

“Living the lift line”
**A phenomenological study of the lived
experience of skiing**

Kerensa Clark

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**Primary Supervisor: Dr Liz Smythe
Secondary Supervisor: Dr Lesley Ferkins**

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this is my own work and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person or material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements and reference list.

Signed: 

Date: 22/6/2013

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Abstract

This study considers and explores the lived experience of skiing through a phenomenological approach and seeks to gain a deeper understanding into the meaning skiing may hold in the lifeworlds of those who ski. Research pertaining specifically to this topic was notably lacking. Literature was drawn upon to inform this study from the outdoor recreation/education, leisure, adventure tourism and outdoor adventure genres. Such research highlighted the growing use of interpretive paradigms to elucidate lived experience in the area of sport and recreation, indicating perhaps a sway away from measuring aspects of experience, to seeking an understanding of the experiences themselves. This study therefore is situated appropriately amongst similar works that draw upon an interpretive approach.

Drawing on a purposive sample five participants were interviewed in unstructured in-depth interviews from which the data were thematically analysed using a hermeneutic reflective method. Such a method allows for a slow revealing of the nature of an experience (van Manen, 1990) but without ever allowing a definitive “truth” about the phenomenon to be proposed. This method is germane to elucidating lived experience, as no two human experiences are identical, thus highlighting the very personal and subjective nature of one’s lifeworld.

Significant revealing’s to emerge from this study were related to the nature of risk (and one’s comfort zone), freedom, solitude, skiing as restoration, embodiment and play; however ultimately it was revealed that skiing enables a *towardness* for those who ski. It was shown in the discussion, that skiers ski *toward* something else – perhaps risk, perhaps confidence, perhaps clarity or sense of self, possibly even a renewed sense of direction and purpose. Some skiers may ski towards perfection, whilst some may ski towards a “letting go” and a “trust”.

The towardness is in itself a transcendence of sorts as no skier is the same as when he or she first begins. Each participant in this study has been touched, changed or affected in some way by the place skiing holds in their lives. I propose that there exists a place for ski professionals (instructors, patrollers, managers) to consider the meaning of skiing in people’s lives and the significance it may hold for enhancing a skier’s lifeworld. Typically research in the area of skiing has focused on accident rates, satisfaction in ski areas (service orientated) and conflict between skiers and snowboarders. These types of studies overlook why skiers ski in the first place and possibly may benefit from gaining a deeper awareness of what draws people onto the wintery slopes to slide down on two precarious planks. Whilst this study seeks to unpack some of these reasons, it is merely scratching the surface of a deeply complex phenomenon, and I suggest further studies could engage in a deeper more prolific exploration of the themes that emerged.



*“Skiing...is positively thrilling no matter how well or poorly you’ve mastered it.
From the moment you begin to slide over snow, feel the tug of gravity pull you downhill,
your heart and spirit exults.*

It is pure thrill.

There are, to be sure, more than a few moments of frustration....

But even during that painful period, there is a constant thrill...

*Once the basics have been reduced to muscle memory, skiing is a non-stop celebration of
how good life can be when you live it at the edge of your self-defined envelope, be that
envelope green or double black”.*

G.D Maxwell
(as cited in Anthony, 2010, pg.1)

Chapter One: Introduction

Every autumn the falling of leaves from trees is eagerly anticipated by some as an imminent prelude to winter. As people hasten to gather firewood stores, fossick for warmer clothes and line up for their annual flu shots, there is a breed of folk who take on an invested interest in the weather and who most certainly welcome the first hint of winter's invigorating chill. These people seek the snowy whiteness that adorns mountain tops with the promise of awe-inspiring rides through soft powder. They embrace winter's magic until the first allusion of spring's onset brings receding snows, a fade towards summer and a reluctance to shed the uniform that distinguishes them as a skier.

This chapter highlights the central reasons for researching the lived experience of skiing. I address areas that are commonly associated with participation in skiing; that being skiing as risk and skiing as freedom. I bring into this research deep pre-understandings of skiing and the ski industry in New Zealand and the wider global influences within it. This thesis unpacks and explicates phenomena that enable a deeper understanding of the meaning skiing holds for those who participate, through exploring the lived experiences of those who ski. It is situated within a New Zealand context; however some of the participants are not New Zealand skiers and bring with them a wider experience of the global context of skiing. None the less, the experience of skiing, as a "lived" phenomenon (van Manen, 1990) is explored through the voices of all participants "as skiers".

Reasons for choosing this topic

I am a skier. My introduction to the sport was through my father who worked at a university and belonged to the university skiing club. We would ski during winter and I remember those eager early morning drives in the dark to Mt Ruapehu, the sense of anticipation as we caught the first glimpse of this majestic mountain when we entered the Desert Road, and the rising excitement as we drove up through lush native bush which eventually gave way to the almost moonscape terrain of the mountain itself.

I have an undergraduate degree in sport and recreation and my passion within this area is in unpacking the place of recreation in people's lives. I have naturally turned to skiing as a way to come closer to understanding the nature of recreation experiences people have and the meaning they might hold.

I have always been captivated by mountains. I confess to be a winter person; most alive during this season (when much of the world is hibernating) and drawn to the beauty of the possibility that lies amongst the snowy peaks of mountains. I lived for nearly two years in rural Northern California amongst magnificent mountain-scapes where in winter I donned cross-country skis to go to the local store. Now I reside in a small New Zealand alpine village where the local ski area has been my focus for collecting much of the data for my Master's degree.

I have realised that over the years, I have deliberately situated myself within the context of skiing. I am *drawn* to skiing, to the mountains where skiing transpires like no other thing I have ever experienced. With such a strong pull, I began to muse; what is it about skiing that pulls people in (normally for life) and creates generations of skiers, of people who *live* for winter and people who would happily give away a “normal” life in order to “chase” snow for continuous winters? What is it about the context of skiing that attracts people? Is it the mountains? Is it the bizarre act of sliding down a hill on two long skinny planks? Is it the “gear” - the equipment, the clothing, the seemingly “trendy” aspect of the sport? Is it the flirtation with pushing oneself into the unknown? Is it adventure, freedom, mastery? These were the questions that dwelled in my mind every time I skied, every time I observed others skiing, and every time post-skiing “dissection” amongst my ski-buddies would take place. *Something* was there.

Over the last six years I have worked as a ski instructor at the local ski area where I reside. During my time as an instructor I have repeatedly witnessed the struggles new skiers have had as they learn to negotiate the strange tools with which to appropriate their new skill, on the ends of their feet. I have observed expert skiers make judgements in error which have had consequences resulting in injury.

I have seen the beginner skier who returns to the ski area the following season, *becoming* “a skier” as they learn to trust what their body is capable of and their intuition in terms of risk and pushing their own zones of comfort as they strive for mastery in their skiing. I am not consciously aware of when I *became* a skier; when my skiing was such that I could happily say “yes I am a *skier*” but as I have developed in my own skiing, I have become acutely aware of the inner commentary that skis with me. This commentary tells my body how it *should* look when I become alert to the watchfulness of others; it tells me I look ungainly at this moment or that moment; warns me of approaching risk; then asks me if my day was “good” (did I ski well, could I have extended myself a little further, how did I *feel* on my skis?). As I became more aware of the evolution within my own skiing, a question unfolded; *what is the experience of skiing?*

In order to seek answers to this question and to come close to finding the *meaning* of skiing, I desired a methodology that best fit my underlying need to understand skiing as a lived experience. Phenomenology emerged as the methodology germane to pursuing elucidation, in that phenomenology seeks to unearth the multitude of ways human experience can appear. Phenomenology is not a route to a definitive “answer” for a specific question (Finlay, 2008), but rather offers a voice through which taken for granted shared understandings can land in their ontological *beingness*. Heidegger understood the world as making sense to us within the context of the “everydayness” of one’s life (Wrathall, 2005), thus I seek here to make known the everyday experience of skiing through unpacking the phenomenon that *is* skiing.

Background and significance

The snowsport industry is the name given in place of the ski industry since the advent of the snowboard and now encompasses a wide range of activities that are carried out on the snow. For the purposes of this thesis, the term “snowsports” when used will pertain specifically to skiing and snowboarding; however this thesis concerns only the sport of skiing.

A short history of two long planks

Skiing appears in history in Siberian cave paintings (Fry, 2006) and was most likely used to transport these early hunters across the snowy frigid terrains of the arctic as they sought their game. Skiing later appeared throughout greater Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden, Denmark), Iceland, Lapland and Russia as an implement both of transport, warfare, competition and fun, with ancient rock drawings found in Norway dating from 6300BC, confirming their wide use in these areas of life (Huntford, 2008). Originally one propelled skis by using a single long pole to control speed and to initiate turning. This early skiing predecessor was known as “stick riding”, a fashion that remained intact until the mid-1850’s when the telemarker’s of Norway developed it into the fore-bearer that has become modern skiing. Norway was home to the first ski club in 1875 and if we fast forward to the present day, skiing as a sport has not looked back since.

In New Zealand, skiing was introduced by Norwegian gold miners who brought skis to Central Otago (snow.co.nz: <http://snow.co.nz/SIHistory/>). It developed readily after World War II with the emergence of ski clubs (Markby, 2008), rendering skiing as a somewhat hard-core activity enjoyed in those early days by folk hardy enough to endure the challenges of first ascending heights lofty enough to ski down. New Zealand’s skiing history although short, shows a determined commitment to establishing New Zealand skiing firmly amongst the wider global skiing community, emphasizing the ideal skiing terrain this country can offer, particularly for those who wish to escape a northern hemisphere summer. New Zealand ski fields however still reflect our “number 8 wire¹” mentality, with many club ski fields maintaining use of old style nutcracker and rope tows to access skiable terrain, earning these fields a formidable reputation amongst die-hard skiers and certainly not a place for those used to sitting in the comfort of a chairlift or gondola!

Skiing as re-invented

Nothing has ever impacted on the ski industry to the extent that the introduction of the snowboard has, with ski areas witnessing a return to the slopes in what was becoming an otherwise dying industry (Thapa, 2002). The commodification of the snowboard industry, particularly accentuated through efforts by Jake Burton (Carpenter) to “brand” his name, saw by default the re-birth of skiing-but not as we know it (Thorpe, 2012). New fatter and shorter carver

¹ “Number 8 wire” (retrieved from <http://the-mighty-entrepreneur.blogspot.com/2010/03/no-8-wire-new-zealands-innovative.html> January 7 2013), a “typical” innovative, creative mentality that New Zealanders are well-known for.

skis (influenced by snowboard design), introduced in USA in the late 1990s, provided the opportunity for the purist back country free-skiers of old to bring the freedom and loose form of big mountain free-skiing into the arena of the 'snow-park'. With this, skiers appeared to find a new lease of life and a new-found affinity with a younger generation looking to express themselves (Johnson, 2007). Here was the perfect vehicle and it offered an alternative to the already maturing snowboard market.

