Experiences leading elite motorcycle road racers to participate at the Isle of Man Tourist Trophy (TT): An existential perspective

Abstract

The Isle of Man Tourist Trophy (TT) is one of the deadliest and most controversial sporting events in the world, with more than 250 fatalities on the course over its 112-year history. Competitors race motorcycles at high speeds on public roads flanked by lampposts, trees, bus shelters, houses, and walls. The purpose of this study was to understand how engagement in TT might contribute to life meaning and give expression to our fundamental questions about existence. Four male athletes participated in life history interviews. Data were analysed using an existential-narrative approach and two representative stories identified: '*That was the pivotal thing',* and '*You're living your life, not just existing'*. Themes were interpreted from an existential perspective, addressing authenticity, boundary situations, mortality and meaning. Riders constructed boundary situations as instrumental in their active choice to compete at TT. Within-TT experiences encompassed myriad sub-themes including conflicting emotions, perceptions of risk, flow and love for the sport, many reflecting TT as a site for engaging fully with life. Findings provide novel insight into riders' experiences by interpreting their stories through an existential lens. We also suggest that classic theory and research, based on risk-taking and personality, does not adequately address motivation across all extreme sports.

Keywords: Isle of Man TT, extreme sports, identity, existentialism, narrative inquiry

Experiences leading elite motorcycle road racers to participate at the Isle of Man Tourist Trophy (TT): An existential perspective

The Isle of Man TT (TT) is an annual motorcycle race meeting held over a 37 and three-quarter mile course on the public roads of the Isle of Man. TT is an integral part of island life and central to the tourist industry, contributing around £25 million per annum to the local economy (Isle of Man Government, 2017). It is a festival of motorcycling, bringing joy and pleasure to many across the globe. Thousands of fans flock to the Island for a two-week party, riding the course and marvelling at the incredible skill of competitors during racing. Conversely, there is anguish and sorrow for some. Serious accidents and fatalities are, regrettably, a regular occurrence and indeed unavoidable given the inherent risks associated with the sport. TT has its own powerful energy, and people are drawn to that in a big way (Rinehart, 2018).

Extreme sports: A confusing discourse

Non-traditional sports have been categorised under various umbrella terms, encompassing everything from parkour to BASE jumping, with no common moniker used in the literature (Frühauf, Hardy, Pfoestl, Hoellen, & Kopp, 2017). The terms *extreme sport* (see Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013), *action and adventure sport* (see Immonen et al., 2017), and *high-risk sport* (see Kiemle-Gabbay & Lavallee, 2017) have been used at various times. These terms all suggest a deviation beyond what is generally viewed as “normal” or “traditional” (Cohen, Baluch & Duffy, 2018). For the purposes of this study, motorcycle road-racing can be described as an *extreme sport,* defined as a sporting activity where the possibility of fatality or serious injury is an inherent part of participation (Kupciw & MacGregor, 2012). Extreme sports also offer the opportunity for existential reflection and self-actualization as framed by the human form of life (Immonen, Brymer, Davids, Liukkonen, & Jaakkola, 2018).

Extreme sports have been studied under various disciplines including psychology, sociology, and, more latterly, philosophy of sport. Investigations into motives for participation have predominantly used mixed samples of participants from a variety of extreme sports (for example, Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013; Willig, 2008). This sampling frame has contributed to a confusing discourse and a muddled collection of research findings (Cohen, 2012; Immonen et al., 2017). Researchers have recently suggested that extreme sports participants should not be treated as a homogenous group (Frühauf et al., 2017), but investigated on an individual basis for a better understanding of motivation and meaning, and the psychological and emotional consequences of participation (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013). The predominant research design employed in this area, quantitative research into personality types (Kerr & Mackenzie, 2012), has overemphasised the risk-taking aspect of motivation to explain participation and has created a biased perspective where participation is perceived as socially unacceptable, pathological, and unnecessarily risky (Immonen et al., 2017). As such, traditional theoretical approaches such as sensation seeking (Breivik, 1996), edgework (Laurendeau, 2006), type T personality (Self, De Vries, Findley, & Reilly, 2006) and psychoanalysis (Hunt, 1996) have been proposed to explain behaviour. Much of this literature lists motivational sources as residing within a person and consisting of innate drives, and typically, entirely disregards cultural contexts and personal life histories. The proliferation of acontextual research, with an overemphasis on risk-taking and personality, has led to other motivational aspects of participation being overlooked (Willig, 2008).

Some scholars have also proposed alternative motives for extreme sports participation. These include goal achievement (Jones, Milligan, Llewellyn, Gledhill, & Johnson, 2017), escape from boredom, pushing personal boundaries, and overcoming fear (Kerr & Mackenzie, 2012). Storry (2003) suggested a number of *games* adventurers play as key motives for participation, whereby competence is tested through freely chosen

engagement with a risky activity. Flow is an outcome often associated with the peak adventure experience resulting from this *edgework*, a term coined by Thompson (1972) to describe moments of fulfilment or self-realization emerging from experiences of pushing boundaries and negotiating edges. In the sociological literature edgework has been defined as voluntary risk-taking, which provides a means of achieving self-determination and authenticity (Lyng, 1990). The fact that so many people seek out such experiences can be seen as a "critical statement on the nature of modern social life" (Lyng, 1990, p. 883). Thus, extreme sports may encourage positive psychological experiences and fulfil certain quality of life needs in a way that the modern, materialistic, and risk-averse world is unable to offer (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017b). Indeed, the idea that experiences associated with extreme sport are profound and positive is gaining widespread traction.

Recent literature suggests that the psychological and emotional benefits include development of courage and humility (Brymer & Oades, 2009), greater understanding of self (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2012) and providing a sense of purpose or meaning in life (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017); all of which could be understood as existential themes. Indeed, several key concepts from existential psychology link closely to high-performance sport: death, meaning, authenticity, anxiety, and boundary situations (Ronkainen & Nesti, 2017). Adopting an existential perspective implies rejecting deterministic accounts of behaviour (for example, due to personality types) and emphasizing human beings' situated freedom, capacity to take a stance on their existence, and make choices knowing one could choose otherwise (Cooper, 2003).

Isle of Man TT: Profligate sensation seeking or a site for authentic living?

