WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN ENDURANCE MOTORCYCLE CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

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This work examines women’s participation in endurance motorcycle challenges, specifically the Hoka Hey motorcycle challenge, a multi-thousand mile turn-by-turn endurance event and lifestyle sport to raise awareness for the Lakota Sioux of Pine Ridge, South Dakota. Using ethnographic methods and creative non-fiction, the experiences of women challengers are folded between postmodern theoretical concepts. Building on work of sport, motorcycle, and feminist scholars, this work takes an interdisciplinary approach to viewing lifestyle sport. Using a feminist cultural studies lens the Hoka Hey emerges as a meaningful event, which not only empowers women but also supports gender non-conformity, builds community, creates instances of transgression, and breaks down binaries. By living a feminist ethic of care and participating in a heavily masculinized environment, women riders of the Hoka Hey challenge gender norms and stereotypes of motorcyclists. Using the Hoka Hey as a basis for understanding both motorcycling and sporting cultures, there is potential for reimagining sport in a rhizomatic model to effectively break down the hegemonic center of the sporting world.
Mitakuye Oyasin
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Hoka Hey!
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This work is what Laurel Richardson describes as a “pleated text” in her work “Skirting a Pleated Text: De-Disciplining an Academic Life” (2). Throughout the work I weave interpersonal stories, narratives, composite narratives, blog posts, and creative non-fiction with textual and theoretical analysis. Largely, the sections theory and analysis are in regular type font whereas the creative and narrative sections are in italics. While many of the narratives are written in the first person, most are composite narratives, which weave individual quotes from various interviews into one voice. Although not always marked with quotation marks, footnotes follow the direct quotes to indicate each unique woman’s story. As Richardson suggests, “the pleats can be spread open at any point, folded back, unfurled” (2). By using this method, my hope is to create a dynamic, accessible story; and, I invite the reader to play with this text. Feel free to skip around, pick up and put down various sections and enjoy. Additionally, I hope to forward the use of unique qualitative methods. As academics, when we continue to broaden our understanding of “relevant” or “legitimate” methods we work toward eliminating the rigid binaries that render us inaccessible.

The following brief excerpt from Erica Lopez’s Flaming Iguanas: An All-Girl Road Novel Thing accurately describes both my Hoka Hey and dissertation writing experiences.

Enjoy!

It’s a Thin Line Between Clever and Stupid

What’s so wrong with watching TV? Why was I doing this? What was I proving? What the fuck was this myth that said you have to leave your job, your life, your tear-stained woman
waving good-bye with a kitchen towel behind the screen door so you can ride all over the country with a sore ass battling crosswinds, rain, arrogant Volvos, and minivans?

This is stupid. Very, very stupid. I don’t even have a tear-stained dog to wave bye to me. But I told everyone I was gonna do this, so I gotta do it…or I will be living a life of feminist-sounding somedays. And I will be more responsible, powerful, and amazing afterward. I will be able to do anything and not self-consciously stare at the elevator numbers when the doors close. I will look the other person right in the eye and nod hello (26).
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

We strolled through the stalls at the Columbus Easyriders Bike and Tattoo Show. The booming sounds of Lynyrd Skynyrd and chatting masses surrounded us. The smile plastered across my face indicated my happiness to be amongst fellow motorcyclists. It was a brief weekend respite from my first year doctoral studies and the sunless abyss that is February in Ohio. The bright yellow tent scrolled with unfamiliar words in the corner caught my eye as we approached the tattoo section of the event. HOKA HEY. I walked slowly behind my dad and eyed the tent as we progressed in a single file line of other rally-goers. Underneath the tent, a large Native American man stood behind a table filled with flyers, maps, and promotional materials.

“Hey, you interested in the Hoka Hey?” He addressed my dad directly.

“What’s the Hoka Hey?” My dad asked as he took the flyer from the man’s hand.

The man introduced himself as Jim Red Cloud, founder of the Hoka Hey, and began telling us about the upcoming 2011 ride just a few months away. Traversing all 48 continental United States. And Canada. All on secondary roads. An Endurance Motorcycle Challenge – I was familiar with the term.

As usual, I (rudely?) butted into what seemed to be a boys only conversation, “How many women participate?”

Jim was taken aback as my dad handed me the flyer. After the astonishment vanished from his face he responded, “Lots of women. Actually, women finish this more than men do.”

I mustered up my best inquisitive look, right eye squinting as my mouth pulled into a half smile, “Really?” I inquired.
He replied gruffly while his eyes scanned my body as if sizing me up to see if I was Hoka Hey material and threw out the challenge, “Yeah. You should do it too.”

My dad’s most mischievous I’ve-got-a-great-idea smile flooded his face and spread his Fu Manchu mustache exposing his dimples. My dad is a man who rarely shows his emotions, but he was excited. Excitement rushed inside me too as Jim’s words and invitation became clear. I eagerly thought about the research prospects. Geek Alert! Motorcycling! Women out-performing men! Extreme sports! Hoka Hey! Unknowingly over-confident, we were consumed by the challenge. It was done. We were going to do the Hoka Hey. This is my dissertation!

The Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge is a multi-thousand mile endurance motorcycle challenge designed to raise awareness about the Pine Ridge Lakota Sioux reservation in South Dakota. Few women participate in this challenge; typically, the participants are 90% men and 10% women. However, women finish the challenge at a higher percentage rate than men. The success of the women who ride the Hoka Hey offers a lens through which to re-examine our interpretations of motorcycling and sport.

Women who ride motorcycles commonly are marginalized within motorcycling culture. This othering is evident not only in media representations, as in the popular television series Sons of Anarchy, but also in motorcycle studies scholarship such as Barbara Joans’s 2001 work Bike Lust. However, as motorcycle scholar William Thompson discusses, women are the fastest growing segment of consumers of motorcycles and thus should be regarded as a legitimate part of the motorcycling community. Defying the dominant discourse, women who ride motorcycles are finding communities and empowerment through the leisure activity. While most women in motorcycling culture are passengers, many are riders; women are taking to the roads and going extreme distances through long distance motorcycle challenges.
This project investigates the experiences of women who participate in the Hoka Hey, the potential challenges they face in this masculine environment, and if they change perceptions of women riders or the attitudes of their male counterparts. Informing this study is interdisciplinary literature from sport and leisure studies, and motorcycle studies. Because there is less literature available relating specifically to motorcycle culture, I apply the work of many sport scholars to motorcycling. These studies influence my work by 1) understanding how women are marginalized through the dominance of masculinity in sport; 2) recognizing that women are socialized to participate differently in sport than men; 3) finding sport as a source of empowerment for women; and 4) advocating that these sources of empowerment can build potential for transgression either through altering perceptions of women riders or through challenging opinions of male riders.

Review of Literature

*The Center of Sport and Hegemonic Masculinities/Femininities*

In Western cultures, sport has been linked with masculinity (Connell; Messner; Allain; Whannel). Sport lauds hegemonic masculinities over other masculinities. Specific to sport, hegemonic masculinity is the notion that characteristics typically associated with masculinity (e.g. strength, power, toughness) are valued and expected in the sporting world. For example, there is a perception that to be successful in any sport a participant must be strong, tough and powerful. These characteristics typically are defined by Western cultures as masculine. Specifically, hegemony is the notion that discourses remain unquestioned and binaries continue to be unequally valued; consequently, we are complicit in their existence. In other words, if something is hegemonic it means we go along with and accept it without asking why. A simple example of this is Western cultures assume pink to be a color for girls and blue to be a color for boys. Through media—television, films, and popular magazines—and consumerism—the toy
aisle in any store—we come to associate specific colors with each gender—pink equals feminine, blue equals masculine. Further, the idea of hegemony understands that one of these (seemingly) inconsequential markers is privileged over the other—here blue being a “better” or more acceptable color than pink. These notions of hegemonic femininity and masculinity go unquestioned and are widely accepted.

I draw largely from Michael Messner’s 2002 work, *Taking the Field: Men, Women, and Sports* in which he discusses the concept of the center of sport. Messner articulates how the most elite players of the most culturally valued sports are lauded and become the “center of sport”, these athletes hold a position of power over other athletes. For Messner, what keeps these players at the center of sport is their reliance on hegemonic masculinity coupled with a penchant for denigrating others. According to Messner, hegemonic masculinity in sport often manifests itself in the denigration of others and can come in the form of misogyny, homonegativism, racism, classism, or violence. Supporting this center are peers at the periphery and margins (such as other team members) who comply with the center through silence driven by fear of becoming the target of the center’s negative attention. For athletes and those outside the center, the anxiety associated with becoming a potential target often overrides their moral conscience; common school bullies leverage this same fear to maintain power. The failure to notify authority figures of the center’s hurtful, discriminative or oppressive acts perpetuates the center’s belief that negative behaviors are common, traditional, or accepted as the norm.

Messner’s work suggests that being at the “center” of sport requires strength, dominance, a “rough and tumble” attitude, and a relentless sense of competition—all traits associated with masculinity. According to Messner, the “center” of sport, “is a position occupied by the biggest, wealthiest, and most visible sports programs and athletes” (xviii). All sports and athletes that do
not fit into this center are thus marginalized or seen as less. Because at the center masculine traits are valued over feminine traits, women are marginalized in sport. The marginalization of female athletes comes in various forms. In practical ways, women’s marginalization exists through women’s sports having less representation and fewer funding opportunities than men’s sports. Growing from this marginalization, socialization and cultural discourse seek to “protect” women and thus keep them from being hurt in sport and relegate women to inferior positions. For example, women typically are not allowed to play contact sports. Additionally, reliance on masculinity assumes that if women excel at sports they must have male characteristics that imply they are lesbian, a social group that is further marginalized (Kauer and Krane; Krane).

The discourse surrounding sport, which supports unquestioned masculinity, also exists in the motorcycle subculture. Motorcycle studies scholars (Auster; Joans; Roster; Thompson) point to the gendered experiences of women in motorcycle culture. Within motorcycle culture, marginalization of women comes in the form of women riders being labeled as lesbians, told they are inferior riders, or viewed as sexually charged accessories to men’s motorcycles (Joans). Additionally, because of time constraints and family commitments, women often are forced to choose between leisure activities. Scholars such as Auster suggest that being confronted with the gendered experience of female riders also mediates women’s choice of leisure activity. Through cultural constraints or reified discourse, women continually are assigned to positions of inferiority, or subjected to the belief that women are weaker than men in (motor)sport. Motorcycling discourse supporting masculinity assumes that women are not riders. As I will discuss in detail in chapter three, representations of the sexualized female body and derogatory statements about women pervade the motorcycling community. Women’s status as riders is often
demonized as is the case with groups such as Dykes on Bikes, marginalized, under-represented, or made to seem invisible.

*Lifestyle Sport*

My understanding of motorcycling and endurance challenges as sport builds on the concept of lifestyle sports. These are sports that many scholars consider outside the center of sport. Belinda Wheaton’s edited work *Understanding Lifestyle Sports: Consumption, Identity, and Difference* informs my definition of lifestyle sport. Alternative models of competition and achievement, reliance on consumerism, and added elements of risk characterize lifestyle sports. In some cases, lifestyle sports are also known as extreme sports. Wheaton describes lifestyle sports as “anything that doesn’t fit under the Western ‘achievement sport’ rubric” (3). While some scholars might argue that lifestyle sports are “forms of play” rather than sports, Wheaton argues we should reject the play/sport binary and suggests we move beyond dichotomies to understand lifestyle sports’ “meaning” (3). I agree with Wheaton in that lifestyle sports (e.g. snowboarding, skiing, motorsport) should be considered sports and valued equally among other forms of sport. Wheaton and other scholars (Rinehart; Wheaton; Midol and Broyer) suggest that lifestyle sports are sites that have the potential to subvert traditional ways of understanding sport—including “traditional rule-bound, competitive, and masculinized dominant sport cultures” (3). Wheaton’s volume highlights adventure racing, snowboarding, skiing, and other lifestyle sports that, like motorcycling, add an element of risk. It is my belief that the risk assumed in lifestyle sport transcends the risk associated with other forms of sport. For example, extreme skiing or surfing could lead to more perilous disasters (e.g. avalanches or shark attacks) than those associated with team sports such as football or basketball. Lifestyle sports specifically rely on risk as a part of their culture creating a unique atmosphere for participants.
Lifestyle sport pairs well with the possibility for seeing the race and class implications of sport. As Wheaton describes lifestyle sports, they are deeply entwined with postmodern consumer culture. Lifestyle sports are sold to consumers—who tend to be privileged, white, male, and middle class—as a complete package (Wheaton 6). Consumerism in lifestyle sport not only takes the form of the sport itself in a pay-to-play environment, but also through the deeply entwined lifestyle package. Thus, lifestyle sports not only are costly—requiring entry fees and travel to specific locations—but also require a certain level of capital in the form of time. Further, Wheaton argues that lifestyle sports create space for identity politics, “a politics that is expressed around competing and passionate claims about the right to belong, and to be recognized” (9). Because of the political and identity associations with lifestyle sport, participants must be able to fit into the culture both racially and socioeconomically to become full participants. Lifestyle sports value those participants who are able to pay their way into the sporting identity. In other words, it is not enough to be able to pay for participation, lifestyle sportspeople must also look and act the part. Although lifestyle sports do not regularly address issues of gender—in fact, some sports allow or require men and women to participate together—I argue that lifestyle sports value masculinity over femininity as evident in their reliance on risk. While Understanding Lifestyle Sports: Consumption, Identity, and Difference does not include specific chapters on motorcycling or endurance running, I believe both of these sports fit within Wheaton’s definition, specifically though their commercialization, competition style, and racialization.

Barbara Joans’s book Bike Lust speaks to the racial and commercial aspects of motorcycle culture. While many motorcycle scholars overlook issues of racism in the motorcycling community, Joans’s work is one of the few that addresses race directly. Looking
specifically at riders of Harley-Davidsons, she is both critical and cognizant of the fact that some motorcyclists “as a group are racist, anti-Semitic, homophobic, and misogynistic” (242). However, she does not challenge the group for these behaviors claiming, “Harley riders are not out to end prejudice. Neither are they out to spread it...They are out to ride” (254). This simplistic examination of race within the motorcycling culture ignores the nuances of race and class within American society and shows the need for further research addressing intersections of class, race, and gender within sport. My work will add to this discourse of race and class in motorcycling and expand this body of literature. While problematic in its racial and class implications, this alternative sport-scape allows for a definition of sporting practice outside the center of sport.

*Gender in Lifestyle Sport*

Because of the masculinization of the center of sport, women are marginalized, their experiences are devalued or seen as less than men’s experiences. Lifestyle sport literature suggests that sport remains gendered and women’s experiences remain marginalized even in the environments that profess to transcend gender by asking men and women to play on the same field (Pflugfelder). Joans, Pflugfelder, and Kay and Laberge study women’s marginalized experiences in lifestyle sport. According to these authors, women’s participation in these sports is essential but constantly negotiated through their femininity. Through gender expression, gender non-conformity, and the reality of their sexed bodies, the gender of female athletes comes into question even in lifestyle sport. This literature shows that although lifestyle sports profess that gender does not matter (e.g. allowing women and men to compete against one another) the experiences of female athletes prove otherwise. Consequently, through gendered discourse surrounding these sports, the female body mediates experiences for athletes and participants. In “‘Mandatory Equipment:’ Women in Adventure Racing,” Joann Kay and Suzanne Laberge find
that, while the adventure racing discourse supports women’s equality of strength to men, the practice, through which women are described as “mandatory equipment” rather than competitors, suggests that women’s perceived natural (in)capabilities make them less valuable competitors. Similarly, Pflugfleder’s article, “Something Less than a Driver: Toward an Understanding in Gendered Bodies in Motorsport,” argues that despite the supposed gender egalitarianism in motorsport, the discourse surrounding women’s performance retains notions of gendered power relationships. For example, Pflugfelder notes the ways in which Danika Patrick’s successes are attributed to her smaller female body rather than her competencies as a driver. Joans contends motorcycle culture discourse relegates women to positions that are “necessary but peripheral to the biking world” (139). These experiences lead women to negotiate their femininity to make space for themselves within these cultures.

Living and riding on the periphery and within the context of masculinity forces women to negotiate with their femininity through becoming gender non-conforming. Kay and Laberge argue that while women are marginalized, elite women competitors of adventure racing legitimate male domination through valuing traditional “male capital” (e.g. toughness and strength) over feminine attributes. While this notion may stretch toward essentializing masculinity and femininity—where all men are strong and all women weak—it shows the discourse of the sporting world perpetuates these binary oppositions. Binary opposition is based on only two opposite or alternative options, here femininity and masculinity. Binary conceptions limit opportunities for fluid definitions of identity, gender, and self. Pflugfelder states that via discourse women in motorsport are both inherently gendered and, when in vehicles as “racers” or “drivers”, are expected to undergo an erasure of their gendered body. Danika Patrick must compete with men during the race when her gender is erased, yet becomes gendered when she
wins and her female body becomes a cause of her success. These gendered experiences serve to further highlight the marginalization of women’s participation in male dominated sport. Joans agrees that women must assume some level of gender non-conformity within the hyper-masculine motorcycling world. Joans contends, “All [biking] women have broken with stereotypical femininity. All these women have rejected, consciously or unconsciously, the written and unwritten rules of female behavior” (139). By joining a traditionally masculine leisure activity often linked with aggression and power, women in the motorcycling community challenge gender norms and break with the notion that femininity must be demure and soft. Furthering this example, straddling a motorcycle suggests an aggressive form of sexuality, which does not align with dominant conceptions of femininity.

Transgression through Lifestyle Sport

Within masculine environments such as sport and motorcycling, scholars suggest that room exists for the possibility of transgression, a state in which the dominant cultural perceptions are challenged. Ultimately, Kay and Laberge conclude that, though adventure racing could be a site for transforming gender regimes in sport, it actually reaffirms and legitimates masculine domination. Furthering this idea, Pflugfelder exposes the unstable assumption that motorsport is an arena in which men and women compete equally. Despite motorsport being one of the few sites in sport where men and women compete together (e.g. auto racing, BMX, rally racing) the discourse of motorsport creates a gendered experience for women by highlighting the differences in men’s and women’s bodies. Joans, however, contends that motorcycling is a sphere in which traditional ideas of femininity can be reshaped. As she indicates, most women who ride consider themselves to be feminine; she and they understand femininity not as based on actions but rather rooted in feelings. In this vein, Joans believes that “femininity has lost its restrictive and dependent component” (150). By understanding motorcycling and femininity on a continuum in
which there is not one but many ways to be feminine or a motorcyclist, Joans contends that female bikers see themselves as feminine, while actively challenging gender roles through their presence in the male dominated culture. I agree with Joans’s premise and argue that femininities in plural can alter previous misconceptions of women, their bodies, and their participation in sport. For example, by understanding that being strong is not only a masculine trait but also a component of femininity (or female masculinity), we can imagine a more egalitarian experience for athletes at all levels.

Marginalization of Women in Sport Cultures

As argued by the sport and leisure scholars detailed above, hegemonic masculinities and femininities only serve to marginalize women within sport. Like hegemonic masculinity, hegemonic femininity sustains an imbalanced power relationship between an unstable binary (masculine/feminine). Markers of hegemonic femininity include socially accepted traits such as women are caregivers and homemakers who are weak, emotional, like pink, and have cats. This marginalization leads to the perpetuation of antiquated notions of female inferiority. Supporting the dominance of masculinity in sport, it was not until around the 1970s that women were allowed to participate in marathons (some sources cite Bobbi Gibb’s participation in 1967 and 1968 while others cite the 1980s as the larger acceptance of women’s participation). Early medical science suggested that women’s uteri would fall out of their bodies if they ran long distances. This obtuse assumption about women’s ability reinforced hegemonic masculinity by suggesting that women are weak and inferior competitors while strength and stamina allowed men to forge ahead in distance sport. Still today, popular press athletic magazine articles relegate women to inferior positions by continually suggesting that women are subpar athletes. For example, David Lowes’s article “Women and Endurance Running: Should Female Endurance Athletes Train Differently Than Their Male Counterparts” featured in Athletics Weekly notes that,
Despite physiological differences, men and women train equally hard for endurance racing. The article perpetuates traditional masculinity as the center of sport by stating, “women are not as physically strong as men, but if they wish to compete at the highest level they have to train very hard” (np). Despite the article being published in 2009, the author still cites women’s menstrual cycles as a potential hindrance to performance. Further, the existence of this article supports the perception of women’s weakness in sport as compared to men.

Women’s participation in motoreycling culture has only boomed recently with new motorcycle sales increasingly being attributed to women (Thompson). Motorcycle Studies scholars and authors—such as Ann Ferrar, Suzanne Ferriss and Steven Alford—detail the history of women’s participation in endurance challenges in their works *Hear Me Roar* and *Motorcycle* respectively. The authors highlight the long history of women and motorcycling that includes clubs such as the Motor Maids and many endurance challenges won by women. However, this history of women and motorcycling is not a part of the dominant narrative of motorcycling, supporting women’s marginality within the culture. While women have been allowed to participate in long distance motorcycle racing since its recent resurgence¹ their limited numbers suggest that the open road is not equally accepting of men and women. Media representations of women in motorcycle culture, like those in the popular FX television series *Sons of Anarchy* (*SoA*) and motorcycle magazine *Easyriders*, support the notion that women exist in motorcycle culture to support men not to ride themselves. Through these representations, women are

¹ The Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge (a distance race) has been in place since 2010; however, distance rides (not races) through the Iron Butt Association have taken place since the 1980s (hokaheychallenge.com, ironbutt.com).
ornaments on bikes instead of riders of these machines. In SoA, the club mantra “If you can’t ride, you can’t lead,” reveals the underlying cause of female invisibility in the motorcycle culture. Because none of the female characters can ride motorcycles themselves, they cannot hold leadership positions within the community. Much like the uninformed assumption that women may lose essential female body parts if they run, these media representations perpetuate the outdated idea that women are not well suited for motorcycle riding. Because of stringent binaries—men ride, women are passengers—exist within sport communities, scholars suggest that sporting individuals perpetuate these negative perceptions and limiting binaries.

In her article “Queers Even in Netball?: Interpretations of the Lesbian Label among Sportswomen”, Kate Russell describes both positive and negative experiences of women in sport and their relationships to being labeled lesbian. Pertinent to my research, Russell points to the ways in which sportswomen negotiate their identities to accommodate for perceptions of sports in which they “should” or “should not” participate. Like female motorcyclists, these athletes must justify their participation in sport because of gendered and heterosexist stereotypes. Further, Russell suggests that women decline to discuss their sport in certain situations when their choices may come under scrutiny. For example, women who participate in “masculine sports” such as hockey may choose not to mention their participation in the workplace so as not to bring their sexual identities into question. As Russell states, “the fact that these women are constantly expected to justify their participation shows that people believe it to be an unexpected activity which, in turn, reflects stereotype formation and maintenance” (112). These findings are mirrored in Catherine Roster’s “Girl Power” article in which she describes how many women withheld information about their motorcycling identities to friends and family. Specifically, female motorcyclists from Roster’s study chose not to identify as motorcyclists when they felt
they might be labeled as unfeminine, such as when they identified as mothers or wives. As a female motorcyclist, I understand this predicament; in my personal life, motorcycling is an identity marker I choose to reveal only when necessary or to people whom I trust. Roster describes how labels can be limiting to the interpretation of femininities stating, “here there is only one definition of femininity as meaning ‘not manlike’ which prevents any other possible expression of femininity” (117). As Roster suggests, adopting notions of dominant femininity only serves to further limit the overall interpretations of female motorcyclists. Through their disassociation, the female athletes and motorcyclists in these studies unknowingly perpetuate the marginalization of women in their respective arenas. This highlights the irony that often women within sport are the ones who prevent inclusiveness.

Socialization of Female Athletes and Negotiations of Masculine Environments

Hegemonic masculinity and femininity coupled with sport discourse, as supported above, reifies women’s inferiority and contributes to the socialization process through which women are differently conditioned. “Gendered Social Dynamics in Sport”, Vikki Krane’s work applying social identity perspective in sport, suggests group identity can reinforce the masculine center of sport or more positive team environments. The use of social identity perspective in relation to gendered experiences in sport shows that social conditioning influences group dynamics. In other words, the way we are treated as men, women, athletes, or motorcyclists influences the way we participate in a collective. By applying this model to other sport literature, we see that women are socialized to participate in sport differently than men, resulting in alternative models of participation and competition. Through this process, women are socially conditioned to participate on teams and compete with notions of traditional femininity in mind, encouraging nurturing environments and downplaying one’s own achievements for the good of the group or team. Notions of traditional femininity condition women to form conceptions of competition that
are inclusive. A competitive nature is aligned with masculinity and thus is praised within the
sport world; however, women are socialized to understand their achievements are attributable to
the team while men are conditioned to believe that athletic success is based on individual
accomplishment. While women are socialized to be less competitive than men, this form of
hegemony is not always internalized. Competition does not rely solely on gender and this
socialization could be seen as a technique for the marginalization of women within sport. Krane
suggests that group identities are formed in part through the identification of marginalized groups
such as female athletes. Positive group dynamics and unity can come from mutual experiences of
exclusion or marginalization by creating positive environments in response to negative
experiences elsewhere.

Embodied femininity and socialization can lead to a competitive, yet supportive, sport
environment. Specific examples from endurance sport suggest this sense of socialization toward
communal competition. In endurance and lifestyle sport, some women assist one another in
creating communities based on their marginalization because of their disavowal of Western
conceptions of competition in which only one winner is praised. For example, in the 2009 New
York City Marathon winner, Deratu Tulu, constantly encouraged world record holder, Paula
Radcliffe, to complete the competition after Radcliffe sustained an injury. While Tulu ran past
Radcliffe at the finish, Radcliffe’s ability to stay with the lead pack came directly from Tulu’s
encouragement and support. This is just one example of collaborative competition and women’s
collaborative spirit in endurance sport. Like female marathon participants, female motorcyclists
often discuss the camaraderie felt on the road. In a compilation of women’s written experiences
with endurance motorcycling, Sasha Mullins’s *Bikerlady: Living and Riding Free!* exposes
coalition building existing between women. As a journalist, Mullins describes her own
perceptions of riding long distances in addition to printing fifteen other women’s accounts of
distance riding, some through groups such as the Iron Butt Association or distance rallies while
others engaged in solo rides. Each woman tells a unique story of satisfaction in riding,
camaraderie on the road, and the love of two wheels. The writings of the various women reflect
the scholarly work of Astur and Thompson who state that women enter the motorcycle culture
through men—as wives, daughters, or companions—and frequently have to defend their choice
to ride to family and friends. The accounts of female riders from Mullins’s work show that riding
a motorcycle is a source of camaraderie and empowerment. For example, Carol, a surgical
assistant from Georgia, discusses her initial resistance to riding coming from a fear of dropping
her bike. In her text she states, “I have dedicated my trips to sharing with other motorcyclists,
especially women, a simple way to pick up a bike if you drop it. I hope no woman ever goes 20
years thinking she can never ride a motorcycle because she can’t pick it up” (Mullins 143).
While women often entered the culture apprehensively or because of a man, their bonds with
female riders became stronger throughout long rides. As noted in my own work, a feminist sense
of coalition building can be seen through endurance sport.

In addition to collaborative competition, women often are socialized to enter
competitions for different reasons than men. Constantly told that women are lesser competitors
than men, some women have become socialized to transform their desire to enter competitions
from winning to personal improvement. This is evident in Kay and Laberge’s discussion of
lifestyle sport. Kay and Laberge discuss this alternative sense of competition as relevant to the
lifestyle sport of Adventure Racing. In their discussion of women’s view of success, Kay and
Laberge note that
the majority of women indicate that although the teams, which achieve high competitive ranking, occupy more powerful positions in the field, a ‘successful’ race - for them - is one in which their team worked together. Women, accordingly, demonstrate a relative privileging of teaming over toughness by valuing participation over competition (Kay and Laberge 162).

Here it is clear that some women value community and personal success over competition and winning. Perhaps this focus on personal success allows for the level of stress associated with the competition to naturally decrease thus allowing for increased focus on personal performance.

The continued socialization of women to adhere to feminine standards also suggests a limitation in how women choose in which sports they will participate. Discussing these limitations to leisure participation, Susan Shaw (1994) examines reasons women are kept from participating in various leisure activities. Shaw includes societal constraints, constraints from leisure activities themselves, and leisure as offering possible sites of resistance as the limitations to women’s choice of leisure activities. She states, “The argument for resistance arises out of the definition of leisure as a situation of choice, control, and self-determination. When leisure is seen in this way, women’s participation in activities, especially non-traditional activities, can be seen to challenge restrictive social roles” (Shaw 9). Shaw argues for an integrated understanding of leisure constraints that emphasizes the “need to understand women’s leisure in the context of their everyday experiences as mediated by social structures” (18). This includes the social conditioning through the emphasis on masculine and feminine norms. Shaw also understands the choice to participate in a leisure activity that may not support social constraints can challenge social norms. Building on the position that choosing alternative forms of leisure can lead to challenging social roles, Carol Auster discusses leisure constraints pertaining to the motorcycling
community. In her article, “Transcending Potential Antecedent Leisure Constraints: The Case of Female Motorcycle Operators”, Auster examines the reasons women choose to enter the male dominated world of motorcycling. Her research supports the “enrichment hypothesis” which posits that women need special environments such as a family connection to motorcycling through which to enter leisure activities such as motorcycling. Auster’s findings further suggest that women motorcycle operators are not rebelling from their surrounding environments because they have been socialized to participate in these spaces. Her survey found that participant age, along with time spent within the motorcycling subculture, affected the perception of women’s acceptance—with women who were involved in motorcycling longer finding the subculture to be more accepting of women operators. Contextual factors mediating participation (e.g. time, family connections) add to the notion that the socialization of women influences their participation in sport differently than men.

Identity

Scholars such as Belinda Wheaton, Catherine Roster, and William Thompson find participating in sport and leisure activities leads to the development of identity. Identity formation through leisure activities allows individuals to create both collective and self-identities. For example, as women begin to ride, motorcycling becomes a greater part of their self-identity as they begin to describe themselves as a motorcyclist, rider, or biker. Building on this notion, Roster notes as women begin to join clubs or ride with others, they become part of the collective group of motorcyclists and create bonds and group identities (452). This same identity construction happens within various subcultures, speaking specifically to lifestyle sports, Wheaton investigates the relationship between collective identities, popular culture, and identity formation stating, “understanding how these social identities and forms of collective expression
are constructed, performed, and contested, recognizes popular culture’s significance as the basis of people’s identities” (9).

Research regarding popular culture and identity permeates cultural studies literature. ² Dick Hebdige’s early work on subcultures informs my understanding of how popular culture and identity formation intersect. In *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Hebdige analyzes the ways in which the punk subculture reinvents and reinterprets certain commodities to create a culture. This is a form of identity creating culture. Not mass produced and completely organic, punk created a culture out of ordinary objects. Creating cultural codes, punk strove to formulate a culture. Hebdige describes this by staying, “they *display* their own codes (e.g. the punk’s ripped T-shirt) or at least demonstrate that codes are there to be used and abused” (101). The manipulation of dominant culture through identity creates a new culture. To further show this phenomenon of change into creation, punk commodities “were stripped of their original connotations - efficiency, ambition, compliance with authority - and transformed into ‘empty’ fetishes, objects to be desired, fondled and valued in their own right” (106). Like motorcycling which builds on commodity, subcultures create cultural codes from media representations and commodification of cultural identities. Wheaton expands on this idea by indicating, “despite the visibility of symbolic markers of the lifestyle sport participant’s identity there are less ‘visible’ aspects of identity that are often more significant to the insider notions of authenticity” (9).

² While there are too many cultural studies works to mention here, I point to Judith Halberstam’s work on female masculinity in James Bond films, and Ben Chappell’s study of low-rider culture, as well as the important works of Stuart Hall.
Hebdige would agree that simply ripping a t-shirt does not make a punk, rather a true member of the subculture would understand and embody the code in addition to displaying the code.

In a postmodern age, these collectively and individually constructed identities are constantly in flux. Wheaton, quoting Kellner, suggests, “whereas in traditional society identity was relatively fixed and stable (based on a range of identifiers such as work, gender, ethnicity, religion, and age), in late modernity, ‘identity becomes more mobile, multiple, personal, self-reflexive, and subject to exchange and innovation’” (5). Rosi Braidotti expands on this notion through her idea of nomadic identities and becoming(s). According to Braidotti, the mobile, self-reflexive identities Wheaton describes place us in a situation of constantly “becoming” something else. For example, through the Hoka Hey, women riders are becoming women/riders/warriors. In the postmodern world, which emphasizes our pluralities through deconstructed binaries, our identities constantly change. Braidotti states, “what the process of becoming stands for is the qualitative shift of perspective…there is a becoming woman, for instance, which refers to established counter-ideologies and theoretical frameworks and emancipatory ideals and practices” (133). For Braidotti, the act of becoming or transposing one’s identity is integral to the postmodern understanding of politics and the ability to create change. By understanding who we are and adapting as we become woman/rider/warrior, we challenge dominant structures and emphasize a shift in our own perspectives.

**Empowerment**

Sport and motorcycle scholars argue that women’s participation in masculine sporting environments can be empowering. Nancy Theberge’s article “Reflection of the Body in the Sociology of Sport” synthesizes theoretical works on the sociology of the body and feminist poststructuralism and applies this concept to sport to show how dominant ideas of bodies, gender, and power can be transgressed via sport. Theberge argues that participation in
traditionally masculine sport can lead to women’s empowerment through boosting confidence and self-esteem. Specifically she highlights empowering practices that include “fitness activities pursued in an ideological and social context of empowerment and instances of team sports that are modeled on visions of community and empowerment” (129). Theberge argues that the creation of community within teams as well as meeting personal fitness goals can lead to increased confidence, self-esteem, and empowerment. Simply put, as competitors have known for centuries, winning feels good and thus empowers. Through endurance sport women have found that out performing men is empowering. In a motorcycling context, Liz Jansen’s work *Women, Motorcycles and the Road to Empowerment: Fifty Inspirational Stories of Adventure and Self Discovery* discusses individual stories of embracing challenges and finding power which leads toward empowerment on the road. Jansen notes dealing with unexpected circumstances, finding one’s own power, as well as discovering freedom and confidence on a motorcycle made the activity empowering. Like Theberge’s work with sport, Jansen contends, “most of the women who participated in this book see other woman riders as the embodiment of power…[they] exude confidence” (9). These studies suggest women’s confidence in arenas of sport and motorcycling grow from excelling in each context.

Specifically in foot racing, Lewis G. Maharam shows women excel at endurance challenges. In his article for *Competitor* magazine, “Running Doc: Are Women More Suited For Endurance Than Men?” Maharam digests other clinical studies on distance running and suggests biological factors may contribute to women’s excellence at endurance sports. He notes fat reserves and the capacity to burn fuel after longer distances enables women to compete at greater levels than men. To this end, the studies he reviewed show that this increased level of performance in women does not take effect until after the traditional marathon 26.2 mile mark.
As such, women who perform in extreme distance running, such as a 50 to 100 mile ultra marathon, either are consistent with or better than men’s times. Christopher McDougall’s TEDx Talk “Are We Born To Run?” also argues that women have the capacity to run greater distances than men. In this July 2010 TEDx Talk, McDougall discusses three stories of the human capacity for running. McDougall states that women are built for distance in lieu of speed effectively finishing endurance races before men. These ideas support that sport can be a site of resistance. Certainly women outperforming men in any sporting arena challenges the notion of male domination in sport. Much like these statistics on endurance foot racing, long distance motorcycle racing seems to be particularly well suited for female participants. To highlight this, I use the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge as an example. While fewer women enter the challenge, women complete the Hoka Hey at higher percentage rates than men. This is true of the 2012 event in which only one woman rider left the challenge before its end while approximately twenty-two men did not complete the challenge (83 percent of women riders finished and 73 percent of men finished the challenge). As with distance running, endurance motorcycle challenges allow women to outperform men and thus become increasingly empowered.

Transgression Through Sport
Feminist scholarship suggests the empowerment of women can lead to the transgression of sporting contexts. Susan Birrell and Nancy Theberge’s 1994 article “Feminist Resistance and Transformation in Sport”, applies feminist perspectives to sport to uncover the world of sport as a site of cultural resistance. This work informs my definition of both resistance and transgression. The scholars maintain that we underestimate the cultural and political significance of sport and overlook it as a site of possible transgression. Birrell and Theberge define resistance as “the process by which disempowered groups or persons refuse to submit fully to their disempowerment” (363). However, the two go on to state that resistance alone does not cause
transgression, which is a shift in the ideological and power structures of an institution. Birrell and Theberge argue that masculine superiority can be challenged by girls and women in sport who are excellent competitors and performers (365). In addition to being excellent competitors, girls and women can reclaim their bodies through sport; the authors argue that through these avenues some sportswomen challenge patriarchal practices. In addition to legal changes, like Title IX, sport as a site of transgression and transformation is seen through women participating in masculine sports such as hockey, auto racing, and motorcycling.

Through socialization toward coalition building, alternative competition, and female excellence, women’s experiences in lifestyle sport can help sporting women negotiate masculine domains of sport and motorcycling. While this area needs further research, the empowerment women feel while participating in endurance sport allows them the confidence to enter another race. This continual alteration of the masculine environment may eventually help us redefine sport to be a more inclusive environment. One race at a time, women may be able to sustain resistance and move toward transgression through mere participation.

Conceptual Framework

*Standpoint Theory*

Feminist theorists (e.g. Nancy Hartstock, Patricia Hill-Collins, Lata Mani) use standpoint theories to build both a uniquely feminist perspective and unity. Standpoint theory assumes that women form a critical understanding of the world and their place in it though social and political constructions. In simple terms, standpoint theory can be described as the explanation of how we negotiate and struggle within our places as women. According to Carole McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim, feminist standpoints can be used to understand social realities and can spur social change (9). Rather than searching for differences between men and women (or women and women), I understand standpoint theory to use experiences in creating unity to move toward
social change. In this vein, standpoint theory assumes that we are intrinsically linked as women and can thus build rapport and coalitions to create change. Based on this idea of standpoint as coalition, some feminist scholars now strive to find unity based on shared experience and different perspectives. More importantly than developing a critical understanding of our own point in social realities, standpoint theories can help us bridge gaps and highlight our shared struggles. Feminist coalition building around a standpoint can create shared experiences and increased understanding of all women. Standpoint theory understands women forge intragender bonds by finding commonalities within and across our experiences. Patricia Hill-Collins’s 1991 work frames the outsider within construction. Hill-Collins’s understanding of standpoint, as outsider within, displays that those outside a dominant community have a distinctive standpoint knowing both their own culture and having the position to observe the dominant culture from within. This theory can be applied to women in the motorcycling community who take on the standpoint of outsider within as they infiltrate the traditionally male dominated activity. Women in this community are both outsiders—as they are women infiltrating a male sphere—and insiders—as they are (marginally) accepted within the culture. Thus, women in motorcycling have the privileged position of understanding what it means to be a part of the culture and an outsider.

Postmodern Theory
In addition to standpoint theory, this study employs postmodern feminist theories that call for an elimination of binaries, understands that there is no single TRUTH, and attempts to avoid grand generalizations in favor of seeing individual experiences as unique. Postmodernism understands the necessity of eliminating binary opposition to transgressive experiences. I believe we must understand the multiplicities of our identities for transgression to happen in any culture. As the father of postmodernism, Jean-Francois Lyotard defines the theory in *The
Postmodern Condition as having an “incredulity toward metanarratives” (356). Metanarratives are grand generalizations or common stories that oversimplify the complexity of individual experiences. In the context of my work, a metanarrative may be that men are better at sports than women. With an expulsion of generalizations, postmodernism eliminates binary opposition believing that all structures are more nuanced than a binary allows. Here I focus on the elimination of the male/female or masculine/feminine binaries, which do not understand multiple definitions of gender or self.

The elimination of binary opposition extends to an elimination of hierarchies and denial of a single truth, cornerstones of postmodernism. Instead postmodernism understands that all truths/knowledges are constructed and constituted through power and performativity. As Lyotard suggests, “This is how legitimation by power takes shape. Power is not only good performativity, but also effective verification and good verdicts” (362). Through Lyotard’s words I understand that hierarchies are constructed through power and performativity and thus can be deconstructed. Other postmodern theorists such as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and Rosi Braidotti embrace relational connections over hierarchies by positing a rhizomatic understanding of power and culture. Rhizomes are complex systems that form connections with any point on any surface, like a root system or web. By understanding that connections can be made at any point on the rhizome, they create multiplicities, thus working to eliminate binaries and hierarchies. In other words, connections among things (e.g. people, sports, experiences) create a three dimensional expansive web of understanding, knowledge, or power rather than a silo or tower. Braidotti discusses the appeal of multiplicities in Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomatic model by saying, “it is only when the multiple is effectively treated as a substantive, ‘multiplicity’ that it ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object, natural or
spiritual reality, image and world. Multiplicities are rhizomatic” (381). Understanding cultures, texts, and artifacts in multiplicity is postmodern thought in that it substantiates the elimination of hierarchical models, metanarratives, and binaries. As postmodern theorists investigate the people, artifacts, and texts that make up our complex world they seek to understand intersections and connections rather than promote hierarchies. In relation to sport, finding connections among athletes’ experiences may help dismantle the center of sport where the best football players are the only athletes who matter.

Postmodern feminist theorists (e.g. Butler, Halberstam) understand that femininities and masculinities must be conceptualized in plural. These scholars suggest that there is more than one way to be feminine and/or masculine. The elimination of this binary allows for resistance and transgression in dominant cultures. Postmodern feminism supports the notion that women’s participation in male dominated sports can create a source of resistance. In her works, Butler effectively theorizes that gender is a social construction separate from biology. She contends that we enact gender through a performance via the way we act, the clothes we wear, and how we present ourselves. Butler’s theory of gender performativity delegitimizes the idea that men are inherently masculine and women inherently feminine. Through gender performances that do not conform to societal standards of femininity/masculinity (e.g. women participating in masculine sports like motorcycling) some women choose to resist the notion that there is only one way to be feminine. Reinforced conceptions of masculinity and femininity marginalize statuses of the other. For motorcycling, this means that women often are relegated to inferior positions within the community because they are not men or masculine.

Butler and Halberstam describe the ways in which our genders are forced upon us through societal discourse. A simple walk down the toy aisle at any store shows that we are
socially acculturated to understand that girls like dolls and boys like cars. These social discourses, or themes, are reinforced throughout our lives as we make choices in our leisure activities. This is important for sport scholarship and motorcycle studies because social discourse confirms masculinity at the center of sport. However, by not conforming to these gender stereotypes and participating in a male dominated subculture, female motorcycle riders challenge our notions of in what sports are “right” for women to participate. Any gender performance where we step outside of society’s idea of our assigned gender, like women riding motorcycles, could be called gender non-conformity. Halberstam specifically discusses gender non-conformity via female masculinity, in which women take on masculine qualities thus creating multiple forms of femininities. Female masculinity could extend to Drag Kings but also incorporates the type of gender-bending women enact to “fit” within the masculine environments of sport and motorcycling. Building on theories of gender non-conformity and performativity, sport and leisure studies scholars utilizing postmodern frames (e.g. Markula, Bordo) conceptualize masculinity and femininity on a continuum. For these scholars, gender is something we perform not something we are. Through this interpretation of gender identity and gender expression, avenues for subversion open.

While it may seem difficult to combine standpoint and postmodern theory, I utilize the idea of multiplicities in postmodernism to understand standpoint in plural. Thus, inspired by postmodernity, I understand standpoint(s) in multiplicity. I believe we all have socially conditioned individual standpoints from which we understand the world. These standpoints can change and alter in different contexts—perhaps as a woman but not a motorcycle rider or some days as a woman and a motorcycle rider. I believe these standpoints can change over time, creating a fluidity of self-identification. Through these ever-changing standpoints we create
unity through shared experiences, even if there are only partial commonalities. I understand that no two people may ever have the same experience; however, our multiple standpoints allow us to identify with various situations across time and space. Rosi Braidotti explains this concept well through her interpretation of nomadic subjects. For Braidotti, nomadic subjects are “qualitative multiplicities” which “express changes not of scale, but of intensity, force, or potentia (positive power of expression), which trace patterns of becoming” (94). Through becoming woman/rider/warrior, the women of the Hoka Hey express these nomadic subjectivities.

Queer Theory

Sport and leisure scholars often employ queer theory, which is grounded in postmodernism, to explore avenues for subversion within sport (e.g. Johnson and Kivel, Krane, Russell). In “One Lesbian Feminist Epistemology” Krane states, “the queer framework examines concepts such as gender, sexual orientation and masculinity/femininity within continua rather than opposites” (405). I understand gender non-conformity to be a part of this queer theory dialogue as an opportunity to challenge dominant narratives of masculinity/femininity. Corey Johnson and Beth Kivel suggest that literature related to sport and leisure confirms that homonegativism and heterosexism give power and privilege to men over women (101). Their definition of queer includes that “in its most simplistic form, queer offers a new way to think about the production of culture and what difference difference makes” (102). Through the queering of sport, Johnson and Kivel suggest that we can create more inclusive environments and make sport more equitable and safe for individuals (104). I understand queering of sport to mean both the complete inclusion of LGBT athletes but also any gender non-conformity that challenges dominant, hegemonic, or oppressive narratives. As such, I believe the presence of women, regardless of their sexuality, in masculine environments actually
queers that space by creating difference and challenging perspectives of participants and bystanders. Johnson and Kivel also contend that queering sport should take place not only with LGBT athletes but also with heterosexual athletes, as all athletes should work to reshape the landscape of sport. If LGBT and gender non-conforming heterosexual athletes participate, compete, or excel in sporting environments, perceptions of sport may change. This could include accepting multiple forms of gender expression or understanding that sex/gender may be unrelated to ability in sport. The presence of “others” in sporting arenas can lead toward progression within sport culture causing a reinterpretation (or reimagining) of sport. Through this reinterpretation of sport, it is possible to decrease hegemonic discourses and create more inclusive environments for all participants.

Furthering these ideas, queer theorists see sport as a site of potential dismantling of rudimentary binaries (i.e. masculine/feminine, hetero/homo) and emphasize a need for multiple masculinities and femininities. Here I emphasize the importance of the plurality of these terms to further understand that there is not one single “correct” way to be masculine or feminine. By utilizing queer theory in this way, it is possible to more fully understand the role sport and motorcycling can play in the lives of its participants. Mary Jo Kane focuses on sport as a site of resistance by continually exposing and deconstructing these binaries. Kane argues that creating an awareness of sport as a “continuum of physical, athletic competence”—in which we understand the possibility that women routinely outperform men—could lead toward resistance and transformation (193). Here Kane highlights ways in which scholars call to change the purview of sport, thus expanding and challenging hegemonic sporting practices. These tactics include elevating the status of sports outside the “male pantheon” (e.g. football, basketball, baseball) and embracing physical skills traditionally associated with females (194). Kane’s
proposal, however, transcends these previously accepted notions. Like the work of postmodern theorists, by showing sport on a continuum Kane already encompasses the appreciation of alternative sports and physical skill while understanding that women can outperform men even in traditionally “male” sport-scapes.