This 'coolifying' of the snowsports industry has had major ramifications worldwide (Humphrys, 1997) as the effects of merchandising and marketing have posited snowsports not only as a funky hip sport which personifies the juxtaposition of rebellion and freedom through an almost grunge street culture (Anthony, 2010), but as "statement" sports for young people (and some old 'hippies'). This contrasts the previous 'status' sport that skiing was well known as (Schriber & Jager, 2000). The industry has seen incredible changes which Edensor & Richards (2007) suggested can be (to some extent) attributed to the advent of the snowboard kick-starting the skiing revolution into a lease of new life with (re)-borrowed snowboard technology, style and attitude, discovering a previously un-tapped market in today's youth.

The New Zealand "scene"

The New Zealand scene was somewhat slow to pick up on the advances of skiing technology, as evidenced by a decline in skiing as a sport from 1997-1999 (Sparc, 2001). This was to change however from 2000-2001 (Sparc, 2001) when snowboarding was beginning to make a noticeable impact on the international ski industry. It was, however, during this period in New Zealand's snowsport history, that some New Zealand ski areas experienced a major decline leading to the temporary closure of some club ski areas (Markby, 2008).

Being part of a large international industry that was struggling to maintain its distinctiveness, also impacted on New Zealand in the early years of this new decade. Old school skiing with visions of one-piece suit wearing, mulled-wine supping, white-collar mavens, was quickly being superseded by an eclectic variety of snowboard shred-heads who were dragging along with them the younger new school free-skiers who were rapidly disseminating the building blocks of new school tricktionary with their twin tipped fat skis. This was ground zero for the re-birth of New Zealand snowsports. At last the industry had found reason to reinvent itself.

The influence of tourism on snowsports

The dominant American influence on the snowsport industry as a whole (an estimated 22 million people ski in the U.S; The Examiner, 2011) has to some extent provided a pre-determined pathway for how the New Zealand industry will fare, and it forecasts as an industry experiencing a resounding growth. For example, New Zealand has always enjoyed a buoyant tourism industry, with snowsports now positing as a notable reason to visit the country. According to Tourism New Zealand (2012) as many as 65,000 Australian tourists enter New Zealand every season specifically to ski or snowboard, and with campaigns targeting countries such as Japan, Britain and some European countries, that number is likely to increase. New Zealanders

travelling within their country, seeking a range of different recreation and leisure activities are also tourists, whether or not they choose to explore activities through a commercial operator.

Skiing as “the outdoors”

The “outdoor” industry is that which includes activities and recreational pursuits that are positioned in the outdoors, but specifically refers to an industry that provides an outdoor ‘experience’. This experience may come in the form of back country trips, kayaking tours, four-wheel drive adventures, tramping, camping and the likes-often sought through a commercial outdoor provider, and is now a fast growing industry in its own right (Hudson, 1998). The tourism industry, sport and recreation industry and the outdoor industry, are all extremely complimentary and are not mutually exclusive, relying heavily on each other to support and build benefits to the operators within each industry. Each of these industries is strongly involved in the New Zealand snowsport industry specifically.

Skiing within the greater snowsports structure: The New Zealand context

The snowsports industry in New Zealand is largely overseen by four major organisations: New Zealand Snowsports Council (the umbrella organisation for the snowsports industry); the Ski Areas Association New Zealand (also known as “SAANZ”, comprising of 15 commercial ski areas in New Zealand); New Zealand Snow Industries Federation (which represents importers and retailers of snowsport equipment) and the New Zealand Snowsport Instructors Alliance (which oversees the qualification and certification of New Zealand ski and board instructors).

Numerous other supporting agencies work in synergistically within the New Zealand snowsport industry, such as the “Sport fitness and recreation industry training organization” (SFRITO), who provides qualification and certification in ancillary roles such as snow-making technology and groomer operations; Territorial Local Authorities who are made up of local councils, and a long standing relationship with the Department of Conservation (DOC).

Where do we play?

The majority of snowsports occurs on Crown land (some in national parks), with commercial enterprises being carried out on public land requiring a concession through DOC. It is through this concession process, that the snowsport industry has a partnership with DOC. In addition to providing opportunities for recreation through snowsports, ski area concessionaires also strongly promote snowsport for recreation as part of their marketing plans. Some ski areas are also privately owned, operating on private land.

Who plays?

According to the Tourism Industry Association New Zealand’s submission to inform the “Outdoor Recreation Review” (August, 2007) snowsports is amongst the fastest growing winter sports and is extremely popular amongst youth, with 7% (287,000) of New Zealanders participating in snowsports in 2006. Of this number, 5% (14350) of snowsport participants were children under the age of 12 who skied and 2% who snowboarded.

The 2008 season also presented with record participants in New Zealand ski areas with 1,402,000 over a season lasting 1,311 open days. This figure was up 200,000 from the previous (low snow) season. Of these, 38% were international tourists which resulted in a gross turnover of \$75,500,000, with over 40,000 season passes sold prior to the season (New Zealand Snowsports Council, 2008). The industry supports 15 commercial ski areas and 11 club operated ski areas, providing for over 3,000 seasonal employees from June through to October. Resort towns of Ohakune, Methven, Wanaka, and Queenstown enjoy unprecedented support during the winter months, and typify the meteoric rise in snowsports as a destination activity. No figures are available so far for the 2009-2012 seasons.

Structure of this research

Chapter One:

In this chapter I have introduced and made explicit my research focus through articulating my research question. I seek to understand the lived experience of skiing, and in so doing I have highlighted why this topic has held so much interest for me, enough to become a major area of concentrated focus.

Chapter Two:

I situate my research within the current context of skiing, and draw on some of the key concepts that are relevant to skiing as a sport that comfortably straddles various genres; for example those of adventure recreation, outdoor recreation, “sport”, “extreme” sport, adventure tourism, to name a few. I therefore explore the context of skiing and how it brings me to this research in chapter two. To understand where skiing sits within these genres is crucial to grasping why the sport is so dynamic, emotive and attractive for those who participate. I briefly introduce phenomenology as my chosen methodology and why this is a fitting approach towards understanding the deeper meanings skiing holds in people’s lives. I also introduce my own background in skiing which additionally serves to highlight some of my pre-understandings. However, these will be further unpacked in later chapters.

Chapter Three:

This chapter introduces the literature that has informed my research by highlighting in particular those studies that draw on a phenomenological approach. The literature review did reveal that research pertaining to the lived experience of outdoor based activities is growing, however those that relate to skiing as a lived experience in particular, are lacking.

Chapter Four:

Chapter four discusses my chosen methodology and why this has been a fitting approach within which to embed my research. Phenomenology seeks to come closer to meaning through

unpacking experience as “lived” (van Manen, 1990); and thus this chapter explains clearly the chosen approach for revealing the lived experience of skiing.

Chapter Five:

The methods I have used to carry out my research are highlighted in this chapter through a clear explanation of the steps taken in sample selection, data collection and analysis, along with discussion on pertinent issues relating to ethics in researching lived experience.

Chapter Six:

This is the first of four findings chapters, within which the stories of the research participants are revealed and unpacked to explicate the deeper meanings of the lived experience of skiing. In this chapter I introduce the notion of the equipment of skiing, drawing upon Heidegger’s writings around tools and the gear for daily living. In this chapter I invite the reader into the early experiences of participant’s skiing as they negotiate the newness of finding themselves in the white, somewhat alien world of snow and the equipment they must make sense of in order to traverse from the non-skiers world into that of the skier.

Chapter Seven:

In this chapter I further unpack the notion of movement as I now explore what it means to be *seen* skiing, and also the way a looker gazes or apprehends the skiing body. I talk here about the ownership inherent in being watched by another and how one might take on a construction of awkwardness through the awareness of being watched.

Chapter Eight:

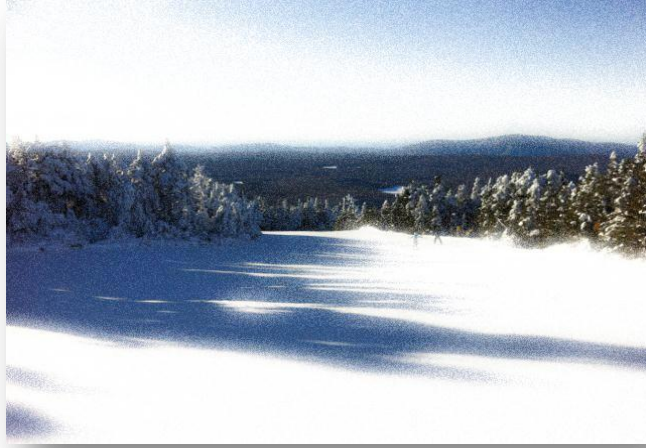
Here I construct meaning from the stories of participants who push through moments of fear or anxiety as they flirt with or resist risk by being in a *towardness* that contextualises their skiing. I relate the experiences risk to Heidegger’s work on authenticity, as skiers become embodied within a realisation of their skiing potential – what is possible, what is not; what to accept, what to reject. Here I unearth further notions of risk by exploring the “comfort zone” as participants relate their own experiences of pushing “through” an imagined or real zone, beyond which personal change might occur. I also explore embodied movement of participants whilst skiing and the awareness of their bodies which might manifest as a felt awkwardness or perhaps a solid confidence – a being in “the zone”.

Chapter Nine:

This final findings chapter further extends the previous insights by considering notions of freedom whilst skiing. I explore the meaning of skiing *towards* freedom. Here participants unpack what freedom looks and feels like in their skiing. This chapter also reveals skiing’s place as a restorative activity. This further draws upon the space where one *goes to* to feel restored and the value specific contexts might hold for people as they *play* in their *re*-creation.

Chapter Ten:

This final chapter completes the hermeneutic circle by unfolding the meanings that have been revealed through participant's lived experiences of skiing. It additionally includes sections on the relevance of my research to the current body of knowledge, to education and practice. I have also made suggestions in this chapter for future areas of research.



*"This snow is so light, to turn in it you only have to think of turning
and effortlessly, you scoop left, then right again, in some avian rhythm.*

This, truly, is what flying feels like.