TT is marketed as the pinnacle of the road-racing calendar; an "intoxicating mix of prestige, danger, speed, and excitement" (Savov, 2015). Racing a motorbike between two stone walls at speeds of up to 200 mph is an activity imbued with risk. Since the inaugural

race in 1907 the TT course has accounted for over 250 fatalities (Gastelu, 2018). The level of risk and distinctiveness from traditional sports is acutely captured by TT winner Richard Quayle, “If Roger Federer misses a shot, he loses a point. If I miss an apex, I lose my life” (Key, 2017). Furthermore, beyond the fatalities there are numerous cases of catastrophic injury to competitors. For example, in the 2017 Senior race, 16-time TT winner Ian Hutchinson crashed at high speed, breaking his leg badly; the same leg was almost amputated in 2010. He subsequently underwent seven major operations, 37 in total over the course of his career, and returned to action at the 2018 event (McRae, 2018).

The resulting popular media conception of TT riders is that they are thrill-seekers or adrenaline junkies (for example, Cary, 2014). This sensation-seeking narrative partly derives from research into a plethora of extreme sports (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017a). Research suggests that sensation seeking is a personality trait, defined as “the seeking of varied, novel, complex, and intense sensations and experiences, and the willingness to take physical, social, legal, and financial risks for the sake of such experience” (Zuckerman, 1994, p. 27). Previous quantitative research in this area suggests that there may be a thrill seeking or risk-taking athlete profile, identified on general personality tests, more specific and relevant trait tests and risk-taking questionnaires (Breivik, 1996, Self et al., 2006). However, extreme sports participants regularly refer to experiences other than risk when trying to define their involvement (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017a).

Furthermore, the differing experiential realities of these various sports have been glaringly overlooked (Willig, 2008). Exploring personal stories within each unique sporting subculture is required to understand the variety of personal and cultural meanings assigned to them. Extreme sports are generally evaluated based on subjective, creative, or aesthetic criteria (Lee, 2004; Watson & Parker, 2015) and lack the same competitive elements seen in

more traditional sports. TT uniquely combines the risk of extreme sports with the direct competition of traditional sports.

Despite the media attention and popular accounts of racing, such as biographies, TT has evaded academic inquiry from a human science perspective. Furthermore, the extant literature on extreme sports does not appear to accurately capture the experiences and meanings of those who compete at TT. The purpose of this study was to explore how participants storied their journeys to becoming elite TT racers. Through open-ended life history interviews, we sought to understand how significant people, events, and interactions influenced their choice to compete at TT, and how engagement with such a dangerous sport might contribute to their life meaning and give expression to our fundamental questions about existence.

Methodology

Theoretical framework

For the purposes of the study, we drew on existential psychology and narrative methodology to understand how participants constructed meaning in their experiences as TT riders. Existential and narrative approaches share fundamental assumptions about the importance of meaning in human life and the situated nature of human existence within the cultural horizons of pre-given meaning (Richert, 2010). Existential psychology provided us with the sensitivity to themes of finitude, authenticity, freedom and responsibility that are at the heart of its understanding of what it means to be human; narrative approach, on the other hand, offered the methodological ‘tools’ to elicit stories and analyse the data. The methodological approach has been previously used to explore athletes’ experiences of existential dilemmas such as ageing (Ronkainen, Ryba, & Nesti, 2013) and injury (Ronkainen & Ryba, 2017).

Existential psychology is rooted in existentialism, a philosophical movement in the European tradition concerned with addressing the fundamental givens of human existence and emphasising individual responsibility (Nesti, 2004). It is generally held to be ontologically realist, assuming there is a reality that exists independent of our views and attempts to understand it (Cooper, 2003). In this sense, existential psychology differs from social constructionist approaches to sport psychology that have often informed qualitative studies (Ronkainen & Nesti, 2017). However, existentialist epistemology aligns with a constructivist approach, asserting that our attempts to know the reality are always subjective (Ronkainen & Nesti, 2017). The existential approach is based on a human science conception of psychology (Giorgi, 1970), which contributes to sport psychology by bringing neglected concepts such as courage, authenticity, spirituality, and personal meaning to the fore (Nesti, 2004).

From an existentialist perspective, athletes' career decision-making (in this case, the rider's decision to race at TT) is grounded in the notions of the personal meaning associated with that career, the opportunities the career provides for authentic existence, and acceptance of responsibility for one's actions (Ronkainen et al., 2013). Cohen (2003) argued that career decision-making, as a major life decision, can be conceptualized as an existential *boundary situation* (Jaspers, 1970, p. 179), making it amenable to being investigated through an existential framework (Ronkainen, Tikkanen, Littlewood & Nesti, 2015). Indeed, it has been argued that "career is a project of one's adult productive life in which the struggle for authenticity is most acute" (Maglio, Butterfield & Borgen, 2005, p. 79). Alternatively, if a person is unable to establish a career which fulfils their desires, it can lead to an existential vacuum, with associated feelings of frustration, emptiness, depression, and apathy (Ronkainen et al., 2013).

Existentialists suggest that death is the most fundamental limitation of human freedom and an inescapable part of the human condition (Nesti, 2004). This death awareness, overtly acknowledged by TT competitors, has been considered amongst the strongest sources of human anxiety (Yalom, 1980). Anxiety is related to human possibilities and freedom and is experienced because individuals must make choices, and take responsibility for those choices, without absolutely knowing the outcome (Kierkegaard, 1980). These moments of existential anxiety provide opportunities to develop courage, the capacity to move forward despite an uncertain outcome, and more conscious and authentic modes of living (Corlett, 1996). This greater understanding of self signals genuine psychological health and provides a platform for personal growth and development (Parry, Robinson, Watson & Nesti, 2007).

In sport philosophy, the link between existential authenticity and extreme sports has already been established. Breivik (2010, p. 42) suggests that risk sports present participants with "the possibility of dying and thus for experiencing anxiety and self-confrontation, where one must "press beyond" to affirm oneself authentically." Exposure to such situations should, according to Heidegger, facilitate a more authentic understanding of what life is about (Breivik, 2010). This suggests that existentialism, high performance sport, and TT have shared common ground in authenticity.

TT lies uniquely at the interface between extreme and traditional sports, integrating both risk and direct competition. As such, we tentatively suggest that TT is likely to share many of the features of extreme sports (for example, freedom from social and cultural constraints and development of courage and humility; Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013). However, in extreme sports, the competition element is predominantly self-evaluative, existing between participants and the environment (Cohen et al., 2018) whereas TT features a more conventional element of competition. We would therefore expect TT to demonstrate many of the features of traditional sports, such as a competitive mindset, and a will to win.

The results of this study will aid in developing the link between existentialism and TT and increase understanding as to which existential themes are most relevant to TT.

