are less than 1 km in length] for the kids are excellent starts as they have family-friendly trails. You get a bunch of parents standing around chatting when the kids race so then it becomes more approachable, and that really, really helps.

Myles also points out the role that short track racing has played in getting families involved in mountain biking. These races are short in duration (approximately 10 minutes for young children and up to a maximum of 30 minutes for older teenagers and adults). As well, the race takes place on a small lap as described by Bart:

Short track races are awesome, for everybody all around. You have young boys and young girls. The youngest rider was two on a run bike [a bike without pedals, chain or gears] and the oldest rider was a guy that's seventy years old. That's a

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pretty significant age range and everybody's having fun. At short track, parents

can see their kids for 90% of the lap because it's so small. That's with the

youngest kids and then it gets a bit longer, to keep it still fun for the older kids

and then longest for the adults or senior high students and then we just go out and

have a good time. And a couple of us will lead out the kids and follow along. I

followed a little kid on a run bike and it's, "Oh come on buddy!" and you see him

just blasting down hills and that's exciting!

Bart's explanation of short track racing captures the fun and excitement that characterize

these events. He notes how a variety of people are involved including girls and boys, the

very young, and older riders. Both Bart and Myles note that families become involved in

this form of mountain biking because it is "approachable" and safe. Parents are able to

watch their children as the laps are very short compared to a standard cross country race.

These types of races challenge the masculine gender hierarchy that characterize the

standard longer race format. Rather than being a site for hegemonic masculine

performances, the shorter race format focuses on getting all family members involved

and everyone having fun. Indeed, these events have contributed to mountain biking

becoming a family-oriented sport in Nova Scotia and thus more inclusive of anyone who

wants to participate.

This shift in mountain biking becoming a family friendly sport in recent years has

also been a result of the first mountain bikers in Nova Scotia (those who started in the

late 1980s and early 1990s) becoming parents. Alison notes that "because mountain

biking is a relatively new sport, a lot of the pioneers now have families" and Ruthie

observes that "the kids that I see in mountain biking now are kids whose parents ride."

Furthermore, Alison comments that "it's a life sport so it seems very likely their kids will be involved" meaning that mountain biking can be done throughout a person's entire life, thus parents are now getting their children involved in this sport. Finally, Alison provides a narrative that describes the importance of mother's being involved in mountain biking and the role they play in challenging the notion that it is a sport for men and boys only:

> When I was racing it wasn't focussed on [my brother]. If anything it was almost focused more on me because I was a bit more serious and had bigger goals. There was a strong family aspect. Growing up I remember watching my mom race and I remember watching my dad race so it was both of them so it was just natural for all of us [brothers and sisters] to go and race too. Having this family involvement kinda takes away the gender thing. The gender stuff is gone and everyone is just out doing it and doing the best they can, be they male or female. And I think even if you look at the girls that mountain bike now, their moms, dads, and brothers race so they've grown up kinda the same as I did with everyone racing around them. I think we see that too in other sports that are family sports like cross country skiing where the numbers have been pretty even. Probably slightly more girls than boys actually. Eventually mountain biking will get there as more people don't see it as only for guys but as a family sport.

For Alison, her entire family mountain biked including her mother, thus it was natural for her and her siblings, regardless of sex, to be involved in mountain biking. The "gender thing" was not present meaning that mountain biking was not viewed as a sport in which only men and boys could participate. In the absence of "gender stuff" no one in her family was competing to be an idealized mountain biker needing to display hegemonic

masculinity. Alison and her family members were riding to be the best they could be and striving for personal excellence in their abilities, not status in the narrowly defined (i.e., masculine) gender hierarchy.

5.3 A WELCOMING AND CONNECTED COMMUNITY

In the last section, Alison notes that having her entire family be a part of mountain biking provided the opportunity to strive for personal excellence without being concerned with competing for a place in a masculine gender hierarchy. The narratives of the participants of this study also provided accounts of riding with a group of people who are happy to be riding and not concerned with a hegemonic masculine performance. They describe the social aspect of mountain biking and riding with a welcoming and supportive group. Ruthie notes how finding a welcoming group to ride with is like "finding a new family" as one is able to make deep connections with other members of the mountain bike community. These connections provide for such an enjoyable experience that many riders, like Ruthie, fall in love with this sport and the social interaction it provides. Much like the atmosphere created with Alison's whole family being involved in mountain biking, groups of riders can also provide an environment free from competing to be a part of a masculine gender hierarchy.

5.3.1 Mountain Biking for the Social Aspect

The interactions of mountain bikers in Nova Scotia reveal the gender practices they perform. Depending on context, such as the composition of a riding group, the mountain biking culture in Nova Scotia accommodates various versions of masculine gender performance. As noted in previous sections of this chapter, the ride setting such as riding in a family environment allows for alternative gender practices that challenge

hegemonic masculinity. The participants in this study all provided narratives of riding in

mixed group settings which were not characterized by hegemonic masculine practices.

Bart provides a description of how a mixed group of riders came together and created a

social and enjoyable riding environment:

> It's your riding family, an extended family. You go on a ride and there are good
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> talks. It's social time while you're out exercising and having fun. You meet new
>
> people along the way and you all come together under one umbrella. People are
>
> coming from totally different paths. It's not like one group of people from say a
>
> work place or school. It's everybody coming from a different place to go for a
>
> ride with everyone keen to give tips on how to make your riding better. It's one
>
> common interest that brings us together like a community.

Bart's notion of a group of diverse people coming together to create a community is a

result of a common interest among the members of the group and a willingness to share it

with others. As Ned notes, to create a positive riding environment "the group must be an

open and welcoming community". Alison adds that "genuine camaraderie and

friendship" are necessary for rides to be good. Other participants agree that a positive and

welcoming social atmosphere develops from the deep friendships made. Ruthie provides

a description of such friendships:

> Once you become a mountain biker, you BECOME a mountain biker! You're part
>
> of a culture. Everybody lives and breathes it! It's something that connects you. It
>
> creates these friendships and these groups of people that are solid. When I think
>
> of my friendships, I have a few really good friends that I've known for a long
>
> time. Then I have my biking buddies, and they're my core. They understand me

because we're in the same groove and the same head space.

For Ruthie, a positive mountain biking culture is based on deeply connected friendships. Everyone understands each other and what they "do" is mountain bike. Gendered practices are not a part of her description because her riding group is based on friendship and not competing to gain status in a hegemonic masculine hierarchy. In the context of strong friendships, alternative gender practices result in a sense of community and a love of the sport.

Ned adds to the notion of true friendship being necessary for the mountain bike community to be welcoming. He speaks about people giving back to the community of mountain biking so that everyone can enjoy the sport:

It's the folks who have put it all on the line and put their heart and soul into the sport and have given back in one way shape or form that make it such a great sport. Whether it's trail building or coaching or putting on events or what have you. People who say, "What can I do to help?" They realize it's not just about going out and showing each other up on a ride. It's about everything going on around it and those are the folks I look up to. They keep the community spirit going. It's about providing something to the community whether it be a forum for people to post rides or stopping on the side of the trail to help someone fix something.

Ned admires the people who help make mountain biking accessible to everyone and he sees them as necessary for maintaining a "community spirit" that welcomes rather than excludes. This welcoming community is created by people who do not focus on maintaining a masculine gender hierarchy by "showing each other up". Elladee agrees

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with Ned that competition on rides is not what makes mountain biking a welcome social opportunity:

> You need the social part to make it fun. I don't like the rides where you're hammering all the time, killing yourself the whole time you're riding just to be ahead of others. I like to stop and be social. Social things make it a fun ride. Things like meeting new people. Hanging out with people that you don't normally see except when you're riding. And then just having that thing in common to talk about after the fact.

For Elladee, enjoying the company of others and not competing with them makes for a fun ride. Ned also believes in "stopping along the ride to share a couple of laughs and enjoy the day". He adds that "fun people who are easygoing and can laugh at themselves" are necessary for a welcoming and positive riding environment.

5.3.2 Mountain Biking for Fun and Flow

In Chapter 4, some of the participants described the notion of fun in the context of constantly competing with other men riders. Fun for these mountain bikers requires a gender performance of doing what it takes to measure up to an ideal hegemonic masculine mountain biker. Earlier in this chapter, Myles describes fun in a noncompetitive context. The mountain bikers he describes are not concerned with competing with others and are only interested in practices that achieve a personal hedonistic experience. Elladee agrees when she states that ideal mountain bikers "do it because they think it's fun, not because they want to beat someone. They enjoy everything about it." For Julianna, fun is her "primary motivator" and "knowing that

there's some fun stuff coming up" makes her want to ride. Bart provides a narrative of riding in groups where everyone is experiencing their own personal hedonism:

> The group rides are for people getting out and having fun, that's all it is. When I started I was too young to even know what physically fit meant but I knew riding my bike was a good time and I loved going out and just having fun. It makes me happy to see people enjoying it. They're all having fun. The adults are having fun, the teens are having fun, and the little kids are having fun. Fun, is the most uniting of anything.

The personal hedonistic experience of mountain bikers challenges the masculine gender hierarchy as the focus is not to compete with others but rather to enjoy the ride. Bart notes that having fun on the ride brings people together. Ruthie agrees that there is a uniting spirit amongst mountain bikers as a result of their shared passion for the sport:

> We have a similar spirit. We share this passion. It's all about the ride. It's not about [riding] style. It's about the adventure. It's not the destination so we're not commuters. It's not about getting from point A to point B. It's all about that space in between. Every minute you have to be present. It's all about this space. What's in this space? There's a root, there's a rock. OK I've got to move this way. OK what's in this space? There's a tree limb and then there's a bridge at the end of it. OK I've got to be in this position. There's constant dialogue that we don't even think about. It's hard to think of other stuff because you're constantly dialoguing with yourself about what is present. And if you do different styles of riding, you see your dialogue change but it's still about the ride. There's a united spirit even between [riding] styles.