*You've had moments of it ripping backcountry runs...but this goes on and on, and on.
Over two thousand feet of it, you skiing like some dream, through pines and firs higher up, then
strands of quaking aspen below, you singing some nonsense song that just bubbles up out of
you, out of this ecstasy".*

(Wayne Johnson, 2007, p. 328)

Chapter Two: Setting the context

Skiing as risk

Where does one begin to understand the experience of skiing? Gadamer (1982) talked of the hermeneutic circle where the parts become the whole. To understand the whole one must examine the parts, but the parts themselves can only be understood in terms of the whole. Thus understanding spirals back and forth, expanding within the circling. The researcher jumps into this circle, and then faces the challenge of taking the reader on the circling to-and-fro journey towards understanding. Because of the limited amount of research literature related to the experience of skiing, in this thesis I draw on philosophical writings, accounts of skiers and related sports literature.

Through dwelling with the data, writing, reading and re-writing, I came to see that the theme of risk is a fundamental (but perhaps unspoken) aspect in the experience of skiing, and is pivotal when exploring the deeper meanings skiing might hold for people. Thus to put this study in context, I begin by exploring the meaning of risk as presented in relevant literature. “Risk” as an assumed or imagined facet of skiing allows the skier an opportunity to engage wholly in the often-untapped reservoirs of true reflective experience in one’s *Lifeworld*; for it is not often until *after* one has experienced a potentially risky situation that reflecting on the “what-if’s” may occur. It is these “what-if’s” that possibly linger and inculcate a sense of anxiety and fear in subsequent skiing experiences. It is also these experiences that allow us to consider the thrownness that exists in the world of skiing.

Risk as a theme, is a concept common to the majority of outdoor recreation pursuits (Brymer, 2005), and in particular to pursuits such as B.A.S.E jumping, skydiving, big-mountain skiing and high-altitude mountaineering. Here through the stories of skiers, *risk* is unpacked as central to the experience of skiing. Much has been offered on the topic of “risk” within the context of extreme sports. Risk is a perception. Risk carries a promise of something other than what is presented to the risk-taker, and it offers an element of the unknown, even though the risk-taker skims the surface of “known” possibilities. Farley suggested that “risk taking is at the core of human creativity” (1991, p. 372).

Risk as perception

It could be surmised that “risk” is all about perception. If we were to ask, “what exactly then is perception?” we could look to Jean-Paul Sartre to provide an analysis of perception (Spade, 1996). Sartre (1956) described his *perceiving* of a cube; that at once he could see three sides in a two-dimensional presentation (Sartre borrowed the cube idea from Husserl).

Sartre (1956) described the perception of the cube as a kind of *promise*; the promise that (not presented to his view), there existed a further three sides of the cube – thus making up the three-dimensional solid cube. As a skier perceives the mountain he or she will ski down, the

perception of what the ride down might be like is constructed in part by what is presented visually to the skier and any prior understandings of the skiing experience. There exists also a promise in this view – that there may be rocks to avoid, there may be high speeds on the way down, there may be cliffs to jump, there *may* exist risks; there *may* exist, as Galloway (2006) supposed, real or apparent danger. Stephane Dan, French ski mountaineering guide, offered this insight: “In the mountains things are very simple. You have to do something right ... because if you do something wrong you die. You know it’s very risky ... but you go because it’s everyday a new adventure; a new story ... it’s magic”. (as cited in Obenhaus, 2007).

So what then *is* risk? Is it the *chance* of something going wrong (usually with negative consequences – commonly injury or even death). Risk is unpredictable as to when it may show itself, yet it is predictable in *how* it has the potential to make us feel when we know we are dancing with it. This from Doug Coombes who died in 2006 in a skiing accident:

No one ever said to me, don’t go off the trail...we were off-piste skiing when I was 7, 10. I just didn’t think of it as that ... I just thought of it as going through the trees, down river beds and things like that and jumping off waterfalls ... and I just thought it was normal. If someone said you have to ski at a ski area the rest of your life ... well I could maybe do that when I’m 80, but I couldn’t do that now.
(as cited in Obenhaus, 2007)

My point here is that risk, in itself, is mere perception. With risk, we are adding the unseen dimension to construct a complete picture. Perhaps for the expert skier willing to accept there may exist an element of risk, it is the *hidden* component of the “picture” of skiing that creates the pull.

Spade (1996) suggested Sartre always alluded to the element of caution in perception; that things *may not* be as they appear. For a person beginning, the novice skier who is negotiating the sensations inculcated by awkwardness and unfamiliarity, perhaps the picture is more complete; in effect – they want to see the back of the cube, to *know* for sure that it exists, rather than a promise that it exists. Sartre might have argued (Spade, 1996), that there *may* exist the risk that in fact the cube *does not* have a further three sides hidden away from the viewer’s line of vision, thus augmenting his arguments (and also those of Heidegger, 1993), that perception is the phenomenon of *perceiving*.

The concept of *risk* is in itself, a mere concept. It is a promise that yes, a skier may well enter a world of real (not imagined) risk, and therefore will require resolve to keep him or herself “safe” by not engaging in some aspects of skiing. For some people, this may be to NEVER ski; for others it may be to ski within specific defined boundaries; a “comfort zone”. For others it may be to ski with abandonment because they have embraced risk as central to their skiing, or perhaps they do not consider there to be any risk at all. Lou Dawson offered: “We are mountain people. This is what we do. This is how we live. The risks are very high but I think most of us have decided that the risk is worth it” (as cited in Obenhaus, 2007).

Sartre may well have argued that we cannot learn anything about the concept of risk if we are to inspect it; observe it and never to engage *with it*. Therefore a concept is something that is already defined within us; it is a way of understanding something. If we were to use Sartre's cube again (1956), we can see the concept of the cube all at once without having to actually see the hidden sides. The novice skier may look up at the mountain and see the risks without having to ride the lift and look down to *know* that risk was *real*.

Galloway (2006) suggested one might live a whole life without ever exploring the notion of pushing boundaries of risk, lest it be considered some form of deviant irresponsible behaviour.

Anselme Baud reflected on pioneering extreme skiing in Europe in the 1970's and 80's:

We were always in control. If we hadn't been...what can I say...we'd be crazy.....and this is how the first viewers of our films thought of us. They thought we were insane. But that wasn't it at all. Of course we were always very afraid. The person who's not afraid is crazy. He's a dead man.
(as cited in Obenhaus, 2007)

Heidegger (1927/1962) may have considered this a form of duality in how we live our lives; engaging in risk could equate to living authentically, *against* the current of mainstream "ways" of living (Breivik, 2010) and exposing oneself to the possibility of death as the antithesis to life's purpose. Is it not that we are born (thrown) into this world with a natural "order" that allows us to die once our life has been lived?

To be a skier, perhaps one requires a slight resistance towards the "natural order" of things in order to submerge oneself into the experience of skiing. In June 1971, an American skier named Bill Briggs became the first person to ski from the summit of one of America's most iconic peaks The Grand Teton in Wyoming. At the time it was ill-considered, he was seen to be pushing boundaries and taking risks. "The Grand" was well known for its steepness and dangers. For Briggs, the mountain presented one of the greatest and most satisfying challenges of his life; to those who only ever dreamed of such a feat, it opened their minds to the possibilities of what terrain outside designated ski areas could offer.

The idea wasn't for me that I would be the only one who would ever do this; my idea was that everybody should be doing this. At the time nobody was but, this was something that was too much fun to pass up.
(as cited in Obenhaus, 2007)

The idea that some people may be willing to pursue risk (Groves, 1987), could be viewed as chasing death, with perhaps the "buzz" coming from having escaped it. Briggs went on to say about his accomplishment, "If there's no risk there's no adventure. I think adventure is a great part of life ...for me it's why am I living ...?" (Bill Briggs as cited in Obenhaus, 2007).

Breivik (2010) proposed that with risk comes anxiety and the two may co-exist in a delicate counter-balance. Even for the expert engaging in the sport of skydiving, there exists a risk that the mechanics of one's chute may fail, there-by exposing the skydiver to the ineffable; that death may be an unavoidable consequence of falling without a canopy. Risk has never been a stranger in mountain culture, whether it is in mountaineering, climbing or skiing, and it can

provide some insight as to why people chose to embrace seemingly risk-loaded pursuits within the captivating snowy enclaves of mountain peaks. Mountaineer Royal Robbins stated:

If climbing were totally safe, it wouldn't have the same draw. You know it's dangerous in the first place, and the ironic thing is that when there's a mountain on which people died, getting up that mountain alive has greater value.
(as cited in Wilkinson, 2012, p. 46).

For even the most experienced of people, risk carries with it the *butterflies-in-the-stomach* feeling that manifests alongside the surfacing of anxiety. Anxiety then is never far from the surface, and Heidegger theorised it was not always possible to foresee when it might reveal itself (Breivik, 2010).

There exists in such pursuits, a quiet anxiety that is not openly acknowledged but well known amongst those who chose to push themselves in mountain-orientated activities. British mountaineer Joe Simpson claimed:

The defining thing about climbing is that it kills you. Not many people publically question the fatality rate, because it opens up a very nasty Pandora's Box. Your rather fragile rationale for why you are climbing might not stand up to a close examination, and so you'd rather not talk about it. People feel uncomfortable and think, "No, no it's not like that". But you only have to look at the facts.
(as cited in Wilkinson, 2012, p.46)

It could be that risk-takers may oscillate from moment to moment, between anxiety and elation as opportunities to confront oneself through engagement with "risky" sports become apparent. However, is risk ever-present or does it ebb and flow (Boga, 1988) as the participant becomes more competent in the activity, more skilled and more able to moderate the risk?

Celsi, Rose and Leigh (1993) argued that people who engage in risk-taking sports may not even contemplate that they are pushing boundaries. Risk, for many people is a wholly abstract concept. Most people willingly disclose the reasons *why* they might engage in risky activities, for example, the "high", a sense of achievement, the sense of clarity and of life's purpose, joy or even pure thrill; but few are willing to discuss or analyse the cost of taking on those risks. Royal Robbins again cautioned: "We have to remember that if we're talking about true risk, occasionally there has to be a price paid" (as cited in Wilkinson, 2012, p. 46).

Blattner (2006) reminded us that nothing equates to coming close to our true authentic selves as much as when we experience deviations from our "normal" selves. To take a "risk" could well be inviting a deviation from our "normal" selves. Any deviation from the self that we know, leads us away from the possibility of inauthenticity; it asks us to step outside our well-trodden pathway.

Risk being contained

Humans dwell within space in a measured and quantified manner (Shengli, 2009; Merleau-Ponty, 1958/2005). We gain "comfort" from knowing which boundaries we can dwell in - a sense of security is derived from the *knowing* of the havens within which we exist. As Hergenhahn (1982) explained: "Piaget assumed that all organisms have an innate tendency to

create a harmonious relationship between themselves and their environment ... equilibration is this innate tendency to organize one's experiences so as to assure maximal adaptation" (p. 285).