Researcher positioning

I (the first author) was born on the Isle of Man and have lived there for much of my life. For the Manx populace, the TT is part of the cultural heritage and the national identity. I grew up with the exhilaration of TT, *the greatest motorcycle road race in the world* (Christian & De Argues, 2011); sitting on a hedge, without any safety barriers, watching bikes go past at high speed just a metre away. It was, and is still, enthralling. As a child, I remember watching from a spectacular vantage point, so close that I could see the intense focus on the riders' faces and the whites of their eyes as they passed. That evocative image stays with me to this day.

My own feelings around TT are mixed. I love the atmosphere and the energy that surrounds the event, the island comes alive during TT fortnight, it is vibrant. However, my father-in-law lost his brother during racing some years ago and TT can be a difficult time of year for him and the extended family. The same will be true for many families with similar stories.

Participants

Initially, I approached 14 male competitors, seeking those who had competed at multiple TTs and secured at least one podium finish. These criteria ensured that riders had sufficient repertoire of relevant experience and events to draw on and, in this sense, could be considered elite performers (Swann, Moran, & Piggott, 2015). The 14 riders had an average age of 40 years, with an average 11 years TT experience. Between them, they had 118 podium finishes, including 47 TT wins. Four prospective participants were retired, with an average of 10 years since retirement.

Following preliminary correspondence, six riders did not respond further, whilst four were unavailable during the data collection period. Two initial participants were recruited directly, and two further participants were recruited via a snowballing method. I had no prior relationship with prospective participants. The sample included both active and retired racers. The TT subculture is a small population and, as such, personal information that could potentially identify participants has been modified or omitted to protect anonymity.

Procedure

A trusting relationship developed through rapport is key to life-history research wherein participants tell the story of their life, in their own words (Hagemaster, 1992). Prior to the interviews, I corresponded with participants several times to establish this vital rapport-building process. Participants were informed about the nature of the study and provided informed consent before data collection. During the formal interview process, participants appeared relaxed, and it felt as if they were used to talking about their careers; as elite performers, they were well practised at handling media enquiries. However, knowing that they had been promised confidentiality, they quickly moved from conventional stories to more intimate ones that do not appear in the official press. Indeed, one participant commenced the interview by saying:

> I'll answer everything dead straight. I'll not answer as if you're a [journalist]… because I just talk complete rubbish as no-one's actually interested in the truth. Media are only interested in getting stories. So, I'll not give you anything like that.

All interviews commenced with the same broad question: "Can you please tell me how you first became involved in motorcycle racing?" This simple and non-controversial opening allowed participants to provide context. From there, conversations flowed, and I allowed them to talk about whatever experiences they felt were important rather than adhering rigidly to pre-determined themes. I did endeavour to cover certain themes including early years and

adolescence, familial and social support, events leading to participants' TT debut, within-TT experiences, injury, and, where pertinent, retirement. Questions were open-ended, allowing participants to answer in ways that they found meaningful (Riessman, 1993). Probes were used to help participants expand on their experiences (for example, "what did you mean when you said…").

I interviewed participants once only, due to restricted availability, except for one who agreed to take part in additional member reflections. He was purposefully selected based on his availability, his long and successful career, his experiences of injury and retirement and his current role which keeps him closely involved with motorcycle road-racing. This reflection process was undertaken not as a verification technique but to generate additional data and to facilitate the inclusion of complementary or contradictory results to develop a meticulous, robust, and intellectually enriched understanding of the research (Smith & McGannon, 2017). Interviews occurred at convenient times and locations for participants. Researching elite athletes raises challenges in terms of access and recruitment (Hertz & Imber, 1995) and, as such, one interview was conducted by telephone rather than in person. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Following conclusion of the primary data collection and analysis phase of the research, a diagram outlining the main themes of participants' narratives was produced. This diagram was discussed with one participant, allowing him to contest, at a macro level, how riders' stories had been interpreted and to provide further commentary on the aggregated findings. Brief notes were taken to record this additional rich data.

Interview data was supplemented with brief ethnographic fieldwork, which took place at TT between May 26 and June 8, 2018. This mainly included observation of competitors and support staff in free-access areas of the TT paddock and grandstand, ad-hoc conversations, and monitoring of social media. During this time, I took brief descriptive and

reflective field notes, together with some photographs to capture the scene. Although limited in scope, this fieldwork helped to sensitize myself during analysis and to contextualise the themes which emerged from the interview data.

Analytic process

I undertook a thematic narrative analysis of the life stories, using Sparkes and Smith's (2014) guidelines. This approach was particularly suited to this dataset because it helps to generate case studies of individuals, groups, and typologies (Riessman, 2008). In thematic narrative analysis, the emphasis is on the content of speech, the "whats" of the stories, and seeks to identify common threads across cases (Riessman, 2008). Interpretation of the narratives involved reading through an existential lens, paying careful attention to how themes, such as meaning, authenticity, and boundary situations were forming the participants' stories.

In the initial stage of analysis, I immersed myself in participants' stories, identifying key themes, people, relationships, and events that shaped their experiences. The second stage involved deeper immersion in the excerpts of text relating to each theme, followed by searching for commonalities and differences between the cases in relation to each theme. The final analytic step, member reflections, involved discussing the major themes diagram with the selected participant. The diagram was annotated to record his thoughts and this additional rich data was integrated into the findings and discussion.

I adopted a traditional approach to data presentation, interweaving direct quotes from participants (using pseudonyms) with researcher observations and reflections (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). These elements constitute the raw data, providing relevant and sufficient evidence to support the emergent themes. The results attempt to strike a balance between the researcher's voice and the participants' voices in a meaningful and compelling way (Pitney & Parker, 2009).

Research credibility

Consistent with Sparkes and Smith's (2014) recommendations, several key principles guided the research. The researcher sought to (a) obtain a detailed understanding of the participants' lives, (b) demonstrate to the participants that he cared about their experiences, (c) provide stories that advanced knowledge, (d) provide stories that were interesting and which other academics would care about, (e) acknowledge our own assumptions and pre-conceived ideas, (f) provide information that might educate readers and resonate with their personal experiences, and (g) provide useful information for stakeholders. Aware that validity is a contested issue in qualitative inquiry (Ronkainen et al., 2016; Sparkes, 1998), the following criteria were selected as relevant to the research study: worthy topic, rich rigour, sincerity, credibility, resonance, ethics, and meaningful coherence (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). These standards were met by: (a) having specific inclusion criteria to identify experienced, high-performing athletes, (b) building trust and rapport with the participants, (c) engaging in the participants' environment as fully as practicable through ethnographic fieldwork, (d) engaging in member reflection processes, (e) providing full transcripts / audio recordings, and (f) becoming aware of researcher bias. This was achieved by enhancing reflexive self-awareness through frequent meetings with the research team, who provided a theoretical sounding board (Smith & McGannon, 2017).