**Feminist Cultural Studies**

This study is grounded in a feminist cultural studies framework. Feminist cultural studies combines feminist theories and cultural studies theories (Krane). Using this frame, I examine the multifaceted challenges faced by women participants of endurance challenges through an intersectional lens. Intersectionality, the understanding of multiple forms of oppression such as race, class, gender, and sexuality, allows feminist cultural studies scholars to view power structures as hierarchical, layered, and converging. In other words, by applying an intersectional lens, scholars see that it is not only our gender, but also our race and class which affect our daily lives. Intersectionality is paramount throughout my analysis, as I remain cognizant of and reflexive toward the fact that the women involved in this study may be subject to multiple forms of intersecting oppression. Specifically, I will look at how race, class, and gender intersect in the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge. Further, cultural studies critically and reflexively analyzes lived experiences of daily life. In researching everyday behaviors, such as our leisure activities, cultural studies seeks to further understand ideological apparatuses, cultural assumptions, and daily oppressions, which inform our worldview. Building on these ideas, feminist cultural studies applies an intersectional (gendered/raced/classed) perspective to the everyday experiences of individuals, which often includes fluid understandings of self and other. By understanding that identities are multilayered, feminist cultural studies seeks to uncover the injustice, oppression, and opportunities for growth and transformation in everyday life. Krane notes “sport researchers employ feminist cultural studies to explore women’s lived experiences
in sport and physical activity and to understand the cultural conditions that confront them”
(406). As applied to motorcycling, I use feminist cultural studies to explore women’s experiences as motorcyclists in an effort to understand the challenges they face as women in a masculine culture. I understand feminist cultural studies to require both an intersectional analysis and specifically deal with hegemonic structures that are taken for granted in daily life. In this study, I look at the gendered, classed, and racial experiences of female motorcycle riders. Highlighting opinions and stories from marginalized populations (women in motorcycling) seeks to create increasing awareness of otherwise silenced voices. This work seeks to expose the issues related to gender, class, and race in motorcycling which we take for granted or go unquestioned. Throughout this project, I rely on feminist cultural studies to inform and guide my purpose and research.

The feminist cultural studies frame of this project combines sport and leisure theory with motorcycle studies and feminist theories. Motorcycle studies scholarship is still an emerging interdisciplinary field. It draws from fields such as anthropology (Joans), English (Ferriss), leisure studies (Roster), and popular industry-related works (Ferrar, Mullins). I situate motorcycle studies within sport and leisure studies as well as feminist theories to understand the gendered experiences of women within a sporting context, particularly the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge. My work uses motorcycle studies literature to inform the understanding of motorcycle culture as simultaneously masculine and a growing leisure space for women.

Drawing from sport and leisure literature, I gain an understanding of sport-scapes as masculine spaces and utilize its theoretical foundation in the center of sport. Drawing from both sport and leisure literature and motorcycle studies shows motorcycling as a subset of the sporting world. By doing so, it is possible to reimagine the sport hierarchy as an inclusive space
where no one sport is valued over another. Likewise, incorporating motorcycle studies into sport and leisure studies helps move our understanding of sport from a continuum, as Kane suggests, to a rhizomatic sporting model in which there are no binaries of beginning/end, good/bad, important/unimportant sport. This postmodern interpretation of sporting moves from an understanding of sporting excellence based on gender to an understanding based on ability. The addition of feminist theories helps to complicate the notions of gender throughout this project by understanding that there is not one correct way to enact or perform any gender. By combining both feminist standpoint theory and feminist and queer postmodern theories I understand women’s motorcycling experience as socially constructed, gender specific, and inherently complex.

In this work, I combine postmodern feminist theory and sport theory—applying Butler and Halberstam’s notions of masculinities and femininities to Messner and Connell’s hegemonic masculinity and center of sport. For Messner, there is only one center of sport—in which our best football and basketball players find power and control the sporting environment. However, I contend that each sport can have its own center. Thus, the center of the distance running world may be different than that of the football world and both are different than that of the motorcycling world. By assuming that there are centers to each sport context, we find varied sources of power and understand that the perpetuation of racism, sexism, and classism can enact itself in different ways. This plays into the postmodern elimination of binaries in that masculinities and femininities can be performed in different ways depending on the center of each sport. The application of standpoint theory and feminist cultural studies allows me to understand that women’s perspectives as athletes can change based on their experience, gender, race, class, or other identities, each offering a potentially different view of sport. Seeing multiple
centers of sport supports understanding masculinities and femininities in plurality, as postmodern feminism suggests.

Conclusions

By combining postmodern queer feminism with standpoint theories and feminist cultural studies, I construct an intersectional understanding of women who participate in the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge. I understand their experiences as simultaneously varied, unique, similar, and cohesive. They are connected through motorcycling and the challenge, yet each person’s experience of the ride in different ways was informed by her race, class, and/or gender identity. Being open to multiplicities helps me understand the varied perspectives of the women challengers while utilizing a critical lens of analysis. This work adds to the growing body of motorcycle studies literature by applying both a sporting and feminist perspective. I ask why these women chose to participate, how they were able to succeed, and to what extent their gender identities may have affected, challenged, or contributed to their participation. My purpose is to more fully understand why and how these women participate in this sporting context and examine if their experiences impact the larger motorcycling community.

It is my hope that this project will expose new opportunities for women in sport and in motorcycling. By queering the environment, women challenge the unquestioned dominance of masculinity in sport and cycling. More than anything, it is my desire for this project to be fun, productive, and meaningful for the women who participate. This project may draw attention to ways that women riders realize their potential for empowerment. I hope to provide voice to women who have (un)intentionally been systematically unheard, ignored, or made invisible within this space; their voices are rich, loud, and excited about their experiences. Additionally, I hope this opens increasing avenues for research regarding the unspoken misogyny, racism, and classism inherent in motorcycle culture. This project yields interesting data and narratives to add
to the motorcycle studies and sport and leisure scholarship ultimately proposing a new model for understanding the role of leisure in our lives.
CHAPTER 2: METHODS

I forgot a pen. I forgot an eff-ing pen. Seriously, Abby? Seriously? Setting off on a research trip and you don’t have a pen. My dad laughs at me as I tell him of my recent revelation. A man sitting next to us in the South Bend Regional Airport offers to help. He hands me a ballpoint pen. “Thanks.” It’s not like I can’t get more, I think to myself as the idiocy of the situation washes over me. We are going to Vegas, not Antarctica. Planning this research trip took more of my spring and summer—no…life—than I expected. Between corresponding with the challenge operators, gaining sponsorships, working any job I could get to raise money, writing (and rewriting, and rewriting) my Human Subjects Review Board proposal, meeting with my advisors, establishing my blog and social media sites, preparing the for challenge itself, scheduling flights, shipping bikes, and anticipating, I had been consumed. Either way, we are off; we made it to the airport. Our bikes are in Vegas. No clue what we are getting into.

Methodologies

This work uses ethnography to investigate women riders of the Hoka Hey and endurance sport more largely. The purpose of ethnography is to capture the essence of and understand a culture from the perspective of its participants. By conducting interviews and using participant observation qualitative researchers believe ethnography “captures the essence of life; [and]…ask(s) questions and listen(s) to those in our communities” (White 282). The value of ethnography comes in the detailed and complex process of observing, asking, and listening. In this form of research, individual identities, perspectives, and opinions are all validated and valued. Participant observation, autoethnography, informal interviews and formal interviews create the ethnographic body of my work.
Conducting ethnographic research requires preparation and interaction with people and their everyday lives. It is a personal endeavor, personal for both me as a researcher and for the women who participate in my research. My feminist cultural studies epistemology, here constructed through the methodology of feminist participatory research, requires me to situate myself as an equal with my research participants. As noted by Patricia Maguire in her work “Feminist Participatory Research”: “participatory research insists on an alternative positioning regarding the purpose of knowledge creation…the intent is to transform reality ‘with’ rather than ‘for’ oppressed people” (417). Through this process of interviewing and creating new knowledge, I hope the women riders are able to share their stories while also being empowered by having valuable knowledge to share. I have certainly felt empowered by and learned greatly from their experiences as I hope they have from sharing in this work. I strive to create equality in my interviews and eliminate the antiquated, positivist notion of an investigator/subject hierarchy. Rather, I understand ethnography as a process of mutually creating knowledge. In the space of ethnographic research we all have something to learn from one another.

Autoethnography is a process of qualitative inquiry through which scholars interrogate their own experiences. These personal experiences and observations of the researcher serve to further interpret and understand a given cultural setting. Autoethnographic researchers use narrative forms to create an easily accessible understanding of complex issues. Scholars believe that compelling narratives generate a deeper understanding of and connection to lived experiences. Through autoethnography scholars translate their lived experience into sites of critical research. This method is growing in acceptance and is used in disciplines that embrace qualitative inquiry such as cultural studies, sport and leisure studies and women’s studies. According to Heewon Chang’s *Autoethnography as Method*, autoethnography “combines
cultural analysis and interpretation with narrative details” (46). As Chang suggests, I hope to use my individual story “framed in the context of the bigger story, a story of society, to make autoethnography ethnographic” (49). I understand autoethnography as a method that integrates narrative style; however, autoethnography must be more than a story. As a critical method, autoethnography must combine or interpret theoretical applications through a narrative. In Andrew Sparkes’s reflections on writing autoethnographies, “Autoethnography and Narratives of Self: Reflections on Criteria in Action”, he indicates a need for the integration of theory and story. For Sparkes, in order for stories “to become part of the academic enterprise, something must be added to stories in the form of theoretical abstraction or conceptual elaboration” (24). Designed both to analyze and evoke feeling, narratives of self and autoethnographies are difficult endeavors, which seek to create connections among individual experiences.

As part of this method I use creative nonfiction to weave the women’s narratives together creating a compelling text that utilizes a holistic approach to research. My family comes from a working and middle class background. We are farmers, plumbers, teachers, and chefs. As I write, I keep in mind that my work means nothing if it cannot mean something to my family. This is not to say that they are stupid; quite the opposite, they are some of the most intelligent people I know. However, they are also unconcerned, uninterested, and bored with academic jargon. Similarly, I want my work to be accessible to the constituency about whom I write. These amazing women are not academics; my methodology binds me to be a vigilant storyteller and purveyor of their experiences. In my dissertation, I value telling a good story. Ethnographic work need not reflect stringent disciplinary jargon. Like the work of Natalie Barker-Ruchtie and Richard Tinning, “Foucault in Leotards: Corporeal Discipline in Women’s Artistic Gymnastics”, in which they use ethnographic design to interpret data from female Australian gymnasts, I will
use alternative methodologies to create didactic and personal account of the women on the Hoka Hey.

Reflexivity

I also use feminist methodology that requires me to reflect on my own subject position and biases. For this project, reflexivity informs my interpretation of motorcycling culture as well as my interpretations of femininity and womanhood. As a feminist cultural studies scholar, I am aware of gender biases and specifically look for gender imbalances in communities of which I am a part. I am a heterosexual female in my thirties and have been a part of the motorcycling community since I was a child. This position as woman, rider, and scholar allows me different vantage points from which to interpret motorcycle culture. Within this culture, I position myself as a rider first and scholar second and my standpoint changes based on how I position myself in different situations. For example, when I was on the road during the challenge I first established myself as a rider by entering the competition then revealed that I was conducting research. In that situation I was rider first and scholar second. However, when I am in a university setting, I consciously suppress my identity as a rider because it is less valued than my identity as a scholar. I do not feel that this changes the respect I receive in either culture, rather it enables me to be chameleon-like and adapt fluidly to the different cultural spaces.

Reflexivity requires more than listing identities. As such, I understand that my subject position as a researcher may influence the atmosphere of the challenge. Participants could feel uncomfortable being a subject of study or shield which information they share with me because they know I am conducting research. While I did not shield my level of education or position as a researcher, I intentionally situated myself as an insider in the culture rather than an outsider. While my position as a researcher offered me a level of power, the fact that I was a first time participant of the Hoka Hey meant that I had a great deal to learn from the past participants. In
2012, I was one of only two women new to the challenge, while the other four women were return participants. While participants of the Hoka Hey may have viewed me as a researcher, my position as a “newbie” in the culture made this power balance more egalitarian.

I have been a member of the motorcycling community since 1989 when my dad received his first motorcycle, a 1990 Harley-Davidson 1200 Sportster, as a Father’s Day gift. We began riding as a family when my mom learned to ride in 1991. I transitioned from passenger to rider in 1997 when I earned my motorcycle endorsement at the age of 16. I have ridden my own motorcycle ever since and continue to ride primarily with my family. Currently I ride a 2013 Harley-Davidson Road Glide Custom, but while participating in the 2012 Hoka Hey I rode a 2001 Harley-Davidson Dyna Wide Glide. Both of these motorcycles are large machines and considered “men’s bikes” whereas Harley’s smaller models (mainly the Sportster) are considered “women’s bikes.” Throughout my riding history I have taken distance motorcycle trips. Prior to the Hoka Hey, the longest distance I traveled on a motorcycle in a single trip was 2,330 miles from Laramie, Wyoming to Daytona Beach, Florida while conducting research for my Master’s thesis. However, compared to other participants in my research, I have done significantly fewer distance trips. Prior to the Hoka Hey, I considered myself a “fair weather” rider, one who only sets out on a ride in perfect or near perfect conditions. The Hoka Hey changed this for me. After having participated in the challenge, I am more willing to ride in the rain, cold, and other inclement weather conditions; however, I still do not believe that I ride at the same level as my fellow Hoka Hey challengers.

_Interviewing my friend and mentor from the challenge was easy, the conversation flowed like water from the tap. Then she started talking about how “we” rode and said,_


I think there are girls out there, like I said, that they get their bike out and they can’t, because you put them in a compromising situation and they can’t handle it. You know, it starts raining and we’ve got to sit here until it stops raining because I don’t ride in rain. You know, that kind of a rider is just a pretty face. And you know, we all, every sport needs ‘em. We love our pretty girls too. You know but I mean as far as a real rider, a real women rider, those are the ones that uh, if the makeup tends to slide across your face then it’s no big deal you’re out there for the ride. And you’ll keep comin’ back for more.

Oh shit, I don’t know where I fit in this, I think as she speaks. I feel like a fraud. I think I might be a pretty girl; but she thinks we’re the same. I don’t like to ride in the rain. I don’t like to WALK in the rain let alone have it pelt me in the face at 75 miles an hour while semis whiz past me spraying their grosso road crud all over me. I wear make up. Mascara in fact, during the pre-challenge days in Vegas. Maybe finishing the challenge makes her think we were the same? WE are REAL women riders. WE are different. WE completed the Hoka Hey. I hope she doesn’t find me out.

A process of reflexivity enables me to understand that I enter this research as a part of the motorcycle culture, which could arguably inhibit my objectivity. While I believe scholars can never be wholly objective, I have taken measures to ensure that my work is as unbiased as possible. Using multiple sources of data, such as participant observations, formal and informal interviews, enables me to create triangulation through which each source refers back to the other creating a dialogue among data sources. By seeing the work through multiple vantage points, I have the ability to compare and fully examine the women rider’s perspectives.
Furthering my objectivity, I understand that my subjectivity as a woman rider is essential as it allows me access to this community. While I understand that my experiences may be different than those of the other female participants, from my position I am able to see, feel, and understand women’s position as other in this culture. However, utilizing feminist cultural studies makes me hyper-vigilant of gender inequities in the culture. Thus, things I interpret as misogynistic, offensive, or oppressive may not be identified as such by other women challengers. Though I advocate feminism, I did not outwardly identify in this way to my fellow participants so as not to distance myself from the group in any way. However, when asked my political affiliations, I did not mislead the group. Because of this desire for transparency, during the interview process, I remained cognizant of not misinterpreting or misrepresenting the women’s voices. In order to do this, I transcribed each interview verbatim including pronunciation and inflection. As such, each quotation in this work reflects each woman’s own style and voice. Additionally, I asked follow up questions during each interview when necessary to clarify or expand on points. Further, I offered each participant the opportunity to reaffirm or change any opinions they previously stated in their interviews. At the end of each interview I made a point of asking the women if they had anything else they would like to change, add, or remove from the work. Each was also offered the opportunity to read the work and their interview transcription if they so chose.

In addition to my position as a participant in motorcycle culture, I also became increasingly connected to the Hoka Hey community. In part this came through my participation in the event but also through the process of researching and writing this dissertation. I was allowed additional access to certain situations and information which other participants may not have been allowed. Specifically I became friends with the challenge operators, Jim Red Cloud
and Beth Durham, as well as the women I interviewed. They are my friends, my mentors, and my family. However, my desire to accurately represent this faction of motorcycle culture, its participants, and the challenge, outweigh the affiliations I have assumed as a result of my participation. Again to ensure accuracy of my research I did not alter any challenge related texts or conversations to portray these people or their experiences in a more positive light. The negative aspects of the culture and the challenge are not mitigated, rather they are exposed and questioned in order to make the event better and the culture more inclusive.

We arrive at Beth and Jim’s home on the Friday before the chief’s funeral, part of a small group invited to ceremony. I have no clue what ceremony means. I awkwardly amble through the yard my heart still pounding from successfully yet awkwardly navigating the stone drive and parking my bike at the end of their yard. Unsure of where to go, like we would be arriving at any friend’s house for the first time, we thankfully see Beth in the garage and avoid the uncomfortable choice of which door to knock on. Round of hugs. As instructed, we grab the extra chairs and carry them around the house toward the sweat lodge, the social epicenter of the evening. Yes, the sweat lodge. We mill about as Jim fans and sprays a large bonfire with a standard green hose. Beth pulls the ladies aside. Six of us in all. “Jim doesn’t normally sweat with women he’s not related to. I’m not sure what he’ll want to do, he might have us sweat separately from the men, but if you want to participate I have dresses and skirts you can borrow. Oh, and if you’re on your cycle, we ask that you don’t participate.” She goes on to explain about moon camps created during Sun Dance and the bad vibes menstruation creates. Thankfully I am not on my moon cycle and am eager to participate in any kind of sweat. “We’ll all go in together,” Jim declares. We are related. We are family. Hoka Hey family.


Jim’s emphasis on trusting me as a writer and scholar stems not only from the relationship we built (evident in his nickname for me, Gabby), but also from a history of cultural exploitation. The historic appropriation of Native American culture is not lost on me as a scholar. I understand that I have the ability to represent specific people and, tangentially, larger cultural groups. My cognizance of the misrepresentation or cultural appropriation of Native American cultures informs my writing and presentation of material. I made a point to ask permission to print or discuss situations, experiences, and ceremonies associated with the Lakota culture. Likewise, when asked, I refrained from writing about certain ceremonies, as these were indicated to be for us as a family, not the public. Nearly ever time I saw Jim, he encouraged me to “write good words,” an affirmation which not only gives me power as a scholar but also challenges me to accurately represent my friends with an air of social consciousness.

Method

Access To Community

Gaining access and building trust are integral components of conducting ethnographic research. For the purposes of this project, being a member of the motorcycling community and participating in the Hoka Hey gave me access to the community, established me as a legitimate
rider, and built trust with the women I later interviewed. Had I not been a rider or participated in the challenge, I would not have had the same level of access to the community. Like many subcultures, motorcyclists are leery of being subjects of “study.” Positioning myself as a part of the culture and as a Hoka Hey participant alleviated some of the potential hesitancies of the women. During interviews, women riders commented on my ability to participate in the challenge and associated with me as a fellow Hoka Hey challenger. Gaining trust is a result of being a part of a group, here women riders of the Hoka Hey, and respect comes from the need to be a skilled rider, that few riders take on the challenge, and that even fewer women take on the challenge.

I also gained access from challenge operators to conduct research during the event. Challenge operators provided and approved my access to document the event as a participant observer. Additionally, I acquired permission to use the challenge documents such as a marketing packet, official rules and regulations, and applications. I notified challenge operators and gained permission to speak with event staff and participants about my research throughout the ride. The operators also assisted in my snowball sampling technique by contacting and informing women riders of the Hoka Hey about my project. Through their assistance, I gained a majority of my interviews. The access provided by the Hoka Hey operators was instrumental in my ability to conduct research in this environment and gain access to the widest variety of participants.

Participants And Procedure

The participant observation portion of my research included participants and challenge operators of the 2012 Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge. This consisted of both men and women motorcycle riders. Due to challenge specifications, participants could ride any American made V-Twin motorcycles; however, most participants rode Harley-Davidson motorcycles. Primarily the challenge participants were white, although there was a very small number of Native
American participants. Challenge operators were both Native American and white. Due to the fiduciary constraints of participation in the Hoka Hey, most riders were of middle or working class backgrounds with the ability to take time off from employment (through saving vacation days or seasonal work) or who did not work (those in retirement).

There is a shining purple Harley Davidson two car lengths in front of me at the intersection of Flamingo and Mountain Vista. The reflecting light from the sparkly bedazzles on her helmet cover catch my eye and, as intended, draw attention from bike to rider. Her curly dusty blonde hair, feathers, and earrings stuck out under her purple bedazzled helmet. Hair falls delicately down her back as it blows in the warm Las Vegas wind. “Dad, Look! She’s wearing a Hoka Hey vest!” I shout (probably too loudly) over the roar of our engines. “I’m going to talk to her!” We had been in town for a day but she was the first woman rider I had seen at the challenge. Overly excited and charged with the enthusiasm of meeting more than a potential participant but a fellow woman rider, challenger, and perhaps new friend, I charge forward recklessly passing the cars that separate us. Thankful for another red light, I pull close to her and shout like an eager fifth-grader, “Hi! I’m Abby! This is my dad, we’re doing the Hoka Hey too!” She stares at me for a second quickly repositioning a polite smile in place of the startled agape mouth which initially welcomed my craziness. “Oh, cool. I’m Wendy,” she replies nodding, wondering if I am a stalker or just rude. I could not mask the excitement in my voice as I rush to get the words out before the light turned green, “Great, Wendy! So nice to meet you. I’m writing my dissertation on women who participate in the Hoka Hey. Maybe we can talk!?! ” Presumably thankful that the light turns green and traffic begins to move, she yells, “Yeah. Sure. See you around the hotel.”
Participants for informal interviews, both men and women who participated or were associated with the Hoka Hey were informed that I was doing research for a dissertation. In order to be transparent about my intentions to potentially utilize my interactions with participants in research I made an announcement during the pre-challenge rider party to the entire group regarding my research. I informed challengers that I would be conducting participant observation and having informal discussions throughout the challenge and at various events. I invited people to speak with me and tell stories if they liked or to avoid me if they so chose. Many male and female challengers commented on my work throughout the ride as a result.

Formal interview participants were recruited in three ways. First, during the Challenge, I asked potential participants face-to-face if they were interested in participating in an interview about their experiences. I followed my recruiting script when requesting participation in interviews. Second, I used a snowball technique in which I asked people I met during the challenge, and the Hoka Hey corporation, and other interviewees to forward my recruitment script to other riders who may be interested in being interviewed. Third, I asked people I met during the ride and other interviewees to give me the email addresses of other riders who may be interested in being interviewed. Then I emailed those potential participants my recruitment script. These tactics resulted in semi-structured interviews with women from all three previous Hoka Hey challenges.

Interview participants were women who participated in any Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge. I conducted interviews with fourteen women. The women interviewed all identified as white or Caucasian. Like the larger group of participants, they were primarily working or middle class. Although some had previously retired, all the women held jobs at the time of their participation in the challenge. Many of the women held jobs related to the motorcycling industry
as retail associates, small business owners, and test riders. At the time of their respective interviews, the women ranged in age from 28 to 57 years old; over half of the women riders were in their 50s. A table listing demographic information follows:

**Table 1. Participant Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>HHMC Year</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junie Rose</td>
<td>2010-2012</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Assembly plant operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Motorcycle test rider (HD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheila</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Construction worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Motor clothes Retail (HD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jersey Pearl</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Self-employed (women’s motorcycle shop)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryana</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Student (Ultrasound)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly Quinn</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Self-employed (Throttle Girl)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debra</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Home Cleaning Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Self-employed (real-estate manager)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schatzi</td>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Self-Employed (excavating)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debby</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Self-Employed (HD Dealer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eden</td>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherie</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Drug and Alcohol Counselor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participant Observation and Informal Interviews**

Participant observation occurred during the 2012 Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge. I engaged in informal conversations and observed male and female participants, challenge
operators, and the general public. While a majority of my experience happened in a small group (my dad and one other male riding partner), interactions with the larger group occurred at rider meetings, in the garage before the challenge, during registration, and after the challenge at the finish line and post-challenge party. I observed 75 to 100 women and men during my experience in the fourteen day event. I was present for the entirety of the fourteen day challenge, engaging in participant observation as a challenger in the Hoka Hey. I observed public behavior of other participants, challenge staff, and observers of the event. All observations were conducted in public space. Detailed notes were taken throughout this process. Additionally, I audio-recorded pre-challenge rider meetings to ensure accuracy of information and to supplement my field notes. During the challenge, I took notes while on the road at gas stops or at night before going to sleep. I either verbally articulated and audio-recorded, or hand wrote these notes. I ensured that my personal experiences were detailed separately from interactions with other participants.

Informal interviews helped me to understand the overall atmosphere of the challenge and male participants’ views of female riders. According to Krane and Baird’s 2005 article, “Using Ethnography in Applied Sport Psychology”, informal “interviews are brief discussions that provide further insight into the participants’ behaviors. Informal interviews are best described as casual conversations initiated by the participant-observer when an opportunity arises. In some cases, they may consist of a single question. At other times, the researcher is afforded more latitude and longer discussion occurs” (97). Krane and Baird’s interpretation of informal interviews informed my interactions with men and women during my participant observation. The easy-going nature of these informal interviews helped me build rapport, an essential element of feminist research.
Throughout my observations, I conducted informal interviews (i.e. casual conversations). During participant observation, informal interviews help focus observations. These interviews remained causal and supplemented my formal interviews with women riders. I informed participants that I was writing my dissertation research on women who participate in motorcycling endurance challenges. They similarly were informed that I might use their words as part of my final analysis, that I would keep any identifying information confidential by coding their name and any other potentially identifiable information if desired, and that their participation in this research is entirely voluntary. I made an initial disclaimer publically at the first rider meeting and then reminded participants about my research as I spoke with them individually. These discussions focused on participants’ experiences during the ride and occurred at checkpoints, gas stations, and during meals. Because these interactions were spontaneous and flowed from the activity at the moment, there was no formal script for questions during these exchanges; rather, to keep participants comfortable and build rapport, I simply engaged them in conversation. During the challenge we did not have time for lengthy structured conversation and as such I did not follow a formal line of questioning with each participant; instead, exchanges were brief and varied with each participant and interaction.

Autoethnography

My personal experiences on the Hoka Hey serve as the basis for my autoethnographic research. During the trip I kept detailed field notes, audio-recording notes on my daily experiences on the ride. While on the ride, I used down time or time not on the bike to take notes and compile data in a field log. This field log mostly consisted of my own daily experiences and observations about the route, weather, distance traveled, and interactions with other challengers. After the pre-challenge meetings, I also recorded my thoughts by typing field notes on my computer. Additionally, I engaged with social media throughout the Hoka Hey to chart my
progress and allow my supporters at home to accompany me on this cross-country adventure. During the trip, I blogged about my experience. A record of the blog is online and open to the public at www.womenonthehokahey.blogspot.com. The pictures and text from the blog supplement the autoethnographic portion of this work.

*Formal Interviews*

I continue my ethnographic research by focusing on the other women challengers of the 2010, 2011, and 2012 Hoka Hey. Fourteen women participated in one to one and one-half hour semi-structured interviews following the 2012 ride between November 2012 and May 2013. Because of the disparate areas of the country in which these women reside, in person interviews were not always possible. I conducted a small number of interviews in person and I used telephone, Skype, and email exchanges to gain further insights into the women’s journeys. I followed my HSRB approved recruitment script when asking if riders they wanted to participate in a semi-structured interview. People recruited for semi-structured interviews were asked to participate in a sixty to ninety minute interview scheduled at a time convenient to their schedules. After they agreed, I emailed participants an approved consent form so they could read it before we met for the interview. At the time of the interview, I asked them if they had any questions, answered their questions, and then asked them to sign the consent document or to provide verbal consent for audio-recorded interviews.

Participants engaged in one to two interview sessions. The topics covered in the interviews included their experiences during the Hoka Hey Challenge, their experiences as a woman rider, and demographic information. Questions were developed based on my initial interpretations of what the Hoka Hey might be like. Because I had not yet participated in the Hoka Hey when I developed the questions, I based these on what I wanted to know as a woman rider about to participate in the challenge for the first time.
During interviews, I focused on creating a relaxed atmosphere for my participants. In doing this, I strove to make the interviews as friendly and conversational as possible. My desire to use feminist methodology encouraged me to be respectful of my research participants and create non-hierarchical spaces in which they felt comfortable sharing their stories. I wanted the women to feel at ease speaking with me. Many women indicated that they were nervous about speaking with me and felt as if they may not be “good” contributors. I attempted to create connections with the women and build rapport to alleviate these concerns. I reassured the women riders that at any time during the interview they could ask me questions and that we were merely having a conversation. I intentionally began interviews with demographic questions that were “easy” for participants to answer. Next I focused on questions about motorcycling in general and then moved into questions specific to the Hoka Hey so as to devote the most attention to this topic. Often during the interviews women asked about my experience on the Hoka Hey, which I shared openly to create a greater connection. During the interviews I made jokes or offered insider knowledge to build trust and make the participants feel more comfortable.

I audio-recorded all interviews and transcribed them word-for-word. After reviewing each interview during the transcription process, I gauged the need to ask participants for a second, shorter interview (30 to 60 minutes) to allow time for further clarification and elaboration. Second interviews were conducted if I had additional questions for a participant, if I required clarification about a particular meaning, or if there were unfinished stories. I conducted follow up interviews via email exchanges with two participants and one additional participant emailed me photos of her ride to supplement my work.

Data Analysis

Preparing my data for analysis was an integral part of my method. First I transcribed any audio-recorded field notes and typed any handwritten field notes. Then I transcribed all
interviews with the women riders. On average, it took me an hour to transcribe fifteen minutes of an interview. Because I am using creative nonfiction, I found it important to accommodate and record the nuances in speech and nonverbal communication. To this end, the transcriptions were done word for word and included inflections in the women’s speech. Nonverbal communication is also recorded throughout the transcripts using parentheses to indicate descriptions of physical motion or by incorporating the word “pause” when a participant stopped talking for a period of time. While some scholars choose to outsource their transcriptions, I felt this offered me an additional layer of connectivity with the women and their interviews. By personally transcribing the interviews I was able to have an in-depth understanding of the women riders’ perspectives more so than if I had only conducted the interviews.

After preparing the data for analysis, I began the process of coding and interpreting the data. I began by assigning initial minute coding to each interview. During this process of open coding, I used a vast number of codes. I did not seek out specific themes for coding; instead I coded all meaningful segments of text for further analysis. I considered everything as potentially useful. Next I grouped quotations from common open codes together to verify that my coding was consistent throughout the interviews. After assembling the open codes, I used the process of axial coding to seek connections among the codes and created higher-level codes. The higher level codes were then developed into themes which provide structure to my analysis. Throughout the entire process of coding and data analysis, I kept my research questions and conceptual framework present in my mind.
CHAPTER 3: CONTEXTUALIZING THE HOKA HEY

An imposing Native American man sits atop a bright yellow Harley-Davidson motorcycle. He wears the same Hoka Hey tank top and jeans that I saw him wear so many times on the Hoka Hey. His tanned skin makes his large tattoos difficult to decipher. His is a familiar face—deep smile lines around his mouth, his rose-colored glasses perched just below his billowy eyebrows. A source of comfort from the ride, his was the face I looked to many times for strength and advice throughout my 6,000-mile journey. I press play on the embedded YouTube video, giddy with the thought of seeing my old friend come to life if only on my computer. He begins talking to the camera, uncomfortable and with a tinge of awkwardness as he clearly reads from a script, “Hi, I’m Jim Red Cloud, founder of the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge.”

“Hi, Jim,” I think and wink at the small digital image of my friend and mentor. He continues the endorsement video for event sponsor Cee Bailey’s windshields. As the short video progresses, I cringe as the words come out of his mouth, “So if you’re looking for a windshield that’s been tested by the most toughest motorcycle challenge in history, and the toughest men in history, then you wanna look towards Cee Bailey. Toss me a Rockstar.” The can of energy drink flying in from the right side of the scene hits the Cee Bailey windshield like his words hit my heart. The toughest MEN in history? What about the women? What about us? Thanks for reminding me that this culture lauds masculinity above all else. Despite its comical nature, the advertisement video reinforces that I, and my fellow women riders, play in a man’s world.

Historically, both motorcycle culture and sport glorify masculinity. The Cee Bailey/Hoka Hey endorsement video highlights the invisibility of female participants in the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge (HHMC). While these sentiments may not reflect the actual opinions of challenge operators, they mediate the public and female participant’s interpretation of
motorcycle culture and the challenge environment. In this chapter, I describe the roots of the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge in Native American culture, and the social justice aspects of the conditions of the challenge, as well as the event itself. As part of my ethnographic findings, I utilize documents and artifacts from the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge and my personal experiences to characterize the challenge. In addition, I critically examine historical and contemporary media representations of motorcycling and the cultural associations of motorcycling. The analysis of motorcycle culture and the Hoka Hey documents converge to offer a thorough understanding of the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge within the context of motorcycle culture. What emerges from this interpretation is a site of layered masculinities, race, and class, in which challenge participants constantly interact. Consequently, the culture outlined in this chapter, exemplified by the commercial described above, is what women face when they choose to participate in the Hoka Hey. Within this cultural context, women’s standpoints as women riders are constantly negotiated.

The Hoka Hey Cultural Ties to Native Americans

The Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge began as an awareness-raising event to bring attention to the conditions of the Lakota Sioux. The Native American challenge organizers sought a nationwide event to bring attention to the plight of our country’s indigenous peoples, specifically the substandard living conditions of the Lakota Sioux on the Pine Ridge Reservation in the Black Hills of South Dakota. A life-long motorcyclist himself, Jim Red Cloud—event founder, attorney, and member of the tribe—noted the philanthropic power of motorcyclists, the motorcycle’s ability to draw people in, and its position as a literal vehicle of a given message. The message each challenger carries is the Sioux warrior cry of Hoka Hey.
The term Hoka Hey means “This is a good day to die” (Niehardt). It is a Lakota Sioux warrior cry most famously used by Crazy Horse during the battle of Little Big Horn. The Oglala Sioux imbued this warrior cry with significance by using the term continually. Hoka Hey insinuates a readiness to die for a cause and simultaneous acceptance of a life well led. Even today, the cultural significance of this phrase comes across time and space in tribute to all Native American warriors. Hoka Hey is not only the name of a motorcycle challenge but also a mindset. Because of its significance to the Oglala Sioux, it is a phrase given to challenge participants to wear as a badge of honor. Hoka Hey emblazons each bandana, t-shirt, sticker, challenge coin,
and motorcycle associated with the event. Figure 2 depicts the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge logo including the Hoka Hey moniker. The call is regularly acclaimed by challenge participants. They shout “HOKA HEY!” before rides, upon their successful completion, and throughout each ride. It is simultaneously a remembrance of those who have gone before us, and a reminder that we must be fully accepting of and at peace with our lives everyday, in case it is our day to die. This moniker ties the motorcycle challenge to Native American culture; there are also numerous additional links to the Lakota Sioux culture that run throughout the challenge.

We gathered in the parking lot of Las Vegas Harley-Davidson, the darkness of the early morning surrounding us. Our bikes formed two long lines, people everywhere taking last minute pictures of the directions in case their only copy became ruined by the elements. A nervous excitement filled the air as riders encircled Jim. The sun began to rise over the mountains to reveal looks of anticipation surrounding me. My heart pounded as he gave the blessing for the warriors in Lakota. Then an English translation, far less beautiful but still full of meaning, “Bless these warriors as we ride our steel horses into battle. Keep your heart strong. And God’s hands on you. Cause by the end of today, you’ll be dancing with him. But remember, it’s just a dance. Enjoy the ride. And keep us all safe so you can see your families again.” We stood for a moment in silence as he began to sing. Heads fell as he finished and walked away. I stood awkwardly among the other riders, tense with exhilaration yet not knowing how to respond to such a powerful moment. A lone rider broke the silence with a whistle, then the crowd roared together, “Hoka Hey!” We mounted our bikes, ready to accept the challenge.

While the term Hoka Hey means “It’s a good day to die” challenge founders changed race memorabilia to read, “It’s a good day to ride”; however, challenge coins retain the original translation.
The Sioux have a traumatic past steeped in war, loss, and devastation. Like many Native American tribes pushed from their land by the American government, the Oglala Sioux now live on a reservation in South Dakota. While intended to allow Native Americans to live as they pleased, reservations did not keep out the white culture surrounding making it impossible for the

Yellow is an important Native American color, a color for chiefs.

(Author's photo)
Sioux to continue many of their cultural practices. The elimination of animal herds, desire for fossil fuels and minerals on the land, and continual influx of whites to the area forced the Sioux to assimilate to white culture. However, the Sioux received little help from the government and the Lakota Sioux living on the reservation fell into a number of devastating conditions. The Pine Ridge Reservation today is one of the largest Native American reservations in the country. Impoverished from a long history of white power and greed, the Sioux suffer from alcoholism, diabetes, unemployment, as well as high rates of infant mortality and teen suicide. Many now are homeless and much of the reservation lacks clean running water. These deplorable conditions exist in the United States, but also under the watchful eyes of Mount Rushmore, a monument to our nation’s early leaders who professed democracy, equality, and justice for all. This is the message Hoka Hey challengers attempt to empathize with and understand as they champion the cause and discuss the lives of the Lakota Sioux on Pine Ridge.

She mentioned passing through Pine Ridge on the 2011 ride. I took the opportunity to ask for a description. Schatzi described the conditions. She faced her own privilege as her voice strained with anger and confusion. “They really are poor. And not to have running water really is a sin. It is something we take for granted so easily. They don’t even have it. So I mean, indoor plumbing is definitely really nice. And for them to use outhouses...those days are gone. Or should be. But they’re so poor, no one is really doing anything about it. And it’s not easy in Pine Ridge. The weather in the Dakotas can be hot as heck in the summer time and cold in the winter. It’s extreme. We get very spoiled” (Schatzi, 2011, 2012, 2013).

Intended to raise awareness for the Pine Ridge Reservation, organizers ask Hoka Hey challengers to tell the story of today’s Lakota Sioux as they cross the country. While this may seem like an insurmountable task because riders spend most of their days actually riding,
opportunities for discussing the hardships of Pine Ridge abound. At each stop for gas, food, or facilities, strangers ask participants why they are on the road. In addition, each challenger’s motorcycle must don the Hoka Hey logo and many riders affix their Hoka Hey bandana to their bikes or their person. These symbols serve as invitations for the public to ask questions about the ride and for riders to share the Sioux story. Not only do challengers speak out about the deplorable conditions on Pine Ridge, they also see first hand the abject poverty of Native American tribes as they cross into and out of reservations across the country. Because the route takes challengers through reservations, and other sites of injustice in our country (such as WWII era Japanese internment camps), many challengers experience consciousness-raising moments during the ride as their own assumptions, values, and worldviews come into question on the road. Most Hoka Hey challengers are white men, a particularly important constituent group in the quest to raise awareness. Historically, and still today, white men hold the most power within our nation. Thus gaining white (male) allies, here Hoka Hey challengers, is crucial to moving forward social causes. They retain the most interest in maintaining current conditions. However it can be argued that white men also have the most power and thus can affect the most change.

“Every single turn had a meaning. Now our job was to pass through Indian reservations and you know areas where Indian battles had been.” Her voice pained as tears started to form in her eyes. “And we were...Supposed to be collecting the souls of the warriors to carry them home. So wow...It was just so...” The anguish of the ride flooded back into her memory. “And I’m not a spiritual person. But it really was. You know, everywhere you turned you saw something of this country you really took for granted. How we destroy her. And then the next thing you see. We rode through literally straight through farms in Alabama almost as if you were riding on someone’s property. There was this appreciation of what the earth had... But we had
no idea what Big Jim’s actual premise for the ride was until we got to the Challenger’s meeting
down in Key West. And that is when he told us about carrying the soul home.” Her tears
continued to fall as she mustered through the words. “So we had no idea. And then it like all just
clicked. It just clicked.” She wiped the tears from her face, thankful for the ride. “And then it
was like a gift. That we didn’t expect” (Jersey Pearl 2010).

During the 2010 Hoka Hey challenge, organizers informed participants of the vision of
the Hoka Hey. Native American organizers asked (primarily) white challengers to profess the
story of Pine Ridge as they rode across the country. At the pre-challenge party they also asked
riders to collect and bring home the souls of fallen Native American warriors. Each ride passed
through ancient battlegrounds, grazed burial grounds, and wove in and out of reservations.
Challenge organizers saw participants as warriors on a quest to bring justice and awareness to the
Native American people. The History page on the Hoka Hey website champions this warrior
mentality. It describes challengers as “warrior riders” who are “prepared for combat”
(“History”). At the outset of the challenge, Native Americans glorify riders with traditional
ceremonial warrior blessings. Multiple Native American prayers and songs accompany the
starting line rituals. As challengers pass through the various reservations, state parks, and public
lands that once made up the pride of Nations, they are reminded of the reason for their
participation. Challengers see first hand the grandeur of national parks, formerly Native
American land, and how those parks stand in stark contrast to the poverty of current Native
American living conditions.

I stared at Jim’s big yellow Road Glide as we stood next to the Lincoln Highway marker
somewhere in Utah. “So, is yellow your favorite color?” I naïvely asked. “Oh, that bike was
donated to me by Harley. But yellow is a Chief’s color. That’s why your bandanas are yellow.”
The cigarette smoke followed the path of his hand as he gestured toward my bike. “It’s important for my people. And meant to protect you and give you power.” Jim replied without much more of a thought. “Cool.” I said, embarrassed by such a trite response; I struggled to articulate the value I found in his willingness to expose and share his culture.

Additional cultural significance presents itself throughout the challenge. Challengers’ bandanas, given as part of the rider packet, are yellow, a chief’s color. Challenge operators stated there would be four challenges in four years, an “important ritual number for the Lakotas” (Neihardt 20) until the current organizers hope it will be taken over by another tribe in need. Native American values abound throughout the event. Not only are challengers called warriors, but also organizers remind participants that unity and peace are means through which we accomplish goals. Each individual ride is touted as a spiritual journey for challengers.
The Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge

Occurring annually since its founding in 2010, the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge is an endurance motorcycle challenge, which raises awareness for the Lakota Sioux Reservation of Pine Ridge in South Dakota. Each year, the challenge takes riders across the country on “the longest and most grueling motorcycle challenge on earth” (Hoka Hey). Challenge organizers intend for riders to sleep outside to understand homelessness and, as a result, speak to the public with whom they interact about the sub-standard living conditions on Pine Ridge. This challenge becomes part outdoor adventure, part motorcycle challenge, part vision quest, and part awareness raising social justice event. While the challenge course changes each year, the overarching qualities of the Hoka Hey remain relatively consistent. Standard markers of the Hoka Hey include: turn-by-turn directions, utilizing only secondary roads, checkpoints, the difficulty of the ride, and the specific time frame in which riders are asked to complete the challenge. Challenge organizers design these elements to make the ride intentionally difficult.

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4 The Hoka Hey organizers and those most familiar with the culture adamantly use the term challenge not race to define the Hoka Hey. Clearly the terms race and challenge differ; race indicating a sense of competition against other participants and challenge insinuating a personal competition. However, in my opinion the level of competition associated with the Hoka Hey is both that of a race and a challenge. During the 2010 event, organizers used a first-to-the-finish-line model in which only one person won prize money. In subsequent years, they focused on the challenge aspect of the event and created a “window” for finishing to win prizes. This change intended to create a more inclusive environment in which participants only competed with themselves. While organizers encourage participants to only compete with themselves, the presence of other riders makes it almost impossible to not pit yourself against someone else at one point or another along the ride. To respect the culture, I use the term challenge to describe the ride throughout this work.
Set during the warm summer months most common for motorcycle riding, the challenge takes place anywhere from June to August. Because of the length of the ride, which historically has varied between 6,000 miles to 14,500 miles, participants remain on the course for anywhere from five days to a month. Despite hosting the event during the summer, the distance and cross-country nature of the ride create temperature extremes. The challenge has traversed into Canada and Alaska and also to the Southwestern United States. The variety in topography of the event makes for cold days, hot nights, rain, sleet, snow, and everything in between. Riders must be prepared for any situation, while understanding that it is not possible to foresee everything the road and course will bring. This element of the unexpected is part of what makes the Hoka Hey so challenging.

While riding a motorcycle always implies an element of risk, the difficulty of the ride and allotted time frame give challengers reason (or excuses) to participate in dangerous behavior. Two challengers lost their lives during the 2010 event and 2012 left a 70-year-old man in critical condition in a Missouri hospital. After the first event, challenge organizers went to great lengths to dissuade participants from being careless, riding under sleep-deprived conditions, and competing with one another. In each challenge, riders sign waivers absolving challenge operators of any impending fault. The first lines of the “Terms and Conditions” speak to organizers’ desires to create a fair and safe event. They state:

HOKA HEY MOTORCYCLE CHALLENGE™ (the “Event”) is a challenge of endurance, navigation, long distance riding skills and the ability to execute those skills safely and in strict compliance with all state and federal laws, while adhering to all of the Terms and Conditions of the Event. Applicants (“you”) must not compete in any manner with other participants. You must only challenge yourself. You must NOT place any bets
or wagers of any kind in relation to the Event. You must drive safely and abide by all
motor vehicle laws and provisions in each State. You must drive with proper courtesy to
all other participants and members of the public. This event is not a race or competition
to arrive first at any location (1).

Stipulations of not placing wagers and abiding by motor vehicle laws are intended to keep
participants safe. Betting with other participants increases the intensity of the competition and
creates a dangerous culture. Despite best intentions, this statement does not keep challengers
from betting with one another and altering the sense of competition—changing from a personal
competition to a competition with whomever made the wager. Many participants encourage new
challengers to “ride your own ride”; however, some challengers will violate safety laws, enact
dangerous behavior, and compete with one another.