We are defined by spaces in which we occupy the activities of our daily lives; the spaces we "go to" such as home, work, retail spaces, play spaces; spaces for sleep, spaces in which to eat (Degenhardt, Frick, Buchecker and Gutscher, 2011). Such spaces provide a sense of order and, if you will, a sense of control as we transport our bodies throughout our day. Such spaces are tangible. Are skiers then defined by the areas in which they choose to ski?

Brown (2008) submitted that the "comfort zone" is a metaphor for a zone within which no true learning can take place (this is not to say that one can only learn when out of one's "comfort zone"). He implies that perhaps out of the "comfort zone" there may not exist true connection to or awareness of one's surroundings, and he challenges the binary positions of being "in" or "out" of one's "comfort zone" as antecedents to attaining personal growth and achievement. "How big" I wonder, is one's comfort zone? Does it change? Do the boundaries shift? How does it change, if indeed it does? Are skiers consciously aware that they are changing themselves as they glide in and out of their own personal comfort zones?

If we are to understand the space that is or could be the "comfort zone", we must first understand the concept of "space" as something in which beings dwell. Van Manen (1997) described space as "lived space", a *felt* space that cannot be described by concrete tangible measurements. Therefore, the "space" of the skier is the orientated space of the *skiing body*. The skiing body negotiates the skiing space; the skiing landscape merging into a monotone endless nothingness that only becomes full of the colour and vividness of anxiety once the edge of the canvas has been breached. Schrag (1979) alerted us to the intention of lived body space as "the spatial things and relations between them encountered in the life-world of everyday practice" (p.160). Brymer (2005) offered lived space as something that is: "Moving beyond the predictable and into adventure that is experienced as a returning home to inner space" (p. 316). He went on to state: "The experience is both about dwelling in the security of inner space and stepping out into the ineffable void, abyss and danger of external space" (p. 316).

Brown's offering of a "comfort zone" as a metaphor invites an unveiling of *how* one knows when the zone has been breached. I propose, there is a grey area or zone if you like, a "lending towards" (or in Heideggerian terms) a "thrownness" towards stretching the confines of one's comfort zone. Brown (2008) further raised the question if we can assume (by someone's behaviour and actions) when a comfort zone has been stepped out of and is it task specific?

The spatial elements present within one's comfort zone also suppose the existence of 'rules' (Haywood Kew, Bramham, Spink, Capenerhurst & Henry, 1990); rules which may be unspoken but well-known perhaps amongst more experienced skiers and possibly only guessed amongst the more cautious beginners. Rules such as *not* skiing outside the patrolled areas; or if doing so, rules such as ensuring one has avalanche and radio gear with them.

The space in which one skis is tangible and perhaps it becomes less so when the defined parameters of comfort are exceeded, pushed, or blurred. Does such a space then take on a more mystical element, in that it appears to take over our sense of control as we venture into the unknown? Ingrid Bacstrom shared her experience of her first ever filmed ski run down very steep terrain:

So I'm up there all by myself and Hugo who never falls just took the hardest crash I've ever seen anybody take. It got me feeling a little nervous. At that point ... I think my brain probably shut off and I just dropped in and went for it. This is what you dream about skiing ... I just remember skiing out the bottom and it was so fast that it was just a blur but it was one of the most incredible feelings ever.
(as cited in Obenhaus, 2007)

Did she transcend pre-understandings of her own ability at that moment of skiing out the bottom of the run unscathed?

In taking time to explore the notion of 'risk' as a 'fore' to presentation of data interpretation, I make way for the reader to join me in my fore-having, fore-knowing and fore-conception (Heidegger, 1927/1962) which came to inform my analysis. The insights revealed within this chapter are the prejudices which shaped my understandings.

This section introduced the concept of skiing as a risky activity. I have opened by discussing skiing as risk, as an activity that might perhaps incite feelings of fear, anxiety, and trepidation or even dread ... feelings which may in fact be so strong that it keeps people from participating in the sport. My desire here is not to dispel skiing as a risky activity, but rather submit to aspects of risk, and to also bring to the fore that risk is highly subjective and something that perhaps changes as a skier becomes more proficient, more skilled and develops a higher level of confidence.

I discussed risk as a perception, and that possibly some people do not consider what they are participating in, to be risky. This has been highlighted in previous scholarship by Brymer (2005) and Breivik (2010) where both authors suggested that risk is a highly subjective concept. There also exists a desire to contain risk somehow and this aspect of skiing is introduced in this section through briefly unpacking how one might contain risk. Is it through a defined comfort zone that one skis within? Is it through the prescribed rules set by the ski area boundaries (areas for beginners, advanced and so forth); or is it through the unspoken "knowing" of the public when risk containment has been breached?

This section sets the scene for this thesis, in realising there is an element of risk that is prevalent in skiing but is not openly discussed. This thesis seeks to further unpack this notion and to bring elucidation to this complex issue.



"Winter is not a season...it's an occupation".

Sinclair Lewis
(as cited in Carey & McGregor, 2012-2013, p. 10)

Chapter Three: Literature Review

Van Manen (1997) proposed that when a researcher casts his or her net for sources of experiences “we begin to partake in a tradition” (p. 75). A literature review is an essential prelude to fore-gone influences on the subject being researched (Moustakas, 1994) and particularly in phenomenological research, as it allows the reader (and researcher) to connect to the insights of others who have previously explored a similar phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). A literature review enables the researcher to “make sense of” the metaphors in the literature and reveal already existing understandings around the research subject. In this literature review I will examine existing discourse in phenomenological studies as they relate to experiences in outdoor recreational settings. As there is little existing research to directly support my research topic, I am compelled to enquire into the broader literature as pertaining to the *meanings* outdoor experiences might hold for people in the pursuits of mountaineering, hiking, extreme sports (B.A.S.E jumping, extreme skiing, sky-diving) and other outdoor activities such as kayaking and rock-climbing.

I argue that such literature supports my study in that being a phenomenological enquiry; I am seeking to unearth the deeper meanings of the skiing experience. Thus studies which seek to capture the meanings of outdoor experiences will provide a back-drop germane to the skiing experience. I will compare literature that relates to meanings that emerge through engagement with one’s outdoor activities, and I will consider relevant findings which inform and relate to my own subject area.

I feel it important to explain the terms used in this literature review as I lean towards the use of generic definitions to encompass a variety of outdoor pursuits. Such terms include (but are not limited to): outdoor recreation, outdoor education, leisure, recreation, sport, physical activity, adventure tourism, outdoor adventure. I acknowledge that within each of these areas, specific definitions identify one form of activity from the other. In this thesis I principally use these terms interchangeably, except when I am specifically discussing academic literature which cites it as within a certain genre. For example, big mountain skiing could fall into the genre of “outdoor adventure”, but it might also fall under the label of “extreme sport”, whereas downhill skiing might belong under the genre of “sport”. Bungee jumping, sky diving and white water rafting might fall into both “adventure tourism” and “outdoor adventure”, whilst hiking, tramping, mountain biking and running could fall under the categories of “outdoor recreation”, “leisure”, “recreation”, or “sport”, my point being, that terms have been blurred in some literature. Therefore, for this thesis, I use the term “outdoor activities” sometimes interchangeably with terms that describe any of the above genres.

Skiing is accessed through the wider context of the sport and recreation industry, the leisure industry and the broader tourism industry (Hudson, 1998). Many researchers, according to Fredrickson and Anderson (1999), have sought to identify positive outcomes; types of experiences and meanings associated with an interaction during such activities, as falling within

a specific construct; for example an “adventure experience” (Lee et al., 1994; Loeffler, 2004), a “back-country experience” (Haggard & William, 1992; Johnson, 2002; Oosterhous, Legg & Darville, 2007), an “outdoor experience” (Bennion & Olson, 2002; Freidrickson & Anderson, 1999) and so forth. Few studies are dedicated towards revealing a deeper understanding of what these experiences *are* or what meanings they might hold for those experiencing them (Loeffler, 2004; White & Hendee, 2000). Moreover, studies pertaining specifically to skiing focus predominantly on the skier as a client or user of the services provided by a ski area (measuring satisfaction), (Clark & Maher, 2007; Ismert & Petrick, 2004) the skier in conflict with the counter-culture of snowboarders (Edensor & Richards, 2007; Gilden, 2004; Makens, 2001), the environmental impact of ski areas and increasing ski area sustainability (Geneletti, 2008; Scott, McBoyle & Minogue, 2006) and risk factors associated with injuries amongst skiers (McBeth, Ball, Mulloy and Kirkpatrick, 2009; Meyers, Laurent, Higgins & Skelly, 2007). Some studies have sought to understand motivations for skiing (Needham, Rollins, Ceurvorst, Wood, Grimm & Deardon, 2011; Pullman & Thompson, 2002) but such studies have largely been carried out in a mass information-gathering format, and whilst this approach might inform as to the main motivators in skiing, it is limited by not allowing for a deeper analysis to be revealed. Interestingly, the current perspective on leisure and recreation research has an increasing focus on exploring the *meaning* of people’s experiences in their outdoor activities through an interpretive paradigm (Bell, Tyrvaianen, Sievanen, Probstl and Simpson, 2007; Cole, 2011-2012; Patterson, Watson, Williams and Roggenbuck, 1998) perhaps indicating the value of recreation in people’s lives.

For the purposes of my research, I have reviewed the literature that seeks to unpack and unearth the experiences that people have had in the outdoors. Such studies provide rich descriptive explorations of experiences which may range from the “gentle” (for example; leisurely kayaking and hiking or wilderness walking) to the “extreme” (e.g., B.A.S.E jumping, sky-diving, deep-water diving, extreme skiing and high-altitude mountaineering).

Numerous studies also exist on experiences within the tourism context, particularly focusing on the experiences of back-packers and commonly presented through a narrative inquiry approach (Noy, 2007; Tsang, 2000). Although the meanings *behind* these experiences may provide useful parallels in terms of analysis, tourism as a subject area has been deemed largely beyond the scope of this thesis, with the exception of the mounting adventure tourism industry (Chang & Gibson, 2011). The following subject areas are emerging as topics of interest within the wider sport, recreation, leisure and adventure industries.

A “spiritual” dimension

The term “spirituality” frequently summons metaphors of a *religious* nature. In a study by Schmidt and Little (2007), a phenomenological approach revealed the experiences of 24 self-selected individuals who identified that leisure held a spiritual dimension in their chosen leisure activities. The activities participants’ engaged in included “wilderness” walking, hiking, canoeing, mountain-running, and low-grade climbing. The findings unpacked a wide range of

meanings that were triggered by catalysts such as stunning surroundings or other natural wonders which evoked responses of awe, clarity, and appreciation for life.