Results and Discussion

Two major narrative themes were discovered connected to participation at TT. Accordingly, we present an analysis of these narrative themes with their central existential threads: (a) *That was the pivotal thing* explores boundary situations leading to competing at TT, and (b) *You're living your life, not just existing*, explores TT as a site for thriving and engaging fully with life.

That was the pivotal thing

For three of the participants, their path to competing at TT is characterised by boundary situations. For Simon, it was the death of a family member:

> Watching [TT] I always wanted to do it. I just thought yeah, I'd love to have a [go] at that. Well, I lost my Dad when I was [young] you see, he died quite suddenly. I still say to this day, if my Dad would still be alive, I'd never have raced. [He] wouldn't have let me. That was the pivotal thing really, because when Dad died, I thought, you know what, fuck this. I'm going to live life, [do] what I want to do rather than what people say that you should do.

Simon's narrative is notable for the existential themes that it touches upon: death, isolation, meaning, and authenticity (Ronkainen & Nesti, 2017). He constructs this bereavement as an experience leading to a new sense of freedom, underpinned by an awareness that life is finite, and acting as the catalyst for his road-racing career. The story also encapsulates the attitude that it is better to live the life that you want rather than the life others expect. The death of Simon's father could be viewed as an existential crisis, an event which disturbs normal functioning to a high degree, leading to an awareness of one's own mortality (Yang, Staps, & Hijmans, 2010). Existentialists suggest that acknowledging one's mortality can lead to taking up active responsibility for one's existence and ostensibly a more authentic way of living (May, 1983); paradoxically, death tells a person to face up to life (Watson, 2007). Freed from submission to his father's wishes, Simon made a conscious choice to pursue a career in motorcycle racing. Frankl (1984) draws on the words of Nietzsche, "He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how" (p. 84), to explain the importance to people of creating meaning and purpose in the face of negative life events. The deepest quest in human life is this search for meaning; simply to exist is not enough (Shantall, 2003). Simon's account suggests that the death of his father was the catalyst for actively embracing an authentic and meaningful life. Confronting existential crises is critical

to developing a more authentic self, possibly leading to long-term performance and wellbeing enhancement (Nesti & Littlewood, 2011).

Paul described how his short circuit racing career had evolved into an expensive hobby which he could not afford to continue. The debt he amassed had negatively affected his personal life and his mental health:

> I was in that much debt, I was on the verge of suicide. So, I was [racing short circuits] every other weekend and I was coming out of the fortnight two grand worse off. It was a fucking red line. It took the enjoyment out of racing. All of a sudden, the enjoyment came back. Riding my motorbike at TT and it won't cost me a fortune. In some ways it virtually saved my life because I was going to end up fucking topping myself. I can't handle this [huge] debt. All because I want to ride a motorbike. I'll just fucking hit a [lorry] and I'll not know fuck all about it. I can't handle [this] fucking debt. In some ways, the fucking TT really saved my life.

Faced with the career disruption of potentially having to give up "riding this motorbike that I so love and enjoy", Paul faced a major threat to his athletic identity (Allen-Collinson & Hockey, 2007). The rupture to the self-story that had given meaning and continuity to his life, coupled with a crippling debt offer an explanation as to why Paul considered suicide as a way of resolving his existential crisis. Fear of a loss of meaning or purpose can act as a powerful driver when negotiating within-career transitions (Amundson et al., 2010). In sport, career decisions are often made under conditions of continual change or uncertainty (Borgen, 1997; Trevor-Roberts, 2006) and when financial realities constrain desired career decisions, individuals attempt to make good decisions within the realities of their life contexts (Phillips & Jome, 2005). The tension between the desire for basic financial security and the desire to pursue one's passion is a recurrent factor, often leading to feelings

of conflict, confusion, and loss. Career decisions that favour financial security over career passion are often experienced as difficult but necessary sacrifices (Amundson et al., 2010).

Elite sport involves some degree of suffering, sacrifice, and hardship (Nesti, 2007): in this case, failure of a personal relationship, mounting debts, and mental health issues. However, existential courage and mental toughness are often derived from such experiences (Nesti, 2007). Paul explained how choosing to race at TT virtually saved his life, describing how "the enjoyment came back" to riding his motorcycle. Further well-being benefits accrued from the whole TT experience through having "a piss up and a fucking good laugh… an awesome, awesome [TT] fortnight".

A critical moment in Alan's career came immediately after the elation of winning a prestigious championship title. He described the anti-climax following his momentous achievement:

> My ultimate goal in life was always to [win the title] and I eventually got it. Which is a fantastic feeling. But then you're in an odd place after that. Once you've actually achieved your lifelong goal it's like, what next? What do you go to next? Do you go and try and win it again? Everything you've strived for, you've achieved. I was surprised at how I felt afterwards. It was like, well what now?

Alan's boundary situation occurred in the aftermath of achieving his lifelong ambition of winning a championship title. Again, linking to existential themes, up to that point in life he had a clear purpose as he pursued the title. Although winning is often the ultimate goal for elite sportspeople, it may also contribute to their biggest obstacle for future success (Kreiner-Phillips & Orlick, 1993). After the euphoria of achieving his long-held goal, Alan faced an existential crisis and experienced existential anxiety around what to do next, describing it as "being in an odd place". For athletes, professional sport can be viewed as an important "life project" (Watson, 2011) and comes with a strong athletic identity. If that project ends

abruptly, it can pose a significant threat to identity (Allen-Collinson & Hockey, 2007). Alan reported, in the aftermath of becoming champion, not really knowing what to do but, "your next goal is to win a TT".

Autonomous career decisions have been shown to engender growth, self-awareness and to facilitate a sense of self-assurance to pursue new goals with confidence (Amundson et al., 2010). Alan quickly transitioned from short circuit to road, protecting his strong athletic identity and helping to mediate narrative wreckage (Douglas & Carless, 2016). This freedom to explore and develop one's own identity has also been related to feelings of excitement, hope and optimism (Amundson et al., 2010). For Alan and Paul, the active choice to compete at TT was storied as being influenced by existential crises and threats to their athletic identities.