Ruthie's narrative describes the personal internal dialogue each mountain biker engages in when riding. Regardless of their riding style, the focus is on the present moment and each piece of space when riding. This essence or inward nature when riding transcends all other thoughts and actions including gender practices. Ruthie continues her narrative by describing the achievement of flow while mountain biking:

> It's instant gratification. It's, "Wow! This is fun!" I can sense where I can go with it and the idea of flying just totally thrills me. That's flow. Where I feel like I've challenged myself and it's about how well my game was on the bike. I feel free. I feel like the world is a good place. I feel confident. It's me and my bike. It's a refuge. It's a mental state. It's all these wonderful things for me. It's finding balance, so it's a very spiritual experience for me.

Ruthie's description of flow conveys the notion of performing the activity of mountain biking for intrinsic reasons. She attains instant gratification through a deep focus while riding her bike. This complete focus on the task of riding makes her one with her bike. This intrinsic experience transcends all other performances. By attaining flow on a mountain bike ride only one activity (i.e., riding the bike) can be deeply focused upon. Roland also provides a similar description of flow on a ride:

> Flow happens on one of those rides that you start out with no expectation of what's gonna happen and all of a sudden you're blown away. It's like climbing the top of a mountain and meeting a guru. You get that feeling of awesomeness. A feeling of elation. It just produces really good endorphins in your brain. You're enjoying everything: the surroundings, the people, the ride. And the only

challenge is within yourself. You don't think about outdoing the company you're

with.

For Roland, in the context of achieving flow, he does not feel the need to compete with

others. There is no competition. No competing to be at the top of the masculine gender

hierarchy. The ideal hegemonic masculine mountain biker does not exist. Flow does not

have to include characteristics of hegemonic masculinity (e.g., risk taking) to be obtained.

Flow is an intrinsic performance. It transcends everything else including the performance

of gender.

5.3.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter began by acknowledging that some of the narratives in Chapter 4

despite illustrating practices of hegemonic masculinity, also hinted at practices by both

men and women mountain bikers that challenge the idealized hegemonic form of

masculinity and the traditional patriarchal gender order found in this culture. This chapter

explored those practices of men and women mountain bikers that challenged hegemonic

masculinity and the patriarchal gender regime of the sport.

In exploring the practices of mountain bikers that challenged the masculine

gender hierarchy, the notion of an ideal mountain biker was reexamined and new

narratives described a subculture less concerned with masculine traits and masculine

hegemony. As masculinity is socially constructed and contextual, multiple versions can

be practiced. Alternative forms of masculinity being constructed by some men members

of the mountain biking community were explored. Narratives of men mountain bikers

that challenged the idealized hegemonic version of masculinity provided descriptions of

"doing gender" differently by allowing for fun and inclusivity.

With men mountain bikers not always subscribing to practices of an idealized hegemonic masculine mountain biker depending on the context in which they are riding, new spaces for women and girls have opened up. As a result of these new spaces, a new mountain biking subculture was explored. Women only rides as evidence of this shift provide greater opportunities for women and girls to be involved in mountain biking and also choose their manner of riding. The benefits of women and girls creating their own space in mountain biking were discussed along with the notion of complicit femininities not being a part of women-only rides. By not practicing complicit femininities, women and girls were unapologetic as they challenged hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal gender relations. The importance of women as role models for young girls was also discussed. As well, the development of a mountain biking subculture in Nova Scotia, one that sees the sport become more family-oriented was explored. The importance of mother's being involved in mountain biking and the role they play in challenging the notion that it is a sport for men and boys only was examined.

Following a discussion of a possible cultural shift in mountain biking in Nova Scotia, an examination of this sport as a welcoming, connected community that focuses on fun and flow was provided. Positive riding environments free from hegemonic masculine gender performance were seen to develop from the deep friendships made, from riders making the sport better for everyone and maintaining a community spirit, and by riders who are only interested in pursuing a personal hedonistic experience. Finally the chapter ends with a discussion of the context of achieving flow and the notion that this context of riding transcends everything else including the performance of gender.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

The ultimate goal of this research project was to discover how mountain biking can be a sport enjoyed safely by as many Canadians as possible. By exploring the experiences and practices of men and women mountain bikers living in Nova Scotia with the aim of better understanding the gendered culture of mountain biking and by asking, 1. How do gendered practices marginalize as well as privilege some participants, and 2. How do gendered practices put participants at risk of injury, a wealth of information was uncovered to help achieve this goal. As was seen in Chapters 4 and 5, the descriptions and interpretations provided by Nova Scotia mountain bikers have resulted in a better understanding of marginalization and risk taking practices within the sport and thus provide insight for improving inclusiveness and safety. Through rich, thick descriptions of what participants perceived to be the ideal mountain biker, a masculine hierarchy with the hegemonic version of masculinity being the idealized mountain biker was revealed. A variety of practices performed by mountain bikers achieve this gendered ideal and perpetuate a masculine hierarchy that contributes to the privileging and marginalizing of some participants, while at the same time putting participants at risk of injury.

This study joins the debate engaged in by other researchers regarding the meaning of alternative sports (e.g., Beal, 1996; Humphreys, 2003; Rinehart, 2000; Wheaton, 2000, Sisjord, 2009). Wheaton (2004) questions whether the culture of alternative sports is different from "traditional rule-bound, competitive, masculinised dominant sport cultures" (p. 3). This study found that when mountain bikers adopt mainstream sports' values, mountain biking is constructed as a masculine practice promoting an ideology of male superiority. Problematic masculinizing practices that marginalize women and some

men, and pressure others to take risks maintain this gender hierarchy. As with Thornton's (2004) study of ultimate frisbee athletes, this study and several others (e.g., Beal & Wilson 2004; Booth, 2001, 2004; Crocket, 2013; Kay & Laberge, 2004; Kelly, Pomerantz, & Curry, 2005; Olive, McQuaid & Phillips, 2015; Robinson, 2004, 2008; Russell & Lemon, 2012; Thompson, 2004; Thorpe, 2005; Waitt & Warren, 2008; Wheaton, 2004; Young, 2004) found that alternative sport practitioners often fail "to produce practices and meanings that are beyond the dominant structures, ideals and practices of existing sports" (p. 175). Similar to the alternative sports of ultimate frisbee, skateboarding, snowboarding, windsurfing, climbing, and adventure racing, the ideal hegemonic masculine version of a mountain biker exists in many contexts along with a pervasive and systematic acceptance of the patriarchal gender hierarchy.

The taken-for-grantedness of the patriarchal gender hierarchy in the mountain bike community results from masculinities reflecting the cultural values and social norms of this community (Grindstaff & West, 2011). The acceptance of these values and norms and therefore problematic masculinizing practices take place as many people in a culture do not see another alternative (Keddie, Mills, & Mills, 2008). The mountain bike community of Nova Scotia revealed a masculine gender hierarchy with hegemonic masculinity being the most valorized and accepted ideal. The accounts provided by the participants of this study help to explain practices that sustain the pervasive and systematic acceptance of the patriarchal gender hierarchy and why so many men and some women are willing to maintain it.

The masculinizing practices within this mountain bike culture may appear to be all-pervasive; however, some participant narratives have also shown a concerted effort to

resist the masculine gender hierarchy by engaging in alternative practices that challenge the hegemonic version of masculinity. Unlike many of the previous studies (e.g., Robinson, 2004; Thornton, 2004; Wheaton, 2004) which concluded that traditional/dominant notions of gender roles, identity, and power may not be challenged but rather re-invented in alternative sports, select participant narratives in this study describe practices of men and women mountain bikers that are concerned with creating a new subculture that is all-inclusive and egalitarian. In many instances the challenges to hegemonic masculinity and the problematic masculinizing practices associated with the maintenance of the masculine gender hierarchy are conscious and deliberate. Narratives of men mountain bikers who challenge the idealized hegemonic version of masculinity provide descriptions of "doing gender" differently by allowing for fun and inclusivity.

With mountain biking being a sport that, in some contexts, is characterized by fun and inclusivity, it contrasts with traditional mainstream sports. This contrast brings us back to the debate around the meaning and labelling of mountain biking as an alternative sport. In some contexts, particularly in institutionalized race settings, mountain biking aligns with the values of mainstream sports as it is characterized by hegemonic masculinity practices associated with competition. When mountain biking spaces allow for fun and inclusivity, they provide an alternative to mainstream sports values thereby fitting Wheaton's (2004) definition of an alternative sport. Due to this fluidity in sport values and ideology as a result of context, mountain biking must be seen as both a mainstream and an alternative sport. Sisjord (2009) does note that the development of fragmented and plural styles of a sport provides contexts in which male domination is diminished and values consistent with an alternative sport emerge. This study confirms

Sisjord's notion as practices of masculinity have emerged in mountain biking that allow for inclusivity with the establishment of multiple styles, women only spaces, and family-oriented spaces. These practices have resulted in a fractured or diversified community.

The splintering of the mountain biking community in Nova Scotia through practices that either sustain or challenge the patriarchal gender order is a unique aspect of this sport that has not been described in other studies of alternative sports. The alternative masculine practices of some men mountain bikers are unique as they are a direct effort to be all-inclusive and thus challenge the pervasiveness of the patriarchal gender hierarchy. Unlike the men adventure racers in one study (Kay & Laberge, 2004) who praised the more feminine attributes of the sport while engaging in practices that maintained the notion of women being weak, some men mountain bikers in Nova Scotia are actively working towards making this alternative sport less androcentric and more inviting to women. They are not just talking the talk; they are walking the walk by "doing gender" differently.