Through deeper analysis it was recognised that these responses could be further deconstructed into feelings of connection with one's environment, feelings of freedom, increased self-awareness and personal growth, culminating in an overall sense of a "spiritual" dimension in their outdoor participation which remained highly contextual for each individual. White and Hendee (2000) also found that outdoor experiences contributed to a sense of heightened spirituality when they looked at the relationship between being in a natural environment and self-development.

The spirituality dimension of outdoor activity participation is further reiterated by Heintzman (2001) who found in his study of a men's only canoe trip, themes emerged that described antecedents to the dimension of spirituality, such as "peacefulness", "recollection", "being at one with nature", and "getting away from it all". It is almost as if such studies seek to unearth something which struggles to be explained, something *beyond* words which rather manifests as a "feeling" or perhaps as a *knowing* possibly better described as a "spirituality". There is a recognised "spirituality", a shared knowing that is situated within outdoor experience as highlighted by these studies, which in a phenomenological sense asks us to probe deeper – for more illumination – but which still may elude the words to describe it. As Dieneske (2000) stated, "the ineffable is more than the absence and the impossibility of linguistic utterance ... it is an entity, an experiential fact which manifests in a variety of ways" (p. 1).

Potentially from a phenomenological sense, the spiritual dimension in outdoor participation is a type of transcendence – an awareness of deep connection to something other than the self, and a *becoming* as a result. Certainly this aspect was highlighted by Valle and Mohs (1998) who cited a sense of spirituality as an outcome of connection with nature.

Escape and Freedom

Studies in outdoor leisure and recreation typically cite "a sense freedom" as an outcome of engagement with the outdoors (Abramson & Fletcher, 2007; Coleman, 2004; Rothman, 1998). Often this transpires as an "escape" from some other more restrictive realm in one's life. Seagrave (2000) raised an awareness of how sport (a general term I have used here to describe engagement with *any* physical activity) can "provide an escape, a brief and often intoxicating respite from the complexities and confusions of everyday life" (p. 62). The critical notion when considering "freedom" is that it is often a *freedom from* which is being desired (Nicholls, 2000).

The term "escape" is used in Seagrave's (2000) work to highlight how sport is "played out" in various constructs that *enable* a sense of "escape to" (a space, a time, a community, a purpose and a self), as well as "freedom from" the rules of normal daily life. Hemphill and Smelter (2008) identified freedom as a theme in their study, where participants cited sport offered *something* they could *go to* that was in contrast to their "everyday lives" (p. 25). Straker (2005) related this

equates to “negative” and “positive” freedoms (p. 185) as highlighted by Berlin (1998). Seagrave (2000) reiterated this by reminding us along with Hemingway (1996), that the paradox of “freedom from” the rules and confines of daily living lies in the fact that most sport and recreation activities are defined by rules (overt or not), regulations (again – in some sports the regulations might be common knowledge, in others they might be known but unspoken) and, sub-cultures specific to that sport which rather than being freeing, could be seen as binding. To illustrate, there is literature around sub-cultures within snowsports which highlight the burgeoning commodification - and thereby increasing pressure to identify as being *part of the* “scene” - within the industry (Fry, 2006; Thorpe, 2008).

Hemingway (1996) focussed on freedom’s place in leisure activities and thus reiterated that freedom is highly contextual, citing leisure as requiring “emancipation” from the realms of social, political and economic dominance (p. 34). Such conflicts between freedom and “playing by the rules” are emphasized by Straker (2007) who looked at tensions between freedom in outdoor education and using safety restraints, illuminating the subtle line between “freedom *from*” and “freedom *to*”. Perhaps a person in using restraints, is *free to* climb without fear of an accident (freedom from fear or injury), however if it is a requirement (and not a choice), then *freedom from* falling becomes part of the experience and it removes the element of risk (thereby eliminating *freedom to* experience risk).

Straker, in her study titled “Freedom of the hills” (2005), clearly indicated that escaping from something can inculcate a sense of freedom (dependent of course upon where it is we intend escaping to). She argued that the outdoors have become a common respite for escape; a space within which to experience freedom from day to day busy-ness. She suggested that feeling “in control” also augments freedom (p. 4), and continued on to say the participants in her study experienced a range of other feelings, including body-mind-soul unification, and re-defining personal barriers in the outdoors.

A paper by Hemphill and Smelter (2008) used a descriptive narrative approach which focused on the lived experience of one of the authors as a ski instructor of young children. Skiing was described as “my freedom”, where:

I am free in the sense of facing a decision to live a routine life or one filled with challenge. I am also free in the sense of putting myself on the line, risking what I am for a fuller sense of being.
(p.28)

If freedom is an enabling of a deeper, fuller understanding of oneself, then Heidegger’s notions of authenticity are extremely valid in the outdoor context. Breivik (2010) studied sky-diving using a Heideggerian analysis, and queried if sky-divers became more authentic (Heidegger’s (1927/1962) idea of authenticity being an awareness of one’s finitude), simply because they were “in the void” – free-falling momentarily and dependent on a slip of fabric to deploy and float them gently to earth. Breivik (2010) found that in moments of anxiety, beginner sky-divers experience the world as a “void”, where there is potential for grasping “what life is all about” (p. 40). Breivik used a Heideggerian lens through which to consider *authenticity* and highlights the

“void” as a *time* where sky-divers were revealed in their being-ness; a space for self-realisation to show itself as *itself*.

Arguably, such an experience could be seen as a *freedom towards one’s own death* (as one falls earth-ward), an *in-between* place where authenticity has room to move forward. Certainly Nicholls (2000) has discussed this prospect in Heidegger’s “freedom as revelation” (p. 3), where freedom could be seen as “authentic potentiality for being” (p. 3).

Rickly-Boyd (2012) has explored the sub-culture of full-time “lifestyle” climbers and has queried whether their climbing results in moments of existential authenticity. She found that such moments of authenticity were performance-based, and included feelings of kinship with fellow climbers, a sense of flow whilst climbing and “a (re)discovery of a sense of self” (p. 85).

Stoddart in his doctoral thesis (2004) suggested that skiing expresses elements of natural freedom and that it enables a *freedom-through-skiing*. For example, women in downhill racing, big mountain skiing, back-country skiing and park skiing are an increasing in number as identified by Simic (2007), and Laurendeau and Sharara (2008).

Risk

Risk in the outdoor context is a widely researched topic, particularly within the realm of high-altitude mountaineering, rock-climbing, B.A.S.E jumping, sky-diving (Abramson & Fletcher, 2007; Ewert, 1989a,b; Laviolette, 2007). Booth (2007) stated:

Risk-taking activities that are structured enough to come under the banner of “extreme sports” involve meanings significant enough for participants to dedicate considerable time and resources to them.
(p. 294)

Abramson and Fletcher, (2007) highlighted in their work around rock-climbing as “play”, that “pursuit of dangerous pleasure” (p. 5) could be compared to “voluntary risk-takers” (e.g., soldiers) whose increased risk of death pursuant to their lifestyle (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002), somehow adds value to the experience. Allman, Mittelstaedt, Martin and Goldenberg (2009), have explored reasons why people choose to engage in sports considered as “extreme”. They looked specifically at BASE jumping and identified jumpers as having attributes of deliberate risks-takers in that those that embrace risk voluntarily perhaps do so to become “positively transformed” as central their “quality of life” (p. 229).

There remains some debate as to the *extent* of engagement with the outdoors in terms of labelling it (thereby ascribing a connotation of risk level). Ewert (1989a) offered clarity:

What distinguishes adventure activities from those more commonly associated with outdoor recreation is a deliberate seeking of risk and uncertainty of outcome ... only in outdoor adventure pursuits is there a deliberate inclusion of activities that may contain threats to an individual's health or life.
(p. 8)

Guszkowska and Boldak (2010) recognised that some forms of leisure, outdoor recreation and adventure tourism, offer more risk attributes than others. They cited examples such as bungee jumping, rock climbing, parachuting, gliding and scuba diving – where if something goes “wrong”, it will have “devastating” results (p. 157).

Obenhaus (2007) offered up risk as a package that may attract some skiers to seek out terrain well beyond the skill or ability level of the skier. Risk in this context is presented as exhilarating, an adventure, play, and a challenge to be balanced with the sheer beauty and freedom of skiing. The Obenhaus film “STEEP”, highlights how risk is highly subjective, and can change depending upon both the participant and the on-looker. Skiers in this film plummet down the seductively sheer drops on pristine (and seemingly harmless) slopes of Alaska’s highest playgrounds, making it appear effortless, more like a dance than an effort of extreme fitness, split-second timing and an ear tuned for the crack of snow which signals an impending avalanche. A poignant reminder of the subjective nature of risk, is that several of the people interviewed for the film (produced in 2007) have since died participating in the sport.

It is an interesting play on words that expert skiers ski on the *edges* of their skis in order to carve for speed and direction control; and in pursuing steep terrain as depicted in the film “STEEP”, they are literally skiing *on the edge*, whilst skiing *off the edge*. It could be said that such skiers engage in ‘edgeworks’, a term used to describe voluntary risk takers who engage in physical risk within a fine line of control, and who are able to overcome feelings of fear (Earle, 2011; Schneider, Butryn, Furst & Masucci, 2007; Young & Dalliare, 2008) in order to capture potent sensations (in this instance - skiing downhill on steep big-mountain terrain).

Farley (1991) suggested that risk is an essential component in the make-up of *being* human, whilst Brymer (2005) discussed risk within the notion of perception – that being, risk *is* a perception, and he acknowledges it is a theme common to pursuits labelled as “extreme”. Priestly (2012), when referring to climbing, stated:

There is perceived danger and there is real danger ... if your perception of danger is too low in a high-risk situation you are less likely to take steps to minimise the risk ... In the long run, a low perception of danger gives you a higher chance of having an accident.
(p. 46)

In Pederson’s study (1997), participants were asked to rank specific sports according to how “risky” they were deemed to be. The sports Pederson included to be ranked were those typically considered to fall within the realm of “extreme” sports. The findings ranked these sports from low-risk to high-risk as follows: downhill skiing, free diving, bungee jumping, rock climbing, motor racing, gliding, and concluding with sky diving as considered the most risky of the selected sports. This study goes some way towards highlighting how the notion of risk is entangled with biases; an argument supported by Hetland and Vitterso (2009), who stated; “not all of these activities are truly risk associated and the risk within the same category of activity can vary in intensity” (p. 156).