You're living your life, not just existing

When discussing their TT experiences, participants touched on many different themes including conflicting emotions, perceptions of risk, flow and their love for riding motorcycles. However, this second theme, *You're living your life, not just existing*, focusses on TT as a site for thriving and engaging fully with life. Living and existing are not necessarily analogous; as Seneca (2004, p. 11) warned, "you must not think a man has lived long because he has white hair and wrinkles: he has not lived long, just existed long."

Maddi (2004) suggested that the hardy attitudes of commitment, challenge and control provide the existential courage and motivation to face mortality. Furthermore, Nesti (2007) argued that genuine psychological health results from facing up to mortality and living authentically, promoting personal growth, enriching one's search for meaning and allowing individuals to thrive. This courage helps individuals to perceive stressful circumstances as (a) normal provocations to development (challenge), (b) manageable (control), and (c) worth investing in (commitment; Maddi, 2004).

Simon talked of the need to be fully committed to TT to be successful and to deal with the inescapable adversity encountered along the way, “I just wanted it. I just wanted it. I just fucking wanted it. You’ve got to be committed.” Another participant had a similar take, “You’re prepared to do whatever it takes. You know it can go wrong. You hope it won’t go wrong. It will go wrong for some people, but you hope it’s not you.” Again, if professional sport is viewed as an important “life project” (Watson, 2011), it follows that individuals would take responsibility for committing themselves fully to the activity. Maddi (2004) suggests that someone highly committed prefers to remain involved with the people and events going on around them as a means of engaging with what is experientially interesting and meaningful.

Alan described the challenge element of the TT experience and how he felt it relates to the inherent drive for personal growth and development:

> It’s a calculated risk. It’s human nature to want to push yourself beyond that limit and to see how far you can go. You set yourself goals and to beat them, it’s almost like a built-in human nature thing How far can you go and get away with it.

Jackson and Csikszentmihlayi (1999) suggest that self-improvement is not possible without taking risks. In studies of extreme sports participants, self-improvement narratives have illustrated the importance of personal growth and development through risk-taking activities (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2012). Risk can never be eliminated from the TT experience, however, the term *calculated risk* suggests that thorough planning and forethought are required to reduce the level of risk to an acceptable level. Indeed, careful planning and calculation are themes mirrored in a recent study on proximity flying (Holmbom, Brymer, & Schweitzer, 2017). Furthermore, through my ethnographic fieldwork, I can attest to the meticulous detail that riders go to in preparing their machines for competition. A willingness to take *calculated risks* can provide participants with opportunities to enhance self-

knowledge and avoid stagnation (Crust & Keegan, 2010). This notion of risk-taking as contributing to a continuing project of self-improvement links to the central existential themes of identity and meaning.

The recurring narrative of *pushing the limits*, ties closely to Lyng's (1990) concept of edgework. Indeed, 17-time TT winner Dave Molyneux's (2011) autobiography is entitled *The Racer's Edge*. Lyng (1990) suggests that when risk-takers negotiate this "boundary between chaos and order" they engage their "true" selves (p. 855). Edgework takes place around cultural and physical boundaries, such as those between life and death, but boundaries of self also need to be negotiated, as they limit what is possible in terms of self-realisation and expanding one's life experiences (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002). Indeed, one participant alluded to the potentially limiting effects of self-determined boundaries:

> If you go beyond the limits of your talent, something's going to go wrong. If you're at a short circuit, you're probably going to ride off onto the grass and fall off and bounce along a bit. If you go beyond the limits of your talent [at TT] you're going to hit a brick wall. Perhaps that's why I didn't win, I should have tried a bit harder maybe.

However, the *limits of your talent* comment could be comparable to the earlier *calculated risk* comment, with both riders cognisant of a subjective level of risk that is acceptable to them. In this way, both riders imply control over their actions.

Control was constructed as a critical element of the TT experience. One participant talked of being in full control, despite the challenges appearing high to external observers:

> I don't see like you. You see from the outside looking in. I'm riding my bike as hard and to a level at what the machinery's capable of on that day, as hard as I can. So, I'm in control. I control my own destiny. If the bike isn't right, it's up to me what I do. When the bike's shit, I'd fucking [cruise] round some days. Fight another day. The oldest, greatest riders, if it isn't right, they don't do it on that day.

Miller and Frey (1996) suggested that extreme sports participants are drawn only to danger they can control. Indeed, Laurendeau (2006) argued that skydivers fiercely defend the position that their dangerous environments are within their control. However, Lyng (1990) contended that participants create an "illusionary sense of control" which allows tasks to appear less threatening (p. 872). Celsi, Rose and Leigh (1993) suggested that participants "carefully create a context of controlled uncertainty as a stage within which they can act" (p.12). Whether real or illusionary, sustaining a sense of control appears critical to extreme sports participants (Laurendeau, 2006). Pushing boundaries whilst retaining control is the crux of the challenge at TT.

As inferred from the above quote, effective long-term participation hinges on individuals having the courage, if circumstances are not right, to back off and wait for another day and this is an element found to be common to all extreme sports (Arijs et al., 2017). Indeed, one participant talked of being at one with the circuit in a similar manner to how extreme sports participants talk about being at one with the natural environment (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013), "what makes the TT so magical is that it's your own circuit. And you're not racing somebody else. You're racing the circuit". However, the competitive dimension to TT means that if riders have several relatively poor seasons, they risk losing their ride with one of the professional teams, with potentially serious financial and performance implications. This additional pressure, not generally factored into creative or aesthetic extreme sports, could lead riders to consider pushing beyond their accepted limits.

Brymer and Schweitzer (2017b) posit that extreme sports are invigorating. The findings from the current study add credence to this argument, suggesting that extreme sports participation can enhance psychological well-being. The types of experiences described by participants in this study have been characterised as transcendental by athletes from other extreme sports; a place of refuge from day-to-day concerns (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017b).

Transcendental experiences can only exist in opposition to a *mundane mode of being in the world*, an idea consistent with Dienske's (2000) notion of tacit knowledge and meaning being derived from one's bodily experiences. This dichotomy between the transcendent and the mundane was vividly captured by one participant, whose comments closely resemble those presented in recent qualitative research from other extreme sports (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017b; Holmbom et al., 2017):

> I always say, [racing a motorbike] you're living your life, not just existing. You're fucking living your life. Most people, they're just existing. They're just going to work to fucking pay their mortgage.