The fracturing of the mountain biking community in Nova Scotia has also resulted in relatively safe forms of the sport being practiced. Robinson (2008) describes the complexities and diversities of sporting masculinities in the alternative sport of rock climbing. She found that traditional characteristics of competitiveness and aggressiveness can be altered with subgroups experiencing differences in gendered risk. Like the rock climbers in Robinson's study, mountain bikers in Nova Scotia are splintered into subgroups consisting of both men and women and diverse ways of doing and enjoying the sport. With this diversity of mountain biking practices, this sport can no longer be considered an "extreme" sport in which all practitioners are engaging in high risk

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activities. Indeed, Kay's (2005) concerns with the cost of promoting "extreme" sports (noted in Chapter 1) can be alleviated with the findings of this study. Alternative practices of masculinity by mountain bikers in Nova Scotia has led to subgroups who value friendship and having fun over taking undue risks.

This study has revealed the various mountain biking contexts and gendered practices that sustain hegemonic masculinity and the patriarchal gender order and those that challenge it. Understanding the contextual nature of gender performance is essential in helping mountain biking become a sport that can be enjoyed safely by as many Canadians as possible. By understanding the contexts of mountain biking in which social practices and processes produce gendered performances, the complex gendered culture of this sport is revealed. In some contexts of mountain biking, hegemonic masculine performances are acceptable and expected. In other contexts, alternative performances of masculinity prevail. An investment into shifting this gendered culture away from long-established masculine hegemony associated with sport in general is needed to achieve long-term sustained change.

6.1 THE CONTEXTS OF SOCIAL PROCESSES MAINTAINING HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY

The narratives of the participants of this study described a culture in which many members are wholly concerned with masculine traits and masculine hegemony. These narratives influenced my conception of an ideal mountain biker in that prior to this study, I did not see the extent to which masculine gender practices are a part of what is valued by many mountain bikers. The practices of men mountain bikers to achieve what they perceive to be the ideal mountain biker were characterized by competition, one-up-

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manship, and displays of strength, endurance, and ability. In their quest to measure up to the idealized hegemonic masculine mountain biker, the practices of men riders resulted in widespread social and cultural effects. Indeed, the embodiment of hegemonic masculine practices by men mountain bikers situated women and other men in marginalized and subordinate positions within this community, while at the same time putting themselves at risk of injury. It is interesting to note that in many cases the gender practices sustaining hegemonic masculinity and the masculine hierarchy of the mountain biking culture were not apparent to the men participants of this study. These men described their own and other men mountain bikers' behaviours in a manner that lacked conscious recognition that their practices were gendered as well as problematic. The pervasiveness of masculine practices provides insight into the "unreflective routinized actions" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 842) that reflect dominant ideologies of gender that are a part of the mountain bike culture.

The notion that many men mountain bikers do not consciously intend to act masculine and easily accept problematic masculine practices explains, in part, why so many men contribute to the maintenance of the patriarchal gender hierarchy in this community. All men, even those who do not subscribe to hegemonic masculinity (i.e., those who are complicit) benefit from the patriarchal dividend by virtue of being men. The unconscious realization of the patriarchal dividend ensures their status within the gender hierarchy and enables them to avoid being marginalized within this community. This collective acceptance by many men mountain bikers of the practices that maintain the gender hierarchy reveals a taken-for-grantedness whereby many men do not see an alternative to these gendered practices, nor the need to act any differently.

That men benefit from the patriarchal dividend provides an explanation for the normative nature of mountain bikers' gender practices that maintain hegemonic masculinity and the gender order. The narratives of the participants also reveal the contexts in which there is a strong contribution to the maintenance of the patriarchal gender hierarchy in the mountain biking community. It is not surprising that the practices that help men measure up to the idealized mountain biker take place in a competitive setting. In particular, the institutionalized race setting produces the greatest pressure for men racers to demonstrate hegemonic masculinity. In this context, the top male biker needs to prove that he is the strongest, most skilled, and willing to do whatever it takes to win the race. As with other sports, mountain biking and in particular mountain bike racing, illustrate that sport is one of the central sites for the social production of hegemonic masculinity and the maintenance of the gender hierarchy.

The idealized masculine hegemonic version of a mountain biker which dominates competitive racing contributes to problematic masculinizing practices that are a part of sport culture. Men mountain bike racers actively take part in gendered practices to demonstrate superiority and produce inequality and these practices reflect the three social processes men use to marginalize women in many different sports (Bryson, 1994). Firstly, men mountain bike racers engage in practices to directly control the sport of mountain biking. Excluding and limiting women's participation in mountain bike racing is accomplished by men through decisions/practices that reduce the number of women's racing categories and prize amounts. By limiting the number of categories for women and allocating lower prize amounts, men implicitly control the number of women wanting to race in Nova Scotia. Fewer race categories force women to race distances that are too

long or too short and thus discourage them from racing at all. Awarding women lesser valued prizes also discourages women from racing as they realize that the mountain bike race culture does not value women racers as much as men racers.

Secondly, men's practices of ignoring and trivializing women's races enable them to benefit from the patriarchal dividend. Narratives recounted in this study confirmed that men mountain bikers engage in many practices that disrespect and minimize the abilities of women mountain bikers. Practices such as ignoring women at races and recognizing only the "top" woman racer discourages other women who race, as well as women who are contemplating racing. Additionally, antagonizing women racers by comparing their abilities with other women racers' abilities and undermining their confidence discourages them from participating. Also, by marginalizing men who fail at demonstrating hegemonic masculinity by being bested by a woman, men mountain bikers maintain their dominant status in the gender order by under-valuing women's riding abilities.

The third social process that men mountain bikers use to marginalize women is to define mountain biking, and in particular mountain bike racing, as something that is done more appropriately by men. A mountain biker strives to measure up to the hegemonic masculine ideal characterized by high risk practices and demonstrations of strength, toughness, and aggressiveness. For women, this ideal is unachievable as men control women's access to this sport and under-value their abilities. Defining mountain biking as a sport for women threatens the gender hierarchy and the patriarchal dividend afforded men. Maintaining the notion that mountain bike racing is a 'manly' sport contributes to the marginalization of women.

This study, similar to other studies of sport and gender (e.g., Beal & Wilson 2004; Booth, 2001, 2004; Kay & Laberge, 2004; Kelly, Pomerantz, & Curry, 2005; Olive, McQuaid & Phillips, 2015; Robinson, 2004, 2008; Russell & Lemon, 2012; Thompson, 2004; Thorpe, 2005; Waitt & Warren, 2008; Wheaton, 2004; Young, 2004) described how the actions of many of the men racers demonstrate a strong need to maintain a traditional patriarchal gender order. This study also provides insight as to how women's practices maintain the patriarchal gender hierarchy in a sporting community. In the context of racing, there are instances of women not supporting other women racers by speaking disparagingly of them, with the top woman racer often being the one who is belittled. Such practices undermine the abilities of other women racers. Furthermore, some women who excel at racing separate themselves from other women racers by placing themselves in the men's race categories. This practice does not help to resolve the gender inequity issues regarding the women's races (e.g., women having the same number of race categories as the men) that originate at the organization level. These practices, which stem from the fear of losing the coveted spot of being the top female racer who is recognized and admired by some men, result in some women quitting the sport and do little to make it attractive to other potential participants. The practices of women mountain bikers reveal that by aligning with men, women can garner some status in the racing context; however, these practices reinforce the dominance of men over women and help to maintain the masculine gender order of the mountain biking community.

This study further reveals that the more organized mountain biking is (i.e., institutionalized), the more the sport becomes a masculine domain. As with other studies

that illustrate the gendered nature of sport in general, efforts that maintain masculine hegemony appear to be more prominent in the more institutionalized areas including mountain biking racing. This study further revealed that recreational aspects of the sport can also result in problematic masculinizing practices. This study provides insight into the role that competition plays in the recreational setting in maintaining a masculine gender order. Although there is no formal race setting, it is in the context of competition that women and some men who mountain bike recreationally are marginalized. Men mountain bikers who ride recreationally are not immune to the pressure to demonstrate hegemonic masculinity thus some men compete to be an ideal mountain biker. As with the racing setting, participants' narratives demonstrated that some men mountain bikers construct a masculinised culture that values the performance of masculinity by continually proving excellence and one-up-manship. Even though they are riding recreationally, some men compete to maintain their ability and status relative to other men. Men riders' practices of hegemonic masculinity are revealed and include not waiting for women and weaker men on rides. This practice systematically removes those who are not able to measure up to the hegemonic masculine standard. For some men, fear of being emasculated as a result of not riding as well as a woman is reduced by practices of exclusion. These practices that marginalize and alienate women and weaker men perpetuate the gender hierarchy.

This study also revealed that women recreational riders participate in practices that maintain the patriarchal gender order. Women riding recreationally, although not as prominent as women racing, also engaged in practices that discouraged other women from mountain biking. As with racing, such practices can be understood as strategies by

some women to align themselves with men and protect their coveted position of being allowed to ride with the men. By only riding with men and not helping other women to become better riders, women's practices are complicit in supporting hegemonic masculinity and perpetuating patriarchal gender relations.

Another form of complicit femininity practiced by some women mountain bikers perpetuates the assumption that women are weaker and less skilled than men. This was demonstrated by girls' apologetic practices of allowing men to best them when riding, which can be understood as the "internalisation and acceptance of those ideas and structures that tend to subordinate them" (Connolly & Healy, 2004, p. 15). Whether women and girls unknowingly or otherwise allow men to best them, their practices reconcile the tension created if a woman out-performs a man. As Grindstaff and West (2011) note, "gender relations are inevitably arenas of tension" (p. 876). Furthermore, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) state that a "given pattern of hegemonic masculinity is only hegemonic to the extent that it provides a solution to these tensions." (p. 853). In surfing culture, women's practices of gender are reflective of both femininities and masculinities, yet they often resolve tension with men surfers by accommodating their interests and desires by practicing complicit femininities (Waitt, 2008). Similarly, practices of complicit femininities demonstrated by some women mountain bikers maintain the cultural norms of hegemonic masculinity within this community thereby reducing tensions in the gendered relations between women and men.