One reason for this increased sense of competition and dangerous behavior is the time
frame within which challengers must complete the route. Each challenge asks riders to complete
the ride within a given time frame to be noted as a challenge finisher. There are three places for
challengers—contenders, finishers, and arrivals. Contenders complete the challenge within a
specific window of time and are eligible to win prize money. However, contenders may not
receive prize money if they fail to follow the rules properly. Finishers complete the challenge
within a longer period of time, typically any time prior to the awards ceremony. Arrivals are
those who cross the finish line anytime after the awards ceremony. Event organizers determine
the time frame for each challenge by assigning an official rider to test the route each year. The
amount of time in which the official rider completes the route then determines the window for
winning prize money. Unlike foot racing, the course never closes. Instead, organizers vow to stay
at the finish line as long as they know there are riders on the course. While the time frame for
each challenge differs, typically riders must average approximately 1,000 miles per day. For example, in 2012, the 6,000-mile course was to be completed within seven days. During this challenge, the finish line was open for a thirty-six hour window between the sixth and seventh day of the challenge. Anyone who crossed the finish line during the given period of time was considered a contender and split the prize money equally. In addition to challenging participants to move rapidly through the course, the window of time the finish line is “open” keeps riders on the road for longer than may be necessary. For example, the finish line may not open until the seventh day of the challenge while some riders may finish the challenge in only five days.

Because the challenge operates without a large support team, this allows organizers time to cross the country but is also intended with the safety of the riders in mind.

_We are STILL in Arkansas. Only half way through the course. We’ve been on the road for five or six days; they’re starting to blur together. “Ok. I love you too. Talk to you later, Momma. Thanks for the information.” Aggravated and exhausted I hang up the phone and slump my head between my bent knees sitting on the gas station curb. My body aches. The exhaustion of the trip began to set in._

_“She said someone’s already at the finish.” I sigh as the words fell out of my mouth. “It’s on the tracker. Someone’s just sitting in New York.” Stunned. Tired. Confused at the possibility. Our trek was only beginning. Despite a sandstorm, hail, and four thousand miles, our journey was just beginning while someone else’s had already come to a close._

_“Hhhuh. But the finish line doesn’t open for two more days!” My dad shouts, laughs, throws up his hands, full of a Pepsi and Oreo snack. “Guess that’s why they said take your time.”_  

_“And you didn’t think it was possible,” I jibe back._
“Well, they have to be cheating,” he said emphatically.

“Well, they certainly weren’t sitting by the side of the road in Arkansas drinking Pepsi and eating Oreos.” We laugh at ourselves and climb laboriously back onto the bikes without another word.

A turn-by-turn challenge requires riders to follow a specific pre-set route. Each rider follows the same course; the rules for the Hoka Hey specify riders must not deviate from this route. While most races are turn-by-turn, the Hoka Hey does not provide markers along the route to indicate turns. It would be virtually impossible to mark the massive cross-country route. Instead, riders must read and follow the directions perfectly. Specifically, the challenge “Terms and Conditions” packet indicates, “Participants must adhere to the prescribed route as written in the driving directions that will be provided. If you find that you have strayed from the route, you must backtrack or circle around to the place you left the route and continue from that point” (1). Printed on standard size paper with a standard font size, directions are difficult to read on a motorcycle. Figure 3 offers a sample page of directions. They indicate which direction, left or right, riders must turn, onto which road, and for how many miles riders stay on a particular road, and the total number of miles traveled. While challenge organizers call this a map there is no pictorial representation of the route5. Increasing the difficulty of the ride, the routes only utilize secondary roadways.

Turn Right onto NW 62nd Street go 4.99 miles to NW Humphrey Road then turn Left onto NW 66th in .52 miles. The directions continue like this for the remaining third of the page. I think

5 In 2010, riders received a small pictorial representation of the route on the first page of each direction set; however, they did not receive specific mileage between turns as was the case in subsequent years.
it will be easy. Big streets. Well marked signs through a town. But once again I am reminded this was the Hoka Hey and it isn’t going to be THAT easy. Despite the numbering and naming of the streets, we are still riding through cornfields. Occasionally a house or farm dots the landscape but essentially we are alone on country roads. The signage is typical for any country road, small and usually tipped over or leaning from being hit by a car or knocked over by teenager pranksters. Sometimes we encounter a stop sign but largely the roads just turn into one another. It is a Right, Right, Left, Straight, Left, Left, Right scenario which confuses me and makes me think we are just riding in circles. Of course, you can only turn so many times left in a row before you’re just back in the same place. It is a feeling of endlessness and exhaustion I had not before experienced. Just get through this to Rossville and we’ll find a place to stop.

Prior to this point, my dad and I had been conferring on directions. We’d stop at an intersection and think about which way to go. We’d confirm we were going in the right direction. But this time it was too hot to stop. I can feel my dad starting to wear down behind me. He is falling back. I have to get him off the road. The reflection of his face in my mirror looks more like a purple dot than his normal mustachioed features. He doesn’t do well in the heat. Then, as the eternity of left hand turns seems unending, my consciousness shifts. I don’t know if it is the heat, or the exhaustion, or a survival instinct to get off the road, or just that I am in the right frame of mind but somehow I see the roads coming before they were there. I finally get the directions. It feels AWESOME. Confidence and adrenaline surge through my body. “Fuck yeah,” I yelled to no one and the world, “I finally GET IT!” I don’t need to stop to ask my dad if we were going in the right direction. It was like I rode through these cornfields all my life and I am on my way home from work. I know Humphrey road will be the next right. I don’t need help
and I am not questioning myself. About six miles into the series of half mile followed by two-mile stretches, he starts to fall behind. I wait for him at a stop sign.

“You see where we are?” I yell over the roar of our engines. He looks back. “We’re down here,” I point excitedly to my directions about three fourths of the way down the page.

“Oh,” he says flatly, “I was looking for 66th.” That was a few miles back. I start to explain the directions to him. His face and arms are turning a deeper shade of purple from the sun. There isn’t any time to explain. I need to get us out of this heat. Just a few more miles to Rossville.

“Just follow me. I get the directions now.” I take off down the road.

...My dad stands by our bikes and filled them with gas. He doesn’t speak much. “I totally nailed those directions!” I am excited and let my emotions show. It is one of my greatest moments of triumph throughout the trip. My dad admits he was confused by the directions. I thought it was just because it was too hot for us to be outside. Our brains literally fried. I only later realized my greatest moment of triumph was simultaneously my dad’s first moment of defeat. He thought the directions proved I didn’t need him anymore.
One of the hallmarks of the Hoka Hey is that riders travel the country on secondary roads. The routes specifically avoid highways and even larger secondary roads. Instead, riders traverse county roads, state routes, and back roads throughout the country. Despite efforts to
remain on paved roads, occasionally the route deviates into gravel or dirt. Likewise, road conditions vary from state to state—forcing riders to dodge potholes and other adverse road conditions as state and federal monies poured into highways take away from the upkeep of secondary roads. Although these roads are intentionally difficult to ride, they offer opportunities for riders to see a vast area of the country. The back roads generally twist through state or national parks, Native American reservations, and small towns. On a promotional video for the Hoka Hey one rider notes, “I just saw the amber waves of grain. I’m looking at purple mountains. The redwood forest we’d already gone through.” Another states, “I had no idea what I was missin’ as much riding as I do. When you see this country from this perspective. Why people drive on freeways? Crazy” (The Movement). Scenic by-ways, historic transportation corridors, and cultural trails are common avenues for the route.

In addition to the use of secondary roads, the difficulty of the ride is a common element of each Hoka Hey. Challenge organizers bill the ride as the “toughest ride” for the “toughest riders on earth” through “some of the most technical roads in North America” (Hoka Hey). A technical road includes multiple twists and turns, and requires a great level of riding skill to navigate. Routes typically traverse mountain ranges and areas the design of the interstate highway system specifically avoids. Commonly called “twisties” by riders, 270 degree turns, “piggy-tails” (turns which look like a spiral) and S-curves abound on technical roads. These roads require riders to understand their machines and how to avoid “over-steering” the bike. Instead of using their arms to turn (an activity which quickly leads to fatigue), skilled riders use their bodies to lean into curves. In addition to navigating curves, riders must know how to ride on incredibly steep grades. This includes slowing the bike with the engine by downshifting so as not to “burn up” the front brakes, and using the clutch to regulate speeds. Motorcycle accidents
and breakdowns frequent the Hoka Hey due to the difficulty of the ride; however, if navigated safely and skillfully, the technical roads on the route can be executed without trouble.

Figure 4. Aerial photo of a technical road—County Road 22 outside of Collinsville, Alabama. (Google Maps Image)

The police officer I asked for directions looked in the index of his maps for County Road 22 and Dekalb Avenue. He flipped effortlessly through the thick binder pages to the proper map. The map indicated which roads were paved and which were gravel—gravel indicated by black and white dashes and pavement a solid black line.

“God. Are they sending you down a gravel road?” He asked stunned. “No, I think they paved that last year.” Clearly these roads weren’t traveled very often. “We don’t even go down these roads. That’s one hard ride they have you on.” He chuckled and eyed me for size and stature. When I looked at the map the road didn’t even look real. It was a zig-zag on the page like
there had been a break in the road and that's what they did to fill in a gap. It couldn't be that bad. We thanked the officer for his help and climbed back on the bikes.

...We took a hard right onto Center Street/County Road 22 (which wasn't marked as County Road 22 at all). The map didn't lie. County Road 22/Center Street was a zig-zag. Thankfully it had been paved. There was no time to think about how hard the riding was. After we turned onto the road it quickly rose in elevation. The curves were the tightest switchbacks we'd seen and the incline the steepest. It was the equivalent of making a U-turn inside a ten by twelve room and increasing in height from the floor to the ceiling through the turn. And then it turned back the other way. This continued through about six different turns—back and forth increasing in elevation each time. The pavement on the road was built up thickly. In the center of the curve there was a gutter-like hole and steep two-foot drop, the crevasse was filled with dirt and gravel. If you went off the road to the right, made too sharp of a turn, you'd be done. You could not get your bike out. To the left, there was only the tree-covered side of the mountain. There were no lines on the road and it wasn't wide enough for two cars or even a car and a motorcycle to pass one another: One lane. Our bikes pulled to each side of the road as we leaned though the tight curves. Thankfully, no one else in the county was stupid enough to take this road. “Just keep going. Just keep going.” I chanted to myself. “Look through the turn.” I gripped my handlebars so tightly my knuckles whitened. I pulled my body forward on the bike. I could feel every pound of my motorcycle between my legs chugging up the road. I stayed in a low gear to make the ascent. Chug Chug Chug—I could hear my bike laboring up the hill. Chris was in the lead, me in the middle, and my dad taking up the rear. I concentrated on the turns and whenever I could looked in my mirror to see if my dad had made it up the hill. My thoughts quickly flipped between focusing on getting myself through this road and thinking of how heavy
my dad’s bike was and how difficult he said it was for it to go up hills. After the switchbacks the road evened out a bit and we continued to climb the mountain. There was no time to think about what had just happened. We all made it through and it was time to focus on the road ahead.

Checkpoints serve as destinations throughout the ride. Upon reaching each checkpoint riders receive directions to the next checkpoint and so on until they complete the route. Typically checkpoints are Harley-Davidson dealerships sponsoring the challenge, and they offer riders a place for respite and motorcycle servicing. Checkpoints remain open twenty-four hours a day in case riders arrive through the night. At each checkpoint, riders must check in and designated officials verify rider credentials including a Rider Card and Coin (see Figure 5). As the terms and

Figure 5. Challenge Coin. Riders must carry their challenge coin on their person throughout the trip. (Author's photo)
conditions stipulate, “Failure to check in at any checkpoint during the course of the Event will be subject to automatic disqualification and you will forfeit any award as well as any entry fees paid” (5). Race officials also include secret checkpoints to verify riders stay on course. These are unnamed, unmarked points along the course. Organizers verify entry into a secret checkpoint through the GPS tracking systems installed on each motorcycle. Time spent at each checkpoint varies from rider to rider. Some use these locations as places to sleep for the night; others simply check in, receive the directions, and quickly continue on the route.

We finally made it to Renegade Harley-Davidson, our second checkpoint, around 6:00 p.m. The store had closed at 5:00 but the amazing team at Renegade waited for us. They had been tracking us all day on the large flat screen monitor outside the service bay. We were greeted outside the store by a small-built, extremely beautiful woman with a sweet Southern accent. She escorted us inside, out of the heat, and immediately made us feel at home. I was so thankful to be there, I nearly cried when she hugged me. I hadn’t talked to another woman in days. She was wonderful, empathizing, sympathizing, and telling me how fantastic it was I was doing this trip with my dad. She, and the woman I had been texting all morning, comforted me in a way I cannot describe.

Immediately she began telling us about how the directions were wrong leaving Renegade and started flooding my head with take this road, not what’s written down. I was confused and overwhelmed again. The comfort I felt quickly changed to exhaustion and I wanted to cry. I found out we were going to ride the Tail of The Dragon, a road so hyped up I’d been dreading it since Nebraska. “You’re gonna do it, girl,” she said to me as she grabbed my shoulders. I didn’t want to believe her. We asked how far it was to the next town and learned that we wouldn’t make it there for another six hours. That would put us in past midnight. Chris and I decided it wasn’t
worth it to push that hard. We would stop in Alexandria for the night. Feeling the relief of a break flood back to me, I savored a beer while my bike disappeared into the service bay.

Riders of the Hoka Hey are limited to riding American-made motorcycles with V-Twin engines. A V-Twin is the standard motorcycle of most American companies. These include Harley-Davidson, Indian, Victory, and custom made motorcycles. Focusing on touring bikes rather than racing bikes, allows for a more level playing field for competitors. This rule keeps racing bikes designed for speed out of the competition. To create further equity among riders, the terms and conditions specify gas tanks must not be larger than standard 6.2-gallon tanks (the largest size available as stock on most machines) and must not carry additional fuel cells. Additional fuel sources are an advantage because along the prescribed route, gas stations are often far between one another. Here, knowing when your bike will need gas becomes part of the challenge. These rules attempt to ensure riders do not have advantages of speed or time-saving devices. Motorcycle inspections occur prior to the start of the race.

Other challenge rules and regulations varied throughout the three years of the competition. For example, the regulation stipulating that riders must sleep outdoors changed in 2012 and rules about traffic violations (e.g. whether any speeding or a moving violation will result in disqualification) alter from year to year. These changes resulted directly from actions and suggestions of participants in previous years. The willingness of race organizers to alter the event shows the detail, desire, and attention given to hosting the best event possible.

The first Hoka Hey in June of 2010 took riders from Key West, Florida to Homer, Alaska. Other than being asked to sleep by their bikes and the start and end of the route, participants knew little else about what to expect on the first challenge. Upon arrival in Key West, the organizers hosted a rider meeting to further explain the details of the race. During the
first meeting, organizers informed participants of the rules, including not using hotels and disqualifications for speeding. There were few rules during the first year. Rather, the event was hosted and billed as a race and subsequently became incredibly competitive. The organizers offered one cash prize of $500,000.00 to the first rider to reach Homer, Alaska. Because of the large cash prize and organizers spending two years advertising the race, over 700 riders registered for the 2010 Hoka Hey. Due to the high-stakes competition during this sporting event, participants in the lead allegedly removed road signs along the route and enacted incredibly dangerous behavior such as placing tacks on the road to create tire blowouts or other accidents.

Increasing the difficulty of this race, riders were not given distances to travel between turns. Riders of the 2010 race noted a greater necessity for attention to detail, as riders could have been on a designated road for less than a mile or over two hundred miles. The distance traversed for the ride was approximately 10,000 miles and took some participants nearly a month to complete. One of the most notable challenges for participants was the extreme temperature variation of the 2010 Hoka Hey. Riders saw an over one hundred degree range in temperature as they moved from the Arizona deserts to the northern extremes of Canada. Riders encountered rain, snow, and extremely hot temperatures throughout the trip. Of the 700 riders, fewer than 200 completed the challenge and arrived in Alaska.

The 2011 challenge increased in mileage to become the longest endurance challenge ever hosted. Traversing 14,500 miles and crossing two countries, the 2011 challenge reached all contiguous 48 United States in only sixteen days. Many participants of this race were on the road for over a month. The 2011 challenge began in Arizona and ended in Nova Scotia, Canada. Because challenge operators intended for the 2010 challenge to be the first and only competition, they did not have a great deal of time to advertise and raise money for the 2011 challenge. The
decision at the finish line to have another challenge in 2011 left less than a year to advertise for
the next event. Because of this last minute decision, the entries for the 2011 challenge were
significantly fewer, only about 200 participants. The competition model for this challenge
changed as well. During this race, organizers stated a pool of money would be divided among all
contenders who completed the ride within a given time frame instead of offering one prize.
Theoretically designed to lessen the sense of competition among riders and focus on the Hoka
Hey as a personal challenge, altering the competition model did not dissuade individuals from
breaking competition rules or state and federal laws. Participants still created wagers with one
another, frequently exceeded the posted speed limits, and received assistance from outside
sources regarding directions.

During the 2011 challenge, rules stipulated participants must not speed. Polygraph tests
were used when contenders reached Nova Scotia to ensure their truthfulness. Eleven contenders
crossed the finish line during the open time window in 2011. When confronted with the
polygraph test, most admitted to breaking speed limits. No prize payouts were given during the
2011 challenge because of this behavior. This dispute, however, led to the alteration of the rules
moving forward. In 2012 the rules stipulated a moving violation, rather than speeding, would
result in disqualification. A strong majority of the contenders made an agreement with challenge
organizers and settled the dispute, resolving they would roll any prize money into next year’s
race instead of “cashing out.” One contender chose to sue challenge organizers for defamation of
c characterize. The incident and lawsuit greatly impacted the organizers’ ability to advertise for the
2012 season; their time and money was spent defending a lawsuit instead of attending rallies and
promoting the challenge.
Additionally, feedback from the 2011 race indicated the contest was too long. In response, race organizers made the 2012 route less than 6,000 miles. This allowed a new group of participants to enter the event, since it required less time to complete. The shorter 2012 race allowed for less time to be taken away from jobs, families, and lives outside the Hoka Hey. Challenge organizers intended for the shortened challenge to result in increased participation; however, only 89 participants began the 2012 race, their smallest contingent of competitors. The challenge began in Las Vegas, Nevada and extended across the country through eighteen states and ended in the sovereign nation of the Seneca Native Americans within the state of New York. Called the “United We Stand” ride, the 2012 challenge was the first to bring together multiple tribes of Native American people. A number of rules changed for the United We Stand event based on previous experiences. For 2012, challengers were told sleeping indoors was “discouraged”; it was no longer prohibited. In another change to the 2012 race, organizers stated they would allow law enforcement officials to dictate challenger safety instead of telling participants how to be safe by banning speeding. Consequently, the speeding ban changed from requiring participants to obey the law to simply asking participants to prove they did not receive a moving violation. As the “Terms and Conditions” state, “Any moving violation, speeding (ANY speed, NO exceptions, regardless of the fact that YOU may only have been trying to pass a slower moving vehicle), failure to signal, improper lane change, etc. will be grounds for automatic disqualification from eligibility to receive awards” (1). Moving violations of any kind were grounds for disqualification.

Because of its shorter route, an unprecedented number of contenders completed the race and qualified for money. Approximately thirty riders completed the 6,000-mile journey within the allotted seven day window. Some riders finished within five days but were warned, via mass
text, by race organizers they should not cross the finish line too soon. Doing so would result in a disqualification. During the 2012 Challenge, riders were tracked using GPS devices attached to their motorcycles. These devices linked to a website which updated rider locations every three seconds. With GPS tracking devices located on each motorcycle, race organizers could tell some contenders reached the area surrounding the finish line days prior to the window. These contenders who finished prior to the finish line opening (the first arrived merely five days after the start of the race) remained just outside the limits of the Seneca Nation until the prescribed time. Views from the GPS tracking site showed the motorcycles of some contenders in a parking lot at a bar in a neighboring town. The riders who blatantly disregarded the rules of the competition (e.g. obeying the speed limit, arriving within a certain timeframe) angered and frustrated many other challengers. After the challenge, organizers utilized the GPS systems to verify each rider’s route to ensure accuracy.

A fourth challenge will take place in 2013 and potentially end the Hoka Hey’s emphasis on the Lakota Sioux. Specifically, Jim Red Cloud plans to not participate in the arrangement of future challenges and rather focus additional time on his law practice. Challenge organizers hope to pass the race to another nation in need of assistance and awareness. Called “Wolakota”, meaning “Walk in Peace” in Lakota, this race displays Native American cultural significance overtly. The Hoka Hey website calls our current period the time of the Seventh Generation, a time described in a prophecy as the point at which all people must come together. As the website states:

A Lakota prophecy was given during the hard times of the 1890s. The Sacred Hoop - the tie binding the Seven Fires of the Lakota, Nakota, Dakota Nations - had been broken by massacres, starvation and campaigns to eradicate the Buffalo Nation. The Lakota Nations
are direct descendants of the Buffalo and their way of life, culture and Spirituality are
dependent on this relationship. The prophecy says, in part, *that the Seventh Generation
would come together to Mend the Sacred Hoop, restore the Spirit of the Nations and
unite all Nations to heal our Mother Earth*. **Now is the time of the Seventh
Generation.** (Hoka Hey)

While the 2013 ride may be advertised as a healing year, all Hoka Hey Challenges ask riders to
embody the warrior spirit and are steeped in Native American cultural significance.

**Motorcycle Culture**

Motorcycle culture can include a vast array of cyclists: riders of café and sport bikes (e.g.
European or Japanese style motorcycles), weekend warriors who only ride during nice weather,
outlaw clubs, endurance racers, and many in between. Throughout this work, I use the term
motorcycle culture to mean the culture surrounding endurance motorcyclists in general and most
specifically, the culture surrounding the Hoka Hey. This includes a subset of larger motorcycle
culture involving riders of American touring motorcycles. Because of popular media
representations of motorcyclists (discussed later in this chapter) these are “bikers” as they have
come to be known by the general public. While these representations may indicate these are
enormous, burly, bearded, tattooed white men clad in black leather, in reality (and as you will see
throughout this work) many different types of endurance riders exist.

Endurance motorcycle racing encompasses a culture of its own. Within this world, the
Hoka Hey stands as the most grueling challenge. It is billed as the longest, hardest race available.
Alongside other endurance rides like the Iron Butt Rallies, the American Legends Motorcycle
Rallies, and the Cannonball Run, the Hoka Hey stands out as the outlaw of this group. Having
been denied sanction by the American Motorcyclist’s Association—the governing arm of the
motorcycle world—the Hoka Hey aligns well with the outlaw club mentality. Outlaw motorcycle
clubs (described in more detail below) are collectives that seek approval from no one. Outlaw motorcycle clubs and the Hoka Hey tend to embody a “take it or leave it”, “this is who we are” attitude. Because the Hoka Hey advertises itself as the “toughest competition in history for the toughest men in history”, women who participate in the ride must negotiate their femininities while adopting the rough masculine attitude of the ride.

*A Brief History of Women in Motorcycling*

While motorcycle culture clearly began at the advent of the machine, societal perceptions of motorcyclists changed greatly over time. Invented in 1876 by German engineers, the first, two-wheeled motorcycle was not more than a bicycle with an attached engine (Alford and Ferris 19). Subsequently, the motorcycle industry moved to America and grew in popularity with the founding of today’s largest American motorcycle corporations—the Indian Motorcycle Company in 1901, and Harley-Davidson in 1903. Spurring from the bicycle industry, early motorcycle companies associated their products with simplicity, physicality, power, and speed. Advertisements for Indian Motorcycles from 1909 describe the machine as “Like a Flash”, “the simplest ever made”, and “more power for size than anything built” (Alford and Ferris 23). During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the country was experiencing a boom in bicycling. Women, in particular, used the new machines for transportation and exercise. With women’s participation, the bicycle craze became a catalyst for changing women’s fashion—from wearing skirts to the greater acceptance of pants—and subsequently our place in society. As bicycles evolved into motorcycles, women played a consistent role in early motorcycle sales and advertising.

Advertisements for motorcycles and motorcycle related products during the 1920s often utilized female models. Steven Alford and Suzanne Ferriss’s book, *Motorcycle* describes some of these early advertisements citing a 1917 advertisement for Excelsior, which appeared in *Motor
Cycle Illustrated (100). The full-page ad depicts a woman in a full-length dress working on the engine of her motorcycle—represented as being a task simple enough for a woman to accomplish. Used as another selling point, motorcycle columnists boasted motorcycle riding as healthy for women. An article in the Evening Standard from 1928 stated, “Girls will find motorcycling brings health. It will give them honest, fresh-air complexions. It will make them hardy and strong” (Alford and Ferris 101). However, these images, articles, and advertisements were not met with universal acceptance. Also during this time, Social Darwinists, whose ideas were founded in Charles Darwin’s theories of evolution, gained popularity and multiple scientific studies purportedly “proved” that women are more fragile than men. Studies such as these prompted questions about women’s participation in motorcycling. Their much weaker bodies supposedly could not support the motorcycle and would be subject to injury or, worse yet, motorcycling would inhibit reproductive capacity (Alford and Ferriss 99). Regardless of their position for or against women motorcycle riders, these popular images, articles, and advertisements laid the foundation for women’s participation in early motorcycling.

_I walked with bravado into the Harley-Dealer prepared for my speaking engagement at the Ladies Only Garage Night Event. The thirty women in attendance on that cool May evening were mostly wanna-be-riders, passengers, and a few long time veterans of the road there supporting friends. The dealership wanted me to speak about what inspires me to ride, about my participation in the Hoka Hey, and about my riding history; in exchange for this simple task they would partially sponsor my Hoka Hey adventure._

“I know you just want to sell motorcycles and shirts to these women,” I thought as the Marketing Manager introduced me, “Doesn’t matter. They’ll like what I have to say.” I stood by my big blue Dyna Wide Glide parked on the showroom floor and told them about the history of
women riders in America: Effie and Avis Hotchkiss, The Van Buren Sisters, Bessie Stringfield, and Dot Robinson. I was excited to share the history they may not know, to tell them they also belonged in this space. The excitement grew on their faces as I told of our proud heritage.

“You’re not alone.” I reassured them, “Women have ridden motorcycles since they were invented. Sometimes, men just want us to forget it.” The group perked up. Comments flew from their mouths, “Heck yah,” “Amen.”

After the talk, she gingerly approached me, “That’s your bike?” a wide-eyed African American woman asked as her eyebrows rose inquisitively. “Yep,” I replied, “And this summer I’m going to ride it across the country in an endurance race.” Her eyes sparkled as a mischievous smirk of a grin consumed her nodding face, “Cool.”

Commonplace in early motorcycling, endurance racing enhanced motorcycle corporations’ abilities to advertise their machines. Racers would traverse the country making stops in towns speaking about their bikes. Perhaps surprisingly, women participated in these early rides. In fact, a rich history of female endurance riders and racers dots the motorcycle cultural past. Ann Ferrar’s work *Hear Me Roar: Women, Motorcycles, and the Rapture of the Road* discusses the first transcontinental female motorcycle trip completed by Effie Hotchkiss in 1915. Her mother, Avis, thinking it improper for a young woman to travel the country alone, accompanied Effie in a sidecar. Their cross-country trip atop Effie’s Harley-Davidson took them from New York to San Francisco and paved the way for women’s distance motorcycling (Ferrar 20). A year later, sisters Augusta and Adeline Van Buren rode across the United States on separate motorcycles to prove women’s ability and aptness to serve as military couriers. They report the trip took “great physical and mental stamina” as their adventure made them the first women to cross Pikes Peak in Colorado atop motorized vehicles (Ferrar 22). While their efforts
proved unsuccessful in garnering positions for women as couriers, they contributed to a lasting legacy of women motorcycle riders.

Early endurance races and rallies served as grounds for women to show their motorcycling prowess. In 1907, Clara Wagner, only eighteen years old at the time, participated in a 365-mile endurance race from Chicago to Indianapolis. Although she earned a perfect score, she was denied a title as the race officiates deemed her “unofficial” because she was a woman (True Pioneers). Later, Dot Robinson challenged race operators and participated in the Jack Pine Enduro competition in 1937 (Alford and Ferris 104). Race operators, including the American Motorcycle Association’s secretary E.C. Smith, attempted to bar women from the 1937 race; however, Dot secured enough signatures to override the rule and win women’s right to participate in Enduro races (Ferrar 27). Enduro races traversed dangerous natural terrain, participants ride through swamps, rivers, and sand. These races tested motorcycles and their riders for their ability to ride on multiple surfaces. Putting these skills into practice, early motorcyclists also engaged in informal distance rides in which women actively participated. The first person, either male or female, to cross the African continent on a motorcycle was British motorcyclist Theresa Wallach. She completed the 7500 mile north-south course towing a trailer behind her motorcycle and sidecar (Alford and Ferris 104). These stories published about women in motorcycle and other popular magazines show women’s riding was not an anomaly.

Throughout the 1920s and ’30s, women motorcyclists gained acceptance and, during World War II, opportunities opened for women to continue riding motorcycles. The Motor Maids, a women’s motorcycling organization started by Dot Robinson, sought to assist the war effort by volunteering for dispatch riding. Dot Robinson herself supported the war effort riding as a motorcycle courier. Similarly, Bessie Stringfield, the most well known African American
female rider, “joined a motorcycle dispatch unit and rode as the only woman in an unit of six other African American riders” (Alford and Ferris 106). Springfield’s earlier days as a motorcyclist gained her notoriety as the “Motor Queen of Miami.” Despite encountering both racism and sexism, Stringfield made multiple cross-country trips for the war effort. Later, she founded the Iron Horse Motorcycle Club and was inducted into the Motorcycle Hall of Fame. During the war, women on motorcycles were common and they assisted the war effort through riding. Much like women on the factory lines, female motorcyclists received little cultural backlash and became lauded for aiding the war effort.

However, Alford and Ferriss and Ann Ferrar note post-war anxieties changed the landscape of women riding motorcycles. The scholars note the post-war return to traditional notions of femininity and domestic life kept women on the road from cultural acceptance (Alford and Ferris106). During these years of economic and social rebuilding, many women were expected to be demure wives and cautious mothers not motorcycle riders. Despite the strides toward gender equality in the workforce made during the war, post-World War II America was unsettled and in search of a national culture. As most men returned from war, women largely left positions in factories and returned to lives as housewives. Many men returning from war desired a complete restoration of their pre-war lives and likewise, large numbers of supportive women returned to their familial duties. This return to the home and men’s simultaneous return to lives as primary breadwinners reinforced traditional views of male and female divisions of labor. The resurgence of the ideals of domesticity created a culture that valued tradition, family life, and hegemonic conceptions of femininity and masculinity. Markers of hegemonic femininity include colors, behaviors and attributes traditionally associated with women or the feminine (e.g. wearing pink, donning makeup, cooking, weakness, fragility, and prettiness). Adopting markers
of femininity became commonplace and continues to permeate even today’s society. Not only did this mean many women reverted to their pre-war lives as wives and mothers, it also left little room for female participation in masculine arenas, including motorcycling.

While the return of men from war made motorcycling more difficult for women, it did not entirely stop women’s participation. In the post-war years, Dot Robinson’s Motor Maids sustained themselves as an organization by adopting traditionally feminine cultural markers, like pink jackets and lipstick holders affixed to their motorcycles (Ferrar 26) to compensate for their association with masculine space. The Motor Maids rode pink motorcycles and kept demure, respectable, and ladylike attitudes toward male riders. This transformation of the Motor Maids from dispatch couriers for the war effort to women riders donning pink was, “carefully crafted in an image of women motorcyclists that conformed to, rather than challenged, conventional expectations for femininity” (Alford and Ferriss 106). Via fashion, accessories, and their motorcycles, the Motor Maids and other female riders kept women motorcyclists on the road but also forever changed the cultural acceptance of women riders.

Motorcycling and Masculinity

In addition to supporting hegemonic femininity through actions as simple as returning to housewifery or riding pink motorcycles, insecurities about masculinity and the desire to care for “our boys” returning home added to the cultural repudiation of female motorcyclists. The resurgence of traditional gender roles in post-World War II America not only created a cultural acceptance of traditional femininity, but also created an increasing need for exclusively masculine spaces. Soldiers found comfort during the war in one another by creating community in military units. The mental and physical strain of war left men, once home, desiring the same level of camaraderie among other men. Thus, spaces traditionally reserved for men, like motorcycling, became common respites from their new lives and spaces for male bonding. As
William Dulaney notes in “A Brief History of ‘Outlaw’ Motorcycle Clubs”, this desire allowed motorcycle clubs to grow in popularity as men returning from war sought the camaraderie they left in the field. Veterans not only sought companionship but also specifically desired the companionship of other men in community. Motorcycle clubs created spaces for men to reinforce their masculinity at home after the trying circumstances of war (Dulaney).

To satisfy the need for post war camaraderie, veterans joining motorcycle clubs gave rise to motorcycling as an emotional outlet and identity marker as opposed to simply a mode of transportation. Delaney notes American motorcycles were particularly engaging to returning vets, “largely due to the high level of performance and excitement the cycles offered a rider, as well as for the relatively antisocial characteristic of loud exhaust pipes and the large, imposing size of the bikes” (par. 15). This desire for size and loudness reaffirms masculinity by establishing power and dominance as necessary components to riding a motorcycle. Similarly, these clubs often profess masculine ideals of independence and brotherhood stemming from post-war alienation. Motorcycling’s background in bicycling and physicality coupled with the surge in post-war motorcycle clubs marked the sport as a culturally masculine space. Consequently, because motorcycle clubs embody notions of hegemonic masculinity, such as strength and power, we begin to understand these groups as exclusively masculine. Thus, despite the rich history of female motorcyclists, men’s clubs took the lead in post-war America as the primary icons of motorcycling.

While outlaw motorcycle clubs of the 1940s and 1950s were primarily geared towards men, women’s clubs also existed. Exclusively for women, clubs such as the Motor Maids, Women in the Wind, and Women on Wheels allowed female motorcyclists the opportunity to engage with one another and find camaraderie on the road, as was the case with their male
counterparts. However, men’s and women’s clubs also were inherently different. Men’s clubs typically associated themselves with an outlaw mentality, living and riding against the confines of society and the motorcycling community at large. They rode motorcycles in packs and generally failed to conform to the expectations of Cold War American society (e.g. providing for a nuclear family, holding a steady job, and attending weekly church services). Men’s outlaw clubs did not seek the approval of any authority, including motorcycling authorities.

Alternatively, women’s clubs fell well within the purview of the American Motorcyclist Association. In fact, the Motor Maids was known as the woman’s organization of the AMA receiving its first charter in 1940 (Ferrar 28). Like the men’s groups, female clubs perpetuated the association of motorcycling with masculinity. In an effort to set themselves apart from men, female motorcycle clubs made conscious efforts to promote femininity by being “dedicated to volunteerism and to promoting a positive image of the sport” (Ferrar 28). As Alford and Ferriss note, female club slogans often promoted a, “‘positive image of motorcycling’ directly relating to the newly formed outlaw mentality of many men’s motorcycle organizations” (108). Many female motorcycling organizations today, including Women in the Wind and Women on Wheels, still retain these sentiments. Women’s Club members were reminded to be ladylike at all times.

By creating an us/them binary, women motorcyclists inadvertently assert motorcycle culture as masculine. Showing women’s clubs as other affirms the male dominated space within motorcycling. This post-war turn toward outlaw clubs as the popular notion of motorcycling allowed motorcycling to become inherently masculine. If men’s clubs created an outlaw image, women’s clubs intended to show the public motorcyclists were good people too. However, media representations of motorcycling did not focus on law-abiding, fundraising women’s clubs; instead, contributing largely to the notion of motorcycling as masculine, were popular articles

Recent television series (e.g. *Sons of Anarchy, Full Throttle Saloon, and American Chopper*) further perpetuate popular interpretations and understandings of motorcycle culture. The popular FX television series, *Sons of Anarchy* chronicles the fictitious life of a California outlaw motorcycle club. Maintaining the stereotypes of outlaw clubs, the Sons take part in various illegal activities and affirm racist, sexist, working-class portrayals of motorcyclists. In their five seasons, the group transitions from producing pornography and transporting guns for the IRA to running a brothel and transporting cocaine for a drug cartel. As a front for their illegal activity, the group runs a mechanic’s shop, a typically blue-collar form of employment. This choice of profession aligns motorcycling as a working class activity. Each episode portrays motorcycling as a masculine space, as there are no women who ride. Throughout the show, women are treated as commodities and are unable to make decisions for their families and certainly are never shown riding motorcycles. Rarely are women even seen as passengers – the motorcycle remaining limited to men.

*First Season of Sons Of Anarchy.* Gemma is an aging aggressive woman. Just like Maud Lavin talks about in *Push Comes to Shove.* Very cool. The series progresses. “This is the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever seen.” I said to my TV watching partner exasperated by the apparent strong woman on screen. “Of course Gemma doesn’t have any actual power. She can’t ride. And the club sign says, “Can’t ride. Can’t lead.”

“Is that real?” Diana asked me. She doesn’t ride. She doesn’t associate with motorcycle culture; she just likes the show.
“Yeah.” I sighed in response. “It’s a tough man’s culture no one gives a shit about women who don’t ride their own. Even me. More women should ride. Women who passenger aren’t riders, they’re not like me. It’s different.” Fuck. I’m not better than those men.

Motorcycling and Criminality

The proliferation of post-war motorcycle clubs built a basis for motorcycling as a masculine space but also paired motorcycling with criminality. Contributing to the criminal element in motorcycling communities was the 1947 Hollister Riot. The small agricultural community of Hollister, California long hosted a series of American Motorcycle Association races. Because they were sponsored by a national organization, these hill climbs, drag races, and enduros were executed with little trouble. However, World War II interrupted the series of races and they were reconvened in 1947 over the Fourth of July holiday weekend. The growth of motorcycle clubs after the war made for increased attendance in Hollister that year. Alford and Ferriss note accounts of the weekend’s population differ (some sources describe out of control crowds, others suggest the descriptions were mere hyperbole), “There were too many cyclists for the town’s tiny, seven-man police force” (89). Intoxicated by alcohol, the participants in the weekend’s races and games incurred injury and arrests. The increase of motorcyclists in a small town and changing perceptions of motorcyclists after the war combined with alcohol to turn a fun race weekend in Hollister into more than organizers could handle. Subsequently, the California Highway Patrol descended upon the town to disperse the guests. A level of criminality to the event was likely—at least drunk driving—but images of one motorcyclist acting out made way for the association of all motorcyclists as criminals.

Originating with a photographer from the San Francisco Chronicle, the notorious photograph, “Cyclist’s Holiday”, presented a negative image of the celebration. The photograph portrays a drunken man with beer bottles in each of his hand lounging atop a motorcycle parked
amidst a pile of glass beer bottles. Alford and Ferris call this photo “clearly staged” (90). As these rider-scholars note, no motorcyclist would ever ride their motorcycle on top of glass bottles for fear of blowing a tire, insinuating the photographer contrived the photograph to sensationalize the event (90). The integrity of the photographer aside, *Time* magazine printed the photo with a caption reading, “He and his friends terrorize a town” (Alford and Ferris 91). Here, the association with inflicting terror places motorcyclist as other against the otherwise subdued populace of an American rural town. The intention of the caption is clear: motorcyclists should be feared and they intend to harm the innocent. This scene quickly became the basis for media representations (largely films) involving criminal motorcyclists and created a backlash against the motorcycling community.

The incident at Hollister also spurred alleged reactions from the motorcycling community. Supposedly in direct response to the allegations and associations of the community at large, the American Motorcyclists Association quickly published an article stating only one percent of the motorcycling population engaged in these lewd and licentious behaviors. However, William Dulaney suggests the AMA has no record of this comment stating: “Tom Lindsay, the AMA’s Public Information Director, states ‘We [the American Motorcyclist Association] acknowledge that the term “one-percenter” has long been (and likely will continue to be) attributed to the American Motorcyclist Association, but we’ve been unable to attribute its original use to an AMA official or published statement—so it’s apocryphal’” (par. 19). Thus, according to biker lore, the AMA claimed all other motorcyclists were generally law-abiding citizens, further creating division between the AMA and outlaw clubs. Outlaw clubs desired solidarity with one another but separation from the rest of society since their post-war inception. Today, motorcycle clubs embrace the one-percenter moniker donning 1% patches, further
separating themselves from other motorcyclists. Perhaps in an effort to “just be left alone” the motorcycling community itself, in particular men’s outlaw clubs, encourages the interpretation of motorcycling as part of anti-establishment criminal behavior. This intentional division deepened the divide between male and female motorcyclists.

Images from the Hollister Riot were transposed later into a short story and eventually the 1954 film *The Wild One* (Bendek 1954). Scenes from Bendek’s film starring Marlon Brando and Lee Marvin entertained audiences but also added to the popular image of the American motorcyclist. The image of Brando’s character, Johnny Strabler motorcycle gang leader, wearing a black leather jacket and blue jeans influenced the association of the biker as a cultural icon. Motorcyclists took up this image and began dressing in similar manners, with even outlaw clubs sporting the fashion from the film (Alford Ferris 92-93). Perpetuated through other motorcycle films, largely from the American International Picture production company, the image of the brooding, tough, leather clad biker “embodied youthful alienation…that was simultaneously seductive and repellent…[which] women (supposedly) found irresistible” (Alford and Ferris 118, 93). This dress embodied solidarity with one another while establishing bikers as outside law-abiding society, as everyday citizens do not generally sport leather vests with images of skulls emblazoned on the back. Here motorcyclists desired to look tough to be left alone. Subsequently, because it appeared in films and on television, this outsider image became culturally desirable and turned from icon to commodity. Once established, the image of the biker could be bought and sold. Marketing and sales of images (e.g. a rough looking jean and leather clad man leaning against a motorcycle or a scantily dressed woman) allow for the association of an image with certain characteristics. The wholesale marketing of the biker image popularized an overall
perception of what it meant to be a biker. Imbued in this image were the ideas of masculinity and criminality.

More than simply an image, motorcycling is further associated with masculinity and criminality through the risk involved in riding. Not only do motorcyclists create an image of toughness, they actually live dangerously through their choice of vehicles. While riding in any vehicle assumes some level of risk, riding without the metal enclosure of a car increases the level of risk in motorcycling. Completely exposed to the elements and other drivers on the road (perhaps without a helmet), the motorcyclist's embodied experience is commonly associated with an element of deviance and disregard for personal safety. Statistics from America’s National Highway Safety Administration 1999 study support this notion stating, “approximately 80 percent of related motorcycle crashes result in injury or death; a comparable figure for automobiles is 20 percent” (Alford and Ferriss 28). Motorcyclists ride knowing these statistics. For some motorcyclists, the love of two wheels overpowers the desire for additional safety. Risk associated with motorcycling adds to the perception of a cyclist as virile and strong. While risk is omnipresent in life, motorcycling increases opportunities for risk thus adding to the perceived toughness of motorcycle riders. Compound this element of risk with masculinity and criminality and those who participate in dangerous and unlawful riding activity (e.g. speeding, racing, reckless riding) are lauded even more greatly within the culture. Many motorcyclists exude machismo as they compare stories of the road attempting to make each ride seem tougher than the last. This valorization of reckless deviant behavior furthers motorcycling’s association with a masculine and criminal space.

*My dad was parked at a gas station with the two other men. His furrowed brow and growing eyes indicated he was confused and worried about me. It was the first time we had been*
separated during the ride. I pulled up to the pump behind his bike. Breathless. Booming. “If you EVER leave me again!...Just because YOU need to prove how big YOUR DICK is to keep up with those other guys!...I got pulled over!”

As I screamed at him the other men shrank back and snickered. “Stepped on your dick this time, man. She’s pissed.” They chided. “We weren’t going that fast,” he sheepishly shot back at me.

“I was going 75 through those curves and couldn’t keep up with you. You were going too fast. I was lucky to have gotten off with a warning!” On the other side of the pumps, the man who the cop pulled over with me laughed at how it was MY nervousness that got HIM out of a ticket. He boasted, “I definitely would have gotten a ticket if SHE hadn’t been there!” Tears welled in my eyes and pooled inside my goggles as we pulled away from the gas station. Of course my dad chose proving his masculinity over me, gotta be a tough guy. Of course.

Motorcycling and Class

Along with criminality and masculinity, motorcyclists have been associated with the working class since the motorcycle’s inception. The motorcycle’s size and design allow it to be an economically efficient machine. From their earliest beginnings, motorcycles were used as work vehicles for deliveries, courier services, and other menial tasks. Often seen as “work horses” early motorcycles were common transportation for working class individuals. During the Great Depression, motorcycles were seen as “hard times alternatives” to automobiles (Ferrar 26). Later, the rise of outlaw motorcycle clubs, as previously discussed, added to the association of motorcycling with the working class. The typically anti-establishment mentality of clubs demonstrated an aversion to “commercial values of contemporary bourgeois society” (Alford and Ferriss 87). Because they did not conform to post-war values such as climbing corporate
ladders or putting in time at the office, these men eschewed post-war grey suits for leather jackets and blue-collar work.

“**I work for the Lee County Board of Education in the School system. I’m in the maintenance department.**” (Debra 2011)

“**Well currently I am an assembly plant operator. I assemble hydrostatic transmissions for zero radius lawn mowers. Um. But for 27 years I worked for the post office.**” (Junie Rose 2010-2012)

“**I’m uh construction worker. I’m an operating engineer.**” (Sheila 2010)

“**I run a cleaning service down here in Florida for the last 18 years. Yeah. Clean toilets for a living. That’s what pays my bills.**” (Wendy 2011-2012)

I was amazed at the hard work these women do on a daily basis. Hard. Blue. Collar. Work. The men weren’t that different, or were they? They were police officers, fire fighters, mechanics, with a lawyer or computer programmer thrown in here or there. I suppose I shouldn’t be surprised by the women’s work; they’re just like my family. I grew up working summers, nights, and weekends for my parents’ construction company. I’m not afraid of hard work, sweat, or getting (really) dirty to earn a buck. If you don’t already have money, expensive hobbies call for hard work. And for some reason we’re all crazy enough to spend our hard earned vacation time (if we’re even lucky enough to get it) on the road. We should be at the spa; but that’s not what we know.

Because motorcycles can be temperamental machines, they require a significant amount of mechanical skill to ride and repair, making riding easier and more cost effective for blue-collar workers familiar with mechanics. Mechanical ability and knowledge of engine systems are skills traditionally not valued in upper or middle class societies. Instead, the skills necessary for
riding early motorcycles harken to working class competencies. Because of the desire to modify motorcycles, associations of working-class individuals with motorcycling continue to inform our assumptions about motorcycle culture. This link to mechanical ability perpetuates notions of working-class behavior and masculinity.