Future Research

Two additional themes addressed by participants were injury and retirement. These represent significant threats to the life project and emerged as important themes warranting further investigation. However, since our research was focussed on understanding how participants became elite TT riders and their experiences of competing at TT, a detailed analysis of these themes is beyond the scope of this manuscript. Briefly, it is worth mentioning that participants gave numerous examples of successfully returning to competition after suffering appalling injuries and enduring long periods of convalescence. For example:

> I hit one of those concrete posts. That broke my hip. I'd broken this arm. I'd broken that leg. [Later] everyone was saying to me, that's it, you'll give it up now, you'll give it up, you'll give it up. And I was like, no. I want it. I know it sounds daft, but you've got to take a bit of a knock to know how much you want it. It would have been quite easy for me to go, you know what, it's not for me that, I'll go off and play fucking golf or something or snooker. Nah, it's not stopping me this. No, I want this. So, I dug in deep and fucking came back the following year.

Developing a deeper understanding of how riders stay fully committed to their sport, the psychosocial processes that help them, and the mental health implications during these long periods of recovery are important directions for future research.

Furthermore, although the narratives constructed by participants indicated that their retirement decisions were voluntary, they were unable to explain their reasoning clearly. Indeed, two participants continued to race for a short period even after deciding to retire, suggesting it to be a very difficult decision for them. Retirement from TT can be viewed as a journey of existential "symbolic death" or "identity crisis" (Meyer & Watson, 2014), a move away from truly *living* to merely *existing*. Exploring these retirement decisions in more detail would enhance the extant literature on career-termination in extreme sports.

General Discussion

The dominant cultural narrative in Western Europe, based on the classical-theological *imago Dei* concept, values sanctity of life over quality of life (Jacoby, 1998). This narrative has perhaps partly fuelled sensationalist media portrayals of motorcycle road-racing which often pathologize competitors. However, participants in this study found personal meaning in competing at TT and constructed the experience as invigorating, despite the obvious risk to their physical being. Existentialist psychologists suggest that by creating or discovering meaning in their lives and by living authentically, individuals can thrive (Nesti, 2004). Arousal and adrenaline are inherent aspects of the generic sporting experience but attributing the motivation to compete at TT entirely to thrill-seeking explanations of behaviour is both ignorant and naïve. Results indicate that the TT experience clearly links to the existential themes of boundary situations, mortality, and meaning, suggesting deeper philosophical themes lie behind the desire to participate at TT.

The findings from the present study both confirm and extend contemporary qualitative research findings linking existentialism and extreme sports (Breivik, 2010;

Brymer, 2010; Brymer & Schweitzer, 2012, 2013, 2017b). Specifically, participants undertake careful, detailed planning to minimise the possibility of negative outcomes since extreme sports trigger a range of positive experiential outcomes (Brymer, 2010). This suggests that the TT experience is, in many ways, akin to that of sports such as BASE-jumping, big wave surfing, and solo rope-free climbing.

However, there are key, fundamental differences between the TT and other extreme sport experiences. In our study, participants' motivation to race at the TT appeared to emanate from biographical boundary situations, specifically those relating to a metaphorical or physical death. Facing finitude emerged as a central experience triggering riders to engage with the TT as a way to live the life they have to the fullest, and not just 'exist'. In addition, TT uniquely blends the values of traditional competition with the ethos of an extreme sport. This creates an environment involving the features of extreme sports that tend to focus more on the intrinsic rewards of the experience yet also providing extrinsic rewards such as money and prestige. A strange duality exists where there's an attachment to and a detachment from the material world.

The main strength of the narrative interview is its inherent subjectivity and ability to capture contextual detail; the story is irreducibly perspectival (Greenhalgh, Russell, & Swinglehurst, 2005). However, this can also be a limitation when stories are used as research data. Furthermore, a story is an interaction between participant and researcher, who (actively or passively) shapes the telling. The challenge of narrative research is to capture the inherent subjectivity, inconsistency and emotionality of stories as data and interpret them appropriately (Greenhalgh et al., 2005). For the first author, as a novice qualitative researcher, working on a previously unexamined topic, this proved somewhat challenging. However, having a dependable, knowledgeable and experienced research team to lean on led to the methodological elements of the research becoming a key strength. Although the study

is based on just four participants, we believe that valuable insight was gained into how they became elite TT racers and how they ascribe meaning to their sport.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore how participants storied their journeys of becoming elite TT racers and how engagement with such a dangerous sport might contribute to their life meaning and give expression to fundamental questions about existence. Riders constructed boundary situations as being instrumental in their active choice to compete at TT, whilst TT was constructed as a site for engaging fully with life. Findings provide novel insight into the experiences of TT competitors and help to broaden theory by interpreting their stories through an existential lens. Findings also suggest that existing personality-based theory and research does not adequately address motivation across all extreme sports. This is the first study exploring TT riders' experiences and provides a platform for future research.

References

Allen-Collinson, J., & Hockey, J. (2007). 'Working out' identity: Distance runners and the management of disrupted identity. *Leisure Studies*, *26*(4), 381-398.

Amundson, N. E., Borgen, W. A., Iaquinta, M., Butterfield, L. D., & Koert, E. (2010). Career decisions from the decider's perspective. *The Career Development Quarterly*, *58*(4), 336-351.

Arijs, C., Chroni, S., Brymer, E., & Carless, D. (2017). 'Leave your ego at the door': A narrative investigation into effective wingsuit flying. *Frontiers in Psychology, 8,* 1985.

Borgen, W. A. (1997). People caught in changing career opportunities: A counseling process. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, *34*(3), 133-143.

Breivik, G. (1996). Personality, sensation seeking and risk taking among Everest climbers. *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 27*(3), 308-320.

Breivik, G. (2010). Being-in-the-void: A Heideggerian analysis of skydiving. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, *37*(1), 29-46.

Brymer, E. (2010). Risk and extreme sports: A phenomenological perspective. *Annals of Leisure Research*, *13*(1/2), 218-239.

Brymer, E., & Oades, L. G. (2009). Extreme sports: A positive transformation in courage and humility. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, *49*(1), 114-126.

Brymer, E., & Schweitzer, R. (2012). Extreme sports are good for your health: A phenomenological understanding of fear and anxiety in extreme sport. *Journal of Health Psychology*, *18*(4), 477-487.

Brymer, E., & Schweitzer, R. (2013). The search for freedom in extreme sports: A phenomenological exploration. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *14*(6), 865-873.

Brymer, E. & Schweitzer, R. (2017a). *Phenomenology and the extreme sport experience*. Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Brymer, E., & Schweitzer, R. (2017b). Evoking the ineffable: The phenomenology of extreme sports. *Psychology of Consciousness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, *4*(1), 63-74.