The inherent desire/need to compete to be an ideal mountain biker in both the racing and recreational settings of mountain biking helps to explain gendered practices that privilege some men participants of this sport while marginalizing other men and

women. The context of competition also provides insight into the role of gender and men and women's practices of risk taking. To measure up to the idealized hegemonic masculine version of a mountain biker, men prove their strength and willingness to do whatever it takes to win the coveted position of best mountain biker. Constantly competing to one-up each other leads to men also engaging in problematic masculinizing practices that put them at greater risk of injury. The process of social embodiment (Connell, 2002) is demonstrated by men mountain bikers whose bodies are both objects and agents of social practice that engage in risky stunts. This pattern of social embodiment involved in gender construction is continuous in maintaining and defining the masculine hierarchy. In order to achieve greater skill and thus greater status, men mountain bikers compete with each other and find ways to put their bodies at greater and greater risk. In so doing, they confirm Young and White's (2000) findings that physical risk among men and boys is naturalized, promoted, and celebrated in the process of sport-related masculinisation. Through their acceptance of risk and tolerance of pain, men also conform to Sabo's (2004) "pain principle". By conforming to this principle, men mountain bikers risk their long-term health and thus are constrained by hegemonic masculinity. Men mountain bikers who subscribe to the pain principle may lose status in the gender hierarchy if they are injured and no longer able to mountain bike. However, if they do not subscribe to the pain principle by taking fewer chances, they risk losing status by not measuring up to the idealized hegemonic masculine version of a mountain biker. The patriarchal dividend eludes these men as they become less privileged in this mountain bike culture. They are not seen as great mountain bikers and therefore lose the benefits (e.g., accolades, sponsorship) of being considered an ideal mountain biker.

The practice of engaging in high risk behaviours is also detrimental to some women mountain bikers as the narratives of women participants also indicated that some women take risks and conform to the pain principle. By engaging in risky practices, women can gain recognition from some men for their riding abilities. In an attempt to be accepted into the masculine domain of the mountain bike culture in Nova Scotia, women mountain bikers engage in practices that knowingly or unknowingly perpetuate "a male-defined sports process replete with its violent, macho, and health-compromising aspects" (Young & White, 1995, p. 45).

Men and women mountain bikers' acceptance of the need to engage in high risk practices as a way to gain status in the masculine gender hierarchy compromises the ability of many people to enjoy this sport safely. It is unfortunate that mountain biking is similar to other sports in that its "emancipatory potential is significantly limited by its current structures and values in particular and by patriarchal ideology more generally" (Young & White, 1995, p. 55). Indeed, as Young and White (1995) suggest, changing the masculinist values that characterize the mountain biking community is a "protracted struggle" (p. 55).

6.2 THE CONTEXTS OF SOCIAL PROCESSES CHALLENGING THE MASCULINE GENDER HIERARCHY

The gender hierarchy of mountain biking in Nova Scotia is characterized by an idealized hegemonic version of masculinity and problematic masculinizing practices that marginalize women and some men and valorize high risk practices. The socio-cultural investment in this idealized version and its associated practices is maintained through the normative nature constituting hegemonic masculinity. The idealized hegemonic

masculine version of a mountain biker is the most legitimate, protected, and accepted version and therefore it does take a "protracted struggle" to upset and challenge the patriarchal ideology associated with it (Young & White, 1995, p. 55). Connell (2012) agrees that challenging hegemonic masculinity and the masculine gender hierarchy is not "uncomplicated" and notes that "gender is not a fixed system, but a complex, historically changing and tension-ridden structure of relationships, always open to change" (p. 178). Keddie, Mills, and Mills (2008) add that "it is these struggles to redress gender injustice through problematising restrictive gender identities that may lead to the transformation of inequitable gender relations" (p. 204).

The experiences and insights of women mountain bikers offer a critical review of the taken-for-granted nature of problematic masculinizing practices. In challenging the hierarchical gender relationship, women mountain bikers' practices of making spaces for themselves suggests that they are aware of the cultural values and social norms that maintain the masculine gender hierarchy. Similar to women surfers in Brazil who did their "own thing" in their "own space" (Knijnik, Horton, & Cruz, 2010, p. 1180) and young women skateboarders in Vancouver who "carved out a space for girls where none used to exist" (Pomerantz, Currie, & Kelley, 2004, p. 552), women mountain bikers in Nova Scotia created their own spaces where they dominated the context and culture of their sport. Narratives of women mountain bikers creating women only rides were recounted. These rides provide greater opportunities for women and girls to be involved in mountain biking and allow them to choose their manner of riding. Most importantly, practices of complicit femininities are not demonstrated in women-only rides, thereby challenging hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal gender relations. As suggested by

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Caudwell (2006), the complex nature of gender and the range of femininities practiced by women riders disturbs the gender norms that characterize sporting spaces. It is through women's struggles to resist gender inequality that they problematise restrictive gender practices and challenge the patriarchal gender order. Similar to women rugby participants in Broad's (2001) study and women basketball players studied by Enke (2005), women mountain bikers challenged the dominant gender norms and were unapologetic in rejecting gender ideals. The creation of their own spaces and their practice of riding in whatever manner they choose, illustrates what Broad (2001) would consider to be gender-transgressive environments.

By creating their own spaces, women mountain bikers help to overcome "unreflective routinized actions" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 842) that work to create and sustain an idealized hegemonic masculine version of a mountain biker. However, the narratives of the women mountain bikers in this study also revealed their awareness of more inclusive alternative gender practices of men mountain bikers and the importance of men "doing gender" differently. These women mountain bikers recognized that in some contexts, the gender practices of men did not legitimize a masculine gender hierarchy. Indeed, this study reveals the emergence of an alternative masculinity practiced by some men mountain bikers that allowed for inclusivity. Studies of other alternative sports including adventure racing (Kay & Laberge, 2004), climbing (Robinson, 2004, 2008), ultimate frisbee (Crocket, 2013; Thornton, 2004), surfing (Booth, 2001, 2004; Waitt & Warren, 2008) and windsurfing (Wheaton, 2004) found diverse examples of masculinities, however the practices of the men in these sports gave no meaningful challenge to the traditional hegemonic form of masculinity. This study is

unique in that it demonstrates that men involved in an alternative sport can indeed recognize the need for "doing gender" differently by not subscribing to the hegemonic ideal and actively working to overcome problematic masculinizing practices that sustain this ideal. Men who practiced this inclusive form of masculinity promoted the notion that rides were not about competing with each other and they rode alongside men and women riding companions. Like the women only rides, when men were practicing this alternative form of masculinity, bikers were able to ride freely at their own pace and in their own manner. In the context of men mountain bikers practising an alternative form of masculinity, the gendered culture of mountain biking shifted from one focused on competition and demonstrations of hegemonic masculinity that maintained a patriarchal gender order to a culture characterized by inclusivity and fun.

As masculinity is socially constructed and contextual, multiple versions can be practiced. In addition to the finding that some men mountain bikers practice an alternative masculinity that directly challenges the marginalization of women and some men, this study also revealed the contexts within which this was likely to occur. Narratives of both women and men mountain bikers described recreational and short track racing contexts as those in which men mountain bikers performed an alternative masculinity that downplayed competition and allowed for fun and inclusivity. As previously described, the idealized masculine hegemonic version of a mountain biker was found to take prominence in the context of competitive racing which raises the question whether challenges to the masculine gender hierarchy can be made during competition. If this is the case, can meaningful challenge only take place in a narrow biking context such as recreational riding? Indeed, many of the narratives describing men practicing an

alternative version of masculinity that focused on inclusivity involved recreational riding settings. However, there were instances of including women, children and less skilled riders in the competitive setting of short track races. The young mountain biker, Bart, provided rich descriptions of his friends and himself wholeheartedly enjoying and helping women, children, and much older riders get involved in short track races. Competition is not a focus for these riders, rather having fun, involving others and practicing and building skill are in this race context.

Bart and his young friends demonstrate another contextual determinant of masculinity practices. Although there are instances where young men mountain bikers subscribe to a hegemonic masculine ideal, these younger riders are also more likely than older men to demonstrate a more inclusive, less competitive version of masculinity. In the context of racing, Bart wants to measure up to the idealized version by showing his strength, courage, and willingness to engage in risky practices; however, he does not subscribe to practices of exclusion. This situation may be related, in part, to Bart and other younger men being involved in mountain biking in the context of riding with women and family more often than some older men riders. For them, the normative situation of men riding with mothers and sisters for enjoyment allows them to perform alternative masculinities without thinking that they are jeopardizing their status in the gendered culture of mountain biking.

Other bikers with whom a man is riding provides another context for practices of alternative masculinities. As already noted, when Bart rides with women and family he practices an inclusive form of masculinity. However, when Bart rides with men only, he continues to work towards being a better rider and competes to demonstrate his skill and

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superior status relative to other men. For men, riding with men results in them subscribing to problematic masculinizing practices that maintain the patriarchal gender order. Men who welcome or seek out opportunities to ride with women and children are relieved of the pressure to measure up to the hegemonic masculine ideal and they can practice an alternative version of masculinity that allows for inclusion and a focus on fun.

Finally, newer contexts of mountain biking have created spaces for men to engage in alternative non-hegemonic practices of masculinity. Wheaton (2004) includes the fragmentation and diversification of the culture as a defining feature of lifestyle (alternative) sports. Indeed this feature can lead to a "pluralization of styles" (Wheaton, 2004, p. 21) as was seen in the US skating (skateboarding) culture in a study by Beal and Wilson (2004). Similarly, Waitt and Clifton found (2013) that gendered hierarchies in surfing culture "simultaneously shape, and are shaped by space" (p. 489), and that space also included various surfing styles. Like the distinctions between skating and surfing styles, the development of new mountain bike styles (e.g., free riding) and changes in some established styles (e.g., downhill now including gap jumps and large drops) reveals how diversification provides for multiple contexts for performances of masculinity. As with the riskiest style of skateboarding (i.e., street skating), the riskier styles of mountain biking (i.e., free riding and downhill) are associated with hegemonic masculinity and the promotion of risk taking and competition as a basis for achieving status in the patriarchal gender order. The less risky style of cross country mountain biking allows for alternative masculine practices that are more inclusive and focus on enjoyment in riding and socialization opportunities.