While many motorcycle riders may come from the working or middle classes, and media representations point to this same characteristic, many riders perceive motorcycles to be a status symbol. Considering the increasing cost of riding, as motorcycles themselves have become more expensive, the link between owning a motorcycle and having enough wealth to own a motorcycle is clear. Despite the stereotype perpetuated through media representations that motorcyclists are “low class” (socioeconomic and otherwise) today, many riders see their motorcycles as an indicator that they have elevated themselves to a higher economic position. Likewise, they perceive a cultural shift in which the one-percenter, rogue motorcycle club is a stereotype of the past.

“For the first ride up in Hoka Hey we were told that up in Homer Alaska, the Homerites were kinda leery about this massive amount of motorcyclists coming in. They were envisioning like the 1970s Hell’s Angels stuff. And the mayor had to go on radio or TV or something and say ‘Hey, ...these folks are not like that. In order to ride in this competition they had to take the time off. Be able to take the time off, the finances to be able to own a motorcycle like that and most of them are professionals.’ So you still have that leeriness and most of us aren’t that way. WE don’t like taking any guff. But we’re not going to purposely going to try to do something illegal. Or hurt somebody to get our own way with things.” (Eden 2011)

Motorcycling and Whiteness

In addition to being an environment steeped in perceptions of masculinity, criminality, and the working class, some motorcyclists see motorcycling as a sport reserved for white people.
People of color clearly exist within motorcycle culture; however, current scholarship, as well as the culture itself, largely ignores this constituency. As motorcycle scholar, M. Shelly Connor notes in her history of motorcyclist of color, segregation politics are alive and well within outlaw clubs and other motorcycle organizations. In her article “First Wave Feminist Struggles in Black Motorcycle Clubs”, she notes the high attendance of African American cyclists at predominantly black motorcycle events while commenting on the “exclusionary practices” of white motorcycle clubs (par. 3). This form of segregation allows for a perception that motorcyclists are only white. Within the culture, racism is most blatant through the ignoring of race within motorcycling; segregation rather than integration is the norm. Many white riders assume an unspoken us/them division, as evident with Black Bike Week events, which create not only division but also an ignorance of race issues within the culture. Creating separate spaces for riders of color and white riders allows racist attitudes to permeate throughout motorcycle culture.

Common at motorcycle rallies, and perpetuating racism within the culture, are sales of patches, vests, and jackets with Confederate Flags, Swastikas, and other racist insignias. While motorcyclists who purchase and wear these products may not intend to be offensive, they profess to the public that motorcyclists hold racist values and mentalities. Like the one-percenter patches, the few motorcyclists wearing these offensive images align motorcycle culture with racism; and, while many cyclists may not harbor racist feelings, the separation of races within the culture creates a space for whiteness to go unremarked. Additionally, it is important to note the use of racist symbols of any kind as inappropriate, offensive, and disrespectful. The sale and use of these symbols to intimidate, or for any other reason, is an issue sorely in need of attention by the larger motorcycling community.
Some motorcycle organizations, such as Harley-Davidson, currently attempt to address issues of race in the motorcycling community by at least acknowledging the presence of riders of color. Marketing specifically to African American and Latino/a riders, Harley creates affinity groups for riders of color. The Iron Elite and Harlistas respectively represent these populations. Despite these attempts by motorcycle organizations to acknowledge riders of color, the cultural perception of motorcyclists remains that of whiteness.

Whiteness is a central theme of the show *Sons of Anarchy* as the club regularly fights for turf and engages in illegal activities with gangs separated by race. Despite offering a representation of African American and Latino motorcycle clubs, the Son’s (and the primary story line) remains a group where whiteness prevails, including a brief aside to amending the club by-laws to allow non-white members. While many Americans do not know anyone in a motorcycle club, or perhaps are not familiar with riders, these images of criminality, masculinity, class, and whiteness continue to permeate popular culture. These notions remain common perceptions motorcycle culture.

“Abby, did you hear that?” Diana asked me as she briskly swatted my shoulder. “They just said it was time to rethink the by-laws.” Juice, the loving olive skinned sensitive guy of the Sons had just confessed to his club president Jax that he attempted suicide after finding out his biological father was African American. “

Yeah, I heard it.” I replied to Diana. “You know I haven’t agreed with this story line from the beginning.” Maybe I just didn’t want to believe that the fictitious club would oust their loyal son over such a thing. Her mouth dropped and eyebrows raised, “Is that real?” She gasped. “Well, I’m not in a club; I suppose they’re all different. But that’s certainly what the show wants you to think.”
Negative images and perceived attitudes of motorcyclists become iconic through television, film, and some (unintentional) actions of motorcyclists themselves. These media representations and actions form a cultural construction of motorcycling, which may or may not reflect the lived experiences of motorcyclists today. Popular constructions of motorcycle culture as rooted in masculinity, criminality, working class values, and whiteness create a space within which women riders must contend. In other words, to be accepted as legitimate members of this culture, women riders must find a way to balance their own identities and values with these aggrandized and/or constructed notions of the culture. These perceptions may be exaggerated and the culture continues to change and adjust constantly. However, motorcycle culture itself remains a largely masculine space. Like the women riders of the post-war years, women who ride today continue to negotiate their own femininity and struggle for legitimacy as riders.

Cultural perceptions and realities of motorcycling’s foundation in masculinity and criminality may be reasons women choose not to enter the culture. However, even after women choose to enter the culture, the motorcycling community can subject women to oppression through sexist remarks and attitudes. Despite potential preconceptions and instances of oppression, women enter and excel in the motorcycling community.

Layered Masculinities

Layered masculinities reflect sites of compounding oppression that emerge when multiple masculine institutions converge. For example, masculinities associated with military and science fields converge for female astronauts and female racecar drivers face oppression from both sport and automotive cultures. Endurance Motorcycle Challenges are situated simultaneously in sport and motorcycle culture. While sport and motorcycle cultures are different entities, both are steeped in masculinities. However, when combined, the cultures laud masculinities both separately and together. Women’s participation in events such as the Hoka Hey Motorcycle
Challenge especially is difficult because of layered masculinities. Here sport and motorcycle culture combine creating a space in which women hear they “should not” participate because they are not equal competitors to men (sport) and also “should not” ride motorcycles (motorcycle culture). The elements of risk and competition converge creating an atmosphere perceived to exclude women from participation. Often seen as loving caregivers rather than ruthlessly competitive risk takers, women entering this culture become othered not only from the hegemonic masculinity of motorcycle culture, but also the hegemonic masculinity of sport.

Many theorists, notably R.W. Connell and Michael Messner, cite competitive sports as important sources for conceptions of Western masculinities. Throughout these spaces, men and boys learn behaviors and actions that support ideas and sentiments of masculinity. Sentiments such as “you throw/run/hit like a girl” permeate the sporting world and teach boys and men they are better/stronger/faster than their female counterparts who are less than/weaker/slower. These learned behaviors create a divide between men and women while simultaneously essentializing (perceived or real) gender differences. Through this essentialization, we learn all girls are weak while all boys are strong. Scholars, such as L. Walker, point to automotive culture generally as a site where collective conceptions of masculinities are enacted. Through spending time in mechanic shops or garages and around cars or motorcycles, men and boys learn it is okay for them to get dirty, use tools, and engage in other hegemonically masculine behaviors such as driving fast, engaging in risky situations, drinking alcohol, and making bodily noises. Simultaneously, these characteristics thrive because women are not invited into the masculine space of automotive culture. Here a “boys will be boys” mentality is not only accepted but encouraged.
Like sport, automotive culture can create a “boys only” environment in which women are othered and/or made to feel unwelcome. Motorcycle culture, as part of automotive culture similarly serves as a collective repository of masculine behaviors. Both sport and motorcycle culture are spaces in which women become othered because of this reliance and promotion of hegemonic masculinity. In situations such as the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge, which combines both sport and motorcycle culture, the masculinities of each environment become layered on one another. I argue the masculine attitudes associated with each culture create an additive property in which the sum of the whole is greater than the individual parts. When layered, these constructions of masculinities create difficult environments for women to negotiate. Retaining components of both sport and motorcycle culture, endurance motorcycle challenges become heavily masculinized spaces.

The Hoka Hey retains aspects of sport through competition, physicality, and the necessity for skilled riding. While the organization works hard to make the Hoka Hey a “challenge” instead of a “race” there remain elements of competition, which support the idea of winners and losers. Here the sense of competition, the difficulty of the ride, conditions under which it is performed, and overall attitude around the challenge promote masculinized elements of sport. These masculine elements include physical strength, strength of will, and necessary training. Through newsletters, blogs, and the website, riders are reminded that fortitude, strength, and toughness—traits associated with masculinity—are all necessary character traits for completing the Hoka Hey. However, the Hoka Hey is not an ordinary sporting event as it is also rooted in motorcycle culture.

Clearly a motorcycle challenge, the Hoka Hey retains aspects of motorcycle culture traditionally associated with hegemonic masculinity. Most of the participants are men and
technical riding is key to the challenge. This event is not for “fair weather” riders (those who enjoy short weekend rides); instead, the Hoka Hey is a difficult feat for even skilled riders. It promotes itself as an experience only for those who are “real” or “true” riders. Because of the skill required, it requires previous association with motorcycle culture, and all its perceptions, to participate. Thus as both a sporting competition and a motorcycle event, the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge is a site of layered masculinities.

Conclusions

Scholars describe the motorcycle as the perfect vehicle (Holbrook Pierson). However, a motorcycle is not only a vehicle but also an American cultural icon. Films, television series, advertisements, and fashion form cultural constructions which situate the motorcycle and its surrounding culture as a white, working class, masculine, and criminal space. These deep cultural roots create a potentially off-putting space for many would-be riders. While members inside the culture may perceive it differently, these cultural constructions contort the social mindset about motorcycles and motorcyclists. Similarly, some motorcyclists choose to perpetuate these cultural constructions through actions, attitudes, and gender performances. As such, the surrounding culture of criminality, masculinity, class, and whiteness create a specific space which women riders must strategically negotiate.

A Native American band of brothers, the warrior spirit, and motorcycles ridden by the toughest men in history—these are the icons of the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge. These images conjure thoughts of Western mythology and beg riders to take on insurmountable feats of the past. These images support hegemonic masculinity and surround women riders as they attempt the challenge of the Hoka Hey. The layered masculinities of motorcycle culture and sport combine to create a sustained environment that looks upon women as substandard competitors. By blatantly ignoring women riders in any iconography, discussion, and
advertising, the Hoka Hey bills itself as a challenge for men. Despite this fact, women riders not only take on the challenge but also experience success and empowerment, and create change in its wake.
CHAPTER 4: FEMINIST ETHICS OF CARE AND EMPOWERMENT

After rider party - met some people from close to home and talked with some of the women. Had three consent forms signed - felt like a pretty big deal. Was somehow inspired by the other women’s stories. They sleep outside. They’re legit. One night last year they got a hotel room just to shower. They slept in the parking lot. I was embarrassed to admit that we are planning on staying in hotels every night. We might purchase bedrolls tomorrow. Or at least blankets and a tarp. I really have no idea what to expect from this ride. I want so badly to do it and really do it. I want to finish and I want to be “hard-core” about it...because this ride is hard-core. But, no matter how you shake it, this is a big deal. On the other hand, I want to be true to the other women who are riding. They’re in it for the right reasons. Not for money like all the guys...but for themselves. And why can’t I sleep outside too? What’s so amazing about a bed? Maybe I just need to find out what’s so amazing about a bed. But I think that also makes me sound privileged. I am privileged. Because a bed is pretty amazing. And who the fuck am I to pay $1,000 to participate in something to experience someone else’s shitty life...some people HAVE to sleep outside. And I’m doing this...why? To prove something? I don’t have anything to prove, do I? I think I’m writing my dissertation to prove something to myself. For others maybe riding is what they want to prove. I’m not trying to talk myself into or out of this...I just want to make sure I’m doing it for the right reasons. And it doesn’t hurt to start out with a bedroll and a tarp. Right? Need to sleep on it. (Excerpt from Field Notes Friday, August 2, 2012)

The women interviewed for this project described the Hoka Hey as an intensely personal experience. We had the support of family, friends, and other riders, which drove us to aim high and take on this massive challenge. As the above excerpt from my field notes indicates, we
competed at various levels but all strive to do our best because people paid attention to our ride, and, consequently, to us. We felt compelled and obligated to do our best. It felt as if our families, our friends, our sponsors, and the people we were riding for were relying on us to achieve something great. In turn, the women focused on doing the ride as it was intended. We followed the rules, we maintained our integrity, and we rode our own rides. As a result of this, our achievement felt authentic and often led to spiritual (re)awakening. This chapter will discuss why the women participate, what drove them to ride the way they did, and how they have changed as a result.

_I just returned from the journey of a lifetime. No, it was an adventure. A true adventure. I crossed the country; I’ve always just been in Alabama. I’ve never really went anywhere other than Florida. And just to go across all these...each state. It was just awesome._6 The Hoka Hey was my opportunity to get out, do something, and see the country. I had no clue what I was in for. I mean I really don’t know why. ‘Cause surely I hadn’t done anything like this before and I didn’t even really know why I tried this ‘cause it just seemed like I was out of my mind._7 I mean, who (in their right mind) signs up to ride across the country on a motorcycle for a month, sleeping outside the entire time, and risk everything? But, this was something I feel I had to do and I didn’t want to regret it._8 I suppose I should back up a bit, you’re probably wondering how

6 Debra, 2011 (84-87)


I even found this challenge or what drove me to do it. I can tell you the story, but you might not understand. It's personal.

It all started a few months ago, although it seems like much longer now. I was going through some health issues with cancer and I say the Hoka Hey found me. And it was just, I don’t know, it consumed my every thought. I had to do it. I just had to go try it.⁹ I was in the doctor’s office for what seemed like the thousandth time. I had been through a barrage of chemo treatments trying to battle this life sucking disease. There’s not much to do while you’re sitting around waiting for your chemo treatments, so I always took a magazine or two along. That’s when I saw the ad. I found out about the Hoka Hey reading a Harley Magazine, a HOG magazine, in the chemo room. I was diagnosed with cancer in 2009. ... So I put the Hoka Hey on the bucket list. When you’re diagnosed with cancer for a second time you really start thinking about that stuff.¹⁰ I thought about how I could live my life, what I had already done, and what I wanted to do, and if I could make a difference. I read about the independence and the spirit and sleepin’ on the side of the road and how grueling and tough it was and the adventure and that totally spoke to me.¹¹ I wanted to feel alive, and at that point I thought nothing would make me feel more alive and test my spirit more than this challenge.

So I asked my doctor when he came in what he thought and if he thought I would be strong enough to do it. This was three months from the ride started. I mean that was March and

⁹ Wendy, 2011, 2012 (78-81)


¹¹ Debby, 2011 (351-354)
we were riding in June. And he said, “Go live your life. Yeah, you’ll probably be strong enough by then don’t let this slow you down.” And he gave me a hundred bucks to go ride the ride. So I either had to give the hundred dollars back or I had to go ride the ride. I saw the opportunity and it just rang in my soul. I had to do it. So I said, I’m just gonna start saving money for the fee and then all my friends, finally once they realized I was serious about it, they threw me fundraisers. And that was it. Reading that magazine and that doctor started a whirlwind of an adventure, planning, and encouragement. I still can’t believe how quickly it all happened and how much I’ve changed since then. I feel like a different person.

Women challengers spoke of the Hoka Hey as an experience that was both multilayered and relational. They see their participation in the Hoka Hey not only as personally important but important to various social circles including their family and friends, communities of other women and riders, and the larger causes for which they ride. These layers of connection weave through their motivation to ride, their desire to perform, and their resulting empowerment and awareness. Women’s social conditioning to perform ethics of care constantly informs these layers of connection. While feminist scholars argue an ethics of care reinforces women’s traditional gender roles as caregivers, I understand care-based feminism to be a strength, which should be promoted for both men and women.


13 Kelly, 2012 (401-406)

14 Tristica, 2010 (230-232)
In *An Ethics of Care*, Carol Gilligan describes this gendered performance. She states, “the ideal of care is thus an activity of relationship, of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone” (62). Specific to women, Gilligan describes the ethic of care as impacting women’s decisions and actions whereas men in her study indicated a more self-fulfilling decision and action strategy. An ethic of care means taking others into consideration while making decisions and taking action. No longer seeing yourself in isolation, care based feminism encourages women to think of their choices in context. Promoting the ethic of care and creating a connected web through and because of the Hoka Hey, women challengers see themselves not as athletes in isolation, rather as taking on a challenge which is gendered, personal, and always in relation to those around them. For example, women who consider participating in the Hoka Hey ask themselves how it will impact their families, friends, and supporters. The ethic of care extends through women’s internal struggles to justify participation in the Hoka Hey, as well as their motivations to participate, and their external desires to perform well. Further, gender roles and social conditioning, as exemplified through an ethics of care, transcend their performance in the challenge and push women toward empowerment embodied through spiritual awakenings and a realization of privilege.

Perhaps most exemplary of the phenomenon of empowerment and ethics of care in the Hoka Hey is Nancy Theberge’s exploration of women’s empowerment through sport, “Sport and Women’s Empowerment”. Although only given a fleeting section in the larger article, and not described as an ethics of care, Theberge describes how women’s softball teams encounter empowerment through working as a team, altering their competition styles to match all competitors, and reconstructing their conceptualization of sport (391). The women she describes find empowerment by thinking of others, which can be described through an ethics of care. Thus,
as in the Hoka Hey, women’s empowerment in sport comes not only from a bodily expression of overcoming challenges or physical adaptation but also through an understanding of self in relation to others. Here teamwork stands in as a simple reference to empowerment. Because we work together and achieve a goal for the group, we feel better about ourselves. Expressing the desire to ride for a cause, understanding their choices as selfish, caring for others on the road, and having a spiritual connection with the world around them speak to the deeply rooted ethics of care embodied by women challengers.

Women’s motivations to participate in the Hoka Hey differ, ranging from riding for a specific cause to riding for others who chose not to or could not ride; however, each woman found a personal connection to the challenge. The composite narratives within this chapter highlight the differences and similarities in women’s motivations. The one Hoka Hey woman warrior who emerges from the amalgamation of the women’s voices speaks to the deep relationships women forge with fellow challengers, supporters, and themselves.

None of the women interviewed indicated they were in search of a long distance motorcycle challenge when they chose to participate in the Hoka Hey. Although each individual story varied, many discussed how they were drawn to the Hoka Hey after seeing a small advertisement in a magazine or after speaking with challenge organizers at motorcycling events. They describe their initial experience with learning about the Hoka Hey as destiny. While these experiences could be explained as happenstance or productive marketing strategies on the part of the challenge operators, the women did not describe them as such. Rather they attributed their entrance in the challenge to a conglomeration of connected events. The level of personal connectivity with the event increased because none of the women felt that they sought out the challenge.
From their initial decision to participate many women made the challenge personal. The personal connection to entering the Hoka Hey builds on Roster’s work regarding motorcycling as a leisure activity. Roster explains women often enter motorcycling after a major life-changing event. She states, “feelings of self-renewal and confidence associated with riding seemed to fortify these women’s inner strength and helped them to regain control over their lives following a significant self-altering experience” (451). While Roster discusses women who began riding for the first time, this project looks at women who have ridden motorcycles and have now entered a challenge. For some women, such as Junie or Wendy (who entered the Hoka Hey after experiencing cancer or becoming an empty nester respectively) the change from leisure activity to competition and challenge reifies this sense of empowerment and motivation to participate.

As the planning went on, I decided I didn’t just want to ride for myself. I wanted to ride for others too. There were so many people who came out to support me at events, who wanted to help, and who put their confidence in me that it seemed selfish to do it just for me. I wanted a connection to a larger cause. Cancer would be my cause. I knew so many people affected by the disease, not all of them could get out and ride the Hoka Hey or even get on a motorcycle, but I could. I would ride for all of us. In January of that year, of 2010, my good friend was diagnosed with stage four-breast cancer. She was 27 years old...And I thought what better for her? ‘Cause here she was bouncing off of being an avid drug user to turning her life around, a complete one-eighty. Going to school. Wanting to be a social worker and wanting to work with domestic violence women. Completely just turned her life around. She was just inspirational in that. I knew I had to do something inspirational for her. So I called her up and told her I wanted to do
the Hoka Hey. And I wanted to do it for her.\textsuperscript{15} She was excited and touched by the sentiment. She
had been on motorcycles before with previous boyfriends and really liked the culture but never
got an opportunity to learn to ride. I think it gave her something to take her mind off the cancer,
just like it did for me.

When I started talking to the other women who were riding I found out that they were
riding for causes too. They were all passionate about finding sponsorships, raising awareness,
or just being a part of something. One woman passed out pink woven bracelets for us ladies to
wear on the ride symbolizing her friend with cancer. It was like she was riding with us, she said,
great idea. There was also the Northern Nevada Children’s Cancer Foundation\textsuperscript{16} and Pine
Ridge. I had never really been a part of those charity rides that happen so often in the
motorcycling community, but it’s really cool, and I never would have known this, but there’s
something really cool about riding in a group for a cause. All the people and the support and
being part of that group and it’s a visual thing. I never would have known how cool that is.\textsuperscript{17} The
Hoka Hey reminded me that we could put our passions into action and really make a difference
either for ourselves or for others. Before, during, and after the ride I remembered why I was out
there. It was for me, but it was something I needed to do for my cause too. Motorcyclists are
pretty amazing like that; we’re the second largest philanthropic group in the country behind

\textsuperscript{15} Bryana, 2010 (193-209)

\textsuperscript{16} Kelly, 2012 (520)

\textsuperscript{17} Debby, 2011 (262-265)
corporations. If that doesn’t say something then I don’t know what does.\textsuperscript{18} Sure, there was a prize waiting for the winner, but my motive for riding the Hoka Hey was not because I wanted to win the money. I wanted to ride for me and for my cause.

A translation of the feminist ethic of care, participants saw themselves as riding for a cause and thus extending their care to those they supported outside the ride. Here the motivation to ride and connection to a cause comes from within and is informed by women’s consciousness as women, spiritual beings, and survivors. When the challenge stared as personal, their connection to the event, its cause, and the people involved only grew. This aligns with research regarding cause-based marathon runners. Karin Jeffery and Ted Butryn’s study, “The Motivations of Runners in a Cause-Based Marathon-Training Program” indicates runner’s personal connection with a cause increased their motivation to train consistently (312). Likewise, women who rode for a cause in the Hoka Hey indicated this was a motivating factor of their success.

Riding for a cause illuminates the women challenger’s ability and desire to promote social awareness and work toward social justice issues through their participation in the Hoka Hey. A feminist ethic of care weaves through this intention as women strive to create change/awareness for others through their actions. A study of young girls’ leadership aspirations conducted by Emilie Zaslow and Judy Schoenberg contends that girls and women are more likely than boys and men to be motivated by helping others to engage in leadership roles (104). Further, the study shows that girls are more inclined to participate in volunteerism whereas boys are inclined toward political leadership roles (104). The emphasis on volunteerism shows a

\textsuperscript{18} Kelly, 2012 (174-176)
commitment of time as important to girls and women. This mirrors the women challenger’s
desires to volunteer their time, talent, and treasure to promote social justice through the Hoka
Hey rather than their desire to create change through other avenues such as political leadership.
The women who rode the Hoka Hey for causes not only took time to complete the challenge, but
also took additional time engaging in public service and fundraising activities for their causes.
Media representations and social structures encourage women and girls to help others through
their natural and learned abilities. Seen here as the ability to ride a motorcycle across the country
in a nationally publicized event, the actions women take up support social justice issues.

We did a ton of fundraisers. We had to, it was expensive. I think minus the entry fee it
cost, I think it was like four or five grand. Or something like that. So it was almost six grand to
do it. Just with gas and crap and all that other stuff. It was insane.\textsuperscript{19} I wasn’t just raising money
though; I was gaining supporters and raising awareness for my friend’s cancer struggles at each
turn. We tried to think of everything to make a buck. I had a Harley dealership sponsor me. I had
donation boxes at the local Harley dealership; my friends and family threw me bar parties.\textsuperscript{20} I
sold muffins to ride the Hoka Hey.\textsuperscript{21} But somehow it all came together and after all the support, I
was able, had the time, and the finances to be able to do it. So you know, I took my money and I
went and I did it.\textsuperscript{22} And it paid off, we were able to raise money so that my friend and her family

\textsuperscript{19} Tristica, 2010 (792-795)

\textsuperscript{20} Tristica, 2010 (276)

\textsuperscript{21} Junie, 2010, 2011, 2012 (520-521)

\textsuperscript{22} Sheila, 2010 (246-248)
would be able to fly out there too, to Alaska, and hang out at the finish. And we were able to
donate some money to the Susan Komen Foundation, the breast cancer foundation. We were able
to give her a nice little vacation for her and her family up to Alaska for two weeks. That was
ultimately what pushed me to want to do the Hoka Hey before I even knew what I was getting
myself in to.  

It felt so good to be able to do it. I was proud of myself (for raising the money, and
actually completing the ride, and everything) and I think other people were really proud of me
too.

Additionally, riding for a cause highlights the women’s class status. Their feminine ethics of care empowered them to make a difference by choosing a cause for which to ride. In turn this reinforced their socioeconomic status because they could not simply reach into their pockets or go to the ATM to obtain funds for the ride or to donate to the cause. Rather than simply giving money, these women had time to give time and talent toward a cause. As discussed previously, many of the women involved in the Hoka Hey are not “weekend warriors” with disposable incomes who ride on weekends, only for leisure, viewing their motorcycles as status symbols. Rather, many challengers ride motorcycles as a form of primary transportation or rode motorcycles for transportation in the past. They had to work hard to raise enough funds to participate in the ride and to give back to their cause. The altruistic action of fundraising strengthens women’s community connection and motivation through their ethic of care but also reinforces their class status.

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23 Bryana, 2010 (210-217)
It was so much more to me than money. For me it wasn’t about getting there to win the money. It was about, “Hey, can I ride from Key West to Alaska? Let’s go find out.”24 But so many people were so pressed. And they just thought, “Oh my gosh, I’m gonna win this money and I’m gonna do great on this and all this.” And you know, it was just sad. There were people that literally died.25 Of course, everybody wants to make it in in time and win money. But for me, it was more; it was personal.26 I couldn’t believe it when people would drop out of the ride. I was riding with a guy and as soon as he heard that, it was sad, as soon as he heard that somebody made it to Alaska first, he went home. He just gave up and went home.27 But I didn’t care about the money. That’s not why I was in this.

The women interviewed discussed a level of personal connection that they viewed as different than men’s experiences. Specifically, many women described their motives differently than men’s motives. They believed that most men were in the competition only for the money, many citing men who quit the challenge after they knew someone else had won. While “Everyone rides for their own reason” is a common sentiment in the Hoka Hey family, meaning all reasons for riding are equally valid, the women interviewed see their motivations for riding in relation to others. In rider meetings it is clear that some riders participate in the Hoka Hey for Pine Ridge, because they love to ride, for bragging rights, or for the money. Many of the women

24 Tristica, 2010 (548-550)

25 Sheila, 2010 (291-293)

26 Wendy, 2011, 2012 (316-317)

27 Jersey Pearl, 2010 (542-546)
challengers described how the Hoka Hey “found them,” further exemplifying the ethics of care through disassociating themselves with a specific decision. Rather than seeking a challenge that would affect those around them, they explain their participation as destiny. The it-found-me sentiment rang clear and stands in stark contrast to other riders who were drawn to the large winnings purse in the 2010 ride. Seeing themselves in contrast to men exemplifies a gendered perspective to their desire to participate. Although most riders share common goals and passions, a division exists between those who are “in it for the money” and those who are not. Because women extended their web of connectivity to those outside the ride, they found more value in staying in the ride.

The women riders viewed themselves as completing the challenge for personal reasons—a cause, personal growth—rather than money. In part, this is because of the level of personal commitment and dedication women faced while overcoming the many difficulties on the ride. However, as the women spoke, it became clear that they also felt connected to the people with whom they came into contact be it through fundraising, on the ride itself, or elsewhere. The women felt a sense of obligation to the family, friends, and supporters who followed and assisted with their rides. This feeling began during the early phases of the Hoka Hey when the women raised funds and advertised their ride.

My family turned out to be a great source of support. At first I wasn’t really sure about how they would feel. It’s dangerous after all, and I would be gone for quite a while. I felt like it was kind of a selfish thing; because I was going to be gettin’ on this bike and takin’ off and going places on it, and you know, you can’t be doin’ it with three kids.\textsuperscript{28} But the kids embraced it. I had

\textsuperscript{28} Junie, 2010, 2011, 2012 (328-330)
a whole team of cheerleaders. Especially my family, my dad, he was my head cheerleader.29 And my husband said, “Yeah, sure,” and wow, I had support from him? And he didn’t care to come?30 He was there at the finish line; but he’s not the biker in the family.31 It was amazing to see everyone get on board with this. I was really surprised. But I suppose not everyone thought I could do it at first. My uncles, when I told them they were like, “You can’t do that. You can’t ride your Sportster to Alaska.” And I was like, well, I’m gonna do it. So either you support me or you know whatever. And like I got back and they all called me and they were like, “We’re SO proud of you! We didn’t think you could do it. But you did it.” And they watched me and after it was over they said, “We’ll never doubt you again when you tell us you’re going to go do some crazy thing.”32 Even if it was after the ride that they turned around, the support from my family and friends felt wonderful.

Interestingly, some women perceived their participation in the challenge as selfish. This happened most often with women who had children. Many of the riders who had children associated a sense of guilt with either riding a motorcycle or participating in the Hoka Hey. The societal pressure women feel to care for family permeates this selfishness. Because women are seen as primary caregivers, they habitually give their time to others thus making the act of taking a long solo journey feel selfish. This is an explicit extension of an ethics of care. By seeing


30 Jersey Pearl, 2010 (314-316)

31 Eden, 2010, 2011 (315)

32 Tristica, 2010 (688-694)
themselves as mothers, understanding how their choices may affect those around them, and making choices based on those thoughts, these women exemplify the feminist notion of care based ethics.

Not only does this feeling of selfishness come because women must leave their families for an extended period of time, it also materializes because of the level of risk involved in the event. The thought of leaving behind children because of their “selfish” participation in a motorcycle challenge seemed like negligence to some of the women. Women who had children or grandchildren at the time of their interviews but who did not have (grand)children when they participated in the event listed their (grand)children as a reason they would not participate in future challenges. The personal and social obligation of rearing children directly affected women’s participation or feelings about participating in the Hoka Hey. Women overcame their guilt because their families supported their endeavors. After hearing that their children, parents, or partners supported their desire to ride the Hoka Hey, they were able to see the event as less selfish.

And then I had this whole little cheering section from the dealership. They were like following me on a computer and all this other stuff. And like every time I’d get to a checkpoint they’d call me on my phone and be like, “AAHH, keep going, keep going!”33 There were so many people cheering me on; it was like they were out there with me. I was riding for them. I couldn’t believe how many people were following my ride. They watched me on the GPS (it told them where I was in the country and also if my engine was on or off—kind of weird but cool). At times it felt like a lot of pressure, like I didn’t want to mess up because they were all watching.

33 Tristica, 2010 (277-280)
But the support outweighed that. One time I a friend texted me to ask why my engine was off in the middle of the day, it was monsooning and we were waiting to see if it would pass. I had people following me online. Someone would post it on Facebook and I would try to post pictures here and there. Someone took a satellite picture of the exact time I stopped it was like four in the afternoon. There were definitely some groupies watching. And to this day, I still have people walk in the shop; I have no idea who they are, and they’re like “We totally followed you and that was so cool!” It’s almost like they can’t believe it. A woman could ride that far, that long distance, you know, 800 miles, a thousand miles a day, back roads. I think that really shocked a few people. And got them thinking. Wow, this is tough. And I know they probably see it as a woman did that. But we’re riders here, we enjoy what we do. It’s weird to have people say things like that. I’m not famous. I don’t feel like I did anything REALLY special. But I guess it kinda is impressive. Even now that it’s over people still come up to me and say “Oh I read that in the newspaper.” “Oh, I read your blog.” “Oh you know so and so told me about this” or, “Tell me this story again.” My husband gets a little annoyed by it; but I guess at the same time, I guess it’s impressive. Because the normal person doesn’t get to do what I did.

I’m a spectacle when I ride, like an impressive sideshow attraction...cue the circus music...Step right up, Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls! Come see the amazing Hoka Hey Rider with a VAGINA! It’s not bad, just funny. On a motorcycle, it’s like you’re approachable. Because you can pull up to a gas station to get fuel and if you’re in a vehicle, nine

34 Debby, 2011 (360-368)
35 Jersey Pearl, 2010 (699-706)
times out of ten nobody’s going to talk to you. But for some reason when you’re on a motorcycle, you’re like approachable. Especially when my dog’s with me. She brings a lot of joy to people. You’ll be going down the road and you’ll see someone is right beside you, pacing themselves; and you know what’s going on. You look over and you already know. They’re taking pictures of that dog on the motorcycle. She’s like a rock star. You know, everybody wants a picture of her on the motorcycle. I feel like sometimes my job is just like driving Miss Trixie. Even without the dog, I seem to be greeted with open arms everywhere I go. People are actually fascinated by the fact that I ride a motorcycle. When looking at me you wouldn’t assume it per se; but I guess here’s the break in stereotype. We’ll be at gas stations and little old ladies will ask us how to pump gas or to help them with something. And my husband and I just laugh and say well I guess we don’t look very tough. But people assume you want to talk to everybody. You’re in a hurry and especially on the Hoka Hey that was a little hard. You want to be friendly. You want to give a good impression of motorcyclists, to change the perceptions.

The sense of duty and obligation the women felt extended into their desire to perform well during the ride. The idea that people were “watching” them profoundly impacted their ride

36 Sheila, 2010 (67-70)
37 Sheila, 2010 (82-87)
38 Kelly, 2012 (326-329)
39 Sherie, 2010 (120-122)
40 Debby, 2011 (259-261)
and began during the planning stages of their experience. Many of the women felt as if people were relying on them to ride and complete this challenge. While there were little to no consequences to how well any woman performed during the event, and it is unlikely that supporters perceptions of the women would change, the personal connection and social obligation women riders felt toward supporters made riders want to do their best and succeed. This desire to succeed and perform builds on the body of literature surrounding other gender nonconforming athletes. I point here to Ruth Chananie-Hill, Shelly McGrath and Justin Stoll’s work on female bodybuilders, “Deviant or Normal? Female Bodybuilders’ Accounts of Social Reactions”, which describes athletes’ reactions to fans. As the scholars state, “admiration puts pressure on female bodybuilders to maintain a hard, lean, muscular body year-round, in much the same manner as men” (823). This desire to maintain a toned body even off-season is similar to women Hoka Hey challengers indicating a desire to perform to the best of their ability and with integrity. While it may seem contradictory to previously discussed notions of women seeing themselves as different than men who ride the Hoka Hey, this shows the subtleties of women’s gender performances in that women’s desire to perform at consistently high levels is informed not by their desire to perform for themselves, but rather for and because of their fans. These pressures produce an athlete/fan connection reminding athletes they do not compete in isolation thus reinforcing their ethic of care.

When I notice people watching me ride, sometimes I feel like a role model. I remember a little girl; I pulled up to a gas station, and a little girl rolled up her window. She was scared. And when I took off my helmet and she saw that I was a girl. She looked over at her mom and she said, “It’s a girl, it’s a girl! A girl on a bike!” And she wasn’t scared no more. And that was amazing to me. Because people judge people by what they look like and I was on like day seven
of the Hoka Hey. So no shower, no nothing, my hair was a mess. And I think I inspired her. I guess the biggest thing that I learned about myself that participating in the Hoka Hey the women were perceived by other women as something above, as heroes. I was even called that by several women. A hero?! Me?!? Just think. I hope to inspire. I really don’t see myself as different than other people.

I’ve been seeing more women riders over the years. There are still few women in the Hoka Hey but there are so many more women riders out there now, in all facets of motorcycling. I felt like I was out there for each one of them. I think that just by having a small group of women who are actually out there and doing these things, that women didn’t generally think they could do before, has allowed more women an ability to feel comfortable doing it themselves and to get out there. I think the number of women riders is starting to rise and I think eventually you’re going to find a lot of women who are winning endurance challenge races all over the world. And doing BMX type stuff and off-road stuff, which has been a male dominated sport. I’m helping that perception. When I started talking about the Hoka Hey, people started telling me how great they thought it was. I didn’t really know why so many people were interested in supporting me. I mean, no one really cares when I go out to Sturgis for the rally. But this was different, it was a competition and I was a part of something bigger. But now, I’m out there riding and doing this

41 Wendy, 2011, 2012 (204-207)

42 Eden, 2010, 2011 (490-492)

43 Debby, 2011 (325)

44 Tristica, 2010 (207-214)
stuff and people are noticing. And now EVERYBODY rides. So now it’s even more empowering ‘cause I was there at the beginning and I was able to watch it grow.45 It’s always amazing to me when I notice women noticing me. It’s usually women who don’t ride motorcycles. Sometimes I’ll get the thumbs up and the women are like, “That’s awesome I wish I could do that.” Like I wish I was brave enough to do that.46 But they are brave enough, or they could be. If I can do it, I’m pretty sure anyone can as long as they wanted to. You do have to want it. And when it all comes together, women can do anything! We can make such a huge difference in other people’s lives just by doing something like the Hoka Hey. I mean whether it’s a guy or it’s another female out there. Or they’re actually riding it, or it’s just some guy you meet at a gas station who thinks it’s so cool to see some female not being afraid, or limiting themselves by the standards and the society that we live in.47 I feel like I am inspiring people. I can tell they watch me ride; they talk to me. They tell me that they think what I’m doing is cool, that doing the Hoka Hey was impressive.

Compounding this personal obligation is the small number of female Hoka Hey participants. Because there are few women who ride, the pressure to succeed increases. In a sense, the women riders feel as if they are riding under a microscope; there is no opportunity to become lost in the larger sea of challengers. The women interviewed feel like (and often describe themselves as) role models, not only to their supporters but also to all women riders. The added

45 Jersey Pearl, 2010 (190-192)

46 Bryana, 2010 (181-184)

47 Bryana, 2010 (680-685)
weight of being a role model for current and future women riders forces female challengers to alter or monitor their behavior. Again here, Chananie-Hill et al.’s work on female body builders applies; it shows encouragement from fellow bodybuilders increases women’s participation in the sport. Their findings indicate “without such subcultural encouragement and support, along with fan adoration and positive audience feedback, it is likely that fewer of the women would have chosen to enter the sport” (824). As these gender nonconforming athletes feel like role models and encourage others to participate in the sport they subsequently feel a deeper sense of obligation to supporters, future athletes/riders, and other subcultural participants.

Similarly, Zaslow and Schoenberg’s study of girls’ motivations to participate in civic engagement activities points to the gendered nature of this experience. The scholars point to studies in which women are drawn into civic engagement through seeing other women participate in such activities (105). Citing how much “exposure matters,” the scholars point out that it “is difficult for girls to be what they don’t see” (105). To this end, women motorcyclists act as role models for young girls to try empowering activities such as civic engagement or motorcycle riding. The women’s understanding of the impact of their actions speaks to their affirmation of exposing themselves for the good of others. Knowing they are role models for girls motivates these women to perform differently than they might otherwise. They are cognizant of their ability to create change and affect lives through their riding which informs their gendered participation. Although the riders may not describe themselves as feminists, their actions speak to a feminist action to create change and work toward gender equality.

*When I arrived at the start of the challenge, I realized it wasn’t just my family and friends who were watching me back home. The other challengers had their eyes on me as well. When we were at the party beforehand, Friday night before and the challenge started on Sunday. A lot of
the guys were like, “It’s cool that you’re here but. I really hope that you CAN make it to Alaska on that bike and, do you know what you’re in for?” Of course I didn’t know what I was in for, but I didn’t want them to know it. Hell, they didn’t know what they were in for either. None of us could have anticipated it. But somehow, the others knew about me, or at least pretended like they did. Maybe it was just easier to remember the women riders; after all there were less of us. Even after the ride started, the other riders wanted to know if you needed help. I remember getting into the second checkpoint and Beth tellin’ me, “Oh yeah, people keep askin’ where you girls were.” Everyone had this caring attitude. You really weren’t in it alone. And nobody was going to get to Alaska without you. The caring attitudes on the road were amazing. I can’t exactly explain how or why we all bonded on the ride. I’m not sure if it was the shared experience or getting to know one another before and after the ride, but somehow the sharing meals and miles made us a cohesive group. A system of support. A family.

In the end, some of the other riders were surprised that we made it into the finish and voiced this opinion. Jim Red Cloud seemed astonished but also proud. “I didn’t think you’d make it. We tracked you pretty close just in case.” I didn’t know how I felt about this. Clearly Jim didn’t know how stubborn I was. Regardless of how surprised they were, people were there for me. There were so many people at the finish cheering me in. It was amazing that there were people involved that were willing to stay up that late to welcome a rider in. There were people there that if they had the time off they were there to say who’s coming in next? I mean there were

48 Tristica, 2010 (140-144)

49 Jersey Pearl, 2010 (449-451)
some really awesome people. Even non-motorcyclists came by to say what’s going on and were impressed.\textsuperscript{50} And I just remember at the very end meeting up with my friend who had the breast cancer and her whole family and everyone crossing the finish line. And I remember getting there and going like, is it over? Can I turn around and do that again? I’m not done. I’m so full of energy. I’m ready to go again. That was the most awesome experience of my life, and just seeing the excitement that all of that was done for her.\textsuperscript{51} I was really proud to have done that for her, and to exceed the expectations.

So I wasn’t just riding this ride for my own benefit. Sure my integrity was on the line but all of those people were relying on me. I was their role model, their hero. I know a lot of the folks that cheered me on may not have felt the hero part or just did it because, but I’m one of those folks that I don’t like disappointing people. It was really tearing me up inside that I even thought that I would disappoint the gal that called me a hero.\textsuperscript{52} I didn’t want to let anyone down; like my boss my owner of the dealership has been EXTREMELY good to my husband and I. I couldn’t do that to him. He was my sponsor.\textsuperscript{53} They were counting on me. That little girl, my sponsors, my family were actually counting on me. I needed to finish for all of us.

Despite some of the women riders feeling like role models, a position associated with prestige and power, they downplayed their own importance. This came when they stated they did

\textsuperscript{50} Eden, 2010, 2011 (389-396)

\textsuperscript{51} Bryana, 2010 (362-367)

\textsuperscript{52} Eden, 2010, 2011 (511-515)

\textsuperscript{53} Carla, 2011 (394-395)
not see themselves as “different” or they thought anyone could do what they did. These comments seemed to be fleeting and often inserted in an obligatory manner. For example a woman would indicate that she was not special; however, upon further contemplation or after describing a particularly difficult portion of the course she would say that what she did was in fact impressive or that not all motorcycle riders could endure the extremities of the Hoka Hey. The initial reaction to downplay one’s achievements may be a result of women being told over time that they are inferior in some way. For example, women are less likely than men to promote their own achievements in the workplace; here we see this same tendency extended to their leisure activities. Alternatively, this points to women’s social conditioning to perform femininity and thus not boast, as boasting is not thought to be ladylike or polite. However, the women did eventually admit that they were perhaps special, indicating an increase in self-esteem and empowerment after completing the challenge.

The social conditioning of women to feel a sense of obligation to friends and family drove women to challenge themselves on the ride. For example, one rider, who dedicated her ride to a friend battling breast cancer, vowed that she would not complain throughout the entire challenge as a tribute to her friend. She felt that complaining about being on a motorcycle, regardless of the conditions, would be disrespectful to her friend who battled cancer. Devoting the ride to another person, and feeling a sense of obligation to her friend enabled this challenger to view the ride differently than other riders. While her friend or other riders may not have known that she was complaining about the ride, her personal dedication to her friend and the ride allowed her to overcome many of the mental road blocks on the Hoka Hey. Often male riders told women riders that they were not likely to finish the course and in some cases friends and family doubted the woman’s ability. When the women were doubted, it often increased their
desire to complete the challenge and subsequently increased their confidence by "proving" themselves or proving others wrong.

The women were surprised and humbled by how many people were watching their ride, following their social media outlets, and cheering for them. Some women associated the feeling of surprise with sentiments about their own unworthiness or lack of importance. For example, many women stated they could not believe someone would pay attention to them. They downplayed their importance as a woman rider and female athlete/competitor. The support from family, friends, the public, and other riders in companion with technological applications of the challenge made the women hyper-cognizant of their own actions. The support they felt created a Panopticon-like effect on the women. The Panopticon is a power structure described by Foucault as a circular prison, which forces inmates to police themselves because of the assumption of constant surveillance. While they were not directly being watched at every minute, these women felt pushed to do their best for and because of their growing fan bases "watching" from home. As Markula and Pringle suggest, the Panopticon in connection to sport normalizes behavior through external influencers (45). In this instance, the agents of normalization are the women’s support networks and fans. The “I don’t want to disappoint anyone” mantra rang clear through the interviews and supports the notion of normalization or performance through the perceived surveillance.

As I rode through the country and realized even more that I was being watched, I knew I didn’t want to let anyone down. I focused on riding the ride right. I had to follow the rules. I try and live as honestly as possible. I’m not gonna go and run like a hundred and fifty miles an hour
and tell them that I was doing the speed limit the whole time. That’s just not how I work. I ran into people who were usin’ a GPS. And I was like, wait a minute. You know, you’re not supposed to do that. And they would be like, “I’m doin it. I’m winnin’ the money. And I’m doin’ it.” You would just shake your head and go, where’s your integrity as a person? Gotta have big brother watchin’ ya to make sure you’re playin’ by the rules? I just wanted to play by their rules. There was one time when I needed to deviate from the rules and one of the Harley dealers wouldn’t let us sleep outside. They got us a hotel. But we felt guilty. We felt like we were not only cheating ourselves, but everybody else. There is when we felt we lost our integrity. But it was forced; we had no choice. That was the challenge; it was to be ok with that, with those decisions that we made. I guess I just want to be true to the challenge. To know that I did the challenge the way it was supposed to be done. And I did that. And I’ll never forget that.

So many people were cheating. I mean these guys who have someone talkin’ in their ear and tellin’ ‘em turn by turn what to do, that isn’t the Hoka Hey. Those front-runners, those people that give a copy of the directions we received to somebody and somebody tells ‘em what

54 Tristica, 2010 (254-259)

55 Sheila, 2010 (375-380)

56 Sheila, 2010 (374)

57 Jersey Pearl, 2010 (628-631)

58 Sheila, 2010 (562-564)
to do, they might as well put on a blindfold too. It was frustrating to see so many people before me at the finish who I felt had cheated. I didn’t really get to gel with a whole lot of people at the finish ‘cause I did the whole route. Not everybody did the whole route that year we did it. Which was a little frustrating. ‘Cause you’re like, aren’t I doing well? I’m not sleeping a lot. I’m making ground. And people were like, no, there’s tons of people ahead of you. ‘Cause people were cutting off stuff. And they didn’t do the whole thing. And it made you feel disappointed. I came in about a hundredth but how many of those people who came in ahead of me didn’t do it the right way? That was one of the frustrations. But I upheld my integrity. I followed the speed limit the whole time. I didn’t, I wasn’t racin’, I wasn’t, ridin’ like a crazy person. You know, I was just doin’ my thing and I was doin’ it the way that THEY explained it needed to be done. You know, to the best of my abilities.