Zuckerman (1983) defined low risk sports such as golf, swimming or marathon running as those where although there could possibly be threats to health or injuries, there is little risk of serious harm. Zuckerman also outlined medium risk sports such as rugby, where risk of injury is quite possible but risk of death is very low, and high risk sports such as sky diving, car racing, free diving and downhill skiing as those where high physical risk exists which manifests in high levels of serious injury (1983). Zuckerman's work revealed the constructs around risk – that it is highly subjective and socially mediated by what is deemed socially acceptable; for example, it is considered acceptable to become a rifleman in the New Zealand Army, however - if deployed to a high conflict situation it could encompass a high risk of being killed or seriously wounded. The construct of risk is reinforced by Booth (2007) who proposed that risk carries socially constructed meanings. Booth argued for a shift in current thinking around risk engagement exists; from the choice to engage in activity with risk elements as an *outcome*, to participation in risk taking “for its own sake” (p. 294).

Boga (1988) queried if risk was ever-present or if changed depending on the context, which I argue holds merit, particularly as one develops skill (and confidence) in an activity. This was a consideration posed in a study on sky-divers by Celsi, Rose and Leigh (1993), where they argued that people who were deemed to be engaging in “risk-taking” sports/activities, were possibly not even aware they are pushing boundaries. Mustzkieta and Gembiak (2004) defined extreme (or high risk) sports as:

...sports which require extra original skills, courage and capacity of acting in a high health deterioration risk – including death risk – situation. Involvement in such activities means overcoming extreme external hardships, mental limits and related emotions.
(as cited in Guskowska & Boldak, 2010, p. 157)

The salient point from numerous studies (Blenner, 1993; Breivik, 1996; Kajtna, Tusak, Baric & Burnik, 2004; Mueller & Peters, 2008; Zaremski, Marusic, Zolotic, Bunjevac & Vukosav, 2008; Zuckerman, 2006;) is that risk-taking is a personal perception and is strongly linked to a “sensation-seeking” personality (Breivik, 1996); (again, factors linked to sensation seeking is outside the scope of this thesis).

The concept of risk is not solely the domain of extreme sports, but it is important to keep in mind that when people are seeking strong emotions and experiences from engagement with sport, recreational or leisure activities, it could be that those with a higher-risk component may be more attractive. This point highlights Mun's unpublished dissertation (2004), where it was argued that we must be cognisant of risk perception as a reflection of the social framework within which it is embedded.

There is a growing base of academic scholarship exploring the subjective nature of risk and the emerging commodification of risk (Salome, 2007; Stoddart, 2004; Thorpe, 2008); a very specific area of sociology and tourism literature that is beyond the scope of this thesis (but none-the-less valuable to touch on it here). Buckley (2012) considered the lure of the rush in engagement in

“risky” activities and discussed how it is the rush (the adrenalin factor) that possibly attracts people to certain activities rather than the risk it is perceived to represent.

Rosen (2007) examined the commercialisation of Mt Everest. She suggested, (given that risk can be packaged, marketed and to a certain extent played down), it is little wonder that places like Mt Everest (which carries a high level of risk to those who attempt to climb it lacking prior climbing experience), have become little more than over-priced tourist destinations to “knock off the bucket list”, rather than serious explorations into the limits of human endeavour. Rosen (2007) argued that current notions of what might constitute a “leisure and recreation” activity have infinitely changed.

I therefore felt it crucial to explore “risk” as a medium to unpack the meanings this held in the sport, recreation and leisure context. Skiing has been revealed as a high risk sport, therefore situating it amongst scholarly debate around other extreme sports seemed highly appropriate.

Comfort Zone

It could be said that a “comfort zone” is place dwelled within that offers familiarity, safety, and a perceived low risk. Studies that have explored the conceptual space that is the “comfort zone” such as Leberman and Martin (2002), often related it to “edgework” (as noted). Consequently, I suggest that being within one’s “comfort zone” is burgeoning on exploring the meaning of “risk” in people’s lives.

As risk is an individual perception (within a wider socio-cultural framework), the comfort zone has diverse meanings. It is the notion that a comfort zone must be *breached* in order to re-define one’s perception of risk, which has been the subject of some debate in academic literature (Brown, 2008; Leberman & Martin, 2002). There are numerous studies which highlight how experiences in the outdoors enable a *pushing of one’s boundaries* in settings that contain or control risk *enough* to auger a growing sense of confidence.

The personal growth that is suggested will occur through over-coming fears or anxieties, is possibly germinated *through* pushing one’s “comfort zone” (Brown, 2008). Often the concept of the “comfort zone” is presented in an outdoor education setting and has been the focus of personal development in some education settings (Zink & Leberman, 2001).

Some researchers (Beedie, 1994; Brown, 2008) have queried the use of risk settings as a platform for personal development, and argue the *process* of assuming risk may be more germane to pushing one’s comfort zone than the actual outcome of having *pushed*. Stoddart (2004) proposed “pushing” could include the physicality of pushing beyond one’s own physical boundaries, and it could also be the “pushing back” people may experience from nature.

Galat and Pudenko in their 2011 skiing movie “Ride the Planet”, offered notions of comfort zone pushing, as the athletes who skied at break-neck speeds discussed pushing their own limits.

Pushing in any sense implies there is a barrier holding one back that requires extension, or perhaps even improvement, rather than containment and stagnation. This film illustrated the concept of doing something beyond which one already does – that this perhaps is what the comfort zone is – a dalliance with difference – nature pushing back to extend us *beyond* what we normally experience.

Priestly (2012) discussed improvement in climbing as relating directly to one's perception of danger. Danger, fear, risk, anxiety could all be germane to being in or out of one's comfort zone (Brown, 2008), and as Priestly (2012, p. 46) further explained:

Even once you have identified which parts of a climb are safe to fall from it is difficult to reconcile the actual (low) danger with your natural perceived (higher) danger ... until you can reach a point where you can climb on lead with the same level of confidence and efficiency as you would on top-rope, your progression as a climber will be compromised.

Roil (2012) cited feeling “awesome” when she was pushed out of her comfort zone in a minor mountain climbing day trip. She described the push from the comfort zone, as being “forced”, perhaps highlighting that at times pushing through the comfort zone may not be voluntary. This is possibly one of the salient points in considering what it means to push a comfort zone. To push through would indicate the participant is aware of his or her boundaries as opposed to engaging in edgeworks, where Laurendeau (2006) found, participants consistently push whether or not they perceive boundaries or limits to exist at all.

Nalder (1995) examined increasing participants' awareness of when they were near or had reached their comfort zones in an experiential education context. Findings suggested an enriched experience of outdoor adventure could be gained once participants were aware of their personal boundaries. Berman and Davis-Berman (2002) have discussed the use of outdoor education camps for troubled youth to encourage movement beyond well embedded comfort zones. They found a positive correlation between such camps and enabling improvements in self-esteem and self-efficacy in these young people, but they do acknowledge there needs to be further studies.

Holford (2010) reviewed the intentions of outdoor education for learning, by explaining the comfort zone metaphor in her article. She asked the learner to:

Imagine a cleared space in the forest and a circle drawn with a rope. This is your comfort zone – the space where you are confident and at ease. This you can already do ... then another rope makes a circle around the first. The ring between the inner and outer circle is the “stretch zone” – the area of discovery, growth and risk – the space into which we must all step if we are to try something unfamiliar and expand our comfort zone. Beyond the stretch zone lies the panic zone, a place where no one wants to be. (p. 1).

Holford further elaborated, “with these simple concentric circles the outdoor education leader has established the common ground that connects all of us as unique learners” (2010, p. 1). Brown (2012) however called into question the over-use of outdoor-based risk and challenge settings as the panacea for stretching comfort zones in the education setting. He suggested

along with Cosgriff (2008) and Brookes (2003), that education providers must consider a re-evaluation of how to evoke improved outcomes without necessarily adopting the assumption that risk-engagement provides the only opportunity for growth.

There is much room to explore the growing literature around this topic in greater depth, as the “outdoor experience” can be a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. Considering the place risk occupies in many outdoor pursuits, the present study offers further exploration in seeking to understand how risk might be experienced for skiers in particular. The over-riding emphasis appears to be that experiences in some outdoor contexts may push participants beyond established comfort zones and into new realms of self-confidence. Some people may participate in higher risk activities as they may receive a sense of excitement, enjoyment and achievement in doing so.

Solitude

Solitude is perhaps an interesting concept that is both freeing and frightening. Whilst it is commonly represented as an ideal attainment in wilderness settings (Long, More & Averill, 2006), it has occasionally been described in a negative anti-social light as suggested by Hollenhurst and Jones (2001). Solitude can be thought of therefore, as proposed by Fetto (2003), as a state of being alone (and feeling lonely and isolated), or a more positive state that could range from reflective thought to intense feelings of connection with the world (Long, More & Averill, 2006). It has been identified in a large number of studies (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2002; Brooks, Wallace & Williams, 2006; Cole, 2011-2012; Hall, Johnson & Cole, 2007) pertaining to outdoor environments, that seeking solitude is a motive for many participants. However, Cole (2011-2012) also made it clear that one does not necessarily need to be in a natural setting to achieve this; “People vary in the experiences they seek and there is little evidence that the experiences sought depend exclusively on a wilderness to be realized” (p. 67).

Skiing is an inherently individual activity within a wider social sub-culture (Stoddart, 2004); however, the very public nature of ski areas means a skier is never truly isolated from another person (Stoddart, 2004). Gibbens and Ruddell (1995) suggested that skiers who seek solitude on the mountain may perhaps be more likely to be backcountry skiers and well-equipped to deal with the challenging environment that is in stark contrast to the relative sedate safety of a manicured ski “highway”. A backcountry skier may also consider him or herself to be a hiker, tramper or mountaineer (Broadbent, 2004) but with skis and skins (a covering that lines the bottom of the ski to enable up-hill walking known as “skinning”). Broadbent stated when introducing his “New Zealand Backcountry Skiing Guide” (2004, p. 8):

This book is intended primarily for the use of ski field skiers who are keen to extend themselves out into the backcountry, but also for mountaineers who are turning to skiing ... There is increasing interest and people are getting out there in greater numbers, but there is still plenty of solitude to be found in the hills, and lots of first tracks to be carved.

Broadbent's (2004) inference is that the backcountry holds a promise of new experience in its solitude. In his introduction Broadbent mentions "first tracks" where no one else has skied before. An unknown speaker in the snowboard documentary "Further" discussed how being alone in the mountains offers a solitude that highlights self-reliance:

This is the furthest north I've ever been ... this is the most isolated I've ever been. If anything happens out there you're pretty much on your own. The further out something is ... it just makes the over-all experience that much richer.
(Teton Gravity Research, 2012)

Marsh (2008) identified in a study of spiritual development of backcountry skiers, telemarkers and snowboarders that solitude was an important antecedent, which illuminates similar characteristics to experiences often reported by people in other outdoor contexts, such as hikers, trampers (Hall, 2001; Loeffler, 2004) and kayakers (Chang & Gibson, 2011).