The diversification of mountain bike riding styles has opened up new contexts for the performance of alternative versions of masculinity and thus this sport has seen a change in participation demographics. Participants in this study provided narratives of mountain biking becoming a more family-oriented sport. These narratives described the importance of mothers being involved in mountain biking and the role they play in challenging the notion that mountain biking is a sport for men and boys only. Indeed, mothers and women in general as role models, are instrumental in seeing the sport open up to those previously marginalized. Croxon (2013) says it best by stating, "You can't be what you can't see" (p. 353). This study found that the situation of mountain biking becoming more family oriented created a challenge to the pervasiveness of gender inequality within the sport.

This change in mountain biking was described by participants as a cultural shift. The challenges posed by women, mothers, families, and some men have resulted in new contexts for alternative masculine practices. The sport of mountain biking in Nova Scotia appears to be evolving; however, one has to question whether the change in practices is signifying a true cultural shift within this sport or simply, for the time being, the emergence of a new subculture. Examples of greater inclusion have been explored; however, the narratives recounted in Chapter 4 provide evidence that the ideal hegemonic masculine version of a mountain biker still exists in many contexts as does a pervasive and systemic acceptance of the patriarchal gender hierarchy of this culture. One observation is that the mountain biking culture of Nova Scotia is fragmented into subcultures and the gendered practices of each subculture can be placed along a continuum. At one extreme highly competitive participants actively demonstrate

hegemonic masculinity. At the other extreme participants are producing alternative versions of masculinity and are developing a welcoming, connected community, as discussed in the next section.

6.3 MOUNTAIN BIKING FOR FUN AND FOR FLOW: TRANSCENDING GENDER PERFORMANCE?

Narratives of men mountain bikers who challenge the idealized hegemonic version of masculinity provided descriptions of "doing gender" differently by allowing for fun and inclusivity. This study found that riding environments free from hegemonic masculine gender performance often developed from the deep friendships experienced by riders who valued inclusiveness, community spirit, and personal satisfaction or a hedonistic experience. A question raised is, how can mountain biking be a welcoming, connected community in all contexts that people practice this sport?

The quest to be an ideal mountain biker results in gendered practices that divide the mountain biking community in Nova Scotia. As noted previously, the most common context where the idealized masculine hegemonic version of a mountain biker was found to take prominence was the competitive setting. Competition by its very nature involves winning and being awarded something as evidence. For men racers, it is also about earning status in the masculine gender hierarchy.

In an attempt to gain excellence many men compete with each other as a way of evaluating improvements in their riding abilities. Through a comparison with other riders, excellence is determined in an extrinsic manner. The extrinsic goal of besting other men riders determines excellence for some and can be labeled as "competing for excellence". Competing for excellence sustains the gender hierarchy as those with higher status

demonstrate the highest level of excellence.

Some of the mountain bikers in this study described striving for personal excellence as their prime reason for mountain biking, and winning was not a necessity. Alison's narrative of her family provides an example of their intrinsic motivation to be excellent. With extrinsic motivation not being a factor in striving for excellence, excellence is determined by comparing one's own past and current performances. Members of Alison's family had the intrinsic goal of improving their personal skills without the need to compare themselves to others. In the pursuit of personal fulfillment, Alison's family members did not want to compete with each other or rank themselves against each other - in Alison's words, "the gender stuff is gone." There is no status (including that in a masculine gender hierarchy) to be gained.

Fun, like striving for personal excellence through intrinsic motivation, is highly individual and non-competitive. It is also subjective and can be spoiled by extrinsic pressure. As a coach I have seen many athletes lose their enjoyment of biking and any motivation to work towards personal excellence when pressured by parents and others to win. Even within recreational riding environments, the goal of striving for excellence is no longer mutually exclusive from the goal of competing to win when others impose the extrinsic pressure of proving worthiness as a mountain biker. With this extrinsic pressure, a rider needs to demonstrate that s/he is an ideal mountain biker by besting other members of the community, not riding for personal enjoyment and excellence. This situation of extrinsic pressure by parents, coaches, and others to compete to win demonstrates the complexity of sporting culture and the historical emphasis on competing and winning.

Removing the need to compete for status in the masculine gender hierarchy lessens problematic masculinizing practices that accompany the need to measure up to the ideal or hegemonic masculine version of a mountain biker. Participant descriptions of mountain biking as a welcoming and connected community that focuses on fun highlighted positive riding environments free from hegemonic masculine performance. A question that remains is, how can mountain biking become a welcoming, connected community in all contexts including recreational as well as competitive riding? If this is to occur, there needs to be a way that mountain bikers can experience fun, personal excellence, and success at the same time. The narratives of mountain bikers describing "flow" in this sport provide promising descriptions of the simultaneous inclusion of all three of these characteristics.

The experience of flow, as described by the mountain bikers in this study, combines fun, personal excellence, and success. If a person attains flow, they are having fun. They can also attain personal excellence and success. Fun and flow result in a welcoming and connected community free from hegemonic masculine gender performance. A description of flow and its fundamental components will further explain how flow transcends the patriarchal gender hierarchy and the practices that sustain it.

Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi is the foremost expert on flow and has developed a theory of "optimal experience" based on the concept. He (1990) defines flow as "the 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 it…for the sheer sake of doing it" (p. 4). Flow is also about focus with a person becoming so totally absorbed in their activity that no other thoughts or emotions enter their mind (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999).

Flow is a special state where mind and body work together effortlessly (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). An important consideration is that flow can be associated with a personal sense of winning (i.e., personal success that transcends winning at something). It "lifts experience from the ordinary to the optimal" whereby one feels truly alive (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, p. 5). Furthermore, flow takes place in a wide range of contexts with sport being a unique place to experience this state of being. By attaining the state of flow while engaged in a sporting activity, the quality of experience is so rewarding that one does that sport to just to be a part of it (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999).

The descriptions of flow by the mountain bikers in this study convey the notion of performing the activity of mountain biking for intrinsic reasons. Whether a mountain biker is taking part in a recreational ride or competing at the highest levels, for most, attaining flow supersedes all other motivations for riding. Flow is the optimal experience that can occur during simple experiences (e.g., a person mountain biking for the first time on a technically easy trail) or exceptional events (e.g., while competing at the Mountain Bike World Championships). Fun or enjoyment is an important component of flow, thus personal intrinsic motivation is all that is necessary for a mountain bikers to get the most out of this sport. A mountain biker's goal should be to attain flow as it not only results in the best experience, but also relieves mountain bikers of the conscious need to compete and measure up to the ideal hegemonic masculine mountain biker. A focus on fun and flow is not compatible with the performance of the problematic masculinizing behaviours of marginalization and extreme risk taking. An examination of the dimensions of flow will explain how a focus on attaining this state offers the possibility for mountain biking

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to be accessible to everyone and as safe as possible for all practitioners.

Currently flow is described as consisting of nine fundamental dimensions that are divided into flow conditions and flow characteristics (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, 2002; Swann, Keegan, Piggott & Crust, 2012). Flow conditions consists of three requirements for flow to be experienced; they include a challenge-skills balance, clear goals, and unambiguous feedback (i.e., feedback that is immediate and clear). Flow characteristics describe what a person experiences during flow; these include action-awareness merging, concentration on the task at hand, a sense of control, a loss of self-consciousness, transformation of time, and an autotelic or intrinsically rewarding experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, 2002).

The sport of mountain biking is safer when flow is achieved because a balance between skill and challenge is necessary. To be in flow, an athlete has to maintain a positive balance between the challenges s/he thinks s/he is encountering and the skills s/he thinks s/he has. The optimal state of flow occurs when the challenge-skills balance is such that the situation an individual faces is challenging but still able to be met while the biker is confident of her/his skills to do so. When challenges are perceived to be higher than one's skill level, anxiety results and flow is unattainable (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Swann, Keegan, Piggott, & Crust, 2012). If the goal of a mountain biker is to achieve flow, her/his challenge-skills balance must be operating. It is this balance that helps mountain biking be a safer sport for participants at all levels. Athletes who progressively increase the complexity of their challenges and skills when their goal is to attain flow will choose the appropriate challenge for their current skill potential (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999).

Other dimensions of flow result in eliminating the problematic masculine practices of maintaining a patriarchal gender hierarchy as they do not leave room for thoughts that sustain hegemonic masculinity. The sense of control dimension stems from the athlete's belief that s/he has the skills to meet the challenge. "The sense of control frees the athlete from fear of failure and creates a feeling of empowerment for the challenging tasks to be executed" (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, p. 26). As well, the loss of self-consciousness further empowers mountain bikers experiencing flow as they are no longer self-concerned and worried about social evaluation (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Mountain bikers who attain flow and thus a sense of control and a loss of self-consciousness, are freed from the fear that they are not measuring up to the hegemonic masculine ideal. They are empowered through flow and have no need to be best thus there is no need to marginalize others or engage in risky behaviours to prove their worth as a mountain biker.

Flow is an exceptional, enjoyable, and intrinsically rewarding experience that can be attained by any mountain bike participant. It reminds us that "ultimately it is how much we enjoy rather than how much we gain or achieve that matters." (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, p. 153). A mountain biker whose objective is to experience flow does not need to gain anything. There is no need to compete, no need to be at the top of the masculine gender hierarchy, and no need to prove anything or measure up to a hegemonic masculine ideal of a mountain biker. By attaining flow on a mountain bike ride, only one activity (i.e., riding the bike) can be deeply focused upon. As a result of this deep focus there is a loss of awareness of time and the world for those experiencing flow. One has to be aware of the social world they are a part of for behaviours and

practices to reflect this world. Gender practices reflect a gendered culture, therefore if one is in a state of not being aware of this culture (i.e., the world around him/her), his/her practices will not be gendered. Flow is an intrinsic performance that transcends everything else including the performance of gender. It is the optimal experience of those who are intrinsically motivated and under certain conditions they will reach this intrinsically rewarding state. The narratives of mountain bikers describing their attainment of flow provide a unique explanation of how more people can be encouraged to take part in a safe alternative sport. When mountain bikers, in practice, adopt the alternative (lifestyle) sport ideology described by Wheaton (2004, p. 11-12) as "a participatory ideology that promotes fun, hedonism, involvement, self-actualization, 'flow', living for the moment, 'adrenalin rushes' and other intrinsic rewards", the mountain bike community becomes a welcoming sport culture that can be enjoyed safely by anyone who wants to participate.