In part, the obligation felt by the women drove them to participate in the challenge with the utmost integrity. They spoke in detail about needing or wanting to follow the challenge rules while they saw others violating state laws or simply cheating. Women are taught from a young age to behave themselves, act appropriately, and follow the rules. Many women internalize these messages and they transfer into their adult lives through decision making, at work and in their leisure activities. Feminist theorist, Rosemary Tong discusses an ethics of care and speaks to this


60 Debby, 2011 (692-696)

61 Sheila, 2010 (420-422)

62 Tristica, 2010 (644-647)
type of connected decision making. Tong bases an ethics of care on “reason toward moral decision making” (164). Describing this caregiving ethic, Tong discusses how women in Gilligan’s study worried about their decisions affecting themselves in “connection to their partners, parents, friends and so on” (165). Women on the Hoka Hey made decisions about their participation with concern for morality and emphasis on how each decision would be viewed by or would affect people around them. Because this was an internally experienced and relational event for some women, it was as if they felt they would be cheating themselves or those who supported them in their endeavors.

The issue of cheating is an almost constant topic of discussion among riders and followers of the Hoka Hey. The women interviewed were taken aback and disappointed by the amount of cheating that took place, showing their emphasis toward morality in a feminist ethic of care. They scorned other riders who used assistance of GPS or personal navigators, they scoffed at the idea of removing road signs, they bemoaned those who left the challenge after hearing someone else had won, and they largely were ashamed by the notion of needing to win so badly as to disgrace a personal reputation. When speaking of cheating, the women regarded some of their male counterparts as cheaters and never brought up the idea that women might cheat as well. Peggy McIntosh exemplifies this notion in her article “Gender Perspectives on Educating for Global Citizenship” by stating, “What is rewarded in them [young men], however, is a solo risk-taking and individualism, and if they are white male a go-it-alone and ‘damn-the-torpedoes’ kind of bravery without regard for, or awareness of, the outcomes for other people of one’s behaviors” (26). For these women riders, however, following the rules was more important than winning. For them the intimacy of the challenge drove them to be true to themselves, to the ride, and to their support networks rather than the solo mentality McIntosh ascribes to men.
It’s all over now and I’ve had some time to think about the experience. For me it was a personal challenge. I didn’t need to cheat. I had my own goals. I wanted to finish. I needed to finish for myself. It’s only fun, I think, to challenge yourself a little bit. Set that bar up a little higher, stretch yourself out a little bit further and because at the end of the day, you’re going to pat yourself on the back and you’re gonna say, Wow, look what I did. With the endurance rides, it’s a competition. And it’s a competition not only with myself because I want to see what I can do. It’s a competition against other riders and saying, ok, I’ve passed that person a couple of times and we’re leap-frogging. I’ve got to figure out something different so that I don’t see that person again. Except maybe they cross the finish line and I’m on the sideline waving them in. A little bit of competitive streak. But I focused on the relaxation, enjoy the ride, enjoy the experience versus I’m here to win. I’m going to do my absolute best. Ride your own ride. I guess that sums it all up. Don’t feel pressured to do anything that you’re not willing to push yourself. Don’t let anyone push you into anything. That’s when it gets scary, and people get hurt, and things like that. I think it’s important that you ride your own ride. There was no trying to

63 Wendy, 2011, 2012 (96)


65 Eden, 2010, 2011 (461-468)

prove anything. It was just something I wanted to do. And it was one of my top five best experiences I’d have to say.  

I was very determined to not quit. While I knew I was out of the challenge, for the money, I needed to be in it for everybody else. I needed to not give up. So I did what I had to do. Even when it was tough, I kept going. I don’t know if it’s just all the experiences you go through. You know being scared and tired and then on your last limb. And wanting to quit, but you can’t quit. But you just push on. You have to finish.

The heightened level of self-esteem comes in part from the way the women viewed the competition. Each of the women interviewed discussed the event as a competition against herself rather than a competition against the other riders. Here a non-Western competition style allows for “winning” to be viewed not as the singular person(s) who win prize money, but rather by what each individual achieved. Entering the challenge with a different competitive mindset enables women to truly ride their own rides and not worry about others on the course. Rather than focusing on winning, challengers focus on finishing the route. Changing perspective from basing a successful performance on finishing rather than winning mimics sport literature regarding ultramarathoning. Maylon Hanold’s essay, “Beyond the Marathon: (De)Construction of Female Ultrarunning Bodies”, shows women who compete in endurance sport focus on

67 Debby, 2011 (172-174)

68 Schatzi, 2011, 2012 (1524)

69 Jersey Pearl, 2010 (615-617)

70 Wendy, 2011, 2012 (232-234)
completing the course rather than coming in first. As Hanold suggests, this “creates a distinct category of distance running” much like the Hoka Hey emerges as a distinct type of motorsport emphasizing an alternative competition model (173). While this competition structure affects all challengers, women challengers internalized their success as relational to their supporters. Although some women did mention traditional competition, they later mimicked the personal achievement statement in part because of their follower’s support.

It is not easy to separate yourself from others while participating in any competition. Like any foot race or other event, Hoka Hey riders constantly compare themselves to others (both male and female) while on the ride; however, when reflecting after the event (such as when these interviews were conducted) it is easier to say you took your own pace. Had interviews been conducted during the challenge with each participant, their comments about the competition may have varied. This sentiment is exemplified by Eden’s comments about leap-frogging with other competitors. Although Eden’s final words were that of a personal competition, the idea of competing against others is present. Likely, this feeling existed with other female challengers as well.

And finish I did. It felt amazing to be at the finish line. Oh, that was awesome!\textsuperscript{71} People came out to see me. The other women were there and so were the people in charge of the challenge, and a few other riders and people who didn’t even know me. And the attitude in Alaska was a lot different than the reception at the beginning of the race. I mean I did make it up to the finish. There were only 12 women that were in that race. 763 people. And I know that myself and, Jersey Pearl and a couple of other girls were the only ones that actually got up to

\textsuperscript{71} Eden, 2010, 2011 (379)
Alaska. It was pretty cool. This one woman waited so patiently just to have her picture taken with me. I mean I felt so much like a rock star at that time. I could tell I was an inspiration to some. I think everybody needs to step out of their comfort shell on something. If I don’t inspire them to ride a motorcycle I hope I’m inspiring them to do a dream.

Of course it always makes you feel good when you’re a woman rider and you’re out there and people like double take, and look back, and “Oh my god, that’s two women!” It makes you feel good. And it’s an ego booster, handling a good-sized motorcycle. But, finishing the Hoka Hey has really changed me; it makes me feel stronger as a woman. Exactly. Stronger. It makes me stronger as a woman. You find out just how strong of a person you are and what you can endure. And to me, to me, uh, it was to me it wasn’t all that hard, other than just tryin’ to stay awake. It made me feel so good, but there’s nothing special about me. The other women are amazing. Stories that I hear about Eden, and Junie, and Carla, that’s amazing.

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72 Tristica, 2010 (158-162)
73 Eden, 2010, 2011 (496-498)
74 Wendy, 2011, 2012 (130-132)
75 Jane, 2011, 2012 (190-192)
76 Eden, 2010, 2011 (114-117)
77 Wendy, 2011, 2012 (98-99)
78 Debra, 2011 (507-510)
is not, it’s amazing for me.\textsuperscript{79} And riding a motorcycle, it’s something that I feel enables women to feel confident in themselves. Feel stronger.\textsuperscript{80} Just think, all the things that I participated in and I accomplished them by myself was a really neat thing.\textsuperscript{81}

I did the Hoka Hey by myself…And it was a really neat decision. ‘Cause I just had a wonderful time doing it.\textsuperscript{82} I figured I’d always want to be with people the whole time. But it made it more clear that I like my independence. I actually could get on a motorcycle and feel like I was accomplishing something. For ME. Without anybody else interfering and saying, oh you need to do it this way. You need to do it that way.\textsuperscript{83} The independence that I had to show in going through some of those areas, not giving up, the perseverance. I mean I could have given up at any time. But I was not going to do that. It was never an option. If I had managed to break something, like a leg, then yeah maybe I would have called help. But I found the independence, the perseverance, the strength of character, willingness to do more than what I had ever expected of myself.\textsuperscript{84} You really start diggin’ deep in your soul and um learning about yourself.\textsuperscript{85}

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\textsuperscript{79} Wendy, 2011, 2012 (393-395)
\textsuperscript{80} Eden, 2010, 2011 (145-146)
\textsuperscript{81} Sherie, 2010 (339-340)
\textsuperscript{82} Sherie, 2010 (104-116)
\textsuperscript{83} Debby, 2011 (791-792)
\textsuperscript{84} Eden, 2010, 2011 (331-337)
\textsuperscript{85} Carla, 2011 (219)
\end{flushleft}
That doesn’t mean I never rode with anyone else. I did. I picked up with groups and left them as we continued on the road. A few times I even had to help the guys I was riding with. I helped people with directions sometimes; people followed me. I found that group of fifteen guys that didn’t know where they were at or where they were going. And so they followed me in. That first check point was when they followed me in. And it seemed like every time after that I had at least one guy following me. ‘Cause he didn’t know where he was going. Then there were some scary times that I thought people were going to lose it. There was another guy in front of me and he almost went off the road in Yosemite. And I was so tired I couldn’t wake him up and you know again, you feel like you have to take care of these people. Anyone who’s around you’re going to try to help him.

Although many of the women riders had participated in organized sports, or other endurance events prior to their participation in the Hoka Hey, they described this challenge as “different”. The main difference between the Hoka Hey and other challenges was the endurance aspect of the event. Thus, the level of difficulty combined with the length of the event likely added to their increase in self-esteem. Additionally, the marketing of the challenge by organizers could add to the level of confidence felt by women. The challenge is marketed as “the toughest ride” for “the toughest riders on earth” (Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge). Although self-appointed, this designation allows riders to feel that they have achieved something that other motorcyclists are not able to achieve. From a gendered perspective, this designation gives

86 Tristica, 2010 (275-281)

87 Debby, 2011 (646-649)
women an even greater sense of importance and empowerment. As mentioned by Tristica in the composite narrative above, the small number of women riding spurs feelings of importance. Here, the othering of women creates a positive effect because few women ride motorcycles and even fewer women riders participate in the Hoka Hey. Difference is key to women’s feelings of success and empowerment.

For these women riders, the Hoka Hey was an opportunity to push themselves and create independence. While many women rode with male or female riding partners, those who undertook the course alone spoke of the solo ride as accomplishing a separate challenge. These independent riders prided themselves on being able to complete the ride alone. These women spoke of an independent spirit gained from finishing the challenge. As Ethan Rouen suggests in the article, “Taking It To The Limit”, many challengers in extreme sports find “the actual moment of competition is a time of solitude” in which challengers are “competing mostly with self-doubt and fear” (55). While a large number of riders spoke of personal and inner stumbling blocks throughout the ride, those who participated in the event alone felt they overcame an additional challenge and seemed impressed at the idea of finishing such a daunting obstacle solo. For some women riders the Hoka Hey was their first trip alone, creating a greater feeling of accomplishment and growth.

Despite the tendency for solitude, riders find a deep community in the Hoka Hey as they do in other extreme sports. For many athletes, this juxtaposition between independence and community is part of the draw toward extreme sports. Those who rode with others described their relationships as being an important factor in their experience. For example, some indicated that their riding partners often challenged them but that these challenges led them to be better people or more connected with their partners. This speaks to a feminist ethic of care though
understanding their ride in relation to their riding partners. On the road, women who rode together or with others did not view themselves in isolation, not wanting to abandon male riders or specifically giving care. For example, in the composite narrative above, Debby’s experience riding through Yosemite speaks to this caregiving on the road. The women assisted with directions, kept riding partners awake, and helped those in need. This specifically speaks to a care based ethics promoting thought processes in context with and relation to others around them.

Regardless of their riding partners, the women all spoke of learning more about themselves while on the Hoka Hey as they constantly battled self-doubt and fear on the road. The ride forced them to face their own shortcomings and celebrate their accomplishments. While being interviewed, some women volleyed between downplaying their experiences in comparison with other women riders and speaking highly of their own achievements. This comparison shows a need to remain humble and be proud, but careful to not expose hubris. Again here a feminine gender performance keeps the women from being overly boastful while simultaneously feeling empowerment.

Once I came back, people asked me everything. What was it like? Had I learned anything? Would I do it again? Would I do it differently? Did I have any advice about the ride? Sometimes it was hard to put into words exactly what I meant or how I felt. Because for me, it’s the most amazing thing by far that I have done in my life. And I would do things differently. And I did learn things. And I would do it again. It gave me time to think. When you’re on your bike for so long like that, your mind has time to work. And I think women are always thinking of

88 Wendy, 2011, 2012 (376)
four different things at once and multitasking in their heads. And I think men can ride mindless. I think they just enjoy the moment. That’s one of the things I’ve learned while motorcycling is to just enjoy the moment. And to leave everything behind. And so now when I ride it’s just a really comfortable feeling and I’m just enjoying the moment and I’m not thinking about what I’m going to do next week or next month or anything like that, I’m just participating in a moment in time. And I think men tend to be able to do that easier than women. And I think I’ve learned how to do that being on a motorcycle.89 It was just AMAZING to me now after doing all that, the Hoka Hey, is the new freedom. It’s the less stress, just me and the bike. And I’m calmer. My kids say I’m calmer. I’m a high stress person. And it has calmed me down.90 Looking back maybe it was all personal. I didn’t do it for anything other than me. And that might be selfish that I needed in my life. And, I found something. I can’t tell you what it is. But I found it. Cause I’m happy. I’m at peace. I love my life. I want to wake up in the morning. I’m not grumpy and old and grouchy anymore.91 And it’s been a growth. It’s allowed me to grow in ways that I hadn’t planned.92

The ability to complete a challenge, in the way they intended, led the women to achieve a great sense of confidence and personal growth. While some women grew through seeing new parts of the country or leaving their comfort zones, others grew by increasing their self-esteem. Regardless of their motives, women left the challenge feeling better about their personal lives

89 Sherie, 2010 (81-89)

90 Wendy, 2011, 2012 (72-74)

91 Wendy, 2011, 2012 (418-421)

92 Eden, 2010, 2011 (134-135)
and their ability to achieve any goal. The most common response when asked “What did you learn about yourself on the ride?” was “That I can do anything.” This exhibits a growing confidence and empowerment. This mirrors the body of sport literature indicating women find empowerment from participation in sport. Theberge’s 1991 article “Reflections on the Body in the Sociology of Sport” describes women’s empowerment through sport as related to the physicality of a sport. As discussed in chapter four, women on the Hoka Hey felt the ride was a bodily experience leading toward their empowerment. However, the added relational connectivity through an ethics of care enabled women to feel empowered not only through their physical bodies but also through their emotional and spiritual connections to the ride. The interconnection of mind, body, and spirit present in the Hoka Hey shows women’s holistic approach to sport. This holistic nature of sporting activities for women is exemplified and explained through women’s participation in dragon boat racing. Diana C. Parry’s article, “The Contribution of Dragon Boat Racing to Women’s Health and Breast Cancer Survivorship”, describes the interconnected physicality and spirituality of dragon boat racing as imperative to the success of women’s health, survivorship, and participation in the leisure activity (231). In turn, this interconnection affects women’s ability to feel empowered through their leisure activity.

I had a spiritual growth out there. I really thought about a lot of things. I thought about a lot of things with my life. I got way more spiritual than I EVER was. I grew up Catholic and had to go to church and do that whole thing but that’s not my realm of life anymore. And just we had someone watching over us in just more times than one. And I really felt that presence. And I felt
blessed. I didn’t anticipate any of it to be as spiritual as it was. Sometimes at night we’d be zoomin’ through a city or somewhere and I’d be prayin’, “Lord, Lord, I need you now! I need you now. Just get me out of this.” I had a couple of spiritual awakenings on two mountain passes. I do have an open heart. I guess I don’t know if you want to say it’s to spiritual things. Someone once told me that you have to have an open heart to experience those. And I had three spiritual awakenings I guess is what you’d call them on this ride. I was up on Route 12 um and just out of nowhere enjoying the ride and watching the sun come up and beat off the mountains and the next thing I know you know I’m in tears. Something reached inside and touched my heart and it was the most wonderful experience I’ve ever had in life. I can’t explain whether it was a spirit or whether it was God or whether it was someone that I loved that passed on. But it happened and it happened three times. But I truly believe that you can have spiritual awakenings. Which is something that I didn’t maybe buy into a hundred percent prior to the Hoka Hey. Some of it felt weird, odd. I prayed more but I also felt spirits.

Many of the women who participated in the Hoka Hey reached a level of spiritual fulfillment and personal growth from the challenge. This is not unlike the euphoria felt after participating in other endurance sports or the spiritual quests some who participate in lifestyle or extreme sport describe. Sports scholars (e.g. Ethan Rouen and Duncan Simpson) suggest that

93 Jane, 2011, 2012 (1083-1087)

94 Jersey Pearl, 2010 (665-666)

95 Debra, 2011 (109-111)

96 Carla, 2011 (485-498)
extreme athletes find a higher power or transcendence while competing in extreme sport in part from the solitude and physical challenge. While pushing their bodies and minds further the women riders often found this higher calling. Here Native American traditions and extreme sports converge. In this vein, challenge operators intend for the ride to be similar to a traditional Native American vision quest in which a lone member of the tribe ventures into the wilderness to find spiritual fulfillment and guidance. The connections between the challenge and the Lakota culture extend beyond the rules and layout of the challenge (as discussed in chapter three) into this type of spiritual fulfillment. While recalling Native American stories or embodying spirituality, women show their ethics of care by thinking of themselves and their experience in relation to the larger Native American culture. Likewise, this displays the previously discussed juxtaposition of Native American/White blurred by the Hoka Hey.

The physical and mental taxation of the body and mind during the challenge mimics this vision quest or transcendence of extreme sport. During the challenge some riders feel as if spirits accompany them, that they see visions, or that they are being led by a higher power. This connection with a higher power, and seeing their experience in relation to another being, is an extension of their care-based ethic. Whether an encounter with spirituality happened as a result of a gas scare, being lost, or being in an accident, riders prayed and sought council on the ride. Spirituality through sport similarly is described through breast cancer survivors who participate in dragon boat racing. Again Parry’s article, describes a connection between “dragon boat racing and spiritual awakening” as women “developed a new purpose in life through dragon boat racing and, consequently, a new commitment to life” (231). However, in regards to the Hoka Hey, it is unclear if this spiritual fulfillment lasted after the ride. Some women riders did experience visions; while they spoke of their visions in terms of spirituality, many also added that they were
extremely tired or sleep deprived at the time. Attributing visions to fatigue rather than the presence of spirits indicates that not all women retained their level of spirituality. This could also be in part because of their discomfort or unfamiliarity with a different religion, here Native American spirituality.

One night when I was really in a bind, I had run off the road. I couldn’t get out of this ditch. Then the old ones came to me and they told me that there were watchers everywhere and that they were watching us. And that they were taking care of nature and they were keeping us all safe and everything. And they revealed themselves to me and there were two of them down in the ditch. And you know the way the leaves twitch or the ears or the deer or something, and nature protects animals by mimicking them. This is odd. Anyway, they came to me and they told me that they would protect me, and that if I was on the right path, but that I had to choose the right path and stick with that path. If I did that then I would be ok. And so it was all about committing to your path in life. And doing, being committed, and trying to not go back the way you came but choosing a path and going forward. And I realized that in order to get my bike out of the predicament I was in, I had to find a path and stick with it basically. So I walked down into the ditch and I figured out where I could go and everything. It was kind of like a metaphor for life actually, like finding your path and being committed to it. I actually had to drive my bike down into the ditch and turn around and drive it back out in order to get out of the situation because I couldn’t back up and I couldn’t go forward the way I wanted to. So I had to take the path that was best. And from then on in the ride, every time I saw any type of animal, they wouldn’t run across the road in front of me. A big elk or a big dear would be just standing on the side of the road and it would stand and watch me. All through Montana, I would see animals and they would be right there and they would stop and watch me go by. And it was kind of off. I’ve
always felt since then that I’ve always been protected by the watchers. I don’t know how that works but it was weird.97

We rode through places that were imbued with spirit—a Japanese internment camp, countless Native American sites and battlegrounds, the Trail of Tears. You don’t really hear about those things a lot so to be able to go ride past some of those places. The energy from those places was amazing. Even though you weren’t stopping and like taking a tour and like getting the history. You could feel a change in the energy even as you were riding by them.98 Every different place brought its own story and its own you know revelation of who I am and what I was doing there, and the true purpose of the Hoka Hey and what it was really meant to show people. And to prove to people. And to teach them. And how for granted a lot of it was being taken.99 When we got into the rider’s meeting in Florida and Jim Red Cloud started pouring his heart out to us and telling us about his people and I mean just. He was actually crying. And he said, “what did my people do to deserve to be treated like this?” The whole no water, the birth defects because of the contaminants on their land, and just the whole the whole thing of how the Indians have been treated so badly and it was something that took my heart. It turned it on the focus of the ride to something so much different.100

97 Sherie, 2010 (562-584)

98 Tristica, 2010 (620-624)

99 Bryana, 2010 (292-296)

I think we take a lot for granted. I knew the Hoka Hey was for the Indian reservation, but I never really knew what existed at the reservation, until I went to Pine Ridge. And that really opened my eyes. And how the Indians are living and how they’re being treated. And the conditions they live under. I mean I kinda had the idea. I know, cause I know what’s going on in the world. But it’s out of my element and don’t really pay attention to it. And then when it was right in my face when we drove there, WOW. That really woke me up. There we were on Pine Ridge, at the Chief’s house. Meeting Chief Red Cloud was really an honor. We went to the Chief’s house and he lived in a trailer with I don’t know how many other people. You think of the chief of a nation is going to have a manicured home. It wasn’t. Very humble. They really are poor. And not to have running water really is a sin. It is something we take for granted so easily. They don’t even have it. So I mean, indoor plumbing is definitely really nice. And for them to use outhouses...those days are gone. Or should be. But they’re so poor, no one is really doing anything about it. And it’s not easy in Pine Ridge. The weather in the Dakotas can be hot as heck in the summer time and cold in the winter. It’s extreme. We get very spoiled. They’re part of us. They’re not aliens. They’re legal. They were born and raised here in the States. So why are


102 Schatzi, 2011, 2012 (595)

103 Jane, 2011, 2012 (612-613)

104 Schatzi, 2011, 2012 (614-616)

105 Schatzi, 2011, 2012 (1884-1890)
we treating our own this way? Granted it’s an Indian reservation but we put them where they are today. Our ancestors did this to these people. And it was wrong. I’m learning a lot about it as I go on. Each time I uh have some involvement with Hoka Hey I learn something new.\textsuperscript{106}

In addition to personal and spiritual growth, the women riders also faced their own privilege. At times, and depending on the rider, this privilege was white privilege or socioeconomic privilege. This is an intended outcome of the event as operators ask challengers to mimic the homelessness felt on the Pine Ridge reservation by sleeping outside next to their bikes. Similarly, the course intentionally passes through Native American reservations and intends to raise awareness about living conditions within those spaces. Many riders encountered reservation lands for the first time. The challenge achieves one of its goals as riders see the changing conditions on and off a reservation and come to realize the abject poverty that exists in our own country. The women most greatly affected by this were those who had the opportunity to visit Pine Ridge and meet Chief Red Cloud (2010 and 2011 challenges) or who participated in more than one challenge. They described the “humble” living conditions of the powerful leader and as a result questioned their own ability to contribute to or dismantle the problem. Likewise, many women riders gained a greater perspective on their socioeconomic status as the ride allows them to truly appreciate things generally taken for granted. As indicated by my field notes at the beginning of this chapter, when removed from your world for two weeks, a bed becomes a powerful thing. Commonly women riders cited the ability to pay the registration cost as a common indicator of their economic advantages. They also spoke of being privileged enough to see the entire country, something that sets them apart from other members of their

\textsuperscript{106} Carla, 2011 (182-188)
socioeconomic classes at home. Many women spoke of learning to “live without” on the Hoka Hey and described themselves as “fortunate”. This indicates a confrontation with their advantaged status. As a direct result of the event, many women felt a new burden of socioeconomic privilege and grew in appreciation for what they have.

Despite its intentions, riders cannot actually feel and understand what it is like to be a Native American living on Pine Ridge by completing the Hoka Hey. While they may face their own privileges, they remain white men and women with the ability and money to ride expensive motorcycles across the country. Although riders spend a week or two facing their own status they quickly return to comfortable lives outside the event. Albeit short lived, the Hoka Hey does successfully introduce most participants (some for the first time) to their own privileges. While the riders did not necessarily attribute their privilege position to being white, they often altered their perception of social justice in the United States. As Eduardo Bonilla-Silva suggests in his article “Color-Blind Racism”, “today most whites assert that they ‘don’t see any color, just people’ that although the ugly face of discrimination is still with us, it is no longer the main factor in determining minorities’ life chances…But regardless of whites’ ‘sincere fictions,’ racial considerations shade almost everything that happens in this country” (133). While most challengers exemplified this color-blind racism, many did make a step toward realizing their position of power. In part because of this newfound association with privilege, many spoke of feeling a sense of obligation to help the people of Pine Ridge and some took to raising funds and continuing to raise awareness through this and other endeavors. This brought their experiences full circle again, articulating an ethic of care.

Another direct result of the Hoka Hey for some women was a newfound involvement in Native American issues. One woman rides a bike painted with the Hoka Hey logo and uses it as
a tool to raise awareness for Pine Ridge. She carries and distributes informational brochures about the Hoka Hey and its cause. One challenger began a blanket drive to support Pine Ridge. She called on other Hoka Hey challengers to participate in raising funds and blanket donations. Last year the drive donated over 4,000 blankets to the people of Pine Ridge. In addition, the continued participation in the Hoka Hey brings greater awareness to the cause. Each time a rider posts a blog or uses social media to speak about their ride, they add to the interest in and awareness of Pine Ridge. However, not all women who participated in the Hoka Hey felt a deeper connection to Native Americans, their cause, or their conditions. While many were deeply affected by this, others saw the ride as a personal challenge and did not necessarily focus on the social justice aspect of the challenge. Largely the women who participated in more than one challenge felt an added connection to the Lakota or all Native Americans. This shows the relational aspects of women’s participation and post-challenge growth. Their circle of connectivity and ethics of care extends beyond the ride by affecting their desire to be charitable, raise awareness, and build relationships with others.

Conclusions

The Hoka Hey was a personal experience for the women riders interviewed during this study. Overwhelmingly, they describe the ride as a personal challenge in which they seek to better themselves rather than to win money. Additionally through their expressed ethic of care, they felt a sense of obligation to family, friends, other riders, and onlookers who took interest in their ride. Because this challenge was seen as a personal experience in relation to others, the women riders felt as if they needed to participate in the challenge a certain way. This sense of duty upheld their integrity and morals throughout the challenge. Further, the women who rode, regardless of their success in the challenge, felt a sense of personal interconnectivity with other
riders, a higher power, or themselves. They described the challenge as changing or greatly impacting their lives.

Women’s social conditioning allowed them to feel as if they were being watched by family, friends, the public, and other challengers and, in turn, they felt an obligation to their supporters, exhibiting a care based ethic. This sense of obligation led them to participate in the challenge in a certain way, following rules to uphold their own integrity. They also felt affected by those with whom they came into contact. Because the women viewed themselves as role models for other women riders, they focused on doing their best so as not to disappoint the women who looked up to them.

The Hoka Hey was truly a transformative experience for the women interviewed. They not only grew personally by increasing their self-esteem, they also grew spiritually and were challenged by facing their own privilege positions. The spiritual and personal growth encountered on the Hoka Hey by women riders is a direct result of their social conditioning and women’s ability to create an authentic experience in which they were primarily concerned with remaining true to themselves and those who supported them. Although it may not be expressed as such, this desire for an authentic experience is informed by a care based feminism. The women express an ethic of care because they saw the challenge and their participation as an extension of their larger networks of family, friends, supporters, and causes. Further, this ethic of care enabled women to feel empowerment. Because women saw themselves always already in relation to others they felt a greater sense of empowerment.

The act of participation took women from being participants in a leisure activity to being challengers; this transformation is a subset of the women’s identity. The Hoka Hey transformation is informed by women’s multilayered relational experiences and extends from
women’s empowerment to become a part of the women’s identity. As discussed in the next chapter, women’s identity, spurred from empowerment, creates substantive changes in the Hoka Hey culture through both male and female participants.
CHAPTER 5: THE HOKA HEY EXPERIENCE: PAIN, FEAR, AND ACCOMPLISHMENT

Blog Post: The Hardest Thing I've Ever Done

The Hoka Hey is the hardest thing I’ve ever done. Period. It was a mental challenge (following the directions and negotiating difficult rides) and physical challenge (not eating, not sleeping, and being outside for 11.5 days straight). Much like running a marathon, it doesn’t seem bad (now that it’s over); but I’m trying not to lose sight of everything we’ve been through. It was demoralizing every day (missing a turn would easily knock down your momentum/confidence). Every day the road threw things at you that you thought you couldn’t handle. Pushing through those moments is what the Hoka Hey is about.

We were worn down physically and part of the ride became about fighting fatigue. (After we discovered Five Hour Energy, this improved/became easier - my dad is hooked) The first few days of the trip we had to stop often to regain some energy (stopping at gas stations and briskly walking the parking lot or doing a few yoga stretches on the side of the road). I couldn’t believe that it was possible to doze off on a bike. It’s possible. And scary. For me, between not running and riding so long, my energy levels were zapped. My dad was worn down because of the heat. On about the fourth day of the trip he (finally listened to me) put his sun shirt on, and was able to stay awake longer during the heat of the afternoon. On top of being tired, we slept in parking lots, which didn’t allow for much sleep. At night my dad often got leg cramps and we didn’t get back on the ground after he was up and the cramp subsided. During a leg cramp, it was all I could do to pull him up off the ground and try to get him walking again. It was also difficult because I could tell he was in excruciating pain. In all, we only slept a max of six hours a night.
on the trip (and that was only once...at the end). Mostly we had only two to four hours each night.

On top of that, I don’t have a windshield on my bike (the only one on the ride to go without). Perhaps I’m stupid, but I really just didn’t know any better. Without a windshield the wind pounds on your chest. I had my bags behind me on the seat to lean up against - without my packs I’d have a core workout in which I’m not interested. The ride itself made your arms tired from leaning the bike back and forth. My right hand (throttle hand) is numb. I literally can’t feel my middle finger. I think it’s from the vibrations and keeping on the throttle all day, every day. The feeling is starting to come back now that I’m not on the bike.

The mental challenge was greater than the physical challenge. I was the only one on our team capable/willing/who knows of reading and understanding the directions while we rode. I would memorize two lines of the directions at a time (L 219 4.2 miles; R 321 43.88 miles) and repeat that over and over in my head. When we made a turn I’d memorize another line (R 321 43.88; R 341 5.6). At first I was doing the mileage math in my head. I needed to track how many miles I went on a tank of gas and would keep a running tally of how many miles we needed to go on each road. Say I started at 20 miles; I knew that when my trip odometer reached (around) 24.2 we needed to make a right turn onto 321. The mileage on the directions was sometimes right, sometimes close, and sometimes WAY off. The math was only reliable to a certain point. Couple that with riding, looking for signs, and making sure that the two people following you were still upright and following made for a stressful trip to say the least. Then I would get ‘yelled at’ for not going fast enough or not knowing if my headlights were producing white or yellow light. Bottom line, I was a mess. I only cried four times (almost a miracle). Somehow my dad
didn’t think the ride was ‘stressful’ (he doesn’t like to admit that he’s stressed) but he also wasn’t trying to follow the directions.

I don’t think you can do this ride with only one person. I wouldn’t want to do it with anyone other than my dad. But at the same time, it was unnerving to see (or not see) him in my mirror or in front of me. Sights of him wrecking, running off the road, and being hit by a car flashed in my mind each time we turned a corner. It was a stressful and straining trip for eleven and a half days. Right now I’m thankful for our safe arrival and already looking forward to our next ride.

Overcoming those challenges and pushing through is what makes the Hoka Hey empowering. Despite laying my bike over twice, I kept going. This is not an easy ride. It’s not for fair weather or novice riders. It’s tough. Purposely tough. Not everyone finishes. Not everyone survives (2 riders killed in year 1; this year one rider is in ICU in Missouri). We ran our own race and we were able to finish. I’m pretty proud of our team - neither of us could have done it without the other. (Blog Posted 17th August 2012 by Abby Van Vlerah)

Women who participated in the Hoka Hey describe it as simultaneously one of the most difficult and most rewarding things in which they have ever participated. While the challenges faced by each rider vary, many common threads exist among the experiences. Like other lifestyle sports, the element of risk couples with overcoming challenges encountered to produce a feeling of successful elation and accomplishment. Women on the road tackled physical barriers (safety, fatigue and sickness), emotional obstacles (fear, the desire to prove themselves, and regret), natural factors (weather, animals, and exposure), and person made problems (mechanical issues, wrecks, and the difficulty of the ride and its directions). To overcome the myriad of issues they faced, the riders bonded together and dug deep within themselves to find ingenuity,
perseverance, and strength. As a result of their ability to face and overcome challenges, riders express a new found sense of accomplishment. This chapter speaks to the challenges encountered on the ride and what they gained as a result.

In the narrative that follows, and continues to weave throughout this chapter, the story of the Hoka Hey experience unfolds. As Richardson suggests, this pleated texts combines a narrative with theoretical analysis. While the situational narrative described below did not happen in reality, the conglomeration of voices from individual interviews creates a comprehensive post-event narrative akin to those storytelling experiences that happen before, during, and after actual challenges. A footnote marks each individual quote indicating who spoke those words and in which challenge(s) they participated. Periodically—and as is consistent with works of autoethnography—my own voice, as based on my personal experience with riding the Hoka Hey, comes in to articulate gaps in the narrative.

Becoming One With Nature

*The road worn women congregated around the back of the Hoka Hey trailer at the finish as the last woman rider crossed the line. We were exhausted from the blurred together days of nonstop riding. It felt like a Thursday, but none of us were really sure having lost all track of time and space. Perhaps a tinge of normalcy would all come back after some sleep. The excitement and anticipation of each rider’s arrival created a vibrant energy. There we were, everybody waitin’ for someone to come in. We all lined up...just hoopin’ and a hollerin’ and greetin’ ‘em. They would tell their most awesome story or what happened.*

107 It was magical to hear. We rekindled the stories that linked us together as warriors—tales of excitement, fear, 

107 Debra, 2011 (337-382)
adventure, frustration, determination, and brushes with death. Eventually a formulaic
description emerged as we each recounted our own adventure, each sermon representative of
our rides as an extension of our lives. First we discussed the hard parts, the many challenges,
and the stories that would have seemed unbelievable if we all hadn’t just come off the same ride.

Figure 6. Big Horn sheep in Alaska. (Photo courtesy of Sheila)

There were animal stories. Elk. Deer. Sheila listed everything she’d seen. I was jealous
as she exclaimed with childlike glee in her voice, “We had a wolf, some big horn sheep, just on
the side of the road!” The large number of wildlife we encountered seemed magical. Carla,
not having had such an enchanting encounter, described the darker side of wildlife and
motorcycling. The trepidation in Carla’s voice remained though her mishap was long past. “I

108 Sheila, 2010 (335-336)
had an altercation with a buffalo. That's another thing. Ugh. I came up on Custer Park just around supper time, dinnertime, ... just as I went up over the pass I was in the middle of the herd. Well, when I get up in there and there's the mommas and the babies and the daddies. Oh, I could feel the emotion and the...the stress in the air. Like an aura; it was just overwhelming.”109 Carla was particularly in tune with her surroundings and felt all things deeply, but we all knew what she meant. Tristica, feeling the same sense of excitement, nervousness, and energy chimed in, topping Carla’s story.

Tristica’s eyes widened as she added to the growing excitement with her own story, “I’m cruising along and there’s like a freakin’ heard of buffalo in the road. And it’s like one of those things, that’s like, Oh, Shit! You know and there’s like a house in front of me. But you know, you slow down and just find a path through them and just ride through ‘em and hope that they don’t get ticked off.”110 Laughter fraught with exhaustion pushed from our breath.

“That’s exactly it! You just wade through.” Carla exclaimed, happy that someone else felt the power of the large animals that so beautifully described our country and its landscape. Like our country, the buffalo are both bucolic and bellicose. A silence fell over us as visions of our own animal encounters raced through our minds.

The silence broke and we shifted from side to side, exchanging smiles, and Jersey Pearl began to speak. She removed her eyes from the ground and began to speak softly at first, “My buffalo story isn’t as quite friendly,” she was a petite woman and chimed in from the edge of the
conversation. She calmly described being charged by a buffalo when she and Mary rode through Alaska, “There was the bison. Up in front of me. And he had his back to me. And I had my headset on. And I watched him. And he jumped up and he turned. And he met me.” Her hands rose in front of her face as her fingertips pointed at one another “And I think we spooked him. He was by himself. No herd. We were at least an hour north of where the herd was. So he hears two roaring motorcycles coming and jumps up and turns. And then the next thing I see, his hoofs come up, and his hoofs come down, and he comes at a full charge at me. And I screamed. And I don’t think there was anybody to hear me. But I know I screamed. I guess instinct just kicks in. ... So I ended up, I let off the throttle. So the bike dropped back. I slammed it to the left. And then hit the throttle up on the right. And I literally went pchew-pchew around him. And I straightened up the bike. And I’m going, Oh my god Pleasedon’tgetme Pleasedon’tgetme Pleasedon’tgetme Pleasedon’tgetme Pleasedon’tgetme. And then I realized. Oh my god, Mary’s behind me! And then I went. Please don’t get MaryPlease don’t get MaryPlease don’t get MaryPlease don’t get Mary.”\footnote{Jersey Pearl, 2012 (375-391)} She slapped her leg and her tiny body erupted with laughter. Our mouths were agape and took her lead laughing at the absurdity of it all. Only possible now that it was over.

We continued standing in the circle adjacent to our bikes, the position so familiar to motorcyclists. Story telling was a part of our culture and there were no better stories than Hoka Hey stories. Occasionally people would leave or join our group, gathering things from their bikes, or nibbling on something from their packs. As our group waxed and waned, we broke into smaller conversations and changed the topic to other concerns and stories from the road. The weather became a perpetual topic of conversation. There were sandstorms, hail, rain, heat, cold,
tornadoes, and hurricanes. From one extreme to another we understood that this was a test of how much exposure we could handle. Some of us, out of our home state for the first time, were surprised at the temperature differences our nation offered.

Wendy, from Florida, felt the weather in her body, “I have never been out West or up North or in extreme conditions. So I didn’t realize that elevation, and rain, and heat, and cold, would affect your body so much.”112

“Oh, I know what you mean,” Debra exclaimed from across the table, “I would layer up on clothes when you were on the top of them mountains lookin’ at snow and then when you’d get down the mountain you’d be pullin’ your clothes off you’d be so hot. And uh goin’ around the mountain all of a sudden you’d hit where there was hail. And I was like, ‘Well, where’d that come from?’”113 There was a sense of awe, surprise, and wonder in her voice and eyes, as if she couldn’t believe everything she had been told about the expanse of our country was true.

Sheila, hearing the weather conversation, turned to join our discussion and spoke of her trip through Alaska. “You know, it was just crazy and it was just freezing. And I mean, beyond freezing cold. And I was just thinking, good thing I got this heated seat and these heated grips. You know, it’s helping. But it’s just so freezing cold. And I mean two weeks before it was so hot.”114 Byranna recounted a similar aversion for the Canadian and Alaskan weather. We had

112 Wendy, 2011, 2012 (301-303)

113 Debra, 2011 (129-132)

114 Sheila 2010 (321-323)
“twelve hours of straight sleet, rain, snow, hail crap thirty minus degree weather.” We had been cold to the bone, the kind of cold that only comes when you are wet and cannot be dried despite your insatiable desire for a warm shower. But now we were in the comfort of the finish line, so far from where we began. What seemed unbearable at the time was now a distant memory, we survived, finished, triumphed, and showered.

Figure 7. Hoka Hey sunrise. (Photo courtesy of Sheila)

The next day we emerged from our tiny motel rooms to face the new day wiping the sleep from our eyes. The exchange of “good mornings” went through the parking lot as the sun flooded our shoulders. The new day brought on new feelings about the trip. Joy and awe filled

115 Bryana 2010 (228)
our souls. Staring stoically at the Eastern sky, Wendy mentioned a beautiful memory. “I think the most the most amazing part of my journey was being on the top of Rocky Mountain National Park. The very tippy, tippy top as the sun rose. I have no idea how high we were, what the elevation was. All I know is it was dark, we were cold, we were twistin’ and windin’ and we were going up. And when we hit that top peak, the sun came up over the mountains. And it was like I was in heaven. It can’t get any better than this.”

Though the comment was not specifically directed at anyone, Schatzi chimed in from across the parking lot, “This country’s got so many beautiful roads on it that we went and saw. And we take a lot for granted. But we really, we saw some exquisite scenery. And a lot of times you remember it, but like why didn’t I have my camera out at that point in time? Like the elk in Oregon.” A head nod from Jane indicated a tinge of shared remorse.

As emphasized in the narrative above, women Hoka Hey challengers describe the appeal of exposure to the natural. This sentiment mirrors, and expands on both motorcycle and sport literature which also indicate the natural as a draw for participants. In her introduction to Understanding Lifestyle Sports, Belinda Wheaton describes lifestyle sports as “occurring in a non-urban environment” and asking participants to “become one with nature” (12). Likewise, motorcycle scholars such as Jansen, Joans, and Mullins describe exposure to the natural as a key element in motorcycling. Specifically, Jansen states, motorcycling “appeals to our basic nature, satisfies primal needs and brings out our strengths…riding outside of urban areas is a spiritual


117 Schatzi, 2011, 2012 (617-620)
experience” (9). Through animal encounters and weather, the challenge exposes challengers to the natural beauty of the United States and Canada, and pushes them outside of their traditional (more) urban environments. However, while this exposure takes challengers out of urban environments, it reminds us that the urban/natural binary no longer exists.

Exposure to the natural while on a motorcycle challenges and deconstructs the oppositional forces of urban/natural. Riding a motorcycle epitomizes post-industrial capitalist society. No longer are motorcycles used as work horses (such as the delivery cycles described in chapter three) symbolizing a retreat from industrial necessity to a post-industrial capitalism in which we use machines for pleasure rather than purpose. While participating in the challenge, or other lifestyle sport, feeling one with nature attempts to reclaim a more primal/native embodiment. The juxtaposition between these two forces blurs as industrial enters nature, not only through the cycle but also symbolized by the roads on which challengers travel, gas stations at which they purchase items, and rest stops at which they relieve their bodies. As challengers encounter animals and feel the raw power of a storm, they are reminded that they are mere visitors in all landscapes and environments.

Similarly, the natural element blurs the native/non-native binary as challengers uncover their connection to the natural world. The myth that Native Americans are more in touch with nature than their colonizers comes into question through white challengers’ recognition of the natural. Challengers break down and embody the plural as they cross the country. As they become both out of and in their element, they take on markers of both white and native cultures. Gloria Anzaldua describes this process of embodying multiple cultures as “floundering in uncharted seas” (McCann and Kim 255). She goes on to note, “in perceiving conflicting information and points of view, she is subjected to a swamping of her psychological borders”
While on the ride, Hoka Hey challengers feel this conflict between natural and urban, white and Native American—a pull exposing the real messiness and complications of living in a seemingly dualistic world.

**Bodily Affect and Engaging the Senses**

As we stood that night after the challenge in the parking lot of our hotel shifting from side to side and stretching our road worn butts, the tenderness in our muscles reminded us that not all of the challenges were external. Some battles happened within our bodies and our minds. We feared for our safety and grimaced with sickness along the route. Tristica emerged from her motel room, freshly showered for the first time in days, and joined our late night conversation, “I got sick when I got into the Yukon. It was only like thirty degrees. I wasn’t able to like hold any food down at all. I had to have my friend Jim help me actually put my kickstand down sometimes when we stopped. I was like really really sick; I couldn’t get warm.”

Carla nodded her head in agreement, talk about sick, “I didn’t anticipate having you know, the swellingness that I had. I’m used to riding in heat. And you know I consumed a lot a lot of water and I, I was seeing a naturopath and a chiropractor prior to going on this and the one thing that they did forget, the biggest challenge was using up electrolytes. When you’re not moving. Other than getting off your bike, putting gas in it, and an occasional walk to the convenience store to relieve yourself. When I got into North Carolina, my legs were ENORMOUS. When it was all said and done after that first year, they thought I had a blockage in my heart and then they found out that it wasn’t a blockage. That I had an actual congenital heart defect that I shouldn’t have lived passed the first year of life with. So I was the one in the

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118 Tristica, 2010 (461-464)
Grateful for surviving the race, we stood from our chairs and hugged one another offering support to those who faced the most physical challenges along the way.

We hadn’t all been sick, but we all experienced physical strains and fatigue. Eden piped up from her seat, “Oh, the challenges! Sleep depravation, that was a tough one.”

Debby agreed adding her perspective of how sleep affected her body; “When you’re tired, you don’t see real well. Like tiny, like especially a map. I had no idea that would happen. And I didn’t know why everyone had these magnifying glasses. So I learned a lot about when I’m tired what happens to my body. I can’t read. Which is frightening. Because you’re like, ‘Oh my god, I cannot read my map. And I’ve got to follow these directions.’”

Carla overwhelmingly agreed, “You know, the challenges I was experiencing there towards the end was keeping awake after day seven. Your body does some really strange things to try to put you to sleep when you don’t want to.”

“And oftentimes I would just pull over and I would literally sleep with everything on. My helmet, my gloves, everything;” I didn’t think it was possible to fall asleep while riding a bike. But it is. It was scary when you realized you were doing it.

119 Carla, 2011 (241-251)
120 Eden, 2010, 2011 (398)
121 Debby, 2011 (534-539)
122 Carla, 2011 (233-235)
123 Debby, 2011 (388-389)
Jane chimed in with a tale about riding into the finish this year, “It was when we were coming in I was literally, and it’s the fist time it’s ever happened to me. Literally falling asleep and waking up. And I know I had to have been going like this,” She waved her hand in an S-pattern indicating a large swerve, “and I’d have to slow down. I can’t imagine what it was like for Schatzi to be behind me.”