Cary, T. (2014, June 7). Competitors in the Isle of Man TT know death is just a split second away - they are an extraordinary breed. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from https://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/motorsport/10883173/Competitors-in-the-Isle-of-Man-TT-know-death-is-just-a-split-second-away-they-are-an-extraordinary-breed.html

Celsi, R. L., Rose, R. L., & Leigh, T. W. (1993). An exploration of high-risk leisure consumption through skydiving. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *20*(1), 1-23.

Christian, S. (Producer), & De Aragues, R. (Director). (2011). *TT3D: Closer to the edge* [Motion picture]. Isle of Man: 3DX Media.

Cohen, B. N. (2003). Applying existential theory and intervention to career decision-making. *Journal of Career Development*, *29*(3), 195-209.

Cohen, R. (2012). *The relationship between personality, sensation seeking, reaction time and sport participation: Evidence from drag racers, sport science students and archers* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/. (15741)

Cohen, R., Baluch, B., & Duffy, L. J. (2018). Defining extreme sport: Conceptions and misconceptions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *9*, 1974.

Cooper, M. (2003). *Existential therapies*. London, UK: Sage.

Corlett, J. (1996). Virtue lost: courage in sport. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, *23*(1), 45-57.

Crust, L., & Keegan, R. (2010). Mental toughness and attitudes to risk-taking. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *49*(3), 164-168.

Dienske, I. (2000). Beyond words: On the experience of the ineffable. *Phenomenology and Pedagogy*, *3*(1), 3–19.

Douglas, K., & Carless, D. (2016). Self-identity: Our most beautiful and creative project. In R. J. Schinke, K. R. McGannon, & B. Smith (Eds.), *Routledge international handbook of sport psychology* (pp. 219-227). New York, NY: Routledge.

Frankl, V. E. (1985). *Man's search for meaning* (Rev. and updated). New York, NY: Washington Square Press/Pocket Books. (Original work published 1946)

Frühauf, A., Hardy, W. A., Pfoestl, D., Hoellen, F. G., & Kopp, M. (2017). A qualitative approach on motives and aspects of risks in freeriding. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *8*, 1998.

Gastelu, G. (2018, June 4). Second rider killed during dangerous Isle of Man TT motorcycle races. *Fox News*. Retrieved from http://www.foxnews.com/auto/2018/06/04/second-rider-killed-during-dangerous-isle-man-tt-motorcycle-races.html

642 Giorgi, A. (1970). *Psychology as a human science*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
643 Greenhalgh, T., Russell, J., & Swinglehurst, D. (2005). Narrative methods in quality
644 improvement research. *BMJ Quality & Safety*, *14*(6), 443-449.
645 Hagemaster, J. N. (1992). Life history: A qualitative method of research. *Journal of*
646 *Advanced Nursing*, *17*(9), 1122-1128.
647 Hertz, R., & Imber, J. B. (Eds.). (1995). *Studying elites using qualitative methods*. Thousand
648 Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
649 Holmbom, M., Brymer, E., & Schweitzer, R. D. (2017). Transformations through proximity
650 flying: A phenomenological investigation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *8*, 1831.
651 Hunt, J. C. (1996). Diving the wreck: Risk and injury in sport scuba diving. *The*
652 *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, *65*(3), 591-622.
653 Immonen, T., Brymer, E., Davids, K., Liukkonen, J., & Jaakkola, T. (2018). An ecological
654 conceptualization of extreme sports. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *9*, 1274.
655 Immonen, T., Brymer, E., Orth, D., Davids, K., Feletti, F., Liukkonen, J., & Jaakkola, T.
656 (2017). Understanding action and adventure sports participation: An ecological
657 dynamics perspective. *Sports Medicine-Open*, *3*(1), 18.
658 Jackson, S. A., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1999). *Flow in sports: The keys to optimal*
659 *experiences and performances*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
660 Jacoby, K. N. (1998). *Souls, bodies, spirits: the drive to abolish abortion since 1973*.
661 Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.
662 Jaspers, K. (1970). *Philosophy, vol. II*. (E. B. Ashton, Trans.). Chicago, IL: The University of
663 Chicago Press.
664 Jones, G., Milligan, J., Llewellyn, D., Gledhill, A., & Johnson, M. I. (2017). Motivational
665 orientation and risk taking in elite winter climbers: A qualitative study. *International*
666 *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *15*(1), 25-40.

Kerr, J. H., & Mackenzie, S. H. (2012). Multiple motives for participating in adventure sports. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *13*(5), 649-657.

Key, A. (2017, June 7). Take a lap in the world's most dangerous race. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/06/07/sports/Isle-of-man-TT-motorcycle-race.html

Kiemle-Gabbay, L., & Lavallee, D. (2017). Coping in high-risk snow-sports: A qualitative exploration of alpine racing and freestyle athletes' experiences. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, *22*(4), 325-345.

Kierkegaard, S. (1980). *The concept of anxiety: A simple psychologically orienting deliberation on the dogmatic issue of hereditary sin*. (R. Thomte with B. A. Anderson Trans.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1844)

Kreiner-Phillips, K., & Orlick, T. (1993). Winning after winning: The psychology of ongoing excellence. *The Sport Psychologist*, *7*(1), 31-48.

Kupciw, D., & MacGregor, A. (2012). High-risk sport research. *The Sport and Exercise Scientist*, *31*, 28–29.

Laurendeau, J. (2006). "He didn't go in doing a skydive": Sustaining the illusion of control in an edgework activity. *Sociological Perspectives*, *49*(4), 583-605.

Lee, J. (2004, August). Extreme sports evaluation: Evidence from judging figure skating. In *Econometric Society 2004 North American Summer Meetings* (No. 122). Econometric Society.

Lupton, D., & Tulloch, J. (2002). 'Life would be pretty dull without risk': Voluntary risk-taking and its pleasures. *Health, Risk & Society*, *4*(2), 113-124.

Lyng, S. (1990). Edgework: A social psychological analysis of voluntary risk taking. *American Journal of Sociology*, *95*(4), 851-886.

McRae, D. (2018, June 3). Ian Hutchinson: 'I want to race the TT until there is no more magic.' *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2018/jun/03/tt-isle-of-man-ian-hutchinson-michael-dunlop

Maddi, S. R. (2004). Hardiness: An operationalization of existential courage. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, *44*(3), 279-298.

Maglio, A.T., Butterfield, L.D., & Borgen, W.A. (2005). Existential considerations for contemporary career counseling. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 42*(2), 75–92.