6.4 THE NECESSITY OF FUN AND FLOW IN SPORT POLICY AND SPORT DEVELOPMENT

This study of the alternative sport of mountain biking has revealed the ideology and values that a sporting culture needs to adopt for optimum sport participation. The mountain bike community provided particular insights into processes and practices that overcame marginalization and risk. This information can contribute to efforts that realize the key values of inclusiveness and safety that are the foundation of participation in sport by all (Canadian Sport Policy, 2012). With the renewed Canadian Sport Policy (CSP) specifically calling for inclusiveness and safety to increase the number and diversity of sport participants in Canada (Canadian Sport Policy, 2012), the gendered culture

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described by the participants of this study has provided valuable information to address problematic masculinizing behaviours that perpetuate marginalization and high risk activities.

Transforming hegemonic masculinity is at the heart of all sport being more inclusive and safe. Previous studies have described challenges to the maintenance of a patriarchal gender hierarchy (e.g., Knijnik, Horton, & Cruz, 2010; Pomerantz, Currie, & Kelley, 2004; Wheaton, 2004); however, the findings have not revealed concrete examples of how to transcend the masculine gender order and reduce the problematic masculinizing practices that sustain it. Indeed, the complexity of masculine gender practices, including the taken-for-grantedness of such practices and the realization of the patriarchal dividend by men, guarantees resistance by those men who want to maintain their privileged status. Furthermore, some women also contribute to the complexity of a gendered sport culture by being complicit in maintaining the status quo and their coveted position of being recognized by some men. With this resistance, transforming hegemonic masculinity in sport is an ongoing struggle. Like the many women who fought over the last fifty years to no longer have sport as the "public image of male superiority" in Canada (Greaves & Backhouse, 2013), to effect lasting change, a critical mass of people need to be motivated to change the culture of a sport. This study proposes that the taken-for-granted gendered practices of sport stemming from the notion of competition as conquest need to be replaced with a normative notion of aiming for fun and flow. This ambitious goal of changing the ideology of sport cultures will require "activism, organization, strategy and most of all, passion" (Demers, Greaves, Kirby, & Lay, 2013, p. 371) just as activists in Canada have been doing for the last fifty years to change

"patriarchal and tradition-bound systems in sport" (Demers, Greaves, Kirby, & Lay, 2013, p. 371).

Working towards an all-encompassing sport ideology characterized by every participant being intrinsically motivated to having fun in any context of practice will provide each participant with the needed precursor to achieving an optimal experience. In addition to fun, this sport ideology should include a focus on developing and demonstrating competence as an important antecedent to flow (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Currently in Canada, there are examples of movements that are working towards removing the focus on extrinsic reasons for being in sport (e.g., winning at all costs) and emphasizing intrinsic motivations such as enjoyment and competence. The Canadian Sport for Life Movement (CS4L) is one such movement that has been inspiring activists to work towards a far-reaching cultural change in how sport is led and delivered in Canada. It is encouraging to note that the key feature of the CS4L, Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD), is a developmental pathway that emphasizes fun, physical literacy, excellence, and being active for life. With the CS4L promoting integration between sectors of high performance sport, community sport, recreational physical activity, scholastic sport and physical education in schools, this organizational effort in system alignment will help more sporting contexts in Canada follow LTAD principles that are supportive of athletes attaining optimal sport experiences (Canadian Sport for Life, 2014).

Canadian Sport for Life – Long-Term Athlete Development has been written into Canada's Sport Policy 2012 and this policy therefore supports the LTAD guidelines for optimal performance at all stages of athlete development (Canadian Sport for Life, 2014).

In many ways, LTAD guidelines support the conditions for athletes attaining flow. In particular, the early stages of LTAD focus on two precursors to flow: fun and developing and demonstrating competence in sport. The later stages continue to emphasize competency in sport, as well as introduce competition in progressively greater amounts as an athlete develops and ages. It is in the competitive setting that some would question if attainment of flow is possible. Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi (1999) suggest that competition can be a strong source of motivation that helps maintain focus. Flow requires total concentration on the task at hand to enable an athlete to be completely absorbed and at one with an activity, and not distracted by any thought other than a desire to achieve an optimal experience. Flow is attainable during competition; however, there cannot be any distractions from the process. A negative interpretation of competition, such as winning at all costs, can lessen the importance of the process of flow and render this state unattainable.

As a coach, it is the overemphasis on winning that I have seen destroy the optimal experience of athletes. In particular, pressure from others to win interferes with the enjoyment of the sport, and thus flow and the rewarding experience associated with it cannot be attained. I have seen parents, coaches, and athletes, even though they believe they are following the guidelines of the LTAD, fall prey to a win at all costs philosophy. When interpreting the LTAD, these people lose sight of its goal to change the culture of a sport system from one that is focused on a win-first conception of competition to one that emphasizes fun, physical literacy, excellence, and being active for life. The result is a return to the shortcomings and failures of traditional sport systems. In my experience, a flawed conception of competition where the focus is entirely on victory has always

introduced pressure associated with the need to measure up to an ideal mountain biker - a hegemonic masculine ideal.

Competitive situations where the focus is on dominating opponents and winning at all costs are sites for the production of hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal gender relations. In order for the Canadian Sport Policy to increase the number and diversity of sport participants in Canada through inclusiveness and safety, not only does this policy need to include Canadian Sport for Life – Long-Term Athlete Development, it needs to support a proper interpretation of LTAD guidelines. Some sport organizations, in their interpretation, have removed competitive elements from youth sport programs. For example, Soccer Nova Scotia ensures that no game scores or league standings are maintained until players are eight years old (Soccer Nova Scotia, 2014). These types of practices aim to ensure that harmful conceptions of competition are not introduced to young athletes in preference to a focus on enjoying the sport and building competency. However, regardless of whether a sport organization delays introducing the competitive aspects to young participants, eventually competitive performance becomes a part of the sport for developing athletes. Strategies such as educating coaches, parents, and athletes on the positive forms of competition are therefore needed. An emphasis on working together with competitors to achieve personal excellence, rather than conquering your opponents is an ideological change that can provide athletes with a greater opportunity to achieve flow and an optimal sport experience.

The National Coaching Certification program (NCCP) in Canada provides the opportunity to help sport organizations achieve this ideological change. The LTAD has been adopted by over 65 different National Sport Organizations across Canada through

training provided by the NCCP. As this training is delivered in partnership with the government of Canada, provincial/territorial governments, and national, provincial, and territorial sport organizations, governments and sport organizations could work with the NCCP to provide training to coaches on healthier conceptions of competition as part of the LTAD education. Changing messages imparted by coaches to athletes, parents and their sport organizations has the potential to shift values and sport culture. With sporting organizations working towards teaching members to view competition as working together with each other to improve skills and achieve personal excellence, the goal of transforming hegemonic masculinity to make sport more inclusive and safe will be more readily achieved.

Sporting organizations also need to implement policy to attract and motivate a critical mass of people needed to change the culture of a sport. Creating and implementing equity oriented policies and practices will result in a more diverse group of members including those who want to challenge the patriarchal gender order of their sport and effect a sport cultural shift where inclusiveness and safety are the norm.

The role of government is also important as policy implementation gaps often occur at the sport organizational level (Hylton & Totten, 2013). One such example of an implementation gap is the requirement of provincial sporting organizations (PSOs) in Nova Scotia to have equity policies in place. The provincial government leaves it in the hands of the PSOs to develop and implement their own policies, thus there is no actively monitored universal plan for all PSOs with stated goals to be achieved. If there was an obligation to comply with specific legislation addressing equity within sport organizations, PSOs would be more likely to implement equity policies with specific

goals. Ensuring inclusive policies and practices take place in a sporting organization will contribute to that organization and the sport it represents being much more appealing to a diverse group of people. Being inclusive of women and other marginalized groups will enable a sport organization to develop the sport culture it represents into one that is open and welcoming to all who want to participate.

It was noted previously that to change the culture of a sport, a critical mass of motivated people are needed. The complexity of gender and a gendered sport culture makes transforming hegemonic masculinity so that sport can be more inclusive and safe an enormous and ongoing challenge. In effecting lasting change, it was also noted that changing the ideology of sport cultures requires "activism, organization, strategy and most of all, passion" (Demers, Greaves, Kirby, & Lay, 2013, p. 371). Indeed, passionate people have made activism, organization, and strategy a part of the CS4L movement and the system alignment involved in helping more sporting contexts in Canada follow LTAD principles. Having CS4L-LTAD written into Canada's Sport Policy 2012 provides more support for the LTAD guidelines that are supportive of athletes achieving optimal sport experiences. The challenge has been in operationalizing LTAD guidelines so that they help in attaining CS4L's goal of a far-reaching cultural change in how sport is led and delivered in Canada. Although the LTAD emphasizes fun, physical literacy, excellence, and being active for life, ideology concerning competition needs to be further defined and made clear to those implementing the guidelines. LTAD guidelines need to specifically state that the notion of competition as conquest needs to be eliminated as it provides a site for the production of hegemonic masculinity and the problematic masculinizing practices

that reflect gendered sport cultures. These guidelines need to include comprehensive

instructions on how to implement healthier conceptions of competition.

To include comprehensive instructions on shifting the notion of sport as conquest

to sport being a site for athletes to work together with their competitors to achieve

personal excellence, more research is needed to understand how harmful conceptions of

competition are maintained in sport. This study revealed that unhealthy views of

competition such as winning at all costs and crushing your opponents provide a site for

hegemonic masculinity and the resulting practices of marginalization and risk taking.