It wasn’t just the difficulty of the ride itself that made the Hoka Hey such a challenge. Rather, it was riding at that same level of exertion day after day that made it seem almost insurmountable. Bryana described this as one of the differences between the Hoka Hey and other rides, “Just the fact of having to get up, took me 12 and a half days to get here, so twelve and a half days of making myself get up and ride and ride and ride as opposed to just getting up and just going for a quick putt then coming back to reality. To actually live in that, and experience that for twelve days straight was pretty, pretty awesome contrast from everyday riding.” The pace also made the ride different. This was no relaxed trip, the timeframe made the challenge more difficult. It is a challenge against yourself, after all. Junie’s years of experience confirmed Bryana’s sentiments, “It’s not like a leisurely pace. You know you have to make some time to get these miles in. To get from point A to point B. I think that in itself creates a little tension, a little stress. You’re riding a little bit more pressured than you are a leisurely weekend trip.”

124 Jane, 2011, 2012 (813-817)

125 Bryana, 2010 (394-398)

Debra agreed and mentioned the added pressure of having a riding partner, “I’d be wantin’ to take it all in and just look. And he’d be sayin’ ‘Come on! Come on! We gotta go. This is a race not a pleasure ride.’ And I’d just be sayin’, ‘I’m takin’ it all in!’ You know. I’d never seen this beauty.” Then we lamented the pictures we didn’t take, the things we didn’t stop to see, the things we only could have imagined we rode through in the darkness of night. The thought of the quick pace of the trip contrasted starkly with the heavy eyes we currently felt. This time we didn’t have to snap ourselves awake, tonight there was no screaming, singing, or gum chewing to fight the fatigue. Tonight the pace of our conversation and our thoughts could slow down, but didn’t. The excitement of the ride still pulsed through some of our veins, too alive to sleep but wanting to crash again at the same time.

The smells of coffee and doughnuts from the 24-hour shop down the street filled the parking lot. A quick coffee run made us note the smells encountered on the road. When I ride, Tristica commented, “I can SMELL everything. Like the trees, or the snow, or the rain, or the wind.”

Jane added, and “the cow shit or whatever it is!” Laughter erupted. Eden turned from the counter and said, Oh yeah, “I can smell things. There are some things that you really don’t want to smell, like skunk. But there’s other ones like just the air, it’s almost a texture like. I just immerse myself in the sounds and the smells and the feel of the wind pressing against me. And

127 Debra, 2011 (121-123)

128 Tristica, 2010 (62-63)

129 Jane, 2011, 2012 (1111)
“it’s almost like it’s blowing all my cares off into the distance to me.”\textsuperscript{130} Our voices quickened as we continued to describe the fun we had on the ride, forgetting the trials once again.

The bodily effect of the Hoka Hey stays with a rider long after her finish. I recall speaking with Carla prior to my first ride as she discussed how she cried for days after she returned home, a bodily response to releasing the emotion and fatigue of the trip. I failed to fully appreciate the drain on the body she described until after I experienced it. Native American traditions have long enacted pain to seek enlightenment (e.g. Sun Dance traditions in which bodies are suspended by piercings). Similarly, sport cultures equate pain with success; here the adage, “No pain; No gain” stands in to easily represent this phenomenon. In describing the Foucauldian concept of disciplined bodies, which sport scholars describe in terms of forcing our bodies to perform at extreme levels by justifying pain, Markula and Pringle suggest that some athletes recognize and ignore pain as they “simultaneously normalized and problematized injury” (118). While riding the Hoka Hey, challengers normalized pain by continuing to ride through sickness and fatigue. Expressed by the descriptions of the pace of the trip, the desire to complete the ride in a given time frame taxes challengers mentally and physically. While challengers listened to their bodies by engaging all their senses, for example smelling animals, the air, or even burning brakes or tires, they ignored signs of pain and fatigue to continue and complete the challenge during the given time frame. Again we see a breakdown of oppositional forces with the normalization and overlooking of pain. No longer is the pain/pleasure binary solidly in place; rather, the challenge reminds participants that bodies are constantly in flux.

\textsuperscript{130} Eden, 2010, 2011 (108-112)
When initially hypothesizing about this work, I imagined that women’s high tolerance for pain (as anecdotally indicated through their ability to endure childbirth) might contribute to their success in the Hoka Hey. Surmising that women may stay in the competition despite injury, soreness, and fatigue I was not surprised by the many stories of injury, fatigue, and pain expressed during interviews. However, sport scholars link the normalization of pain with hegemonic masculinity, not femininity (here I point to Markula and Pringle and Sabo). In particular, Don Sabo’s work “Pigskin, Patriarchy, and Pain” describes how the “pain principle” “stifles men’s awareness of their bodies and limits our emotional expression” (450). In the Hoka Hey, women’s association with accepting and enduring pain pushes the boundaries of what is considered feminine. Women riders embody female masculinity here by pushing through pain to become successful. However, as Carla’s discovery of a congenital heart defect indicates, women also listen to their bodies after the challenge to recover, and discover potential larger health issues. This attunement to their bodies shows an emotional growth which Sabo places in opposition to sport masculinity. By both ignoring and listening to their pains, women riders dissolve the masculine/feminine dichotomy. Because they embody both the traditionally feminine characteristic of listening to their bodies and emotions, and the traditionally masculine experience of pushing through pain, the women challengers express both sides of the gendered experience. This dual role shows that a combination of masculine and feminine traits are welcome and necessary to success in this environment while also challenging the widely accepted notions of what is masculine/feminine.

In addition to the breakdown of the masculine/feminine binary, sport scholars point to bodily experiences being powerful sources of empowerment. As Nancy Theberge notes in “Sport and Women’s Empowerment,” physical activity leads women to feel good about themselves and
engenders positive thoughts. Theberge states, “regular physical activity is not only appropriate but desirable and can lead to a more positive sense of self and physical well being” (390). Because the Hoka Hey challenges women physically, it enables them to garner a greater sense of self-worth/appreciation and feel the direct impacts of their efforts by the strains on their bodies. By challenging their bodies to overcome fatigue and stress women feel more greatly empowered.

Facing Our Fears

*We retreated from our parking lot perches to dinner at the nearby diner surrendering to our feet, finally tired from standing, and our stomachs finally screaming for hot food. We sat at a large rectangular table in a far corner of the diner, hoping our boisterous joy wouldn’t disrupt the other patrons. Eden brought the discussion of the past few days full circle by speaking about her mountainous trial. She reminded us that the accidents were not all animal induced. Some came from our own stubbornness and required all our strength to continue the ride. We leaned in and around one another as Eden described her incredible tale from the year past: “I dumped my bike three times on the first one. More or less because I managed to be a little bit stubborn at the time. There was one stretch between New Mexico and Arizona where we were supposed to find Highway 13, Red Rock Highway. I’d been up and down one section of the freeway, or highway, like three times could not find this bloomin’ road. I asked three of, who I thought were residents, two of them said take this road. One of them said, oh you need to go further north. So I figured two out of three, go with the majority. I should have gone with the third. It started off, the road started off asphalt. Then it went to gravel. And we were told in the pre-ride meeting, be prepared for gravel. Ok. I thought no biggie. Then it got into dirt roads. I was like, well, they said it was going to be a challenge. And so I’m on the Indian reservation and I finally come across this lone little trailer with two, a little Indian couple here. And I ask them, ‘Is this the*
road that goes over the mountain to Lukachukai?’ And they said yes. They nodded. And I’m looking at the road going, ‘OK...’

So yeah, I’m going up this jeep road. And after I’ve dumped the bike three times, fully loaded, I managed to pick it up. The fourth time I dumped it, I was too exhausted. It was late in the day. I mean my arms, I was shaking all over. And I couldn’t pick it up. And I was like, alright, I bought tie downs. Brand new, brand new, I hadn’t even taken them out of the little packages, I think. But they weren’t threaded. I was going to tie down one end to a tree, one end to the rear and work a lever system and get the bike up. Cause the bike didn’t roll on its side. No, it rolled over on a rock. So it was flat. Even with the engine guards, it was straighter than flat.” She laughed. It seemed impossible that she was laughing but, having come through the challenge, we knew that laughter was the best way to meet the challenge. We all felt the difficulty of picking up alone an 800-pound fully loaded motorcycle laying on its side.

We pictured the horizontal bike as our mouths dropped and she continued, “And yeah, it was leaking fuel. Finally the fuel stopped and I was going, oh crud. I even called my hubby to try and help me figure out how to put the tie downs, the ratchet systems, in correctly. Cause every time I did it it would wind to where the tie down would just wrap on itself until you got this great big ball and then it wouldn’t do it anymore. I could not figure out how to properly wrap it. So I called him. He could not figure out how to properly tell me how to do it over the phone. And I even had to hike up the hill in order to get a signal. And I was down to like a quarter bar. And I was like, ‘Honey, if you don’t hear from me in a couple of days, I’m somewhere between Arizona and Lukachukai.’” Her chuckle turned into full laughter as she recounted the unbelievable tale. “I was like, yeah, cause there’s a cliff right next to me. And all the way down there’s a valley. It’s like yeah, ok, if something goes wrong I’m toast.” She broke mid-sentence into a
retrospective laugh, "It will be a recovery not a rescue...but anyway, I managed to dump that bike so many times on that dirt road it was horrid. I was sore for several days afterwards. Just because the bumping and the rocks...It was a total of ten hours and thirty-six miles." We stood with our mouths agape at the sheer amount of time it took her to cross the wrong mountain.

She continued with the just as unbelievable story of her trek down the mountain “And this point, going down hill, it was where I finally figured out after dumping my bike several more times that I had to unload my bike and leap frog. Where I would haul my gear down about a hundred yards, walk back up to the bike, ride my bike down...bump, bump, bump, bump, bump, bump, bump...take the stuff down another hundred. Ride my bike down...bump, bump, bump, bump...oh my god. Finally I heard cars in the distance. And couldn’t see any roadway. And in the mountains, I’ve done enough hiking to where just because you hear something doesn’t mean it’s necessarily close. ‘Cause you can have echoes off the canyons and such. So it could have been a quarter mile away that I heard cars or it could have been another ten miles away. And it was like, ‘Ok, don’t get too excited,’ but I couldn’t help myself. And then it was like, I did, it was only like a quarter mile more and there was asphalt. I literally got down on my knees and I didn’t kiss the asphalt, thank you. But I did do one of those kneeling motions like ‘YEAAAAHHH!’ And it was like oh yeah, it was funny.”131 Her lightness and quick voice was almost as unfathomable as the story. A positive spirit rang through her despite the trepidation she felt during the ride.

Eden’s harrowing and exhausting tale made us all think of the anxiety we encountered just trying to find a place to sleep. Sleeping on the road wasn’t easy for everyone and the fatigue

and loneliness often brought on fear. Sheila thought sleeping on the side of the road alone was a mistake, “Bein’ a single woman you’re not gonna go out in a sleepin’ bag on the side of the road and invite yourself to have problems. You know, so I know outta sight outta mind is the way to be.”\textsuperscript{132} Someone recounted a conversation they had with Kelly before the ride; she was concerned with sleeping by the road. From the woman’s recollection Kelly said, “Typically you see a bike on the side of the road and you’re going to assume, and there’s somebody in a bedroll, you’re going to assume it’s a big, burly, tattooed motorcycle dude. Just like the stereotype. Not so much. Obviously as a woman out there on the road that is my biggest concern.”\textsuperscript{133}

Sleeping on the side of the road alone was Junie’s main concern as well, “Three years in a row I’ve hooked up with people because of my lack of confidence in myself. Each year I’ve let myself hook up with somebody because you know, I don’t like sleepin’ out there by myself. I’m afraid at night.”\textsuperscript{134}

Sherie connected with Junie over this feeling of vulnerability, “That was one of the hardest things about the Hoka Hey was finding somewhere that I felt safe to sleep cause I was on my own.”\textsuperscript{135}

Wendy shook her head with a knowing look, “I quickly found out that I don’t like riding alone. That was scary. That was, you know, but I was facing my own fears, my own demons. You

\textsuperscript{132} Sheila, 2010 (548-550)

\textsuperscript{133} Kelly, 2012 (227-230)

\textsuperscript{134} Junie, 2010, 2011, 2012 (643-645)

\textsuperscript{135} Sherie, 2010 (145-146)
know a man can go out and camp and ride alone and he’s relatively safe. You put a female out there and it ain’t so safe anymore. And I quickly found out.”

The women constantly deal with fear on the road. Motorcycle stories often include overcoming a fear. Whether the fear of riding for the first time, riding after a wreck, or fearing for your safety on the road, women riders experience, challenge and overcome fears daily. These feelings are exacerbated by the length, difficulty, and uniqueness of the Hoka Hey. Fear on the road is specific to women who are more likely than men to feel threatened by being alone. Liz Jansen describes how through riding, women are “coming face to face with fears” which can lead to feeling powerful (110). She states, “By boldly staring down that fear and calling upon skills they’ve discovered through riding, they’ve become aware of even greater power extending far beyond themselves and their circles” (Jansen 110). As Eden’s tremendous story of surmounting the dirt mountain road shows, addressing fear leads to feeling powerful. Here overcoming fears and obstacles enables women to feel empowerment. Not only are women harnessing the power of their machines to overcome fear, they take on power structures which preclude them from feeling safe.

Fear is a common technique used within hierarchies to establish and maintain power. By understanding and feeling fear, people are discouraged from enacting certain dangerous or risky behaviors. For example, the fear of being perceived as too pushy (read masculine) leads women to acquiesce, which then supports non-promotion, ultimately maintaining the status quo hierarchy. Here disciplinary structures, such as those present in patriarchal societies (i.e. propaganda and media outlets), discourage women from participating in certain events.

136 Wendy, 2011, 2012 (219-222)
(endurance motorcycle challenges) by instilling fear. In other words, women are socially conditioned to fear the unknown and feel unsafe which can keep them from participating in events such as the Hoka Hey in part to reify their femininity. Fear disciplines women into succumbing to their accepted gender role. In other words, social institutions force women to feel they need to be with a man to ensure their safety or feel that if they were men they would be safer. However, Markula and Pringle note, “a major argument developed by Foucault was that disciplinary institutions do not always produce their ‘intended’ outcome” (47). Women overcoming fear and feeling power exemplifies this fact. In the Hoka Hey, rather than not participating in the event because of fear, these women overcame their fears to feel empowerment. Here fear did not keep them from enacting dangerous or risky behaviors; rather, it reinforces the human need for fear to experience empowerment.

Women on the Hoka Hey indicated they feared for their personal safety while being on the road alone. They often paired up with other riders to combat this issue. Rules of the challenge indicate that you must sleep outside by your motorcycle. While this may not actually cause problems, it does create an element of fear for women who choose to ride solo. In reality, it has caused problems for some women who were robbed, sometimes at gunpoint, and who struggled to find safe places to sleep. While men may encounter these same problems, the socialization of women and real life issues of sexual assault and violence lead women to fear more greatly for their safety. Government institutions and schools, as well as film, media, and news outlets, discourage women from walking alone at night for fear of sexual assault. These scare tactics fail to focus on the real life problem of the men who perpetrate sexual assaults while placing blame on women and other victims. Despite this, women who participate in the Hoka Hey do sleep
outdoors, sometimes alone. Women riders develop ways to cope with their fears. In turn this leads toward empowerment.

Expect the Unexpected

The mood lightened again as someone broke the awe-induced silence to ask how many times everyone ALMOST ran out of gas. Sheila discussed the benefits of her new Ultra Classic, her “big girl bike”, over her previous ride, “Right. I mean, it’s better to start out with a full tank than 60 miles down, yeah, 60 miles down you don’t need it for another hundred. But now, I can go a hundred and sixty. So it was interesting. And you know, there were times where, I mean, I never ran out of fuel, but I was amazed at how far I could go, you know. ‘Cause new bikes they don’t have the reserve like the old ones; they just have the little light that lights up and you need fuel.”137 We could laugh about our gas scares now. But it wasn’t so funny when we were on the road.

Carla transitioned from discussing the bikes to one close call with gas, “I just reached deep inside of me and prayed. And several times on the Hoka Hey I prayed as I was riding my bike, and I said give me an answer, help me out of this. And before I knew it, there was the answer. I was up on a mountain path and I had been riding with my gaslight on forever. I know how much we can get off that bagger. And I was thinking, I’m gonna run out of gas out here. And it’s gonna get cold. And it was getting late, it was around four, maybe five o’clock and the temperature is going to start dropping, it’s going to start getting cold. That’s the last place I want to be. And I come to a T in the road. And I go, gosh, please give me a gas station, and I

137 Sheila, 2010 (463-467)
look to the right.”\textsuperscript{138} Remnants of nervous laughter break her sentences. “Down the road not a quarter of a mile was a little gas station in the middle of nowhere. And I was like, ’Oh my god, I’m so happy! That gas station!’”\textsuperscript{139}

Tristica mimicked the excitement of finding a gas station. She threw her arms into the air as she articulated her near miss, “I was riding on fumes. I had to have been. There was nothing left in my tank. I put the nozzle in there and all I heard was just empty. You know, it was like echoing.”\textsuperscript{140} Knowing well that sound, Jane agreed describing a fill up on the Pine Ridge reservation, “I had a five-gallon tank and I put 5.5 gallons in it. I had some guidance getting me there too. I was sweating it. Cause there was no gas station for the longest ways.”\textsuperscript{141} We all had a story about siphoning gas, praying for gas, or just barely making it into the station.

We paid our bills and stumbled wearily out of the corner diner toward our bikes. Lighting them up one more time, the familiar roar of our iron steeds sounded like the voice of a comforting friend. We returned to the motel where most of us were staying before we left town. The star rating system failed to start low enough to accurately describe the accommodations; we sat outside in plastic lawn chairs provided by the establishment and continued recounting tales from the road. It seemed as if this conversation would never end; we didn’t want it to end and we had enough stories to last a lifetime. The conversation moved on to the challenge of the

\textsuperscript{138} Carla, 2011 (265-272)

\textsuperscript{139} Carla, 2011 (272-276)

\textsuperscript{140} Tristica, 2010 (430-432)

\textsuperscript{141} Jane, 2011, 2012 (593-594)
directions. We commented that part of the difficulty was with reading the directions from a piece of paper, WHILE riding a motorcycle. Junie, our most decorated woman warrior described how she dealt with the directions on her first Hoka Hey, “I was havin’ a lot of trouble readin’ the directions. I didn’t have anywhere to mount them on my bike. And that was a big struggle.”142 She went on to describe the plastic bag she kept the directions in and how she sat on them while riding and only pulled them out from under her when needed. Amazed at the proposition of not having a place to store the directions, Jane responded, “Yeah. No. They’d blow away! Yeah, I took mine the first year and folded, put them in a zip lock, but folded them. And you know, taped them on my windshield. But I can’t imagine. I’d lose them under my seat!”143 We agreed in astonishment of her ability to continue considering the constraints. Despite thinking that we were well prepared, none of us seemed to have anticipated what to do with the directions. Jane continued with the story of her first year, “I’m always the leader when we do rides, but I never have to read a map. ‘Cause I know all the roads around where I live. So I can just do it. Or I can write something big. And we get out there, and I wear glasses, but I don’t need them to ride so I never wear them when I ride, I just bring them and put them in my suitcase and we get the directions and I’m like, Schatzi…I can’t read these and ride. I never thought about it. I was like this is a problem.”144 Jane figured out her problem with the glasses, just as Junie figured out her problem with the directions.


143 Jane, 2011, 2012 (1322-1324)

144 Jane, 2011, 2012 (1302-1307)
Debby reiterated the challenge of not knowing how the directions would be written, “I didn’t actually anticipate the directions the way they were. That threw me. I’d never done anything like that I’d never done a turn-by-turn rally ride or whatever they call those. So I freaked out a little bit the first day. I sandbagged in a sense. That I just hung back to the very back. And I’d just follow people cause I had all my maps all confused. Cause it was tiny little roads and you had to read directions while you’re riding with all these people around you. And they were just going crazy. And that threw me. So for the first day I just kind of followed people.”145

Bryana agreed that the directions were difficult at first, “After the first day I was able to sit down and go, “Oh my gosh, this is what I need to do.” And, you know, I sat down with their turn by turn directions and I bought a state map of where I was at, that had better interstates, and I was able to map it out ahead of time before even getting on my bike after getting the directions.”146 Most agreed that maps were an essential secret to attacking the directions; some of us had learned the trick faster than others.

Sheila pulled a chair into our circle and joined the discussion saying, “I thought the directions were really contorted and people had taken down road signs. I mean it was just kinda silly...But you know, my sense of direction was good. So it was like, I can see even though the road sign isn’t there, there’s a T in the road. I don’t want to go south. I want to go north here.

145 Debby, 2011 (767-775)

146 Bryana, 2010 (468-472)
So, I’m just gonna go north and see if the next direction appears.” 147 Voices rang out in agreement, Sherie’s the most prominent, “Finding directions was difficult sometimes. I mean not all roads are marked and so you had to find new ways to figure out where you were and how to find the roads.” 148 We nodded in agreement at the frivolity of removing signs from the course and applauded the common sense approach to the race most women took.

If the directions were difficult, the roads were just as tough. As the night pressed on we discussed construction, road conditions, and the constant drain of riding through mountain after mountain. While riding the challenge in the summer brought more favorable weather, it also meant riding during construction season. Jane and Schatzi spoke about their first year riding, “Yeah, the first year we were riding on our pegs. Going through construction sites. In the dark. With cones, trying to figure out where the road was. Cause the bridge was out or something.” 149 Schatzi agreed with her riding partner, “Yeah, the construction, oh my god, the construction sometimes we went through, thank god it was at night time cause I didn’t want to see what I was going over. Then you had to go in some spots, you had to be there by 10:00 or your opportunity was gone until the next morning.” 150

147 Sheila, 2010 (252-271)

148 Sherie, 2011 (342-343)

149 Jane, 2011, 2012 (509-511)

150 Schatzi, 2011, 2012 (507-513)
Jersey Pearl agreed that the roads were particularly challenging, “Ooohh, we were on roads that had no right to be called roads.”¹⁵¹ Bryana described a particularly difficult road condition and new-to-her-phenomenon she discovered while riding through Canada, “Up there on the Alaskan highway up there when it snows the ground freezes and then when it defrosts the asphalt creates these heaves basically. So there’s like a twelve inch drop along the whole entire span of the highway for you know a quarter mile, half a mile, twenty feet, like at random spurts. You don’t know if they’re in front of you. But if you go too slow you’ll totally hit the wrong one and you’ll fall over. It was intense. My bike took a beating. I have to redo the whole front end. I remember hitting those going, ok, I have to ride ‘em like a dirt bike. I need to put my butt up on the back seat and just haul butt across ‘em. And you know, I remember catching air a couple times. The drop was just so intense.”¹⁵² The laughter and excitement in Bryana’s eyes as she spoke made it clear that she was having fun despite the conditions. We compared which roads we thought were worst, their names monumentally infamous: the Moki Dugway, the Alcan, Arkansas County Road 22, California Route 4, the Tail of the Dragon, Iron Mountain Road. One woman summed it up well; “There were some BACK Roads. I knew they were back roads. But my idea of back roads usually has some kind of town or something usually within like fifty miles.”¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Jersey Pearl, 2011 (466)

¹⁵² Bryana, 2011 (348-357)

¹⁵³ Kelly, 2012 (730-734)
We all laughed as another contender for worst road emerged, Sherie had an idea, “It’s called the Moki Dugway. And it like you know those lovely high plateaus you see in Utah? It went up the side of one of those doing you know switchback turns. And it was like a gravel road almost with a little bit of pavement on it with gravel in the corners. There were no guardrails, no berm, no anything. It was just wide enough for two cars.”154 Debby agreed but put in another contender, she exclaimed, don’t forget Iron Mountain Road when we went through South Dakota, “It’s this big spiral and it kind of spirals up and it’s like mountain, bridge, mountain, bridge, and I had never heard of this before. It’s very famous but I had never heard of it. And

then it goes through these really narrow windy roads, like almost single track paved."¹⁵⁵ The thought that we had just rode every difficult road in the country back to back amazed most of us.

Although our circle began to dwindle, several of us stayed outside the motel building hanging on one another’s stories. This was the only time we would have a group of people who actually knew what we went through, knew what it was like. The Hoka Hey was so difficult to describe to other riders and even more difficult to describe to non-riders. If you weren’t there, you just didn’t get it. It’s so hard and so amazing at the same time. We savored the knowing

¹⁵⁵ Debby, 2011 (404-408)

Figure 9. Aerial photo of Iron Mountain Road, South Dakota.

(Google Maps Image)
laughs and recounted tales from the multiple days of technical riding. Junie shifted the conversation to the “twisties,” those hairpin, figure-eight, switch back turns around the mountains that challenged us every day; “They were tough. I mean the second year when we did the forty-eight states we were in those twisties for ten days. I never wanted to see another mountain again.”¹⁵⁶ It seemed impossible that the course designers could ever find these roads let alone know how to connect them in a way that seemed artful, elegant, and inspired.

Having ridden the same ride as Junie, Schatzi agreed, “We were doing all those turns, it was like, give me a straight away, please!”¹⁵⁷ Junie continued and exasperatedly rubbed her arms, “I mean my arms were so tired from the twisties. That I just… I literally just… pulled up to a stop sign and my arms would be shaking. Because we were just constant… all day, all day, all day.”¹⁵⁸ Schatzi’s riding partner Jane confirmed the pain of that ride, “That was like a person with arthritis. It was crippling.”¹⁵⁹ Crippling yet they had all come back for more. This was not their first Hoka Hey. Though some of us were experiencing this unending pain for the first time, these veteran riders knew the pain would soon subside and in its place would form a yearning for the next ride.

One by one we gradually left the circle for the comfort of a bed. The soothing warmth of a hard motel mattress was a first for some of us since beginning the challenge. It didn’t matter 


¹⁵⁷ Schatzi, 2011, 2012 (1631, 1632)


¹⁵⁹ Jane, 2011, 2012 (1635)
how horrible, hard, lumpy, scratchy, or bedbug ridden that motel bed was, we were about to enjoy the first night of actual sleep we had in weeks. Those few days after the ride were the most bittersweet days we could fathom. Filled with laughing, story telling, one-upping, and congratulating, they felt like a continual celebration of life and our recent accomplishments. As we staggered into our rooms, drunk off the high of the ride, we thought of more stories to tell tomorrow.

Linked to fear, expecting the unexpected became a common theme among the women interviewed. The difficulties of directions, finding gas, and tough technical roads added to the overwhelmingly constant “what will happen next” feeling. Challenge operators consciously craft difficult rides with long stretches between checkpoints and gas stations to test challengers’ mental and emotional competencies. On the road, the women describe feeling vulnerable through being lost, sensing unease from contorted directions, and riding on unfamiliar back roads. Perhaps an (un)intended consequence of the challenge, the vulnerability felt by challengers links directly to the stripping of white privilege, as well as other privileges, economic and geographic. In “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”, Peggy McIntosh describes white privilege as, “an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks” (175). While challengers are not actually stripped of their whiteness during the challenge, they are removed from comforting confines of the interstate, suburban landscapes, and GPS systems. The Hoka Hey deliberately takes away power from white challengers and places it in the hands of Native American course designers. The frustrations felt by “confusing” directions—perhaps more accurately described as directions with which white challengers are not comfortable—difficult rides, and the solitariness of untraveled roads, give many challengers who are not yet prepared to face their privilege an easy
excuse to quit the challenge. Often, disgruntled challengers blame Native American’s inability to write clear directions for the challengers' failure to complete the challenge. This form of racism stems directly from the systemic obliviousness to white privilege.

Community Building

*We had new Hoka Hey brothers and sisters,* Debra felt welcomed and succinctly stated, “Everybody was really, really nice.” ¹⁶⁰ Junie knew the lasting effects of Hoka Hey relationships, “I hope that we can have some long friendships together. I think that’s the best thing about Hoka Hey. Is all the people that I’ve met. I hope that the majority of them are friends for life. Because I think most of them are really cool people.”¹⁶¹ With a mark of surprise in her voice, Jersey Pearl agreed, “To actually grow to love these people. And there are many that I still talk with today. You know. Never had any idea that that was going to happen.”¹⁶² The connections we felt with one another ran deeper than waving to fellow motorcyclists. These connections were deep bonds of sisterhood felt only when you’ve survived something so great and so difficult. Truly we grew into one Hoka Hey family, willing to help one another no matter what.

*Sheila noted that we didn’t just make Hoka Hey friends,* “You just tend to meet a lot of people on a motorsicle (sic). Um. Be it other people who ride motorsicles or people that are interested in motorsicles.”¹⁶³ Junie shared that she and her riding partner had been shown

¹⁶⁰ Debra, 2011 (443)


¹⁶² Jersey Pearl, 2011 (673-675)

¹⁶³ Sheila, 2010 (70-72)
hospitality on the road, “Some homeless people made us dinner one night. It was so funny. It was one of those road stories. These people had been at the rest stop when we got there. It was raining and I went in the bathroom to just try and ya' know do what I could to kinda dry things out and stuff. When I came out Chuck had made friends with ‘em. And they were cookin’ on their little grill. And they had made chicken. So that was pretty nice. We of course told ‘em what we were up to and they said they’d been there over a year, living at the rest stop. They’d come there at night and stay. I know. Sad. But they were the ones who gave us food. It’s funny how people who have been out on the road like that will lend a hand. Versus somebody who you know doesn’t want to be bothered or get involved. God forbid we should get involved and buy somebody a meal. You know. I found being out there that, there’s a lot more good people than the media leads us to believe.” The ride challenged us just as it had renewed our faith in humanity. The world felt fresh on that day. It was a hard ride, difficult in every sense, but it was also fun. We enjoyed ourselves. We learned. We grew.

Motorcycle scholars such as Catherine Roster and Liz Jansen point to the creation of community as a benefit of motorcycling as a leisure activity. As Jansen describes when motorcyclists “find our clan…we discover a common bond from which we not only derive strength as individuals but also gather that strength to increase the cohesiveness of the community as a whole” (10). The formation of a Hoka Hey family speaks to this group cohesiveness. Most women list this as a primary benefit of the Hoka Hey. Motorcycles themselves are reminders of the complicated interconnection between independence and group solidarity. While motorcycles are designed for a single rider, they bring people together through

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the creation of communities. Many riders seek the independence and freedom felt by riding solo while yearning for the connected community of a family of riders. Motorcycle clubs, both outlaw and otherwise, have long built on this conflation. The motorcyclist, as independent member of a family, symbolizes the inadequacy of the either/or option.

The small number of women challengers may increase the feelings of community amongst women riders because women find commonality as part of the minority group. While men and women both find community within the Hoka Hey family, the women group themselves as a community of riders within the larger community. For example, during pre- and post-challenge events, the women group together for photographs whereas the men do not ask for a gendered photo. Similarly, when I arrived at the finish of the 2012 challenge, Wendy and Junie met me with open arms. While there were also male challengers present at the finish, Junie and Wendy both noted a desire to come and support “one of the girls.”

Similarly, social media and technology allows participants to remain in contact with one another after the challenge allowing the benefit of camaraderie to remain in the forefront of challengers’ minds. As technology often desensitizes us from human experience, motorcycling communities show a linkage of technology, community, and humanity as riders are not satisfied with online connections and remain rooted in older notions of connecting. For example, Junie describes the “befores and afters” as the most important parts of the Hoka Hey. These are the times in which community bonds form among riders while they spend time in person. Within this community, which leverages both social media use and in-person connections, the lines between impersonal and personal blur.

Accomplishment
“I thought it was just awesome. ”

“I had so much fun, man. I did. Yeah, I’ve got stories to last a lifetime. ”

It was an adventure. “And I was like, this is going to be outrageous! You know, heck of a great ride. The 48 states, and two provinces in Canada, and the roads we went on. Some of the roads I don’t want to do again.”

It proved to be outrageous. That first day was fun! “That first day out you know you’ve got all that momentum. You’re really well rested, you know. Because you’ve been sitting at the hotel for two days waitin’ to ride. And you’re...you’re ready. You’re pumped.”

As we looked around the parking lot, we realized that not only had we had fun and found an adventure, but we met some amazing people.

I was a newbie on the Hoka Hey. Overcome with bravado, I thought I had it all figured out, I mean how hard could riding your bike for a few days really be? “Hard. Really fucking hard, you dumb ass,” my now wiser self rang in my head. That was before the ride. I quickly realized that I had a lot to learn and I had no clue what I had gotten myself into. After speaking with the women at the finish line, I understood that there were many things I still hadn’t figured out on my own trip. It really was unbelievable, the whole thing.

Tristica’s thoughtful voice rang in my head, “I think there was over 600 that started and only just over 100 that made it all the way, so. You know, a lot of people did drop out. I felt really good when I made it up there. Made it the whole way too, we never went off course or

165 Debra, 2011 (48)

166 Bryana, 2010 (233)

167 Schatzi, 2011, 2012 (503-505)

anything.”¹⁶⁹ I was proud too. Just as proud as Debra when she said, “And it’s just something that you’ll never forget. You know, tell your grandkids, your grandmother rode her Harley in all 48 states! It’s just something.”¹⁷⁰ Other people are proud of us too, Sherie’s husband always tells everybody, “She was the first woman solo finisher in the Hoka Hey.” Sherie was the first solo woman to finish,¹⁷¹ that’s something to be proud of.

I’m proud that I got out and did something for once. It’s something you know you want to do in your lifetime I guess. Even though it has its challenge, and some of it is dangerous and scary I still wanted to do it.¹⁷² I guess to encapsulate the whole thing, what the Hoka Hey is, it’s a ride that makes you really become like one with yourself with the earth. You get the rest of everything else, all the clutter out of your mind, because all you’ve got to do is ride and think and focus on what’s on your mind. You know whatever happens to be on your mind at that time. Just to kind clear yourself from all the hustle bustle all the stuff that’s going on and just embrace life. Because at any minute it could be over. It could have ended for me on any one of those three rides at any given time.¹⁷³ So I got out and did something, otherwise you’re gonna sit around and just spend your life dreamin’. I didn’t wait to live my life. Don’t put your life on hold and,
oh, I’m gonna do that when I retire or I’m gonna do that when my kid gets old, or I’m gonna do that when…No, do that now. Because you’re not guaranteed anything in the future. And there’s a reason they call now the present. Because it is a gift. And you better enjoy it.174 And I enjoyed it.

After completing the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge and reflecting on the obstacles they overcame, the women who participated in the Hoka Hey felt a deep sense of accomplishment and empowerment. This resulted from taking on the many challenges faced and successfully achieving their goals. The sense of accomplishment from the Hoka Hey follows them from the finish line into their daily lives. They feel pride in what they have achieved and subsequently people around them are proud. By taking on and overcoming the many challenges faced along the ride women find an increased self-worth. The personal success felt through the Hoka Hey enables women to look fondly on their experience and return for more.

As Catherine Roster explains in her article “Girl Power”, women motorcycle riders find empowerment through riding. According to Roster’s study, this empowerment comes from “developing new knowledge and skill sets” (456). My study confirms and builds upon Roster’s analysis of female motorcyclists. Women who rode the Hoka Hey specifically found empowerment through developing their motorcycling skills. While Roster contends that these are new skills, this study suggests that women also find empowerment from perfecting or improving upon already established skills. Using their abilities at a heightened level affords women the same positive feeling of empowerment described by Roster.

For women on the Hoka Hey, the positive effect of the challenge is not limited to empowerment but also to other factors contributing to empowerment such as a sense of self-

174 Sheila, 2010 (661-665)
worth and appreciation for life. Because of the elevated risk associated with the Hoka Hey challenge—from the length, distance, fatigue, and technical riding—challengers feel that they face death and emerge on the other side with growing appreciation for what they have. Much like the experience from the Hoka Hey, risk taking is suggested by sport scholars, such as Brymer and Oades, as a major contributing factor to the possible positive transformations in extreme sport. In their article, “Extreme Sports: A Positive Transformation in Humility and Courage”, the two describe the positive effects of risk by saying, “Participating at this level involves real fear and brings one in contact with nature at its most extreme. It is these points that act as frameworks for experiencing humility and courage” (124). Like the extreme sports studied by Brymer and Oades, the Hoka Hey puts challengers in direct contact with fear and challenges them to connect with nature in a way that enables them to experience growth. For these challengers, the positive aspects gained—here an appreciation for life, connections with their bike and fellow challengers, and accomplishment—outweigh the possibility for intensely negative consequences.

Emerging as a meaningful event, the Hoka Hey combines fear, pain, success, personal growth, and an examination of white privilege. The constant breakdown of binaries throughout the ride speaks to the transformative Hoka Hey experience. Be it pain/pleasure, masculinity/femininity, fear/safety, white/Native American, natural/urban, the women who participated in the Hoka Hey experienced a negotiation and reformation of self which reminds us that our worlds are messy, incongruent, and ever-changing. Regardless of their intention or realization, women who ride the Hoka Hey experience change and growth, altering their self-perceptions and awareness. These changes also lead to shifts in identities further reinforcing omnipresent change and fluctuation.
We pulled into the gas station thankful for the awning that alleviated some of the pouring rain. Soaking and saturated, I slid off my bike and unlatched my full-face helmet, my face exposed for the first time in hours. The narrow, winding road we just emerged from in Vermont would have been a challenge in dry weather, but the rain seemingly came from the ground and the sky at the same time making dodging boulders and oncoming cars on the tiny, one-lane highway even more difficult. “You did pretty well back there, Sis!” The Southern twang laden voice came from an adjacent pump. A short man I’d never met approached. I looked around to see if there was another “Sis” in sight. Did he seriously just call ME sis? That’s a first. “Even my butthole was puckered in that rain,” he continued with his backhanded compliment, walking directly toward me and confirmed that yes, he was calling me “Sis.” In my head, my mom’s voice echoed, “Be nice, Abby; graciously accept his compliment.” Mom in my conscience is correct; he honestly was surprised at (and affirming of) my riding ability. I eeked out a “Thanks” and looked back at the ground, not exactly knowing what else I could have said. I choked back the urge to sarcastically ramble on about how I knew it was surprising but my lady bits didn’t actually get in the way of my riding. Yes, “Thanks” was more appropriate than what I wanted to say after the sarcasm would have stopped – a blunt “Don’t call me Sis.” But this time my sense of decorum overtook my feminist sensibilities. “You’re a good rider,” again surprise rang in his voice. Well, if I had to be called sis, at least I might have changed his mind about women riders, I thought as I climbed back onto my bike and into the rain. One step at a time.

Being a woman in a traditionally male environment can create difficult, compromising, or perplexing situations. Because of the socially constructed masculine nature of both motorcycling
and sport, women may feel restricted from full participation and acceptance. However, the women who participate in the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge feel deeply connected to the event and its surrounding culture. Riding motorcycles and participating in this challenge are parts of their identities as women, as motorcyclists, and as challengers. In order to survive in this masculine space, women who participate often choose not to conform to standard notions of femininity. This gender bending allows female challengers to be accepted within the riding culture. In turn, they have the ability to work as agents of change directly affecting their male counterpart’s ideas about women riders.

Identity

I sat down for my first interview, nervous about how the conversation might go. Is this voice recorder going to work? Yes. You tested it on the phone a hundred times. It’s going to work. Just calm down. You know the literature: Thompson says that women riders don’t see motorcycling as part of their identities; it’s just something they do. It’s just something they do. Not who they are. They’re here because of family connections. Like you. And Braidotti – identities are nomadic, fluid, and constantly changing. You know the questions. You’ve talked to Junie before. You like her. She’s your mentor. Is that a problem? Do you like her too much? Shut up, Abby. I dial the phone and erase the thoughts from my head.

Abby: What does it mean for you to be a motorcyclist?

Junie: I have been doing it for so long that it’s...you know...it’s kind of become part of me.

Tristica: Exactly. But for me it’s, it’s more of...I don’t know, it’s kind of like my lifestyle.

Sheila: I liked motorcycles from the time I was a kid. And I was never able to have one as a child. You know, my parents were just opposed to that. No mini bikes, no dirt bikes, nothin’. I
knew that I would have a motorsicle. And from the time I got my driver’s license, I’ve always had a motorsicle endorsement on my driver’s license.

**Jersey Pearl:** It’s become the only thing that I know. It’s it. It’s my entire life.

**Debby:** It’s hard to say, ‘cause I’ve always been one. So it’s hard to define myself without riding because I’ve always ridden. It’s such a part of me. It’s like trying to describe yourself as being a woman. You’ve always been a female.

After the first few interviews I am no longer surprised at the constant affirmation that motorcycling is a part of their identities. They are motorcyclists. Perhaps not everyday, perhaps not every second, but today, in these interviews, speaking about their riding, they are riders. Warriors. Women. Just as they are mothers, daughters, grandmothers, wives, construction workers, and nurses, they are motorcyclists. Is it also becoming a greater part of my identity? I can’t tell if it’s the process of writing the dissertation that is bringing me closer to identifying as a motorcyclist or because I participated in the Hoka Hey. I used to shroud my identity as a rider, the last thing I would tell people about myself. You had to be in the circle to know. Ashamed? Now I find myself beginning to use it as a marker of my uniqueness – in a work retreat icebreaker, something I never would have done before. Being a female rider of the Hoka Hey did make me unique – there were so few of us after all. And to deny it would be to deny these women and the thing that linked us together. To cast off their identities would be unfair, against my nature, anti-feminist.

The passion sprang from their voices. I heard them sifting through their memories of riding to find the perfect moment to describe how they felt about being on a bike. I have no clue how I would answer these questions myself. They speak with such strong voices. Maybe I don’t have this same passion? Maybe I do? I find it hard to describe why I ride or how I feel when I do
ride. Jay asks me about it frequently. Rather than finding words as passionate as these women, I stammer and fail to come up with an adequate sentiment to describe how I feel when I ride, why I like it, what drew me in. I say I just didn’t want to be on the back. Wendy said that too. She laughed while reminisced about her dad’s ’78 Gold Wing and said, “I remember being a passenger on the back of that. Again, I was not a passenger.”175 I felt drawn to her laughter at the absurdity of wanting to ride on the back. I, too, wanted to be in control. But it’s so much more than that. I think it’s indescribable, like trying to describe how you feel when you’re in love or agonizing over the loss of a friend. I should just tell Jay what these women said. They get it. They get me.

Carla knows how hard it can be to explain, “I haven’t found the exact words that I’m happy with at this point other than, it’s such a deep passion for me, that when I’m not motorcycling my heart bleeds.”176 Her heart bleeds. Debra mimicked the same sentiment, “I just want to stay on the road and ride for the rest of my life. I didn’t want to come home.”177 The feeling of being on her bike pulls her. Bryana and Kelly described how we’re all in it for “the love of two wheels.”178 I’d never before heard this statement, but now it resonates. We are linked by our passion. Eden paid homage to the ex-husband who put her on her first bike, “little did he know that he instilled this massive, this little bitty seed that turned into a massive love of

175 Wendy, 2011, 2012 (146-147)

176 Carla, 2011 (68-70)

177 Debra, 2011 (124)

178 Bryana, 2010 (163); Kelly, 2012 (337)
motorcycles.”179 The love of two wheels extends beyond relationships with people to create a relationship with person and machine. Debby was succinct, saying motorcycles are “my thing. I love these things.”180 Being who we are and living our passions help us live our lives.

**Junie:** I guess to encapsulate the whole thing what the Hoka Hey is. Is a... (She pauses and I feel the anticipation.)... It’s a ride that makes you really become like one with yourself, with the earth, with you know getting the rest of everything else you know, all the clutter out of your mind because all you’ve got to do is ride and think and focus on what’s on your mind. You know whatever happens to be on your mind at that time. And just to kind of clear yourself from all the hustle bustle all the stuff that’s going on and just, I don’t know, just embrace life. Because at any minute it could be over. It could have ended for me on any one of those three rides at any given time.

They all mimicked the same happiness, the same joy, and the same passionate feelings. The Hoka Hey had become part of their identities and shaped their lives. Each woman expresses it in a different way; each woman eloquently shows her love.

**Carla:** The Hoka Hey kind of put a great big old wrap, a great big old bow on the whole package and said you know, we don’t know what tomorrow is going to bring.

**Wendy:** It’s just where I’m at in life but I love it. I smile. I’m happy. I found my happiness. Someone went on a ride and they did their once in a lifetime ride. And they said they were looking for something. And I think that’s what I did. I was looking for some thing. All I can tell

179 Eden, 2010, 2011 (54-55)

180 Debby, 2011 (684)
you is I found it. But I can’t tell you what it is. But I found it. And I’m running into a lot of people
that know exactly what I mean. And they’re the same way, I can’t tell you what it is. But they
found it out there on the Hoka Hey.

Sheila: Don’t wait to live your life, don’t put your life on hold and [say], oh, I’m gonna do
that when I retire or I’m gonna do that when my kid gets old, or I’m gonna do that when.... No,
do that now. Because you’re not guaranteed anything in the future. And there’s a reason they
call now the present. Because it is a gift. And you better enjoy it.

After the interviews I could see their passion clearly. They were living their lives through,
for, and because of this ride. The Hoka Hey meant the world to them. Riding meant the world to
them. It was part of their identities.

Women who participated in this study indicated that motorcycling was a large part of
their identity. Many, raised in the culture from a young age, felt that it became part of their social
fabric. The women interviewed reflected a passion in their tone and identified motorcycling to be
crucial to who they were as a person. This runs contrary to William Thompson’s study which
indicates female motorcyclists see motorcycling as “what they do not, who they are” (58).
Although Thompson does not specifically express the notion of nomadic subjects or offer a
postmodern construction of individuality, he does indicate that women see motorcycling “as one
of many statuses” although not the “master status” (69). Thompson’s research indicates that
women view their motorcycling identities are less important than their other socially constructed
identities (e.g. race, age, social roles, or occupation). While in partial agreement with
Thompson’s work, my findings indicate that women find motorcycling to be equally important to
their other social identities. As Braidotti suggests, I find that our multiple nomadic identities “are
seldom synchronized” and thus “one may for a period of time, coincide with some [identity]
categories, but seldom with them all.” (94). In other words, one identity is not necessarily more important than another, rather we assume different identities at different times. These anti-synchronous identities explain how some women in this study find riding to be a part of their identities while others may not.

While all women who participated in the study showed a passion for riding, not all strongly indicated that riding was a part of their identity. How much they rode generally spoke to how strong of a connection they felt to motorcycling. Women who rode on a daily basis or those who grew up in a motorcycling community often felt stronger connections to the motorcyclist identity marker than did those who rode less often. This could also explain the differences in my own findings versus those of Thompson’s study as all women who ride the Hoka Hey likely ride more than other female riders. This mirrors Wheaton’s work on windsurfers, in which she describes how “hard core” members of the culture “are extremely committed to one (or more complementary) activities, dedicating large amounts of time, money, and effort investing in a lifestyle and social identity” (9). As women become more ingrained in the Hoka Hey, and motorcycle culture more largely, they assume this as a larger part of their social identity. As a lifestyle sport becomes part of a woman’s identity, she becomes increasingly empowered through its participation. A cyclical connection between empowerment and identity exist in which pride felt from accomplishment feeds the sense of identity and a deeper sense of identity further increases the desire for participation.