May, R. (1983). *The discovery of being: Writings in existential psychology*. New York, NY: WW Norton.

Meyer, A. R., & Watson, N. J. (2014). Radical Orthodoxy and the Emergence of Spiritual Hero-Athletes: Examining Lance Armstrong's "Illness" Narrative. *Journal of Disability & Religion*, *18*(2), 157-172.

Miller, W., & Frey, J. H. (1996). Skydivers as risk takers: An examination. *Humanity and Society, 20*, 3–15.

Molyneux, D. (2011). *The racer's edge: Memoirs of an Isle of Man TT legend*. Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Wharncliffe Books.

Nesti, M. S. (2004). *Existential psychology and sport: Theory and application*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Nesti, M. (2007). Persons and players: A psychological perspective. In J. Parry, S. Robinson, N. Watson & M. Nesti, *Sport and spirituality: An introduction* (pp. 135-150). New York, NY: Routledge.

Nesti, M., & Littlewood, M. (2011). Making your way in the game: Boundary situations in England's professional football world. In D. Gilbourne & M. Andersen (Eds.),

Critical essays in applied sport psychology (pp. 233-250). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Parry, J., Robinson, S., Watson, N., & Nesti, M. (2007). *Sport and spirituality: An introduction*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Phillips, S. D., & Jome, L. M. (2005). Vocational choices: What do we know? What do we need to know? In W. B. Walsh, M. L. Savickas & P. Hartung (Eds.), *Handbook of vocational psychology* (pp. 139-166). New York, NY: Routledge.

Pitney, W. A., & Parker, J. (2009). *Qualitative research in physical activity and the health professions*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Richert, A. J. (2010). *Integrating existential and narrative therapy: A theoretical base for eclectic practice*. Pittsburg, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Riessman C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis: Qualitative research methods series 30*. London, UK: Sage Publications.

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Rinehart, M. (Director). (2018). The space between. [Television series episode] In T. Brady, M. Strahan, & G. Chopra (Producers), *Religion of sports*. Dallas, TX: AT&T.

Ronkainen, N. J., & Nesti, M. S. (2017). An existential approach to sport psychology: Theory and applied practice. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *15*(1), 12-24.

Ronkainen, N. J., & Ryba, T. V. (2017). Is hockey just a game? Contesting meanings of the ice hockey life projects through a career-threatening injury. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, *35*(10), 923-928.

738 Ronkainen, N. J., Ryba, T. V., & Nesti, M. S. (2013). The engine just started coughing!‘ –
739 Limits of physical performance, aging and career continuity in elite endurance sports.
740 *Journal of Aging Studies, 27*(4), 387–397.
741 Ronkainen, N. J., Tikkanen, O., Littlewood, M., & Nesti, M. S. (2015). An existential
742 perspective on meaning, spirituality and authenticity in athletic careers. *Qualitative*
743 *Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 7*(2), 253–270.
744 Ronkainen, N. J., Watkins, I., & Ryba, T. V. (2016). What can gender tell us about the pre-
745 retirement experiences of elite distance runners in Finland?: A thematic narrative
746 analysis. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *22*, 37-45.
747 Savov, V. (2015, June 18). Isle of Man TT 2015: The world’s wildest road race in pictures.
748 *The Verge*. Retrieved from https://www.theverge.com/2015/6/18/8794819/isle-of-
749 man-tt-2015-photo-essay
750 Self, D. R., De Vries H. E., Findley, C. S., & Reilly, E. (2006). Thrill seeking: The type T
751 personality and extreme sports. *International Journal of Sport Management and*
752 *Marketing*, *2*(1-2), 175-190.
753 Seneca, L. A. (2004). *On the shortness of life*. (C. D. N. Costa, Trans.). New York, NY:
754 Penguin Books. (Original work published AD 49)
755 Shantall, T. (2003). *The quest for destiny*. Johannesburg: UNISA Press.
756 Smith, B., & McGannon, K. R. (2017). Developing rigor in qualitative research: Problems and
757 opportunities within sport and exercise psychology. *International Review of Sport and*
758 *Exercise Psychology*, *11*(1), 1-21.
759 Sparkes, A. C. (1998). Validity in qualitative inquiry and the problem of criteria: Implications
760 for sport psychology. *The Sport Psychologist*, *12*(4), 363-386.
761 Sparkes, A. C., & Smith, B. (2014). *Qualitative research methods in sport, exercise and*
762 *health*. London: Routledge.

763 Storry, T. (2003). The games outdoor adventurers play. In B. Humberstone, H. Brown & K.
764 Richards (Eds.), *Whose journeys? The outdoors and adventure as social and cultural*
765 *phenomena* (pp. 201-228). Penrith: The Institute for Outdoor Learning.
766 Swann, C., Moran, A., & Piggott, D. (2015). Defining elite athletes: Issues in the study of
767 expert performance in sport psychology. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *16*(1), 3-
768 14.
769 Thompson, H. S. (1972). *Fear and loathing in Las Vegas: A savage journey to the heart of*
770 *the American dream*. London: Paladin.
771 Trevor-Roberts, E. (2006). Are you sure? The role of uncertainty in career. *Journal of*
772 *Employment Counseling*, *43*(3), 98-116.
773 Watson, N. J. (2007). Nature and transcendence. In J. Parry, S. Robinson, N. Watson & M.
774 Nesti, *Sport and spirituality: An introduction* (pp. 95-115). New York, NY:
775 Routledge.
776 Watson, N.J. (2011) Identity in sport: A psychological and theological analysis. In J. Parry,
777 N. J. Watson and M. S. Nesti (Eds.), *Theology, ethics and transcendence in sports*
778 (pp. 107-148). London: Routledge.
779 Watson, N. J., & Parker, A. (2015). The mystical and sublime in extreme sports: Experiences
780 of psychological well-being or christian revelation? *Studies in World Christianity*,
781 *21*(3), 260-281.
782 Willig, C. (2008). A phenomenological investigation of the experience of taking part in
783 extreme sports. *Journal of Health Psychology*, *13*(5), 690-702.
784 Yalom, I. D. (1980). *Existential psychotherapy*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
785 Yang, W., Staps, T., & Hijmans, E. (2010). Existential crisis and the awareness of dying: The
786 role of meaning and spirituality. *OMEGA-Journal of Death and Dying*, *61*(1), 53-69.

787 Zuckerman, M. (1994). *Behavioral expressions and biosocial bases of sensation seeking*.

788 New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.