Even with challenges by women and men to the gendered culture of mountain biking,

there are those who resist change in the status quo and promote competition as conquest.

More studies are needed to further understand what social conditions help contribute to

the maintenance of the ideology of competition as conquest. Why does society continue

to create narratives of conquering and defeating opponents at all levels of sport? Even the

Olympic Creed adopted by Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic

Games, refutes these narratives and promotes values of giving one's best and striving for

personal excellence (Grasso, Mallons, & Heijmans, 2015). The Olympic Creed states:

> The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just
>
> as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The
>
> essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well. (Grasso, Mallons,
>
> & Heijmans, 2015, p. 421)

More research is needed to examine social institutions that maintain the notion of

sport as conquest. In particular, how and why media often create a narrative of sporting

prowess and conquering opponents should be studied. This narrative is continuously

repeated in many sports and sporting contexts and contributes to unhealthy gendered sport cultures. Furthermore, the effect of technology in helping media communicate this narrative needs to be investigated. The internet has contributed greatly to the far-reaching effect of mass media; however, specific technological developments have seen little research as to their effect on sport ideology. For example, GPS tracking, such as the website and mobile app Strava®, has provided an innovative way for athletes to compete with each other. Not only are geographical routes taken by athletes such as bikers or runners shared among the athletes, Strava® ranks the performances of men and women with top male and female performers being named King and Queen of the Mountain (KOM and QOM). This type of technology provides more opportunities to entrench competition as conquest and demonstrate practices of hegemonic masculinity. Further research in this area will help LTAD guidelines include comprehensive instructions on how to implement healthier conceptions of competition. As well, research on how to change the narrative of sport as conquest delivered by media to a narrative that shows that sport subcultures with diverse practices value ideals such as fun, inclusiveness and playing safe.

The questions remains as to whether this alternative ideology can be achieved. There have been significant efforts in the last fifty years by passionate Canadian activists to change the "patriarchal and tradition-bound systems in sport"; however, these activists recognize that there is still much work to be done (Demers, Greaves, Kirby, & Lay, 2013, p. 371). Along with activism, organization, strategy and passion, financial resources are necessary for change and a "collective ideology to emerge" (Demers, Greaves, Kirby, & Lay, 2013, p. 116). Currently there is a systemic disconnect with sport funding structures

in Canada. In many instances there is a focus on supporting high performance sport financially more so than grass roots development. Own the Podium (OTP) is an example of a program that only supports high performance sport and places an emphasis on extrinsic rewards for sport involvement (Own the Podium, 2015a). Since its launch in 2005, there has been a persistent focus on winning medals (i.e., OTP's Mission is to increase podium performances at the Olympics and Paralympics) by supporting only the excellence area of the LTAD model. Own the Podium makes recommendations to national funding parties on the amount of resources allocated to potential Olympic and Paralympic teams and athletes (Own the Podium, 2015a) thus a very limited number of sport participants in Canada receive funding from this source. By recommending over 57 million dollars be allocated to high performance sport for 2015-2016 (Own the Podium, 2015b; Own the Podium, 2015c), OTP continues to send the message that the external reward of winning medals is the only goal for sport participants. Indeed, Cycling Canada echoes this message by allocating all but $4,000 (which went to a safe cycling program) of their $6.5 million budget for 2014-15, including $3,248,800 from OTP and $1,284,500 from Sport Canada, to support high performance cycling (Cycling Canada, 2014). This funding does not support the basic tenets of Sport for Life and the LTAD model.

The splintering of sports such as mountain biking remains. At one extreme highly competitive participants actively work to maintain hegemonic masculinity and a patriarchal gender order. Realistically, hegemonic masculinity with its problematic masculinizing practices will be a part of sport cultures for many more years to come. However, the fracturing of mountain biking into a subculture where participants are producing alternative versions of masculinity and developing a welcoming, connected

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community provides hope for change. Mountain bikers in this study described deep friendships with each other that fostered this welcoming, connected community. It is this "sense of community" that is essential for maintaining these healthier subcultures (Kellett & Warner, 2011) and factors that contribute to the SOC among mountain bikers should be explored further.

An understanding of the sense of community among mountain bikers will also be beneficial in developing policy aimed at investing in the sport of mountain biking. Gilchrist and Wheaton (2011) note the importance of ensuring participants of alternative sports have control over how their activities are incorporated into policy-led models. In a recent study of youth mountain bikers, King and Church (2015) found that the culture and ethos of the youth mountain biking community affected their desire to engage in a state-funded initiative that provided facilities for mountain biking. However, when provided with a sense of ownership, youth mountain bikers demonstrated "the agency and commitment…to managing and developing spaces for the benefit of their sport" (p. 297). Government involvement in developing infrastructure for growing the sport of mountain biking is essential; however, the results of King and Church's study provides evidence of the need for understanding the mountain bike community in order for investments into developing mountain biking to be successful. Furthermore, Hardiman and Burgin (2013) have shown that the widening diversity of mountain bikers seeking different experiences requires collaboration among all stakeholders to successfully attract new users into the sport and make it more accessible to women, older people, families, and organizations such as schools (p. 976).

Hope is also found within young sport practitioners. Bart was a unique participant

in this study as he offered an example of what an alternative ideology of sport can look like. Bart's inclination towards performing an alternative masculinity that focused on fun and inclusiveness more so than performing hegemonic masculinity, provides evidence of a shift in ideology. This shift is towards an all-encompassing sport ideology with the aim of every participant achieving an optimal experience. If Bart represents other young people, the future of sport may be moving in a positive direction where new spaces open up as a result of focusing on fun and flow. If sport competition can be redefined for and by young people, a far-reaching cultural shift can be attained. With more people focused on enjoying sport for itself (i.e., flow) rather than it being a site for competition as conquest and hegemonic masculinity, this cultural shift will see all sport become more inclusive and safe.

We are in and of the world, and as pointed out by phenomenologists, not necessarily conscious of our practices and the worlds we inhabit. We are often not aware of how are practices are gendered and thus mountain bikers are generally of their gendered performances. Flow transcends these gendered performances and captures the pure joy of just being. Being one with the bike, letting go of any conscious thoughts of needing to measure up and competing with others. It is solely focused on the self and not the self in relation to other people or other considerations. Flow is the ultimate hedonistic achievement.

The quote by Bikergrl, at the beginning of Chapter 1, captures the importance of flow for reducing the complexity of the gendered culture of mountain biking and uniting the members of this community:

"Flow. The flow of a good piece of singletrack. Social flow, sometimes

lubricated with tasty bevvies. Spiritual flow that allows one to merge in

a meaningful way with the natural surroundings. Mental flow that encourages

the release of tension and negativity. Bodily flow, where you, the bike, and

the ground interact as a single unit. The shared appreciation of flow is mountain

bike culture. Simple." (Bikergrl, 2011)

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(PLEASE NOTE: The final copy was on Dalhousie University letterhead)

RESEARCH STUDY

The culture of an alternative sport: Exploring the experiences and practices of Nova Scotian mountain bikers

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Mountain Biker Volunteers Needed!!

Are you 16 years old or older? Live in Nova Scotia?
Identify as being a mountain biker who bikes off-road? Have
mountain biked regularly for at least 2 years? Are a recreational
rider who may or may not have competed in mountain biking?

If so, you are eligible to participate in a research study exploring
the experiences and practices of mountain bikers living in Nova
Scotia.

Please contact the researcher, Sherry: Huybers-Withers, if you are
interested in learning more about this study:

Sherry: Huybers-Withers
902-752-5740
(collect calls will be accepted)
shuybers@dal.ca

Screening Interview

Name of Possible Participant: Phone Number: Email:

Hello (name of potential participant). This is Sherry: Huybers of the School of Health and Human Performance at Dalhousie University. I am a PhD candidate conducting a study that is examining the experiences and practices of mountain bikers in Nova Scotia. You have indicated that you may want to take part in this study as a participant. Is that correct?

Since you may want to be a participant I will give you some information as to what is involved in being a participant. I will be doing a one-on-one confidential interview with you that will take between 1 and 2 hours to complete. I will be asking you questions about your mountain biking activities and experiences. For example, I may ask you to describe what a mountain biker is. I may also want to follow-up with you after the interview. There is a limited risk of any harm by taking part in this study. The potential harm may include you being uncomfortable talking about some of your experiences. This interview will be audio-taped, therefore if you do not wish to be audio-taped, I cannot include you in the study. Are you still interested in taking part in this study?

Since you are still interested, I would like to ask you a few questions right now regarding some basic demographic information and some basic questions about how long and how often you have been mountain biking. The purpose of these questions is to determine who is eligible to participate in the study. There may be more participants eligible than is needed for the study. If this happens, I will randomly select participants therefore not everyone will be included in the study even though I would like to talk to everyone. Would it be all right to ask you these questions? Please remember that you do not have to answer any question you do not feel comfortable answering. You can also end this conversation at any time. I will now ask you the questions.

What is your age? _____
Where do you live? _____
How long have you been riding?_____
How often do you ride? _____
How do you ride? Recreationally, competitively or both?_____
Are you comfortable being audio-taped?_____

Those are all the questions I will be asking you. Are you still interested in taking part in this study? Since you are still interested in taking part, I will add your name to my list of potential participants and will call you within the next 2 weeks to let you know if you have been selected and if so, to set up an appointment time for the interview. Thank you (name of potential participant) for your interest in this study.

Interview Guide

1. Could you please tell me a little about yourself?

   Probes
   a. What else do you do other than mountain biking.

2. Can you tell me how you got started in mountain biking?

   Probes
   a. What drew you to this sport?

   b. Did someone introduce you to it?

3. Can you tell me about a day that you had a really good ride?

   Probes
   a. What made the ride so good?

   b. What words would you use to describe this ride?