Catherine Roster’s 2007 work points to ways that riding motorcycles facilitates women’s empowerment. One of her primary findings indicates women motorcyclists find empowerment by entering the leisure activity after a major life-changing event. This is consistent with many of women who participate in the Hoka Hey who began riding after cancer diagnoses, divorces, or
the onset of empty nest syndrome. Junie’s discussion of finding the Hoka Hey in the chemo
room, discussed in chapter five, exemplifies this point. Likewise, Wendy connects her grown
children leaving the house and her participation in the Hoka Hey. She states, “I was faced with
the fact that, you know, kids are gone, now what do I do? My kids think I was going through a
midlife crisis” (174-175). For these women, the Hoka Hey served as a point of empowerment to
“reset” their lives after traumatic or life changing events. My work builds on Roster’s premise by
showing that more intense or extreme riding can forge a deeper sense of passion, identity, and
empowerment leading to an increased sense of self-worth and appreciation for life. Women were
to better empowered to ride motorcycles, as Sheila says:

- I really have progressed as a rider and in my confidence and the Hoka Hey had a lot to
do with doing that. Before I always followed my husband. We always rode how he rode.

- Rode at the speed he rode. I was parroting what he was doing to some extent. When I did
the Hoka Hey I kind of learned how to find my own path and do things my own way. And
it was really nice (98-103).

Later in the interview, Sheila expressed the empowerment beyond motorcycling while
saying, “I think I found out that I can rely on myself and I don’t need other people to do things
for me. That I can handle anything” (473-474). This “I can do anything” mentality resounds with
warrior-like confidence. Because Sheila, like other riders, extends her empowerment beyond an
empowerment to ride, she emphasizes the ability of the Hoka Hey to be a meaningful and
transformative experience.

In part, the experience includes an identity transformation to becoming Hoka Hey
warriors. Becoming warriors extends from excelling as a woman in a male-dominated
environment. Women’s success in a masculine space, such as the challenge, empowers them to
take on the identity marker of Hoka Hey warrior. A clear example of this, Carla and Wendy literally take on the warrior identity through their dress (Wendy wears a warrior patch on her Hoka Hey vest) and social media (Carla’s social media page uses the name Hoka Hey Warrior Woman). Further, the women interviewed state that the Hoka Hey itself can be a major life-changing event. From their comments, it is clear that being confronted with risk on the Hoka Hey gave them a deeper appreciation for their lives.

[WE were REAL women riders. WE were different. WE completed the Hoka Hey. And we were endurance riders. Not everyone was like us. Not all women riders were like us. We rode more like men.

Junie: I think it takes a lot of endurance, to do it to the degree that we do it. I mean anybody can pull their bikes out of the garage on a sunny day and ride up to the next town and have dinner and then come home. Put it away and polish it. That’s not really what I am.

Carla: Because not everybody can roll like that. And ride like that. Not everyone can ride like that, I’m sorry; we are special people. Not everyone can ride like that.

Schatzi: Yeah, I can’t imagine Stubby, or even Larry, or most of the guys we know ever doing the Hoka Hey. Their riding technique is just so…. They’ll go like fifty miles and like that’s it we have to stop. And I’m like, fifty miles, that’s like nothing.

Because we can’t find people to ride like we do we often ride alone. Solo riders. Just us and our bikes. Was that remorse in Junie’s voice? “I’m a lone rider. Because pretty much no one rides like we do.” Perhaps more of a longing for her Hoka Hey brothers and sisters and a sense of pride from being able to conquer the road alone? Eden, Jane, Schatzi, Kelly, Bryana, Jersey Pearl all said the same. They were solo riders. As Eden put it, I ride “Solo. ... It’s very rare that I ride with anybody.” Tristica rode by herself too, but said it was because “I don’t necessarily
like riding with a bunch of people.” Maybe she would if they rode in her style. Some of us create and seek out (un)willing riding partners. Sheila comments, I ride with “Myself. Now, I have a dog that rides with me. Trixie.” I have my dad. Debra has Stan. Wendy has Bill. But those were Hoka Hey people. They can handle riding like we ride. I can’t imagine riding alone. I don’t ever like to be alone. Sheila lamented not having someone else with whom to share her ride, “And it’s nice to have somebody to share it with; but it’s hard to find somebody who’s able to take off for that amount of time and that.” Maybe they didn’t prefer to ride alone either, stuck between wanting to go the distance and not finding someone to share the miles with. Simultaneously lonely and never alone, tough and soft, both sides present.

We mark our riding by how long we’ve been on the road. How many years we’ve had butts in the saddle. A total of about 350 years of riding. Many of us since before we could drive. The length of time alone speaking to our passion for the road, how could it not be part of our identities? It’s all we’ve known. We also mark our riding by how hard we ride, how far. Riding is a celebration of our lives.

**Jersey Pearl**: I came back from the Hoka Hey and did a trip to Ocala, Florida for one of my nationals. Um. It was like 1,100 miles with my husband. And we said, “Ah, let’s iron butt it.” And we got there in twenty-two hours. And then you know everybody was like, “Oh my god!” And then they took pictures when we got there. But it was nothing. It felt like nothing. You know, um, we don’t, we would take motorcycle trips before and my parents lived, live in Tennessee. So we might do six hundred miles split that over two days. Um, now when we do a trip, we do no less than seven hundred and fifty miles in one day. And we’re out for seventeen days at a time. Every. Every ride has become an endurance ride.

**Bryana**: It averages three to four hundred miles a day if we do go out for a ride.
**Wendy**: A typical ride? Well, last Saturday we went to Daytona for lunch. So 611 mile round trip for lunch, a typical ride. (She laughs).

**Eden**: for my 50th birthday, I’m going to be doing Highway 50 from Oakland, California to Ocean City, Maryland.

The quotes above not only show these challengers as skilled motorcyclists, but also that they are confident enough to ride alone. Because women who ride motorcycles enter the culture through families or men, as studies such as Roster’s suggest, riding alone is evidence of moving beyond their traditional gender role. This sort of empowerment leads women to further their participation in the sport outside of social groups, families, or relationships. Because they have become skilled motorcyclists through rides like the Hoka Hey and spending considerable time on the road, they are comfortable riding alone and formulating an identity around being a motorcyclist. For example, Eden’s desire to ride across country for her birthday links her to motorcycling as an identity mark and also shows her level of confidence with riding (stemming from empowerment). The relationship between empowerment and identity is cyclical. As the women become empowered through riding, motorcycling becomes a larger part of their identities. Likewise, as a woman takes on the motorcyclist identity they become more empowered to ride. As Krane et al. describe, female athletes “feel empowered because of their strength and skill” and despite reminders that they were “not considered normal women, these athletes savored the benefits of their athletic participation” (325-326). As this sport research suggests, empowerment shaped identities as female athletes.

Braidotti’s idea of nomadic subjectivity describes the women who participate in the Hoka Hey. These women constantly negotiate with their feminine identities within the masculine space of the Hoka Hey. Because of the gendered power dynamics within the challenge, the women
must carefully work between being a woman and being a woman in a man’s world. Similarly, in Nancy Finley’s article, “Skating Femininity: Gender Maneuvering in Women’s Roller Derby” discusses the combination of gender maneuvering and intragender dynamics that speaks to this dual role. Finley describes the ways in which women who participate in masculine environments “engineer the interagender dynamics in femininities that support or challenge intergender relations with masculinity” (363). Intragender dynamics can be labeling women with pariah status (e.g. slut, bitch) or positioning oneself as higher in status than other women (e.g. faster, stronger, harder riders). Like Finely’s “Derby Girls” who dress like 1950s pinups and housewives while aggressively bashing into one another on the rink, women of the Hoka Hey carefully position themselves both as feminine and masculine.

As seen in the vignettes above, the women who ride the Hoka Hey separate themselves from other Hoka Hey challengers and other women riders. They make clear distinctions between the way THEY ride and how that is different than how other people ride. The Hoka Hey offers opportunities to ride long distances, at excessive speeds, and on incredibly difficult roads. This is different than the way most motorcyclists are perceived to ride. It is important to note that these women are also insiders in the culture; they formulate opinions of other riders based on their personal experiences, conversations, and pasts. Women of the Hoka Hey perceive other riders to be “weekend warriors” who do not put in the same mileage in the same amount of time as they do. Clearly, there are riders who do not participate in the Hoka Hey but who do ride in a similar fashion as these women. What is important, however, is the perception and posturing of the Hoka Hey women. The divide they place between themselves and other riders indicates a passion for the way they ride, a desire to be “tough” or at least different, and a need to legitimize their place in the culture.
For many women, inter- and intragender maneuvering happens not only in their riding lives but in their occupations as well. The women’s occupations ranged traditionally feminine positions, such as nursing and cleaning, to more masculine-preceived jobs, such as working in construction or maintenance departments. Many women also held positions working with motorcycles (test rider) or in a motorcycle related industries (marketing or retail). Specifically showing intergender maneuvering, Sheila and Debra both described working in a construction related field. While Sheila, who has worked in construction since 1976, indicated that being a woman “meant nothing”, Debra was constantly aware of her status as a woman in a man’s culture stating how the men she works with are often intimidated by her ability to ride a motorcycle or win at arm wrestling competitions. Upon further reflection, these seemingly oppositional viewpoints show how women must negotiate their own identities in masculine environments. In some situations, women embrace their status as woman/other showing intergender maneuvering while at other times women employ intragender maneuvering to align themselves with men resulting in a perceived erasure of gender lines.

With respect to the Hoka Hey, women challengers positioned themselves against other women riders who do not participate in the Hoka Hey. This intragender dynamic allows the women riders of the Hoka Hey to situate themselves in the layered masculine culture. Because women are perceived to be less skilled riders than men, women who ride the Hoka Hey often downplay other women’s associations with motorcycle culture in opposition to the difficult rides they endure and enjoy. A new sense of macho emerges from these women as they “one-up” other non-endurance riders. For example, Junie commented about “pretty girls” who do not want to ride in the rain and Wendy compared herself to other women in her riding group by saying, “I guess with the Hoka Hey I found that I do like it a little extreme” (495). By creating a division
between themselves as women of the Hoka Hey and other women who ride, women challengers reinforce the patriarchy by affiliating themselves with masculine riders, that is those who are hardcore/real/endurance riders, rather than other women riders.

The association with a macho identity speaks to women’s fluid identities and gender non-conformity (discussed at length in the next section). As their identities as riders develop, they more fully embrace the toughness associated with motorcycling culture. As Finely suggests, of roller derby women, “Skaters use interactions in derby to manipulate meanings of gender positions and meanings, to redefine statuses, and create contradictions in complementary gender relations” (371). In translation to the Hoka Hey, women use riding to change their own perceptions of self and redefine or reinforce their gender identities. Many women indicated that the reason they felt a fluid gender identity because they have ridden motorcycles for so long or have long since felt that their gender identities were not singular. Thus, through their participation in a heavily masculine culture, their gender bending has become acculturated to feel like a natural part of their identities.

However, when comparing their own rides and experiences against those of other female Hoka Hey riders, they often downplay their own success, which is a display of ingrained feminine manners. Many women asserted some sort of “I could never do that” or “Oh, that was so much harder than my ride” sentiment when discussing the stories of the other women. For example, when comparing her ride to my own, Wendy asserted, “I think you with the no windshield and the dust storm. That’s amazing. ’Cause when I heard that I was like oh no, no, I would have turned around and went home!” (481-483). Likewise, Kelly Quinn downplayed her own experience as a rider by saying, “I’m just a baby compared to most. You know, I hear all these people sayin’, ‘I been ridin thirty years’ And I’m like wow” (217-218). While
simultaneously hoping to be role models and inspire other women riders (see chapter five) they make a point to describe themselves as endurance riders, skilled riders, and just as good as the men. This shows a need to be tough (masculine) while still retaining traditionally feminine characteristics of downplaying their own success. These women dance between needing to say, “I ride more than that (non HHMC) woman” and “I couldn’t ride like you (my HHMC sister).” This shows a strong display of nomadic identity and gender maneuvering. It is a confusing, complex, and difficult position to find oneself in; however, both indicate a desire to create community with your Hoka Hey sister. Underwriting these conflicting sentiments is a connection to other Hoka Hey riders. Because the Hoka Hey is such a large part of the women’s identities they feel the need to associate with the ride and other riders.

Female Masculinity

Women who participate in the Hoka Hey often speak in conflicting ways regarding their gender identities. For example, one woman simultaneously indicates her gender is unimportant while also indicating that she is cognizant of her intra- and intergender relationships. Likewise, other women describe how their gender matters in issues of safety, such as when they describe needing to find safe sleeping spaces on the road, and then associate with the macho of the riding culture when they describe their tough riding style. They uphold gender expectations and find novelty in their deviation from these norms. What is clear from their words is a constant negotiation with their own femininity inside a masculine space—at times this culminates in bodily encounters and at others with interpersonal interactions. What emerges in the Hoka Hey is a carefully constructed nomadic gender dance in which identities become fluid markers of (self)worth.
I walked into the rider party and fifty heads turned in my direction—bearded faces hidden under dark sunglasses and scraggly, greying locks. They were looking at me. The pushup bra layered under my tight white tank top made me feel confident, sexy and powerful. I could hear them thinking, there’s nothing like a female riding on her bike. They think it’s sexy. A woman on her own bike. Me on my bike. But I’m not like all the other women who don’t ride. There are still so many women that are passengers and that are just like ornaments versus actually participants. There’s just a big difference. Women are still kind of the pin up girl mentality. You don’t see half clothed guys at Sturgis; it’s naked women...It’s still man’s thing. That’s why they’re staring at me. Let them stare. They’ll see when we’re out there on the road. See that I’m different. That I ride like they do—a fast, nonstop, gun it on the straightaways, drag my bags, don’t stop until you run out of gas, Hoka Hey style—because I’m not just another pretty face. I sit down for the rider meeting listening attentively to the instructions; all the while I can feel their eyes burning into the back of my head. I try to concentrate on what Beth is saying, but it’s not working, thoughts from a lifetime of living in a man’s world parade through my head.

I have worked in maintenance departments, on construction sites, run my own companies, and have been the only female in the game many times. The guys at work even know I’m more masculine than them. After all, I got my CDL license (commercial driver’s license) and some of the guys don’t have theirs. I think that’s cool. Plus I have a Harley. And

181 Debra, 2011 (177-179)

182 Sherie, 2010 (140-147)

183 Debra, Sheila, Schatzi, Jane, Wendy, Kelly
none of the guys at work have a Harley. And that intimidates ‘em when I ride my Harley to work.\textsuperscript{184} I’m not really any different than they are. I guess in a lot of ways I consider myself one of the boys. I’ve always put myself in fields with men; I’ve grown up with a group of guys.\textsuperscript{185} When I think about being a woman riding a motorcycle, it really doesn’t mean anything to me ‘cause when I started, there weren’t very many women riding motorcycles.\textsuperscript{186} I’ve been doing this my whole life. I see myself as genderless. I’m my father’s only son. He didn’t treat me like a girl. He liked doing these things, motorcycles and cars, and he just shared them with me whether I wanted to participate or not. So I guess I don’t see myself as woman first. I see myself as a person.\textsuperscript{187} Why do these guys think my gender matters? Why can’t I just be a person? “Ok. We’ll pull out of Las Vegas Harley at 0600 tomorrow. Any more questions?” Beth’s concluding remarks snapped me back into the moment. I picked up my pen and paper and shoved them back into my tank bag. I scanned the room for a crowd to join. There were the other women. My haven.

\textsuperscript{184} Debra, 2011 (21-23)

\textsuperscript{185} Kelly, 2012 (258-260)

\textsuperscript{186} Sheila, 2010 (107-108)

\textsuperscript{187} Debby, 2011 (238-242)
As the rider meeting came to a close, small crowds began forming. Photos taken. A picture of all the riders. Then a picture of just the women. The photo of the seven of us drew a large interest of novice photographers and cell phone cameras. There were far more than the anticipated seven flashes going off. We stood arm in arm, smiles plastered across our faces as more and more people came to see the women who ride the Hoka Hey. Girlfriends and wives of bashful male riders snapped quick shots and ran back to their beaus for approval. Everyone hoping they could sneak in a picture before we broke our stance. Zoo animals? Side-show freaks? Respected and venerated members of a motley family? It didn’t matter; we were a spectacle. It’s almost like they can’t believe it. A woman could ride that far, that long distance.
Eight hundred miles...a thousand miles a day...back roads. I think that really shocked a few people. And got them thinking. Wow, this is.... And I know they probably see it as a woman did that. But we’re riders here, we enjoy what we do.\textsuperscript{188} The flashes finally stopped and we gave one another a final squeeze before heading our separate ways to make final preparations for the trip. One last hot meal, finishing touches on the bikes, making sure everything is packed as tightly and as efficiently as possible. Then sleep, one more night of sweet sleep (if we could actually quell the excitement building in our bodies) before the seven, eight, nine, or more nights of five-star parking lot and rest stop accommodations.

Many women riders of the Hoka Hey display a fluid gender identity, as expressed by the composite narrative above. Although the story uses one voice, it is a combination of many voices of the women interviewed, as the footnotes indicate, and woven together with narrative elements. While they may not have explicitly stated that their gender identities were fluid, they discussed having a changing idea of their femininity. Debby described feeling “genderless” (238), Sheila and Schatzi spoke about how being a female motorcyclist “didn’t mean anything” (Sheila 107; Schatzi 165). Rather than not finding value in their gender I believe this means that they, like Debby, feel genderless or feel gender fluidity. As Judith Butler suggests in \textit{Gender Trouble}, their genders are not “natural” rather they are a “cultural performance” which the women alter at their will (xxxii).

\textit{Wendy pulled her bike onto the side of the road following the large group of men. Jokes and comments about the heat immediately started to fly as the men unsaddled themselves and stood with bravado quickly whipping down their zippers. Ppiiisssss, the sound hit her ears, her}

\textsuperscript{188} Debby, 2011 (365-368)
eyes widening, not at the thought of men relieving themselves in front of her, but rather at the growing thought of having to relieve herself. She looked quickly for a bush, tree, or large rock to hide behind. Seeing nothing in sight she found herself faced with the predicament for the first time. She cautiously walked behind her bike, using it as a shield. Squatting low to the ground, feeling the intense pressure in her already tired thighs, she eased closer to the earth and her shield. SCORTCH! SIZZLE! OUCH! SHIT! She jumped startled and scorned into the air. Bit by her blazing hot muffler her ass burned long after she realized it was better to expose your fanny than burn your ass. Lesson learned.

Women who ride the Hoka Hey negotiate gender dynamics both between female riders and male riders, side stepping boundaries of femininity and masculinity. As indicated in the story above, some challengers grapple with their desire to remain feminine (here by not wanting to urinate in front of men) and needing to exist within a masculine space (a tough road with no bathroom). Similarly, Tristica and Bryana told stories of stripping down to her underwear in front of men in order to dry her wet, cold clothes. Tristica’s comment, “I didn’t have like one stupid ass remark or comment from anybody. It was kinda like everybody was in the same boat. Everybody was freezin’ their ass off. And everybody was wet. And they just wanted to get dry,” indicates her surprise at the fluidity of her own and the men’s gender performances. While Tristica, Bryana, and Wendy all remained cognizant of protecting their bodies from men, they transgressed boundaries of traditional femininity by ignoring the prescribed gender performance. Also, the men in each situation, by treating each woman like “one of the guys,” broke down the line between men and women. These stories indicate a shift in gender

189 Tristica, 2010 (475-479)
performance and gender identity. Because these identities are nomadic and constantly in flux they are able to fulfill multiple needs at any given time.

In addition to negotiating femininity in relation to men, the women expressed masculine characteristics in relation to other women. During an interview with Jane and Schatzi, who ride the Hoka Hey together, Jane promoted Schatzi’s female masculinity. In attempting to define female masculinity or even masculinity itself, Halberstam notes, “masculinity must not and cannot and should not reduce down to the male body and its effects” (1). Further she notes, “the suppression of female masculinity,” either in the form of tomboyism, drag kings, or other gender non-conforming identities “allows for male masculinity to stand unchallenged as the bearer of gender stability and gender deviance” (41). The excerpted interview below indicates a formation of social identity and behavior consistent with team based athletes.

Schatzi: ...motorcycling was my only transportation. And I remember being out there at like fifteen below.

Abby: Fifteen below?!

Schatzi: Yeah. That’s cold.

Jane: I used to think 74 was cold. I’ve really changed my standards. (All laughing).

Schatzi: Yeah. It’s called a snowsuit. Is what you have to wear at that point. ... 

Jane: She has bigger balls than most men; they’re just on her chest. (All laughing).

Jane not only promotes Schatzi’s masculine qualities (here riding in extreme conditions) but also makes a clear association between her female friend and a man. As Kauer and Krane’s article “‘Scary Dykes’ and ‘Feminine Queens’: Stereotypes and Female College Athletes” suggests, “these athletes constantly negotiated their social identities as athletes in conjunction with social expectations. They were empowered through sport and developed valued qualities,
yet these qualities also conflicted with hegemonic femininity” (54). Social Identity perspective used by Kauer and Krane suggest that Jane and Schatzi develop social norms—presenting a non-conforming gender identity—consistent with their group—female riders of the Hoka Hey—that may not be accepted by those outside their circle. The quotes above as well as the previous stories of negotiating femininity show the women exude both macho and socially constructed feminine characteristics. The fluidity of their identities, as well as group social constructions, allows them to bend, blur, and ignore traditional gender lines. Motorcycling is a part of who they are because they ride hard, ride long, and keep up. However, in order to maintain this sense of self they must constantly adapt their identity to fit within a given situation. What follows is a composite, creative non-fiction narrative to further describe how the women interviewed use this fluid sense of identity to adapt to the masculine culture of the Hoka Hey.

I’m on the ride now. It’s still early on the first day. We’ve been pushing hard and have almost completed the first page of the directions. It seemed like a monumental feat, but when you really added up the mileage we had only done about 200 miles. It was a lot of short distances. We weren’t covering much ground. It seems like this state will never end. As I stood at the gas station I pondered my own trip so far. I had done pretty well, considering I had only spent a few days combined on this new bike. Its weight still amazes me; it’s so much heavier than my other bike. But that’s probably all in my head. The guys I’m keeping up with haven’t acknowledged me. Then again, we’ve mostly been on the bikes and haven’t had a chance to really speak yet. Apparently I am “lucky” that they are riding with me at all, but it is early in the ride and groups were still pretty tight. It quickly went through the system that I was a newbie. And people didn’t
want me around ‘cause I would slow them up. But, I’m a very, very competitive rider. And they didn’t want nothin’ to do with me. Well, they didn’t dump me at all because I wound it up and I hung with him through these twisties and everything else at eighty, eighty-five miles an hour. These were some really aggressive riders. I felt really cool that I kept up with them on the mountain roads.

Then I snapped back into reality as the gas filled in my tank. I turned my focus to the men I’d been riding with, I hadn’t been listening to their conversation so far, just stuck in my own head. When I tuned in I couldn’t believe my ears. Veteran riders and they were complaining about the directions being wrong. It didn’t seem like they would be happy even if Beth rode on the back with them and pointed out all the turns. They were disappointed. They were frustrated. They were already tired. And nothin’ tellin’, I didn’t have a problem. I pumped my gas and I turned around and I ended up...I don’t want to say I cussed ‘em out...but there may have been a few choice words in there, but I said, “You know what, wow, I’ve never heard more PUSSIES in my whole entire life standing around a gas tank right now.” I was like, “You signed up for this. You knew it was going to be an endurance challenge. You knew it was going to be a test. It wasn’t going to be quick and easy and painless, they clearly stated everything. And you’re going to stand here and bitch and complain about it. And we’re only five hours into it. I’m glad I’m not

190 Wendy, 2011, 2012 (275-277)

191 Carla, 2011 (441-444)

192 Eden, 2010, 2011 (422-423)
riding with you guys.” And took off on my own. I can’t believe I just had to shame a bunch of grown ass bikers like they were children. Who’s tough now? I climbed back on my bike, strapped on my helmet, and took off watching them pick their jaws up off the concrete in my mirrors as I continued down the route. Maybe I didn’t want to ride with those dildos after all. New friends to be found down the line...

The small gas pump icon illuminated in orange on my speedometer. Shit. I’m in the middle of nowhere. Alone. Shit. Fuck. Shit. Should have stopped at that station even though I had just filled up sixty miles before. Dumb. My eyes scan the horizon for something, anything that might resemble a gas station, house with running water, or a store. Not seeing much I immediately lay off the throttle to conserve what little gas I had. Then, a clearing of trees down the lane the soft lights of a kitchen window shrouded in old lace curtains offer hope and quicken my heart. Please Lord, let them have some gas, just a little to get me to whatever station is closest. I take the helmet off…and just try to make myself a little smaller than I usually am. I slumped slightly and made sure I looked less intimidating than what I might appear at first—a nondescript leather clad biker climbing off a Softail Deluxe. I am short anyway, but I need to be less intimidating now. Less powerful. Less masculine. I can’t believe I am walking up to a private residence; I don’t want to be misunderstood. I’m not going to hurt them; I’m the vulnerable one. I don’t want them feeling that, who is this person? They probably will anyway. I knock on the door and am met with a confused stare from the woman who opened the door. As I begin to tell my story of the Hoka Hey, the Lakota, my empty tank, a small crowd emerges from

193 Bryana, 2010 (248-257)
different rooms of the house. The small girl looks up at me with bright eyes as her father moves to the garage to get me some gas. Thank god they were nice enough to help.

Over time, these long distance riders develop an inclination toward female masculinity. Many women described their childhood selves with some degree of a male identity marker – either as tomboys or “one of the boys” or a “father’s only son” (June 248; Debra 511; Schatzi 184; Wendy 153; Kelly 259; Debby 239). In her work, Female Masculinity, Judith Halberstam notes, “tomboyism generally describes an extended period of female masculinity” (5). According to Halberstam, parents generally accept this blurring of the gender binary—as long as their child eventually “grows out of it” and continues to assume some female characteristics. Their association with tomboyism makes clear the idea that these women challenge traditional gender norms. The female masculinity they felt as a child extends now into their motorcycle riding. Many women who ride the Hoka Hey grew up in a motorcycling culture, with either their families motorcycling together or by owning and riding dirt bikes as young children. As such, the association with a masculine culture supersedes their femininity or, rather, their femininity includes a masculine edge. Because many of the women grew up in a masculine environment they now feel an erasure of their culturally accepted gender (female) specifically when they ride their motorcycles. Some women even noted that they attempt to physically alter their bodies to appear more masculine while riding as described in the vignette above.

As three-time rider and two-time cancer survivor June Rose stated, “And a lot of times you can’t even tell [if] it’s a girl on the bike. I try to, you know, stick my hair so you can’t really tell I’m a girl. Easily anyway” (207-208). Likewise, Debby indicated that the gear she wears

194 Eden, 2010, 2011 (161-166)
serves as a gender eraser, “I look like the Michelin man a lot of the time. I got a lot of layers on. I
got my heated gear. You know. And I look very, um, I guess intimidating in a way” (252-254).
Each of the instances in which the women discuss altering their appearance to be more masculine
is in reference to safety. They feel safer looking like a man on a motorcycle than looking like a
woman on a motorcycle. This points to the culturally constructed notion that women are less safe
and more vulnerable than men. While sexual assault and violence are prevalent in the United
States, this also suggests a learned understanding of vulnerability, which is directly linked to
their gender (as discussed in chapter four in regards to fear on the road). These women, like most
women, have been long told that they should not walk alone at night, not wear revealing
clothing, or attract unwanted attention for fear that they may become victims. Victim blaming
remains a prevalent way in which men exert power over women. In order to combat this learned
feeling of vulnerability, these women assume masculine tendencies, appearances, and attitudes.
This includes an alternation of their gender performance. While riding, these motorcyclists
identify more with their masculine side; however, their traditional markers of femininity remain
present as a part of their gender performance when they are not specifically riding their
motorcycles.

At times the women describe harboring traditionally and hegemonically feminine
qualities, such as needing to be clean, and when discussing their sexuality; however, when they
ride the Hoka Hey they overwhelmingly alter their feminine gender identities. In essence, they
pick up and leave their female gender identity when necessary. Kelly, who works in the
motorcycle industry, describes how she uses her sexuality as a tool in her job. She is cognizant of
her feminine sexuality and uses that to promote her brand and philanthropic endeavors. Kelly
states, “All of the promotional speaking and stuff that I do, I have to look sassy. I have to look
the part. Well, you look the part in your jeans and your chaps sure; but I can’t walk into a college campus or a women’s seminar to give my spiel … I wear [the clothing brand Bebe’s] stuff, I buy their leather pants, I buy their studs, I buy their studded heels” (396-404). Here, while not actually riding her motorcycle, Kelly is able to perform her femininity through her sexualized clothing. This sexualization of the athlete for media and marketing purposes echoes the representations of other female athletes of masculine sports. For example Sisjord and Kristiansen’s 2008 work regarding female wrestlers notes, female athletes who conform to traditionally feminine standards of beauty are photographed by media more often than athletes with more muscular bodies. While some female wrestlers scoffed at the sexualized media portrayal, others noted any representation of a female wrestler did “a lot for the sport” (361). Both situations represent a pull between the desire for any representation and remaining true to the gender identity of others in your sport.

Other women noted their female gender identities through their attention to hygiene on the ride. Although I did not ask a question specifically about showering on the ride or cleanliness, many women inserted comments regarding their hygiene into their descriptions of the Hoka Hey. For example, Wendy described her appearance as “Day seven of the Hoka Hey. So no shower, no nothing, my hair was a mess” (210). Here she makes note that while riding the Hoka Hey she pays no attention to feminine standards of beauty while also indicating her

![Figure 11. Author’s dirty fingernails after day two of the 2012 HHMC.](Author’s photo)
awareness of that expectation. Others described the first shower they took during the ride as an amazing feeling. Some even rented a hotel room just for the shower. Bryana notes, “They opened up like the civic center down the street for all of us to go take showers and I did not expect to be able to take a shower. And I was like, “Oh my God! A warm shower! I’m not coming out of here!’” (504-507). As Bryana and others note the need to shower and appear clean, they show that clean is what they “should” be under the standards of hegemonic femininity. They move between accepting and embracing their dirtiness and yearning for a shower. While they are marking their understanding of femininity, these descriptions also serve to show the necessary macho associated with the Hoka Hey. The ride is a time in which women must abandon their femininity and they laud themselves for not showering for days on end. Jane and Schatzi play with their traditionally ascribed gender performances when they say they “don’t like to drive from like 2:00-5:00 in the morning; we like to get our beauty rest. And that’s also when all the animals are out too” (990-991). This gender play both acknowledges their socially constructed idea of femininity while honoring the masculine nature of their ride. Here gender play highlights the limitation of the masculine/feminine opposition, which does not allow these women to explain fully their own gender identities.

Women who ride the Hoka Hey have an “outsider within” perspective of a masculine culture (Hill-Collins). In other words, they understand the culture from the standpoint of a marginalized woman while simultaneously being accepted into the male culture because of their riding abilities. They are both part of the dominant male culture and part of the marginalized group. This allows them to understand the nuances of motorcycling from a different vantage point than their male counterparts. By calling fellow male challengers “pussies” and keeping up with the men as they ride dangerously or at excessive speeds, they prove themselves to possess
the rough and tumble (hegemonically) masculine qualities. This gender performance positions them as “one of the boys”. In a sense, they “pass” as men because of their ability to alter their gender performance while they are on this challenge. Because of this ability to move between gender boundaries they are able to create their niche in a masculine culture. This inbetween-ness creates a gender identity that does not fit neatly into a male/female box. It begs for new understandings of what it means to be a woman and what it means to be a man. Their femininity is marked not only by their ability to care for themselves but also by their ability to ride hard. As such, while women come into, and understand, motorcycling from a female perspective they create fluid gender identities to be accepted and remain a part of the masculine culture.

**Women Riders and Social Change**

*A rouged skinned, older man with a white mustache and cap raised his hand. His almost too unbuttoned shirt offered a glimpse of his strong pectoral muscles. He spoke with a thick east coast accent after Beth called on him. “Yeah. Uh. Is catheterizing allowed this year?”*  
Seriously?! I thought as I shot a stunned awkward look at my dad also wearing a look of disbelief. These people are fucking crazy. “I know a lot of guys catheterized last year, and it is really an unfair advantage. Women can’t catheterize themselves so the men shouldn’t. It’s not fair.” Holy shit, he’s advocating for women’s rights. Snickers erupt from around the room. Were those laughs really jeers because he stood up for the women or because the proposition of catheterizing yourself to ride farther sounded so crazy?  

*The two veteran women riders he sat next to spoke up, “We don’t need to catheterize ourselves. We’re cool.”*
Beth chimed in at this point offering a voice of reason, “If you think you need to jeopardize your health by catheterizing yourself then go for it.” The proposition seemed crazy but obviously had happened in the past. After the meeting I inquired about the catheterizing comment, choosing to ask the two women rather than their friend who posed the question. They put a tube into a condom on their dicks and stick the tube down the leg of their pants and pee as they’re riding. This actually happened! It wasn’t an old wives’ tale. They actually want to win badly enough that they pee into a condom, down their leg. I certainly wouldn’t want to ride behind anyone who was going to pee on me. Gross. More importantly, they explained that Tim, the man asking the question, rode with them for part of last year’s ride and planned to ride with them again this year.

Jane started reminiscing about meeting up with Tim. She stared into the distance as if replaying a scene from a movie in her head, “So many times we’d meet up with him and say, ‘You want to ride with us?’ And he would say, ‘No I was just riding with somebody and he was on my shirrtail’...and ‘I had to do all the navigating. And they just followed. And so no, I’m not doing that anymore.’ And then the next time ‘Oh, I gotta stop and get a map’ or the next time ‘Oh, I’m stopping at a friend’s house.’ And we thought, ok, whatever, Tim.” She threw her hands up in exasperation and continued, “So then the final time we were in Murfreesboro, and one time even when we got robbed we told him about that, ‘cause we saw him in Ohio, in Columbus. And he felt bad, but he didn’t ride with us that night. But then when we were in Tennessee we were all taking showers and he happened to be there. And we were getting ready to leave, and I said, ‘We’re leaving; you can ride with us. Join us if you want. If we go too slow, pass us, no hard feelings; but if you can’t keep up, so long.’ And then he never left our side.” A roaring laughter
sprang from her chest. “And then we got the name Thelma and Louise.”195 So that was it. They changed his mind about riding with women. Schatzi iterated my thoughts, “He rode with us. And he was like, “Wow, you girls can ride! I actually don’t mind riding with you.” And it was actually really enjoyable to have his company.”196

When I asked if they thought they had changed his mind about women riders, Jane nodded her head and brought it all together answering, “We have a little bit. But I don’t know if he puts that to every woman rider. He likes women riders. He has a few other women that he rides with. But I think before he rode with us and then he rode with us and he went back home and he talked to his friends, they couldn’t BELIEVE he rode with two women. Could not believe it. I mean, he told us that several times.” It wasn’t just Tim though, Jane noted others who they influenced, “Bubba, and Blackie, and Mickey. The three of them, we certainly changed, ‘cause they came up on us one time in North Carolina, we were riding with Tim and they asked Tim at the stop light, “why are you riding with the girls?” And Tim said, “Oh, cause they can ride.” “And you let them lead?!” And Tim said, “Yeah, we take turns. One will, and then the other one will, and then I will.” So then they go and we get to the next stoplight. ‘Cause we were in a rush to get to North Carolina, Rocky Mountain, before they close. And the guys go, “I know why you ride with them. They are the original Thelma and Louise.” She boomed with laughter, the pride in the earned nickname roaring from her chest. After calming herself she continued, “So it changed their mind too. ‘Cause they were obviously thinking that women couldn’t ride. Mickey


196 Schatzi, 2011, 2012 (416-417)
was like, ‘You girls ride better than the guys that I ride with back home.’” Their ability to ride
had changed the minds of these large men. I knew Bubba, Blackie, and Mickey. Nice guys. Salt of
the earth. But I wouldn’t exactly call them feminists. Well…maybe there’s hope for them to be
feminists yet!

We sat at the picnic table in the dark telling stories about the ride. Stories of triumph,
wounded pride, and great escapes. “Did Joe Smith finish this year?” I asked about the big
talking, strong Southern man who I was surprised to find out had ridden every challenge and not
finished a single one. He did. An inexplicable pride swelled in me. Good for him. Wendy and
Bill had ridden with him for part of the trip that year. Wendy started chuckling at my question.
“He almost quit. He wanted to quit when he was riding with us. He asked me if I wanted to quit.
I said, yeah, sure I do. But I got kids, and what kind of message would that send to them if I
quit?” She described the quizzical look that flashed across his face that I can vividly picture
though I wasn’t there. She continued, “Then he said, ‘Well, I got kids’.” She said that he stood
there for another minute and walked over to his bike. A smirk grew on Wendy’s face as she said,
“So I don’t know if I had anything to do with it or not, but…” We all let out a knowing laugh,
mine louder than anyone’s.

The possibility to affect change within a deeply rooted culture does not come easily;
however, the brave few women who ride the Hoka Hey directly affect change in the Hoka Hey
motorcycle culture. In turn the riders with whom they interact on the challenge might slowly
begin to change their motorcycle cultures at home. These women riders force a challenging of
gender stereotypes that hold women in inferior power positions. While the change may be slow,
their presence in the culture and ability to excel at the Hoka Hey, a challenge reserved for only
the toughest riders, affects male participants’ perceptions of female motorcyclists. By simply
entering this competition, seen as an event for tough men, women gain and earn respect. The respect of one Hoka Hey rider to another surpasses gender boundaries allowing female and male riders to be seen as equal competitors. As feminist scholars such as Butler, Finely, Birrell and Theberge suggest women’s presence in traditionally male environments can affect change and create transgression. While it may remain on an individual level, women who participate in the Hoka Hey certainly create change. Further these individual instances of change have the ability to cause a ripple effect throughout the larger system of motorcycling networks as Hoka Hey riders interact with riders in their home communities.

As each woman rides with various men throughout the challenge she proves herself a worthy competitor. This comes most clearly in the Jane and Schatzi’s story, described above, as they made their mark as skilled riders and changed the mind of a life-long rider to accept women into his fold. The Hoka Hey allows for this form of change in part because men and women compete on the same course and ride for the same prize. There is no separation of riders by sex, instead, like other motorsports, men and women compete equally. Using the same rules, course, and competitive environment eliminates the possibility to say that women play an easier game. As Mary Jo Kane suggests, sport has the ability to transform culture when women perform alongside men and surpass men’s athletic abilities. Changes, such as those Kane proposes, take place in events, such as endurance motorcycle challenges, where men and women compete together and women succeed at high levels. In the Hoka Hey, ability supersedes sex.


*Pride exudes from her voice:*
You know, I’m looked at as the girl who would typically be eye candy on the back of the bike. Or like you can’t possibly ride that big bike. I’m looked at as that girl, and then when you ask me how many miles I typically ride, then it’s like, “Wow, you ride more than I do.”

She is pensive and stoic:

And we can make such a huge difference in other people’s lives just by doing something like this. And you know. I mean whether it’s a guy or it’s another female out there. Or they’re actually riding it, or it’s just some guy you meet at a gas station who thinks it’s so cool to see some female not being afraid or limiting themselves by the standards and the society that we live in but... Don’t give up. That’s always a big thing too. Not to give up. But having done what I’ve done and the men that I do know that ride a lot of them tell me I’ve got more balls than most men they know. And I know a lot of women who ride the same way.

She humbly defends her acceptance by men:

They say they would love to do the ride, again together and things. And a lot of them complimented me on my riding, when I wasn’t really tired. But so yeah, they realized that I could be an asset and helpful. And I’m good with directions. I’m a good navigator.

She contemplates her position in sport:

197 Kely, 2012 (282-285)

198 Bryana, 2010 (680-685)

199 Bryana, 2010 (160-162)

200 Debby, 2011 (657-660)
But you know. It’s more about riding to me than uh the show and so then when you talk to these guys and they’re telling their tall tales and I’m right in there, one-upping them, with what I did. It’s fun. To me it’s competitive (pause) to some degree and it’s a lot of fun. I mean, women just don’t get into that circle you know even with sports.201

She beams with joy at the thought:

And you know. At the end of the ride, her husband came up to me and said you know, you really changed my point of view on a lot of things. You know, I probably wouldn’t have made it out of Florida if it wasn’t for you.202

These women feel as if they are creating change within their culture. They tell stories of men offering their surprised kudos after difficult rides. Each compliment about their riding capabilities marks another mind altered because of their presence. Men often do not compliment one another on their ability to ride on a certain road. While male riders may reminisce about a difficult road, hard turn, or steep grade with one another, the thought that any man could not complete a ride does not come into question. When speaking with the women, however, men often offer comments such as “You kept up pretty well,” or “You did a good job back there.” The affirmation directed by men toward women indicates their previous disbelief in the woman’s ability to perform. While these men may not directly admit women riders effect their thinking, the women feel as if they are making strides within the culture to change perceptions of male and female riders.


202 Tristica, 2010 (445-448)
While it may be a stretch to assume that large-scale transgression—the entirety of motorcycle culture changing—takes place because of these actions, transgression within the microcosm of the Hoka Hey does exist. It is important to note that the Hoka Hey creates an incredibly tight knit group of riders. They ride together, live together, and die together throughout the course of the challenge. This could lead to an increased acceptance toward the women riders. Because men and women become “Hoka Hey Brothers and Sisters” along the ride, it is likely that men begin the challenge with a greater tendency toward accepting women who share the challenge. However, this camaraderie is something felt only AFTER riders complete the course. The wholesale acceptance of one another, especially women, does not take place at the outset. In essence, women must “prove” themselves to be worthy riders rather than enter the culture as worthy. Their perceptions of women riders may not extend outside the confines of the Hoka Hey and thus may not be considered (by some) to be actual sites of transgression. However, the fact that men’s perceptions about any woman rider are malleable is noteworthy.

Conclusions
As sport and motorcycle literature suggest, women become empowered through riding motorcycles and participating in sport which assist female athletes in constructing gender identities. Empowerment from riding the Hoka Hey informs women’s identities as riders/women/warriors. Because they are passionate about riding and empowered through their successes they become more inclined to associate themselves with an identity as a motorcyclist and become Hoka Hey warriors. Further, their identities as motorcyclists inform their gender identities. Participating in a masculine culture while living in a larger society, which values
traditional—often sexualized—images of femininity makes these women gender traitors. Because they exist within the conflicting confines of both masculinity and femininity they find ways to express their gender identities as fluid, transformational, and non-conforming. Either as non-gendered, or as masculine females they bend and break the rigidity of the masculine/feminine binary. This form of gender bending becomes a tool in their chest used to work toward group acceptance.

Identity plays a crucial role in understanding the women of the Hoka Hey. They find riding to be a part of their identities and their gender identities are constantly in flux. These women are gender nomads who remain cognizant of their fluid identities and adapt to changing situations. Further they use their riding and gender identities to affect change within the culture of the challenge. Through their ability to ride, their determination to succeed, and their personalities they transgress gender boundaries and challenge gender binaries. By embracing their female masculinity they easily adapt to the masculine culture of the Hoka Hey, which allows them to be successful, and consequently change the minds of their male riding partners. By eliminating the rigidity of hegemonic masculinity and femininity they spur transgression and affect change. Now, if we can just get this to permeate motorcycle culture at large.
CONCLUSION: SPORT AS RHIZOME

Text from 602-59 (Hoka Hey), Jul 8, 2013, 9:17 PM:

Anyone wanting to ride in the Chief’s funeral meet at Jim & Beth’s @0800 on 7/13 to ride to Pine Ridge.

That was it. That’s all we knew. One cryptic message inviting us to come to, and participate in, the funeral of a great leader, grandfather of our friend, a man we’d never met. Maybe we should just send money? Think of how much we’re going to spend going out there. That money could make a difference. Do we really have time for this? It’s 1,200 miles one way. But we would Hoka Hey it—1,200 miles is nothing. Four days, day and a half out, day of funeral, day and a half back. All on the interstate. Easy money. Would we be debating attending if it were our “real” family? What the hell is “real” family anyway? Technicalities, I suppose. We’re Hoka Hey family. More important than how much money you have or how much time it takes to get there—Bikers. Show. Up. FAMILY shows up. So we showed up.

My personal struggle with privilege and power came a year after I completed the Hoka Hey, with the passing and funeral of Chief Oliver Red Cloud. The Chief died during the 2013 challenge and Hoka Hey riders were invited to participate in the event. All riders received a mass invitation via text to “ride in the Chief’s funeral.” Not knowing what this invitation really meant, if it was intended for us, or if we were just part of an obligatory large group message, we struggled greatly with how to respond to such an invitation. On one hand, I questioned my own whiteness as an outsider to Native American culture and wanted to make sure, if I attended, I was not just going to be a cultural voyeur or tourist. I felt horrible and riddled with white guilt as the “but it’s a once in a lifetime opportunity” thought crept into and out of my head. Further, I
questioned if I had enough time to take off work to ride to South Dakota and back for a funeral. I selfishly wondered if my time would be better spent writing my dissertation. I questioned if it would be better for me to send money rather than show up. After all, funerals are expensive and certainly there were not stockpiles of cash on the reservation. I grappled with feeling like the “Great White Hope” and also wanting to support my Hoka Hey family. This was a deep internal and external struggle that seemed to last many days, though in reality only spanned about twenty-four hours.

A convergence of motorcycle and sport cultures in action, my desire to “show up” outweighed any other thought. Two separate events in 2013 demonstrate the desire for sport and motorcycle cultures to show support through presence. As displayed in marathons after the Boston 2013 bombing, runners showed support for those affected by the acts of terrorism by attending races and wearing symbolic bracelets. Likewise, in motorcycle culture, presence is far more important than other support acts such as sending funds as exemplified through the Two Million Bikers to DC event supporting and remembering those affected by the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Showing support and coming together is why we participate in races, rides, and rallies. In other words, athletes, like motorcyclists, show up. In the end through my physical presence at the funeral, I was deeply touched by the experience of traveling to South Dakota. We were welcomed as family and invited to experience rich traditions and ceremonies. It was a transformative, spiritual, and meaningful experience.