White and Hendee in their (2000) study suggested there is a need for further research into the benefits of self-development, spiritual development and community development, and the link with solitude in wilderness settings. They argued in order for people to experience the attributes presented in such settings, these settings need to be maintained in the first place. This is reiterated by another unknown speaker in the *Jeremy Jones* film (2012), who acknowledged mountains as a place people can go to truly experience wilderness away from the throngs of everyday life. He explained:

To me true wilderness has to have ... unpredictability. Land remote beyond reckoning, any far off unattainable goal, any uncharted regions. All of us have a part of our soul that has a longing for that. To find it, in most parts of the world right now, you gotta go to the mountains.
(Teton Gravity Research, 2012)

Jeremy Jones himself elaborated further on this, explaining the overall sense of solitude as a positive notion, in terms of personal growth, awareness, connection with his surroundings and experiencing the immediacy of his world.

It happens the second I step foot into the mountains, it's like walking through a portal where instantly I'm in a different world ... what's going on with my computer ... iPhone ... it's totally irrelevant. Nothing in your pocket ... no credit card ... no keys ... if were able to be just like simple humans, be up there just focus and forget everything you know ... The second you go into the mountains ... all the rules, the laws and make up of society ... those all go out the window ... you're in this environment that is wild and untamed and everyone's equal out there.
(Teton Gravity Research, 2012)

Solitude in its barest form could potentiate freedom and possibly a deep sense of adventure. To be truly alone and at one with nature appears to inculcate a peace and calm that sometimes is unable to be attained through the everydayness of urban living. In the study by Bell et al (2007), they proposed that in the context of their study (Finland), the opportunity to experience aloneness for the Finnish is more likely to occur further and further from one's home. They assert: "The most sought after experiences are mainly enjoying the natural scenery, peace and quiet. These qualities are sought, if possible, near home, but increasingly they can be found only in rural and peripheral urban areas" (p. 22).

Wray (2009) suggested that one of the most common notions about solitude is the conscious seeking of getting away from other human beings as a way to restore themselves. It was suggested that this is more likely to happen in a natural outdoor setting, possibly due to such environments attracting a lesser density of people, therefore providing more likelihood of being alone. This was further reiterated by Hall (2001) who investigated the *solitude* experiences of hikers in wilderness settings. Findings indicated that people struggled to experience a true sense of solitude when encounters with other people were high.

It was noted that opportunities for solitude create moments of heightened awareness, that perhaps when just with oneself, the surroundings become more vivid. Cole and Hall (2008), however, claimed that to experience solitude, one does not necessarily need a wilderness context to experience it. They went on to say that whilst solitude appears to be valued as an outcome of being in nature or in the wilderness, it is not an *essential* element in an outdoor wilderness experience. This current research offers an opportunity to explore the context within which skiing occurs and if it holds relevance for skiers who participate to inculcate a sense of solitude in their lives.

Awareness of body movement and the gaze

There is a dearth of literature exploring the moving body within the wider context of sport and recreation. However, writings that *have* emerged are largely presented within a phenomenological framework and draw heavily on the works of van Manen (1990), Merleau-Ponty (1948/2004), Sartre (1956), Heidegger (1927/1962) and Van den Berg (1952); and offer an in-depth query into the experience of bodily movement and *being* in one's body.

The Moving

Skiing is a sport that is highly visual as it occurs in a public domain thereby opening one's body up for analysis by those around us, and commonly a self-analysis as we reflect on the skiing we have just completed. Sartre wrote of his experience on skis in his works "Being and Nothingness" (1956) which has been reflected on by Martin (2004). Sartre sought domination, a "conquering" of the snow and yet no trace of physical evidence of having skied it (Martin, 2010). Sartre's mind-set almost treated the body as if it did not exist, that the experience was devoid of corporeality, as highlighted in Askay's work (1999). Sartre also completed works on *dimensions of the body* (Van den Berg, 1952) where he explored the varying degrees in which we become or *are* aware of our body.

Johns, (2010) called upon Sartre's (1956) *dimensions* in his phenomenological exploration of the gymnastic moving experience and opens the reader into the world of the gymnast by relating these dimensions to "the body as object" (p. 118). In this, the body is seen in the separate parts which make up the whole, with each part having a specific purpose and function, that is: "the body in its subjective dimension" (p. 120), where the body is "passed over in silence". As Johns (2010) explained, the gymnast becomes so absorbed in the movements that he or she momentarily forgets the body and the awareness of the gaze of others on "the body

on display" (p. 121). Fleeting ownership of the gymnast's body is passed over to the onlooker. Van Manen (1994) also noted there are various modalities of body experience and he too draws heavily on the works of Sartre (1956), Van den berg (1952) and Merleau-Ponty (1964).

In relating this to skiing and the present study, the progression of skiing from beginner to expert is one that demands an intense awareness of one's body parts moving on snow (perhaps awkwardly or in a seemingly truncated manner), towards one being aware perhaps of the body as mediating between the mind and the snow beneath it. Csikszentmihalyi (1975) likened this to experiencing a sense of "flow", where "the person is too involved with the experience to reflect on it" (pp. 46-47). Flow is relevant in the sense of feeling *in control* (I relate this here to skiing). I argue that if one is in "the flow" whilst skiing, then one feels in control, at one with the snow, and able to meet the demands of the terrain.

It is in the reflecting of one moving, that one becomes aware of *having* moved. Van Manen (1990) offered much reflection on the experiencing of the world through one's body, which he termed the "Lived Body". Searle (1983) argued that we move the body in response to thinking about it or because we have a *reason* to do so. He might therefore have also suggested that in the reasoning, we have an awareness of moving *whilst* we are moving. Searle (1983) alluded that we do not pre-empt our movement but rather that it "happens" and then we may become aware that it has occurred. Heidegger (1982) could have taken this notion further and disputed Searle's *intention in action* by offering that only in *purposeful* action are we able to experience our *intention* to provoke movement.

Merleau-Ponty offered that we cannot separate out our body from its intention to act in the world, that we *are* our body (Askay, 1999). Merleau-Ponty (1964) consistently reminded us that through our body we perceive our way of being-in-the-world. Overgaard (2004) called to attention Heidegger's premise of being-in-the-world as a *whole* human being (p. 122), as an essential corporeality. However, Overgaard was quick to point out that, "... paradoxically, it is precisely in order to be able to capture adequately our bodily being-in-the-world that Heidegger feels compelled to avoid the theme of the body (in his *Magnus opus*)" (p. 118).

Thus Heidegger's thrust is Dasein relates to (Dasein being in its *beingness*) and is involved with the *things* around it, and is orientated (up, down, left, right) in a spatial relationship to these things (Overgaard, 2004). Breivik (2010) talked of the body falling in sky-diving, and uses a Heideggerian approach to analyse authenticity (as previously discussed). However, my point here is, Dasein, (in its falling towards), is a being-in-the world; it is orientated in a corporeal manner *towards* the earth and is falling relative to the spatial environment around it. Van den berg (1952) approximated with Merleau-Ponty's (1958/2005) writings that it is *through* our body that we experience the objects of the world and we do so by moving *relative* to the objects within our world (for example moguls on a ski slope).

Bunsell's paper (n.d; www.bl.uk/sportandsociety) provided a rich descriptive analysis of the moving body of a 400m runner, in which she offered an interesting account of the runner's awareness during his run. She penned:

Arms spread behind him; head held high, Jon leans forward as his chest hits the finishing line. It's all over. Only after the race has finished does Jon realise he had "blanked out", and cannot recall the last 100 meters of the race. Lost in "focused intensity" his mind has become free as his body automatically took over.
(n.d, p. 7)

Bunsell's offering draws us back to the arguments of both Heidegger (1927/1962) and Searle (1983); and certainly adds weight to Hockley and Allen-Collinson's phenomenological scholarship around the sporting body (2006), calling for more considered phenomenological descriptions of bodily movement.

The present study offers some insight into the embodied experience of movement on skis in a phenomenological approach that adds to the growing scholarship on lived experiences of being human.

The Looking

Van Manen's premise is the *corporeality* of the body (van Manen, 1990). That is, the body as body-object (Fuchs, 2003), and means our attention is *drawn* to our bodies if we perceive it to be somehow exposed to others. As Clark, (2012) noted:

As the chairlift ascends overhead, there is an awareness of the gaze of others down upon us. Such a gaze can lend itself to a fleeting feeling of awkwardness, or even perhaps urgency or panic, as we struggle to contain our own skiing for ourselves and not for the censorship of other people.
(July 27, para 3)

Robbins and Parlavecchio (2006) proposed a "Model of Embarrassment" developed through phenomenological analysis. In this study one significant emergence was that of the "unwanted exposure model of embarrassment" (p. 340) whereby the participants cited the "unwanted gaze" of others as evaluative, critical and judgmental. Such sudden cognition of unwanted eyes upon oneself manifests one's body as Sartre (1956) expressed it as, a "body-for-others". Johns (2010) here again called us into the world of Sartre by exploring awareness a sports person might have of an unwanted gaze upon them. Johns offered an erudite Sartrean analysis:

But the third dimension of the body comes into being when the mountaineer becomes aware that I am regarding him. However the look of the other may have differing effects upon the performer. Sartre suggests that at the moment that the mountain climber becomes aware that he is observed by others, the effect of being thus "objectified" may be detracting and take away from his performance. He knows that the other sees and criticizes just that which he himself must forget I order not to fail in his climbing.
(p. 121)

There are, as Hockley and Allen-Collinson highlighted in their paper (2006), "ways of seeing" (p. 9). Sartre (1956) concerned himself with dissecting the gaze of others upon us, and the moment when we realised we are being studied. As a ski instructor I might look upon my student in "a way" that looks for dysfunctional movement or improvement. A student may *want* my gaze in order to seek the feedback he or she requires for improvement; a gymnastics judge

in competition may search for irregularities in the performance of a gymnast; or as Devine (2009) suggested below, a swimmer might not become aware of her body as form, until an on-looker observes her (as her over-weight form). As Brosman (1987) asserted, Sartre (1956) was engrossed in relaying the uncomfortable and intensely disturbing notion of being observed by others (particularly when it is unwelcomed), and he saw it as being “robbed” of one’s ownership of an aspect of oneself.

Brosman (1987) described Sartre’s (1956) notions of looking, as if we use our *seeing* as a portal through which to *be* bodily in the world. Brosman also alerted us to Sartre’s ideas on observing oneself *being* as if “from an exterior vantage point” (p. 63). This brings me back to the work of van Manen (1994) “the body of self as self-observed” (p. 7), when our body falls under the scrutinizing gaze of our own eyes, which he suggested occurs when our body falls outside of its usual functioning, when it is “rebellious and unreliable ... when we feel sick or we are injured” (p. 8).