4. Can you tell me about a day that you had a bad ride?

   Probes
   a. Did you keep on riding?

   b. What would keep you riding?

   c. What would make you stop riding?

    d. Can you tell me about any injuries you have experienced or others have experienced?

5. Tell me about your bike and biking gear?

   Probes
    a. What kind of bike do you ride and like best?

    b. Tell me about the bike gear you wear while riding?

    c. How important is your bike and the gear you wear?

6. Who are the mountain bikers that you admire?

   Probes
    a. Why do you admire them?

    b. What would make you not admire a mountain biker?

    c. What kind of mountain biker do you like to ride with?

7. If you were conducting this interview what would you ask?

   Probes
    a. Is there anything else about mountain biking that you think we should talk about?

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Inspiring Minds

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Examining the culture of an alternative sport: Exploring the experiences and practices of Nova Scotian mountain bikers

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Sherry: Huybers-Withers, PhD (Candidate)
Interdisciplinary PhD Programme
School of Health and Human Performance
Dalhousie University
6230 South Street
Halifax, NS B3H 1T8

Ph: (902) 494-2152
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RESEARCH SUPERVISOR:

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Division of Medical Education
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Halifax, NS B3H 4R2

Ph: (902) 494-6307
Fax: (902) 494-2278
Email: Joan.Evans@Dal.Ca

INTRODUCTION

We invite you to take part in a research study being conducted by Sherry: Huybers-Withers, a doctoral candidate in the Interdisciplinary PhD program at Dalhousie University. Dr. Joan Evans, a Professor in the Division of Medical Education at Dalhousie University, is the supervisor of this research. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. You are being asked to take part in a face-to-face interview as well as follow-up contact which may include a second face-to-face interview, phone interview, or email interview. The study is described below and information is provided about the potential risks and discomforts that you might experience. You should discuss any questions or concerns that you have with Sherry: Huybers-Withers, the principal investigator.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences and practices of men and women mountain bikers living in Nova Scotia with the aim of better understanding the culture of mountain biking.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

You are eligible to participate in this study if you are you 16 years old or older, live in Nova Scotia, and consider yourself to be a mountain biker.

STUDY DESIGN

This research study is a qualitative project that uses interviews to gather an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and practices. This study is aimed at investigating the lived experiences of Nova Scotian mountain bikers and what it means to be an ideal mountain biker. It is anticipated that approximately 10-15 Nova Scotian mountain bikers will participate in this study. In general, participants will be asked to describe their mountain biking experiences, and what practices they undertake to be a mountain biker. Once the interviews have taken place, the data will be typed out word-for-word and analyzed by the researcher. The analysis will be focused on the stories provided by the participants in order to provide a rich and thick description of mountain biking and mountain biking practices The results of this study will seek to inform future participation and injury prevention programs and policies in Nova Scotia and elsewhere.

WHO WILL BE CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

Sherry: Huybers-Withers is the Principal Investigator for this study. A thesis committee will oversee and guide the research process, and consists of research supervisor Dr. Joan Evans, in the Division of Medical Education at Dalhousie University, Dr. Lori Livingston of the Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences at Lakehead University and Dr. Laurene Rehman in the School of Health and Human Performance at Dalhousie University. The Principal Investigator will conduct the interviews, analyze the data, and write research reports (including a thesis).

WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO

As the interview will need to be audio-recorded and transcribed, consenting to be audio-recorded during your interviews is required for participation. However, at any time during

the interview, you may request that the audio-recorder be turned off and, if you wish, all data collected during the interview, including hand-written notes and the audio recording will be destroyed. The individual interview will last approximately 60-120 minutes, and will explore questions regarding your experiences and practices of mountain biking in Nova Scotia. At the completion of the interview you will be asked to provide consent for direct quotations from your interview to be used. You are not required to allow the use of direct quotes however, should you give permission all personally identifying information will be removed from the quote and you will not be identified. You will also be provided with an opportunity to identify any information that you disclosed which you do not permit to be directly quoted.

POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

It is possible that you may become emotionally or psychologically distressed as a result of participating in this study. Talking about your experiences and practices of mountain biking may be uncomfortable. Given this, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. Should you become distressed following the interview the interviewer can arrange for support services to be accessed if the participant deems appropriate. If at any time you feel upset and would like to take a break from the interview, please inform the interviewer.

WITHDRAWAL FROM THE STUDY

There is no pressure to complete the interview and it can be ended at any time at your request. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and should you decide to not to answer any question(s), or end the interview, you may do so without question or consequence. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all data including the audio recording and any hand-written notes will be destroyed.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS

It is unlikely that you will directly benefit from participating in this study. You may experience a positive outcome from having the opportunity to discuss your experiences and practices of mountain biking with a fellow mountain biker. Your participation may benefit others as the information you provide may help to create new knowledge about the experiences and practices of mountain biking. This knowledge may be used to assist in participation and injury prevention strategies, policies and programs.

COMPENSATION/REIMBURSEMENT

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY & ANONYMITY

Full anonymity in this study is not possible as the principal researcher will know who you are. Measures will be taken to ensure that you will not be identifiable to others as a participant in this study. Your name will not be used in any transcripts or reports, including when direct quotations are used. Your name will be replaced by a pseudonym and other specific identifiable references such as friends will be deleted or changed so that you are not personally identifiable. Moreover, the responses you provide will be kept strictly confidential and in no way will it be possible to link you to your responses. The audio

recording of this interview will be transcribed and data encrypted by the transcriptionist onto a password-protected computer. Once the document is complete the audio recording will be deleted from the transcriptionist's computer and your pseudonym name will be assigned to the transcript. All encrypted electronic research material used by the researchers will be kept on a password-protected computer. All transcripts of your interview will be kept in a secure location in a locked office within the School of Health and Human Performance, at Dalhousie University. All materials will be stored for a period of 5 years after publication, at which time they will be destroyed. This consent form, and any other forms that contain personal information such as your name, will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, in a secure office at Dalhousie University. Any forms containing your name will be kept geographically separate from the transcripts and will never be used to identify you.

LIMITS OF CONFIDENTIALITY

During the interview, if you discuss the abuse of someone under the age of 16, or an adult in need of protection, the interviewer is required by law to report this information to the proper authorities. In this instance, confidentiality will be breached.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions about this study, its purpose or procedures, please contact the Principal Investigator, at (902) 494-2152 or via email at shuybers@dal.ca. You may also contact the research Co-advisor, Dr. Joan Evans at (902) 494-6307 or via email at Joan.Evans@Dal.Ca.

PROBLEMS OR CONCERNS

If you have concerns about any aspect of this study or your involvement, you may contact Catherine Connors, Director of Dalhousie University's Office of Human Research Ethics Administration at (902) 494-1462, or via email at catherine.connors@dal.ca**. Please note that collect calls are always accepted.**

The culture of an alternative sport: Exploring the experiences and practices of Nova Scotian mountain bikers

I have read the explanation about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby consent to take part in this study. However, I realize that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

> By signing this form you are agreeing to the following statements.
> ☐ I have read and understood this form.
> ☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without consequence.
> ☐ I consent to be audio-recorded
> ☐ I would like to receive a copy of the results (lay summary) of this study.
> ☐ I consent to possibly be contacted by the researcher to review key themes from my interview and to provide feedback.

Participant Name:_____

Participant Signature:_____ Date:_____

Interviewer Name:_____

Interviewer Signature:_____ Date:_____

Please provide a mailing address or email address in the space provided below if you would like to receive a copy of the study results, or if you are willing to be contacted to review a summary the key themes from your interview and provide feedback to the principal investigator.

Consent for Direct Quotations

Use of Direct Quotations Approval Form

I, _____ (print name), hereby confirm that I give
permission for direct quotations to be used from my interview conducted as part of the
research study *The culture of an alternative sport: Exploring the experiences and practices
of Nova Scotian mountain bikers.*

Only initial those statements for which you give consent

I understand that my true name will not be associated or linked to the direct quotations, and
that a pseudonym (fake name) will be used in its place.

Initial: _____

I acknowledge that all personally identifying information, such as names of people or
places, will be removed from the transcripts

Initial: _____

I consent to be directly quoted from this interview as deemed necessary by the principal
investigator.

Initial: _____

I have been provided with an opportunity to identify any information that I disclosed during
the interview that I do not wish to be quoted directly.

Initial: _____

By signing, I consent to the use of my direct quote(s) in any documents, conference
presentations, or other materials resulting from this research project.

_____   ____/____/____
Signature of Participant   dd   mm   yy

_____   ____/____/____
Signature of Interviewer   dd   mm   yy

Appendix E

Transcriptionist Confidentiality Agreement

You have been hired to transcribe interviews for Sherry Huybers Withers, Principal Investigator, for the research project at Dalhousie University entitled, *Examining the culture of an alternative sport: Exploring the experiences and practices of Nova Scotian mountain bikers.* Given the ethical guidelines of this study, please read and sign the form below, signifying that you are willing to enter into a confidentiality agreement with respect to the data collected in this study.

The audio-recordings may contain personally identifying information about the participant, such as the names of participants. You are to remove all identifiers in the transcript in order to protect the confidentiality of the participant. In addition, you will be required to remove all identifying information such as place names, or names of friends, and to provide an appropriate designation. For example, if a specific rural town is named, you would remove it and indicate 'rural area." If transcription occurs outside the School of Health and Human Performance, you will ensure that all records, transcripts, and recordings are kept confidential (i.e., materials are never left unattended or are secured when not being used). By signing below, you agree not to reveal any information about what is contained on the audio-recordings or in the written transcripts. Furthermore, you agree not to discuss anything regarding the participants or the data collected in this study with anyone other than the Principal Investigator.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this contract or the confidential nature of this study, please contact the Principal Investigator, Sherry: Huybers-Withers at (902) 494-2152 or via email at shuybers@dal.ca.

By signing below you are indicating that you have read and understand the above agreement and that you will follow all of the specified conditions.

Name: _____

Contact Telephone: _____

Contact E-mail: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____