This decision exemplifies what happens so often between whites and Native Americans in the Hoka Hey. As white woman I entered the conversation thinking about what I could give back to the Native Americans when in reality I learned and gained a great deal from the Lakota on Pine Ridge. This experience, being invited into the group, was far more important and
different than entering a culture as an outsider interested only in donating money. In this situation, our physical support meant far more than any monetary donation. On the day we grappled with going or sending money, we transformed from benefactors and apologists into people who think about the wishes of the family. Doing the more difficult thing, in this instance traveling cross-country, shows a shift in identity. We changed emphasis from us feeling good and doing what was easy—sending money—to acting on the family’s desires—showing support in person. Asking what do they want, rather than what do I think they need, depicted a shift in my identity. Here the decisions we made were informed by an ethics of care. We thought relationally, eliminated the us/them binary, and extended our interrelated family.

As exemplified by my shift in identity, the choice to attend the funeral also illuminates the interconnected nature of motorcycle culture and the paradigm shift required to understand sport as rhizome. The interconnected web woven between members of the tribe, the Hoka Hey family, and the Chief’s family were strong that day. Rather than thinking of how WE could help THEM, we were part of an intentional assemblage and mixture of individuals coming together to heal and honor. Attending the funeral made us part of the larger web of connection as informed by our ethics of care. As theory in action, we embodied the rhizomatic model, which emphasizes touch points of connection over linear hierarchies.

Scholarly literature on motorcycling and sport indicate sport and motorcycling as sources of empowerment for women (here I refer again to Theberge, Jansen, Mullins, and Ferrar). Likewise, as the narratives woven throughout this work suggest, women find empowerment through participating in motorsports such as the Hoka Hey. Cyclically, empowerment and identity (re)formation inform one another creating nomadic, gender non-conforming identities of challengers as riders, warriors, and women. Through negotiating and navigating the
masculinized environment and overcoming social restraints, women challengers have the ability
to effect individual change. These processes of empowerment, the gendered experience, change,
and transgression make clear the need for an elimination of such binaries as feminine/masculine,
White/Native American, rich/poor, and a larger shift in perception toward a rhizomatic model.

Deleuze and Guattari suggest the rhizome as a conception of power to support an
integrated network in which no one thing/person is more important than another. Rather than a
traditional hierarchy, the rhizome represents an interrelated power structure through which all
things/choices/people/situations impact and connect to one another. The perception shift
suggested throughout this dissertation should incorporate an overall acceptance of the women
challengers as empowered, confident motorcyclists, and a formative change in how we, as
scholars, participants, and onlookers view sport. Overall, the Hoka Hey emerges as an example
of Wheaton’s extreme/lifestyle sport acting as a meaningful event (seen through Gilligan’s
feminist ethics of care and Braidotti’s nomadic subjectivities) and gendered experience
(supporting Halberstam and Butler’s notions of gender non-conformity) with the ability to create
and effect change as Birrell and Theberge suggest is possible in sport.

Endurance Motorcycling as Lifestyle Sport

In order to understand the basis of the rhizomatic model, we must understand how sports
interact with one another. Messner’s center of sport concept allows us to understand hierarchies
within sport culture. In Messner’s theoretical model, traditionally male sports, and masculinity,
become paramount and most celebrated—football and basketball being more important (and
their players protected) than “lesser” sports such as lifestyle sport. While some sport theorists
such as Kane suggest a continuum for understanding sport possibly promoting ability rather than
sex/gender, the linear model still implies some sports to be more important than others. However, using a rhizomatic model we can understand sport as an interconnected system of energies feeding off one another creating a non-hierarchical network of sports. Within this network, lifestyle sports and more “mainstream” sports should be valued equally.

The Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge fits neatly within Belinda Wheaton’s nine-point list of lifestyle sport features (11-12). Although some challengers may not consider the Hoka Hey to be a sport, their actions and participation exemplify the notion of extreme or lifestyle sport. Classifying the Hoka Hey as a lifestyle sport allows scholars and participants to draw clear connections to other sports and sporting cultures to better understand challengers’ lived experiences and offers added legitimacy to the organization. Below is a simplified version of Wheaton’s lifestyle sport features embedded with the elements of the Hoka Hey:

- Lifestyle sports are “the adaptation of older ‘residual’ cultural forms” (Wheaton 11). While Wheaton points to surfing and rock climbing as examples of lifestyle sport, the adaption of motorcycling into an organized endurance sport creates a relatively new phenomenon in the motorcycling world. While endurance rides existed in the past, the recent birth of multiple endurance challenges speaks to the desire to foster a new subculture within motorcycling.

- “Lifestyle sports are fundamentally about participation, not spectating...Nevertheless, practitioners are self-consciously aware of ‘being seen’” (Wheaton 11). The Hoka Hey emphasizes participation. Women’s comments suggested they could more easily speak with me regarding the event because I also took on the challenge. In other words, in order to understand the event you must participate. Further, as was consistently noted in the women’s interviews, riders of the Hoka Hey realize they are being watched not only
through online tracking devices but also by the general public whom they encounter daily. The desire to be independent, yet also seen, allows riders to maintain a sense of anonymity while still raising awareness for themselves and their cause.

- “Based around the consumption of new objects,” lifestyle sports require altering and adapting technology (Wheaton 11). Clearly based in the consumption of objects, the Hoka Hey requires not only a motorcycle but also the appropriate gear and devices to successfully complete the challenge. As evident by the many discussions of gear and motorcycle types, participants constantly upgrade and adapt their rides (motorcycles) to accommodate new and diverging needs.

- Through a “commitment in time, and/or money” lifestyle sports create “forms of collective expression” (Wheaton 11). Knowing the ins and outs of the Hoka Hey becomes one of the hallmarks of participation. Likewise, a deep social identity forms around the Hoka Hey after continued participation in more than one challenge. The emphasis on community, such as calling the group the Hoka Hey family, contributes to this collective expression. Continued participation requires both an exorbitant amount of time and money; however, many participants find the increase in cultural capital worth the effort.

- Lifestyle sports encourage “living for the moment, ‘adrenaline rushes’ and other intrinsic rewards” (Wheaton 12). As its name implies, the Hoka Heyreminds challengers each day is “a good day to die” reinforcing that riders should embrace life and ride as hard as possible. In the Hoka Hey, self-reflection, realization, and an increased appreciation for life are direct reflections of this element.

- Lifestyle sports consist of “a predominantly middle class, white, Western participant composition” (Wheaton 12). While many Hoka Hey challengers are of a working class
background, they are almost exclusively white—with the small exception of some Latino and Native American riders—and all are Western. The ability to own the machines coupled with the time involved in participation place many participants in a nebulous area between lower and middle class Western lifestyles.

- “Individualistic in form and/or attitude” describes the Hoka Hey (Wheaton 12). While many challengers do ride in packs, challengers largely think, ride, and navigate for themselves, as evident by the solo rider comments throughout this work. This element also builds on the inherently individualistic nature of motorcycling.

- “They are non-aggressive activities…yet they embrace…notions of risk and danger” (Wheaton 12). Clearly not involving bodily contact, this notion seems an extension of the previous point. Hoka Hey challengers face, and increase risks, traditionally associated with motorcycling by participating in a multi-day, difficult challenge.

- Finally, lifestyle sports, “occur in non-urban environments” (Wheaton 12). Furthering this point, Wheaton notes that many lifestyle sports ask participants to “become one with” nature (12). Because Hoka Hey challengers constantly expose themselves to the elements, they truly attempt to and feel as if they have grown closer to nature, evident in the many descriptions of animal encounters and surviving inclement weather.

Because lifestyle sports, such as the Hoka Hey, embrace notions outside traditional sporting concepts they promote an alternative understanding of the sport hierarchies presented by Messner. Alternative concepts of sport remind us that in a postmodern world, binaries and hierarchies create systems of oppression and limit our conceptions of self.
The women interviewed find the Hoka Hey to be a meaningful, life-changing experience. While the women express this sentiment differently, the profound impact it has on women’s lives clearly resonates. In part, the Hoka Hey is more meaningful for women participants because it is understood through an ethics of care. The women expressed their participation in relation to those around them. They felt a connection among their fellow challengers, their families, and their supporters, which informed their decisions, actions, and abilities. As sport scholars such as Nancy Theberge suggest, the sport changes the lives of participants through offering a feeling of accomplishment from overcoming obstacles. This empowerment comes not only from pushing our bodies physically, but also from the teamwork and promotion of causes we support. This added element, enhanced by our relationally understood experience, makes the Hoka Hey increasingly important, meaningful, and life changing for many women challengers. Overcoming challenges, physical and mental, coupled with an interpersonal understanding of the event seems to be related to the women’s sense of empowerment.

The challenges women confront come not only in the form of difficult roads, encounters with nature, risk, and endurance but also from dealing with hegemonic gender expectations which preclude our full and unquestioned participation in the challenge. Accomplishment for these women came at the cost of pushing their bodies, minds, and wits to the limit. Building on feelings of accomplishment, the women describe a growth in confidence, being able to “do anything,” after their completion of the event. These are women who have already gained confidence and become empowered through motorcycling, as suggested by motorcycle studies literature such as Liz Jansen’s work; however, the difficulty level involved in the Hoka Hey increases even already high confidence levels. Combining Roster and Theberge’s work, these
women are not only empowered by riding motorcycles, they are additionally empowered by the participating in a sport.

Similar to a growth in confidence and a feeling of empowerment, Hoka Hey challengers often found spiritual growth through participating in the challenge. In part, the inclination toward spirituality comes as a result the confrontation of risk. The risky behavior of riding a motorcycle—here compounded by an intense, daily struggle of difficult and dangerous riding—reminds riders of the ephemeralness of their existence. This risk taking behavior builds on the body of lifestyle sport literature (here I point to Ethan Roster’s work) describing risk in sport as creating spiritually transformative experiences. While some motorcycle riders describe an increased spirituality through riding (popular motorcycle related literature such as Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance contribute to this perception) the challengers of the Hoka Hey find a connection with their surroundings often coupled with, or in the form of, Native American spirituality. Because of the association with Native American, specifically Lakota culture, many challengers found and experienced hallucinations, or visions, related to their interpretations of Native American spirits. Regardless of their level of connection with Native American culture, spiritual growth in any form adds to the meaningful nature of the challenge. Consequently, the spirituality encountered on the ride blurs the Native/Non-Native binary limiting our conceptions of race and class in America.

As a part, spirituality and meaning made manifest, some riders encountered and challenged their own privilege while on the ride. Removing daily, unquestioned comforts, such as a bed, roof, and food, forces participants to come face-to-face with their socioeconomic privilege. Many women riders describe themselves as “fortunate” or “lucky” showing a renewed appreciation for their status. While largely working class, these women found themselves to be in
a better socioeconomic situation than most Lakota people living on the Pine Ridge Reservation. This revelation of privilege shows the Hoka Hey to be successful in its desire to raise awareness for Pine Ridge even one rider at a time. In this case, the realization of socioeconomic privilege links directly to racial differences of the two groups. Many women described an us/Them binary indicating their own privilege in juxtaposition to the poverty on Pine Ridge. None overtly expressed this privilege as a direct result of their own whiteness; however, the realization of the us/them divide can be considered a form of encountering and recognizing white privilege. Despite the fact that many women did not link their privilege directly to their whiteness, they did encounter a shift in perceptions regarding status and socioeconomic advantage. Although facing privilege may not feel as good as a sense of accomplishment, boosts in confidence, or spiritual growth, it is an important indicator of the meaningful nature of the challenge to participants.

The meaningful nature of the Hoka Hey emphasizes the entire ride in a rhizomatic schema. While participants encountered their privilege, became in tune with their spirituality, and felt empowerment they reinforced the interconnections between themselves as challengers, those around them, nature, and people from whom they previously felt disconnected—the Lakota. After the challenge, many women took up supporting the Lakota through activism—such as Carla painting her bike with the Hoka Hey logo, Junie beginning the blanket drive, or all of those attending Chief Red Cloud’s funeral. This form of activism highlights their newfound relationships with the Native Americans on Pine Ridge and dismantles the rigid division between “us” and “them”. Seeing the Hoka Hey challengers and organizers as a family and creating meaning where there previously was none emphasizes not only the importance of this event but also situates it as multilayered and hyper-connected. Hierarchies are erased through the blurring of binaries in a rhizomatic model as exemplified by the Hoka Hey.
Contribution to the gendered experience of women riders is the masculine nature of the Hoka Hey. As discussed in chapter three, the layers of sport and motorcycling, both heavily steeped in masculinity, create a double-bind situation in which women are less valued than men. Messner makes clear the connections of sport with hegemonic masculinity and describes the overt ways in which men’s sports are valued over women’s. Motorcycling as a masculine environment takes on practical form in the motorcycle gear presented to patrons; for example, men’s rain suits are more strongly constructed and reinforced than women’s suits because women are only viewed as passengers within the culture whereas men riding in front require additional protection. This masculine environment spills over into the Hoka Hey, as the majority of riders are men, but also because actions of hegemonic masculinity—displaying strength, being tough—are valued within the culture. Despite this masculine environment women participate in and enjoy the Hoka Hey.

Women participating in the Hoka Hey are passionate about this leisure activity. As such, their passion indicates that motorcycling is part of the women’s identities. However, because of their multilayered identities, women create nomadic identities which constantly change, taking up and leaving the motorcyclist identity marker when necessary. Braidotti’s concept of nomadic subjectivities supports the postmodern rhizomatic model allowing women’s identities to be similarly viewed as rhizomes. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, rhizomes are “multiples” composed of “directions in motion” (672). Exemplified through Braidotti, the women’s identities take multiple directions in sustaining a motion of always becoming woman/caregiver/rider/warrior. Their identities touch at various points of encounter and branch off, change, and constantly alter themselves as a result. The living network that is the rhizome
creates a dynamic and fluid sense of identity blanketing the women who participate in the challenge.

The women interviewed indicate motorcycling as present in their social media, jobs, families, and spare time thus becoming a part of their identity. In and of itself, passion for motorcycling does not necessarily contribute to the gendered experience of women participating in the Hoka Hey. However, notably, women’s identities as riders fluctuate in part because of their other “more important” socially constructed identities. Society does not “allow” women who are seen as wives, mothers, and caregivers to ride across country on a motorcycle. Hence, women who participate in the Hoka Hey often present their identity as motorcycle rider during and surrounding the challenge, yet return to an identity in which motorcycling is secondary after the event. This was evident in the many comments indicating feelings of selfishness, or lack of desire to participate given the new addition of dependent children or ailing spouses. The effervescent nature of their identities emphasizes a postmodern element of feminist standpoint theory expressed through the rhizomatic model. As discussed in the review of literature, standpoint and postmodern theory converge in an understanding of rhizomatic identities where touch points of meaning inform, build on, and branch from one another. The women take up and leave their identities as motorcyclists as they are, as Braidotti suggests, always becoming something/one else. While women become Hoka Hey warriors they reconstruct their gender performances constantly adapting to changing surroundings.

Because of their position as marginalized, women must negotiate the heavily masculine environment that is the Hoka Hey. In addition to the oppression women face from others challenging their mere participation in the Hoka Hey, women’s small numbers make us marginalized within the culture (both Hoka Hey culture and motorcycle culture). Constantly
being seen as “other” makes women’s position in the challenge more difficult while simultaneously enabling us to feel more empowered. In order to adapt to the masculine surroundings, women often take on some sort of gender non-conformity. As Halberstam and Butler suggest, gender non-conformity pushes the lines of what society deems “appropriate” and reifies intersections of identity through race, class, and gender. In the Hoka Hey, gender bending can come in the form of creating intragender power structures (as Finley discusses in relation to women’s roller derby) to distance themselves from other women who ride motorcycles, but who do not compete in the challenge, and also by blurring the lines of femininity and masculinity through dress, speech, and gender performance. In line with their nomadic identities, some women chose to take up and leave markers of hegemonic femininity when seen as necessary and/or convenient. This most often came in the form of women attempting to alter their gender performance to seem “smaller” or “sexy” and thus more feminine when in need of help or to present themselves to those outside the culture.

Altering gender performances and identity markers allow women riders to adapt to and negotiate the masculine environment. Likewise, social constraints, such as the gender based questioning of their participation, faced by women add to the gendered experience of their involvement. Interviews indicate a strong commitment to, and cognizance of, expectations of their performance (both gender performance and actual performance in the challenge). Their desire to not “let down” onlookers and supporters links the socially constructed idea of pleasing others and an ethics of care to femininity. As Gilligan suggests, the feminist ethics of care can reinforce the ability and desire to think and act relationally. Because the potential effects on others’ actions constantly inform their own actions, the women often feel guilty or selfish about their decision to participate. Further, feelings of guilt associated with entering the challenge, as
well as the doubt associated with women’s ability to finish the challenge, are other markers of social restraints on their participation directly stemming from their gender.

Key to the idea of social restraints upon women’s participation in the Hoka Hey is that these restrictive gender roles may not keep all women from participating but it does bring their participation and intentions constantly into question. “Why are they these women participating?” and “How are these women going to succeed?” are questions asked—sometimes aloud but often unspoken—by their families and the public, as well as other riders, affecting women’s participation in all lifestyle sports. Because we currently view sport as a hierarchical system in which women athletes are less valued than men, these questions remain. However, viewing sport as rhizome reinforces the interconnections between genders potentially eliminating questions of participation based on gender. The flimsy gender binary evaporates when we conceptualize sports as relational. Regardless of their chosen identities or their level of participation women’s involvement in motorcycling culture is a gendered experience with the ability to create change.

Effecting Change

As gender, motorcycle, and sport scholars (such as Butler, Joans, and Johnson and Kivel) suggest, women’s participation and presence in a masculine culture can change and challenge the culture. Specifically in regards to the Hoka Hey, the idea that the toughest rider on earth might be a woman is paramount in masculine cultures such as motorcycling. Here, the presence of women in the challenge nullifies the simple notion that a man must be the toughest rider on earth and challenges, or questions, our perceptions of the masculine environment. Here women’s acceptance and ability to enter the competition takes an important stance on women’s ability and legitimacy as expert riders. In an arena where simply “showing up” would make a difference, the
women who participate in the Hoka Hey are doing far more than the minimum; they excel in this world. While participation may be sufficient, women’s success in the Hoka Hey furthers the acceptance and appreciation of women as skilled and confident riders.

A direct result of women’s participation in the Hoka Hey, the public’s and male riders’ perceptions about women riders alter. On a number of levels, women create change through changing minds. First, women who participate in the Hoka Hey have the ability to push boundaries of what is traditionally accepted as feminine. Be it through seeing themselves as non-gendered, appreciating their “otherness” in a male work environment, or riding a motorcycle, these hard-riding, tough-it-out women riders shift culturally accepted norms of women as demure, soft and fragile creatures who must remain indoors (forgive the intentional exaggeration). Motorcycle scholars (such as Joans, Ferrar, and Jansen) already support this notion by understanding women riders as “the perfect psychic balance of feminine and masculine” (Jansen 11). Rather than inflexible identities, their gender performances are fluid and dynamic like a rhizome itself.

Second, because of their high levels of success in the Hoka Hey, male challengers’ opinions of female riders change. After completing the challenge, women riders are seen not as an appendage to the culture, but instead as “Hoka Hey sisters” who can keep up, ride, and “make it” just as well, if not better, than some men. This further blurring of the male/female binary makes clear the connection to the rhizome. As women enter the challenge they touch male challengers lives, whose altered perceptions, in turn, effect change within their own communities. The burst of energy created through women’s participation in the Hoka Hey blazes new paths within the construction of the rhizome sending shock waves of change through larger motorcycle culture and beyond.
Third, as perceptions of ourselves and men’s perceptions of us change so do the public perceptions of female riders. As role models, and with the influx of women riders to motorcycle culture more largely, women riders of the Hoka Hey have the unique ability to effect change on a (inter)national scale. As we travel across the country during the challenge, women are adored, lauded, and encouraged for their participation. Rather than their riding ability being seen as a detriment to their femininity, women stated people were “impressed” by their ability to execute the challenge and largely viewed participation in the Hoka Hey as positive. This post-challenge success shows a divergence from previous notions and feelings that women should feel guilty because of their participation in the event and increases women’s interconnectivity to those around them. Again here the ethics of care supports the notion of sport as rhizome by reinforcing the connections between athlete/fan/supporter/coach. By touching lives through their sport, the women of the Hoka Hey add to the nonhierarchical conception of sport as rhizome.

It is particularly important to note the Hoka Hey culture has changed since I began working on this dissertation in 2011. As a microcosmic example of the larger culture, I believe the challenge operators, specifically Jim Red Cloud, have become more accepting of women riders. While I am unsure of Jim’s personal stance on women riders prior to my meeting him, there is evidence of change within the culture. For example, while the third chapter of the dissertation describes an advertisement in which Jim refers to the Hoka Hey as a ride for the “toughest men on earth,” the Hoka Hey website and other documents now identify the challenge as for the “toughest riders” on earth. There is a marked difference in using gender-neutral language to describe riders rather than men. This type of change makes the challenge more accepting and welcoming of women riders and eliminates gender-based hierarchies. The breakdown of gender differences is a step toward a rhizomatic understanding of sport. Here, as
Mary Jo Kane’s continuum of sport suggests, ability can supersede gender as a marker of success. This simple change in language is a small step toward inclusivity that might someday permeate motorcycle culture.

While women have the great capacity to create change in masculine environments, it is important to note women should not solely be required to spur these changes. In other words, women should not have to teach the world about women’s oppression. Rather, we should all work together to make fundamental changes (albeit small at first) in the way we interact, present ourselves and understand the limits of gender roles. For change to truly take effect, male riders must not only profess to others that women are skilled and competent riders, but also they must truly believe this themselves, and show it through their words and actions. We might not be there yet, but by working together, substantive changes and transgressions can permeate masculine spaces.

Implications and Future Directions

This work makes clear that rigid binaries and hegemonic gender roles do not include an interpretation of identities that are nomadic or fluid. As more and more women and men move away from traditional femininity and masculinity we must continue to challenge and change our conception of what is Right or Best. By understanding that there is no singular or correct way to be masculine, or feminine, we grow in our appreciation of others and ourselves. Motorcycle culture, which tends toward being anti-establishment and promotes anarchy and individualism, can be a cultural incubator for establishing change and eliminating restrictive binaries. However, because it is so steeped in masculinity, effecting change within this space is difficult and slow
moving. Regardless, women riders of the Hoka Hey add to this potential elimination of rigidity by embracing their fluid identities as women, riders, and women riders.

Eliminating binaries and embracing permeable gender identities adds to the changing perceptions that enable masculine culture to be more inclusive. While there is a distinct possibility that the majority of people who make up motorcycle culture do not WANT to change, the presence of few but strong women and other minorities within the boundaries of the culture push all riders toward a change in attitudes and perceptions. As the economic landscape continues to change and motorcycling sees an influx of new riders, cultural shifts are inevitable. What motocycling needs now is to keep up with its changing clientele and discontinue harboring the center of this sport, which steeps itself in sexual oppression, racism, and antiquated notions of masculinity and femininity. Although still present in television and media, gone are the days of one-percenter outlaw motorcycle gangs ruling large over the motorcycling world. As more people take to the roads on two wheels, these pervasive images continue to simultaneously depreciate and appreciate in cultural value. Cultural change and growing acceptance must come from within; women riders of the Hoka Hey are at the forefront of this change.

In addition to creating change and transgression within the motorcycling community, this work has implications for (re)conceptualizing sport to include the ever-changing and multi-layered understandings of gender. I propose, and further research should be done on, creating a rhizomatic model for understanding sport. Rather than a linear continuum, a rhizomatic model would appreciate all sports as valid and equally worthy. No longer stacked from best to worst, the rhizomatic model would clearly show that all sports touch, intersect, diverge, and converge to create an intricate web of ability, gender, competition, and success. If we think of sport as a rhizome then we are better able to conceptualize a world in which each sport has its own unique
value. This model also allows us to decouple monetary value from perceived value; in other words, greatness is not dependent on how much an athlete makes or how much money a single group spends on a sport through ticket sales, advertising, and after market promotions. In an understanding of sport as rhizome, simply because football brings in a large amount of revenue does not automatically position it as the most important sport. Likewise the performance/ability/greatness of an athlete need not be linked directly to how much money he or she makes; rather, an athlete’s value can be derived from alternative means, such as personal growth. In the rhizomatic model, by embracing alternative competition styles the Hoka Hey, like other lifestyle sports, challenges the center of sport.
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APPENDIX A: HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW BOARD APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS – AS OF APRIL, 2012

Please answer all applicable questions and provide the material identified. Please complete electronically and use most current form.

- Applications judged to be incomplete, or vague will be returned to the Principal Investigator (PI) for revision.
- All boxes are expandable so be sure to include complete information.
- SUBMISSION LEAD TIMES – For Full Board projects – submit at least 2 months before your planned start of recruiting and data collection. For Expedited Review projects – submit at least 5 weeks before your planned start of recruiting and data collection.
- For projects reviewed via the expedited review process - You should receive notification of the results of the initial review of this application 15 – 21 business days from the date of receipt of the application by the Office of Research Compliance.

Ia. General Information:

Name of applicant (Principal Investigator): Abagail L. Van Vierah

Date: 5/7/12

The Principal Investigator is (check one):

- Faculty
- BGSU Staff
- Undergraduate Student
- Graduate Student

Off-campus applicant (check this box if you are not affiliated with BGSU but propose to conduct research involving BGSU Faculty, Staff, or Students)

Department or Division: American Culture Studies

Campus Phone: 307-399-0652

E-mail: avanvle@bgsu.edu

Fax: ___

Have You Completed BGSU Human Subjects Training?

Yes (Office of Research Compliance will confirm training date.)

No (This application will not be reviewed. See HSRB website for training information.)

Title of the Proposed Research Project:

Women's Participation in Endurance Motorcycle Challenges

Names of Other Students or Staff Associated with the Project (Student PIs note – Do not include your advisor for this research project here):

Have you requested, or do you plan to request, external support for this project?

- Yes
- No

If yes, external Funding Agency or Source:

Ib. If you are a BGSU student, please provide the following information:
This research is for: Thesis  Dissertation  Class Project  Other   

Advisor's Name (This is the advisor for this research project): Dr. Vikki Krane 

Department or Division: HMSC  Phone: 2-7233  Fax:  E-mail: vkrane@bgsu.edu 

Has Advisor Completed BGSU Human Subjects Training? 

Yes (Office of Research Compliance will confirm training date.) 

No (This application will not be reviewed. See HSRB website for training information.) 

II. Information on Projects Using Pre-existing Data 

(Skip to Section III if this project does NOT use pre-existing data. Pre-existing data includes retrospective medical chart reviews, public data sets, etc. Sometimes it is referred to as secondary data or archival data.) Some projects involving the use of pre-existing data may not require review by the HSRB. However – it is the HSRB's responsibility to make that determination – not the researcher's. 

NOTE: If you are obtaining medically-related information from a "Covered Entity" (e.g., health plan, health care clearinghouse or a health care provider who bills health insurers – e.g., hospitals, doctor's offices, dentists, the BGSU Student Health Service, the BGSU Speech and Hearing Clinic, the BGSU Psychological Services Center), the HIPAA Privacy Rule may apply. 

a. Name(s) of existing data set(s) [Include any ancillary data sets you might be linking the main data set(s) to]: 

b. Source(s) of existing data set(s): 

c. Please provide a brief description of the content of the data set(s): 

d. When you obtain the data, will the individual records be anonymous or will they have identifiers/codes attached? 

Anonymous (i.e., no identifiers or codes attached to any records in any of the listed data sets) 

(If you indicated "anonymous" and your project also involves direct data collection, please go to section III and complete the rest of the application. Otherwise, please go to and complete sections VII.a, VII.b, and IX.) 

Identifiers/codes attached (examples would include, but not be limited to, record numbers, subject numbers, case numbers, etc.) 

d.1 If the records have identifiers or codes attached, can you readily ascertain the identity of individuals to whom the data pertain (e.g., through use of a key that links identifiers with identities; linking to other files that allow individual identities to be discerned)?
Yes, I can ascertain the identity of the individuals.

Please explain in the box below how you will protect the confidentiality of subjects. The Human Subjects Review Board is concerned about 2 dimensions of confidentiality: (1) that the researcher has legitimate access to the records, i.e., the records are not protected by any special confidentiality conditions, and (2) that the researcher will not reveal individual identities unless permission has been granted to do so.

No, I cannot readily ascertain the identity of the individuals.

Please describe in the box below, the provisions in place that will not allow you to

ascertain identities (e.g., key to decipher the code/identifier has been destroyed, agreement between researcher and key holder prohibiting the release of the key).

(If you answered “no” and your project also involves direct data collection, please go to section III and complete the rest of the application. Otherwise, please go to and complete sections IV (as appropriate), VIIa, VIIb, and IX.)

e. Are the data from a public data set? (A public data set is data available to any member of the public through a library, public archive or the Freedom of Information Act. Data obtained from private companies, hospital records, agency membership lists or similar sources are not usually public data)

Yes

Are you requesting permission to conduct multiple research projects with these data?

Yes No

(If you answered “Yes” and your project also involves direct data collection, please go to section III and complete the rest of the application. Otherwise, please go to and complete sections VIIa, VIIb and IX.)

No (if no, please answer the following questions)

f. If you are obtaining access to non-public information, please explain in the box below how you will obtain access to the information (e.g., permission from the CEO, permission from the Board of Education). Note: a condition for approval will be written documentation of this permission – this can be an email from the relevant authority.
g. Before the data were collected, did respondents give their permission for the information to be used for research purposes?  
Yes  No

h. Are you recording the data in a manner that will allow you to identify subjects, either directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects?  
Yes  No

i. If your project also involves direct data collection, please continue completing the rest of the application. Otherwise, please go to and complete sections IV (as appropriate), VII.a, VII.b, and IX.

III. General Project Characteristics: Does the research involve any of the following?  (If the response to any of the following is "yes," provide a justification and/or rationale in the box provided below)

Yes  No

a. Deception of subjects  
(if "yes," this application will go to the full Board for review).

b. Shock or other forms of punishment  
(if "yes," this application will go to the full Board for review).

c. Sexually explicit materials or questions

d. Handling of money or other valuable commodities

e. Extraction of blood or other bodily fluids

f. Questions about drug and/or alcohol use

g. Questions about sexual orientation, sexual experience, or sexual abuse

h. Purposeful creation of anxiety

i. Any procedure that might be viewed as an invasion of privacy

j. Physical exercise or stress

k. Administration of substances (food, drugs, etc.) to subjects

l. Any procedure that might place subjects at risk (e.g., disclosure of criminal activity).

m. Systematic selection or exclusion of any group. This includes the selection or exclusion of any group based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, etc.

For formal interviews, I will primarily be interviewing women who participate in the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge. All others will be excluded as women are my population of interest.

IV. HIPAA: If you answer "Yes" to any of the following questions, your project is subject to HIPAA and you must complete the HIPAA Supplement (available online at www.bgsu.edu/offices/orchsrb).

Yes  No

a. Will health information (information relating to the past, present, or future physical or mental health or condition of an individual) be obtained from a covered entity (a health plan, health care clearinghouse or a health care provider who bills health insurers – e.g., hospital, doctor’s offices, dentists, the BGSU Student Health Service, the BGSU Speech and Hearing Clinic, the BGSU Psychological Services Center)?

b. Will the study involve the provision of health care in a covered entity?  
Yes  No

b.2 (Complete this only if you answered "Yes" to IV.b – otherwise, skip this item).

If the study involves the provision of health care, will a health insurer or billing agency be contacted for billing or eligibility?
V. Subject Information: (If the response to any of the following is "yes," the researcher should be sure to address any special needs of the potential subjects in the informed consent process. For example, if subjects are over the age of 65, then it may be appropriate to use a larger font in all correspondence with subjects to ensure readability.)

Yes No Does the research involve subjects from any of the following categories?

a. Under 18 years of age included in the target population
   (If "yes" signed, active parental consent is required for those individuals who are under 18 unless a waiver is granted by the HSRB. If you are requesting a waiver of parental consent, this application will go to the full Board for review.)

b. Over 65 years of age as the target population

c. Persons with a physical or mental disability as the target population
   (If "yes" this application will go to the full Board for review.)

d. Economically or educationally disadvantaged as the target population.

Yes No please provide their own legal informed consent
   (If "yes" and the subjects are not children, this application will go to the full Board for review).

f. Pregnant females as the target population
   (If "yes" this application will go to the full Board for review).

g. Victimes of crimes or other traumatic experiences as the target population

h. Individuals in institutions (e.g., prisons, nursing homes, halfway houses)
   (If "yes" this application will go to the full Board for review).

VI. Risks and Benefits: (Note: the HSRB retains final authority for determining risk status of a project)

Yes No Please answer the following questions about the research.

a. In your opinion, does the research involve more than minimal risk to subjects?
   ("Minimal risk" means "the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests."). If the answer is "yes," explain in the box below and provide an explanation of the benefits of the research to the subjects and to society.

b. Are any emergencies or adverse reactions (physical, psychological, social, legal, or emotional) probable as a result of the research? (If "yes," then explain the measures to be taken in case of emergency in the box below.)

c. Will participation in this research result in any appreciable negative change in the subject's emotional state? (If "yes," explain the nature of the change and the process for assisting subjects in the box provided.)

VII. Project Description: (Please provide as much information as you feel will adequately answer the following questions.)

a. What are you going to study? What is (are) the research question(s) to be answered / hypotheses to be tested?
I am going to explore the experiences of women who participate in long distance motorcycle racing specifically with the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge. Does participating in endurance challenges empower women? Does it create a transgressive experience/environment? How and why do women participate?

b. Discuss the benefit(s) of this study. Why is this study important? (provide scholarly support)
Include a discussion of benefits to individual participants as well as to society as a whole.
NOTE: Compensation or incentives (e.g., gift cards, research credit, extra credit, etc.) offered for participation are not considered to be benefits.

This study expands on the body of sport and leisure literature which supports women's participation in hegemonically masculine sport-scapes as empowering and transgressive. Particularly building on the work of Theberge (1981), Birell and Theberge (1994), and Krane (2001), this study will investigate the ways in which women form communities and find empowerment through motorcycling. Motorcycle studies scholars indicate that women do find empowerment through riding (Roster 2007, Thompson 2011); however, these studies do not look specifically at distance races and do not explore the transgressive aspects of women's participation.

As an interdisciplinary work, this study makes strides toward further seeing motorcycling as a 'legitimate' form of sport. Many motorcycle studies scholars focus on sociological or anthropological perspectives; however, this study will use sport and leisure literature to analyze motorculture thus expanding the work on both sport/leisure and motorcycle studies. Few scholars are currently using a sport lens through which to see motorcycling, Catherine Roster's (2007) work stands out as a way, this study will add to this body of scholarship.

A benefit of this study to participants is to provide an opportunity to talk in depth about their experiences as a motorcyclist.

c. Are there any risks associated with this study? If so, explain how you will minimize the risks to subjects.

Risks are no different than those faced in everyday life. Generally, I am asking about common life experiences.

d. Who will be your subjects?

My interview participants will be individuals who participated in the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge. Criteria for being a participant is limited to women who participated in this specific endurance race.

Obeserved participants will be riders in the 2012 Hoka Hey Challenge.

e. List the maximum number of subjects you hope to enroll.
(Recruiting is not enrollment – you will likely recruit more individuals than will be enrolled in the project. Also, factor in the possibility of withdrawals, which may require enrolling of additional subjects in order to achieve your desired sample size. If, during the course of the project, you need to increase the number of subjects to be enrolled, you must request Board approval for the increase.)
f. How will you recruit your subjects? Please describe the method(s) you will use to recruit (examples include via telephone, mailings, sign-up sheets, etc.). Please include recruitment letters, scripts, sign-up sheets as appropriate with the application.

Participants will be recruited in three ways. First, during the Challenge, I will ask potential participants face-to-face if they are interested in participating in an interview about their experiences. I will follow my recruiting script when requesting participation in interviews.

Second, I will use a snowball technique in which I will ask people I meet during the Challenge and other interviewees to forward my recruitment script to other riders who may be interested in being interviewed.

Third I will ask people I meet during the ride and other interviewees to give me the email addresses of other riders who may be interested in being interviewed. Then I will email those potential participants my recruitment script.

I have already received permission from the sponsor of The Hoka Hey to observe and interact with race participants during the ethnographic observation portion of this research.

g. Describe the process you will use to seek informed consent from the subjects (Example -- provide consent document to potential participants, allow them to read over the information, ask them if they have any questions, answer questions to their satisfaction, then request them to sign the consent document). (See IRBNet Library for consent document skeleton.)

I will provide a consent document to the potential participant before we sit down for the interview. I will email participants the consent form so they can read it before we meet for the interview. At the time of the interview, I will ask them if they have any questions, answer their questions, and then ask them to sign the consent document or to provide verbal consent that they will be audio-recorded. As already stated, I have already received verbal consent from the Hoka Hey sponsors to interact with and observe participants. I will ask them to introduce me to the race staff so that they are also informed and aware of the purpose of my presence. As for informal participant interactions, please see below.

Yes  No

g.1. Are you seeking consent/assent from all relevant parties? (If "No", explain why not in the box provided below)

Yes  No

g.2. Are you having your participants physically sign hard copies of consent/assent form(s)?

If "No," you are requesting a waiver of written consent. Please select one of the justifications below.
That the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality.

That the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.

Please indicate how you will document consent in the box below.

(For example, in an electronic survey, clicking the next button indicates consent to participate.)

For face-to-face formal interview participants, I will ask participants to sign a hard copy. For phone and skype interviews, I will verbally ask for, and audio-record, their consent to participate in this research.

I will request verbal consent from informal interview participants. For this segment of Hoka Hey participants (informal interviews and observation), I will tell potential participants that “I am working on my dissertation and I would like to talk to you about your experience with the Hoka Hey. If you agree to talk with me, if I bring up something you don’t want to talk about, we can skip it. Are you willing to talk with me and be part of my study? By responding to my questions, you are indicating your consent to participate.” If a potential participant says “no” or indicates unwillingness to be part of my study, then the conversation ends. If “yes,” I will continue the conversation. The topic of discussion will be very similar to common conversations already occurring on the trip. Also, the participants can remain anonymous (I may not even know their real names) since they do not have to sign a consent form. As suggested, I will make my personal contact information available to those who would like to have it should they have additional questions about the study.

h. If deception or emotional or physical stress is involved, subjects must be debriefed about the purposes, consequences, and benefits of the research and given information on procedures they can follow or resources that are available to them to help them handle the stress. Please include a copy of all debriefing materials, if applicable.

Debriefing form: Yes No

i. Explain in the box below the procedures you will follow to protect the confidentiality of your subjects. Include considerations associated with data and/or consent form collection and storage, and dissemination of results. Explain whether or not the study is anonymous. (Note: it is not always necessary to protect the confidentiality of your subjects, but they must be informed if you plan to quote them directly or reveal their identities in any way.)
All comments and identifying information revealed during the interview will be kept confidential to the best of my ability. While confidentiality cannot be completely guaranteed, I will do everything I can to protect participants’ confidentiality. All data will be stored on password protected computers and any printed materials will be safeguarded in a locked office. If an interview takes place via skype or other electronic means I cannot guarantee 100% confidentiality, which I disclose in my consent form. Only my advisor and I will hear the audio recordings or read the transcripts. All of my notes, recordings, and original transcripts will remain solely in my possession. In all printed notes or transcripts, participants will be identified by their first name or a code name and any other identifying information will be coded or removed. When using direct quotes, I will not choose quotes through which participants could be identified. At the end of the study, all digital recordings will be destroyed. Direct quotes from these interviews may be used in the final products developed from this study, which may include academic presentations and publications, but all potentially identifying information will be deleted or coded. Individual participants will not be identifiable in any presentations or papers based on this study.

j. Describe what subjects will be asked to do or have done to them from the time they are first contacted about the study until their participation in the study ends. Note – a summary of this information should be included in information provided to the subjects as part of the consent process.
Hoka Hey Observation and Informal Interviews

I have already received permission from the sponsor of the Hoka Hey to conduct my research on the ride and I have asked permission to interact with both the staff and the participants of the challenge. I will be present for the entirety of the 14 day race engaging in participant observation as a participant in the Hoka Hey, observing public behavior of other participants, race staff, and observers. All observations will be conducted in public space. I will write my observations on a notepad. When interacting with the informal interviews (i.e., casual conversations), I will inform them that I am doing my dissertation research on women who participate in motorycycling endurance challenges. I will inform them that I may use their words as part of my final analysis, that I will keep any identifying information confidential by coding their name and any other potentially identifiable information, and that their participation in this research is entirely voluntary.

Informal interviews are brief discussions that provide further insight into the participants’ behaviors. Informal interviews are best described as casual conversations initiated by the participant-observer when an opportunity arises. In some cases, they may consist of a single question. At other times, the researcher is afforded more latitude and longer discussion occurs” (Krane & Baird, 2005, p. 97).

In my study, I will engage in informal conversations with participants throughout the Hoka Hey. These discussions will focus on their experiences during the ride and will occur at check points, gas stations, and/or during meals. Because these interactions will be spontaneous and will flow from the activity at the moment, there will be no formal script for questions during these exchanges; rather, to keep participants comfortable and build rapport I will simply engage them in conversation. Sample topics of conversation include: how are you staying positive, what do you think of the course/support team/etc, how is the ride so far.

During the race we will not have time for lengthy structured conversation and so such I will not follow a formal line of questioning with each participant; instead, exchanges will be brief and will vary with each participant and interaction.

Formal Interviews

People recruited for formal interviews (through personal contacts during the Hoka Hey), will be asked to participate in a 60-90 minute interview. This invitation will happen either face to face, by email, phone, or skype. I will follow my recruitment script when asking if riders want to participate in a formal interview.

I will email participants the consent form so they can read it before we meet for the interview. At the time of the interview, I will ask them if they have any questions, answer their questions, and then ask them to sign the consent document or to provide verbal consent that will be audio-recorded.

Participants will engage in one to two interview sessions. The first interview will be semi-structured and will last approximately 60-90 minutes. The focus will be on her experiences during the Hoka Hey Challenge. Interviews will be conducted at a time and location convenient for the participant (e.g., her home, a coffee shop, a campus office). If we are unable to meet in person, some interviews may take place by phone or skype. After reviewing each interview, I may ask participants for a second, shorter interview (30-60 minutes) to allow time for further clarification and further elaboration. These interviews may be conducted by email, phone, or skype. I will audio-record all interviews and transcribe them word-for-word.
VIII. Consent Form Checklist: If you are using an informed consent document, you must use the checklist below to check off the required information.

The consent document is on BGSU or departmental letterhead.
Stated the purpose of the study.
Stated the benefits of this project (to your field of study and to participants).
Stated the risks of participation. If there are none, you can indicate that the "risk of participation is no greater than that experienced in daily life".
An explain for how confidentiality will be protected has been provided. For example: Where will the data will be stored, and who will have access to the data?
Indicated that participation in the study is voluntary.
Indicated that participants are free to withdraw at any time.
Indicated how much time participation will take.
Informed participants that deciding to participate or not will not impact any relationship they may have with BGSU.
Provided the contact information for the PI (phone and email) regarding questions about the study.
If the PI is a student, provided the contact information for the Advisor (phone and email) regarding questions about the study.
Provided the contact information for the HSRB (419-372-7716 and hsrb@bgsu.edu) regarding questions about participant rights.
"Anonymous" or "Confidential" are used correctly.
Consent/Assent document is at an appropriate reading level.

If there is any chance that participants could be under 18, indicated that participants must be at least 18 years old to participate in the study.
Changed all "I understand" phrases to "I have been informed".
Statements about accidental injury and unforeseen risk have been removed.
Acronyms have been spelled out.
If the study is online, informed participants to clear their internet browser and page history.
If requesting a waiver of written consent, indicated how consent will be documented. For example, "Completing and returning the survey indicates consent to participate."

IX. By electronically signing this application package in IRBNet, I certify that:

1. The information provided in this application is accurate and complete.
2. I have the ultimate responsibility for the protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects and adherence to any study-specific requirements imposed by the HSRB.
3. I will comply with all HSRB and BGSU policies and procedures, as well as with all applicable Federal, State and local laws and regulations regarding the protection of human subjects in research.
4. I agree to the following:
   - I accept responsibility for the scientific and ethical conduct of this research study
   - I will obtain HSRB approval before amending or altering the research protocol or implementing changes in the approved consent documents or recruitment procedures
   - I will immediately report to the HSRB any serious adverse events and/or unanticipated effects on subjects which may occur as a result of this study
   - I will train study personnel in the proper conduct of human subjects research
   - I will complete and return the Continuing Review form when requested to do so by the HSRB
APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM FOR HOKA HEY MOTORCYCLE CHALLENGE PARTICIPANT STUDY

Consent Form for Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge Participant Study

My name is Abby Van Vlerah and I am a doctoral student at Bowling Green State University conducting my dissertation research on women who participate in endurance motorcycle challenges. The purpose of my study is to explore the women’s participation in this sport. Your participation will help me understand the role of women in motorcycling and will give you an opportunity to express your experience as a challenge participant and motorcycle rider.

Your involvement in this study includes participation in one to two interview sessions. The first interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes and will focus on your experience on the Hoka Hey. I will audio record the interview and transcribe it word-for-word at a later time. After reviewing your interview, I may ask you to participate in a second, shorter interview (30-60 minutes) at a later date to allow time for further clarification and further elaboration to ensure your story is being understood as you intended.

The risks of participation in this study are no greater than that experienced in everyday life. All comments and identifying information revealed during the interview will be kept confidential. While using electronic communication (email/skype) for interviews is convenient, it is important for you to be informed that these forms of communication may not be 100% secure and confidential. The interview transcript may be read by my advisor who also will maintain your confidentiality. The audio-recordings and transcripts will be kept secured and will only be accessible to my advisor and me. All of my notes, recordings, and original transcripts will remain solely in my possession; they will be password protected on my personal computer or locked in a secure office when printed. In all printed notes or transcripts, you will be identified by your first name or a code name and any other identifying information will be coded or removed. At the end of the study, all digital recordings will be destroyed.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, it is important for you to be informed that you may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty or prejudice. If you decide not to participate or to discontinue participation in this study, your decision will not affect your relationship with the Hoka Hey, Bowling Green State University, or me in any way. During the interview, you may refuse to answer any questions and I will move on. At any time, you may withdraw from the study without penalty.

If you have questions, please ask them now. If you have additional questions later you can contact me at (307) 399-0652 or by email at avanv4@bgsu.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Board at (419) 372-7716 (hsrb@bgsu.edu). If you have questions about the conduct of this study, you may contact the Chair and/or committee member of this dissertation research, Ellen Berry (419) 372-6833 (eberry@bgsu.edu) or Vikki Krane (419) 372-7233 (vkrane@bgsu.edu).

Your signature below indicates that you have read the above information, been informed of the interview procedure, have been informed of what is expected of you and that participation is entirely voluntary, and had any questions answered. By signing this form you are indicating that you are at least 18 years of age and you provide your consent to participate in this study.

Signature

Printed Name

Phone number/email

Date

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