Devines (2009) phenomenological writing on the training experience reinforced the notion of the violation of another’s eyes upon the moving body when it is uninvited. An example of this is the woman who is aware of others around her when she is overweight and how if one’s training (physical moving) is disrupted, the “euphoria” of the experience is significantly reduced in that *knowing* of the “other’s” eyes.

There is ample room for phenomenological literature around embodiment to develop in the wider area of sport and recreation movement. Deep descriptive explorations of the lived experience of movement, provides profound insight into the *being-ness* of movement, (which possibly reveals the ontic nature of movement itself) and calls into question the relationship people have with everyday objects we encounter daily. The notion of *being looked at*, and of *looking at* another with a “way of seeing” links strongly to embodiment and is suggestive of a reflective element in bodily movement and the way we might begin to move once we sense the gaze of someone upon us, or how we “look at” movement approvingly. This present study considers the concept of being watched whilst skiing, and the watching of others that openly occurs on the ski slopes, and how this might impact on one’s skiing experience.

Restoration in “place”

Literature surrounding the value of specific places in which to recreate is rich and prolific, and construction of recreation and leisure “places” has been the topic of much academic research in recent years (Coleman, 2004; Fry, 2006; Sonnetag & Fritz, 2007; Veenstra, 2007) particularly as an awareness of creating opportunities to be in the outdoors has increased.

George Sheehan wisely said “running is not a philosophy, it is a place” (as cited in Mellow, 2012), reinforcing that the value of restorative recreation lies perhaps in what we *do* rather than *where* we do it. Going to a particular place to recreate can have restorative properties which Berman, Jonides and Kaplan (2008) argued in their study, can include both physiological and

psychological benefits. Sonnetag and Fritz (2007) argued further however, that it is not so much the venue (the *place*) of the restorative activity that provides the restoration, but the *activity chosen* to engage in. Their study used a questionnaire (closed-ended questions) to amass responses, thereby limiting the potentially exploratory capacity of such research, but highlighting the future value in gathering data through an in-depth interpretive approach to truly elicit meanings.

There is literature to suggest that people will return to specific areas to recreate due to the meanings attributed to those places by the people who frequent them. Jordan, Smith, Cox, Thompson, Jeon, Palacios, Patterson, Peel and Henderson (2009) conducted a study which explored the meanings people attribute to particular outdoor recreation areas. Themes emerged that indicated social connections and the opportunity to craft memories were valued, along with relaxation and escape on a personal level.

Seagrave (2000) has considered the “sports space” as the arena within which to “play” whilst Salome (2010) has explored through a qualitative approach, the rise of indoor sport and recreation spaces/places. Salome highlighted the growing indoor ski slope as an alternative to the authentic experience of being in the mountains on a natural slope, and she pondered if people would attribute the same meanings to a constructed “inauthentic” indoor artificial area as they do outdoor areas. This is an interesting study in that it questions the assumption that one must be amidst nature in an *authentic* outdoor setting in order to gain some of the assumed sought after benefits (solitude, freedom, escape).

Bollnow (1961) has unpacked “lived space” and refers to the way in which humans connect to a place (e.g., home) and orientate themselves towards that place. Such a place offers safety, freedom perhaps to be oneself but also a knowing and familiarity. Bollnow continued on to further deconstruct lived space and described “outer space” as being characterised by breadth, strangeness and distance (p. 35). Of distance he offered:

Altogether different is distance, which speaks to man from the blue mountains on the horizon. It is not threatening and hostile as strangeness, but enticing and alluring, endowed with indescribable charm. When man wearies of the ordinary existence, when the sameness of everyday threatens to constrict his life, then distance beckons him. The longing for distant places is the basic urge of all romanticism which by a strange twist makes the road to far places the way back to a forgotten origin.
(p. 35)

Bollnow’s description of distance is echoed in part by many of the narratives which express escape *from ... to* somewhere other than the common drudgery of everyday living. Commonly the escape *to* is a place that enables and inculcates a re-connection with oneself, offers freedom, a connection with nature, solitude and multitude of other feelings, meanings and sensations (MacNaghten & Urry, 2000). This is strongly reiterated by Korpela and Kinnunen (2011), who proposed in their study on nature as recovery from work stress, that communing with nature offers valuable respite from the everyday pressures of life. In their findings they stated: “Exercise and being outdoors during free time was evaluated as the most effective activity for recovery from work stress, and the time spent in interacting with nature was

mentioned as second in importance" (p. 10). It was made clear in their study however, that being outdoors did not necessarily equate with being in nature and that this could also occur in built-up areas. Conversely studies which *do* reinforce the value of natural and outdoor *re-creation* settings in the restorative process are noteworthy (Berman, Jonides & Kaplan, 2008; Chang, Hammitt, Chen, Machnik & Su, 2007; Kaplan & Berman, 2010), and highlight that this area remains one which will benefit from further studies through an interpretive paradigm.

Chapter summary

This discussion of the literature has highlighted that a strong body of work exists on risk associated with outdoor recreation pursuits particularly in the areas of "outdoor adventure" and sports/pursuits considered to fall under the genre of "extreme". Labelling such pursuits appropriately has shown to be problematic, highlighting the rising acceptance of risky sports as the "norm" (particularly within adventure tourism) thus, asking us to re-evaluate what indeed constitutes "risk" as a phenomenon.

Literature focusing specifically on skiing as a "risky" activity is lacking. However, there is a growing body of visual material, such as, magazines, films (full-length movies and documentary style), that are devoted to "extreme" skiing or back-country "big-mountain" experiences. These visually stunning works have provided wonderfully rich anecdotes of the lived experience of skiing and would provide a sound platform upon which to unpack these experiences further. Moreover, from a sociological perspective, there is ample room for deep analysis of big-mountain and extreme skiing discourse.

Engaging with risk lends itself to unpacking the "comfort zone" and its relationship to personal growth opportunities. Much of the literature pertaining to this topic is centred on the comfort zone in an outdoor education setting. Brown (2008) is a strong driver in terms of academic contributions in this area, and he maintains more research is needed to substantiate situating "risk" in an outdoor education context in order to inculcate personal growth (through overcoming fears) in young people. Moreover, the comfort zone is a concept well used to express the "pushing-oneself" aspect of extreme skiing in some visual works (e.g., STEEP). One salient point to arise from the literature is the comfort zone is highly individual, and may change depending on the context.

It has been recognised through some studies such as Schmidt and Little (2007) that a spiritual dimension may be a motivating factor for the leisure and recreation activities engaged in, and there appears to be an overall sense that the outdoors has much to offer in terms of re-connecting with one's deeper self. Perhaps allied to the spiritual dimension, is the desire for escape and freedom, which is cited in the growing body of literature pertaining to the outdoors. A major recurring theme to emerge from such literature is the need to escape "from" something and go "to" something or somewhere for a sense of freedom to be revealed. Hemphill and Smelter (2008) offered rich reading around the meaning of freedom, as has Straker (2007) who discussed Berlin's (1998) "negative" and "positive" freedom. Stoddart (2004) offered valuable

writing in his doctoral thesis centred on skiing, and he suggested “skiing embodies a natural freedom” (p. 19), which is inculcated in part by the environment and the socio-cultural context of the time.

Breivik (2010) perhaps offered the most relevant of interpretations of freedom as he unpacked authenticity using a Heideggerian influence. Breivik’s (2010) work centred on the experiences of sky-divers as they “fall” towards authenticity or inauthenticity, and provided a wonderfully descriptive analysis of the potential for authenticity to “free” us.

As a concept, *solitude* is a burgeoning area of research within outdoor leisure and recreation and it has been widely recognised in the literature that people actively seek to engage in moments of solitude, often in outdoor settings, as a way to unwind and de-stress from daily life. This is strongly related to “place” for restoration, or the place one goes to in order to feel restored and *re-created*. It has been shown that often such places are frequented alone (particularly if it *is* solitude someone is seeking) in order to connect with surroundings and experience the immediacy of one’s world. A notable point to come forth on solitude (and place) is, as Wray (2009) proposed, the deliberate separation of oneself from other humans as a pathway to restoration on a psychophysiological level.

In pertaining to sports-specific literature, studies that focus on embodiment, body self-awareness and the lived experience of sport-based movement are meagre. However, there remains much literature on the theoretical perspectives behind embodiment as offered by van Manen (1990), Merleau-Ponty (1948/2004), Van den Berg (1952), Sartre (1956) and Searle (1983). These writings deeply unearth and debate the experience of human movement, embodiment and awareness, and no doubt will become increasingly called upon for the evolving interest in sport and recreation literature.

By no means are the above themes exhaustive in terms of exploring the outdoor, sport, recreation or leisure experience. However, they do inform as to the more commonly noted reasons why people might engage in an activity and are germane to my pursuit of explicating what *it is* and what it *means* to ski.



*"When there's snow on the ground
I like to pretend I'm walking on clouds".*

Takayuki Ikkaku
(as cited in Carey & McGregor, p. 14, 2012-2013)

Chapter Four: Methodology

Phenomenology is a qualitative inquiry into lived experience. It is a way in which to return to an experience, to as Husserl might put it “the things themselves” (1936/1970). It is both a philosophy and a resolve to unearth the phenomena that *is* the lived experience sought. Crotty (1996) suggested that phenomenology is an approach through which we can come to understand the “subjective experience of the people it studies” (p. 3). It is important to grasp that whilst we can make assumptions or assertions about the *appearance* of things, “we can never come to know the things in themselves” (p. 38).

Van Manen (1990) asserted that phenomenology has its aims in an *original* experience (p. 31) and he asks “how can human science research be pursued?” (p. 30). To address this he offered:

1. Turning to the nature of lived experience: Here van Manen reminds us that lived experience (being a subjective experience) opens up multiple interpretations of the same phenomenon. In this study I have interviewed skiers who share *multiple ways* of knowing about what it means to ski.
2. Investigating experience as we live it: Here van Manen urges us to consider the nature of *being* experienced. I assert that reflection informs experience, and in so doing we may be able to come closer to grasping the nature of an experience. In my study, the participants create their own stories of their skiing experiences, and in so doing recognise the meaning skiing holds in their lives.
3. Reflecting on essential themes: In phenomenological research we are urged to delve beneath the outward appearance of “how a thing is” into “what it might be”. It is to be cognisant of “what shows itself” in order to understand the nature of a phenomenon. As a researcher with pre-understandings it would be undemanding to craft a narrative on what *I understand skiing to be* for those who ski, based upon my own experiences. It is through the process of reflection on what shows itself in the skier’s stories that the themes come into being, there-by a slow process of uncovering occurs. Finlay (2009) submitted that the first-person accounts with which we build our phenomenological enquiry should be “set down in everyday language” and should avoid “abstract intellectual generalisations” (p. 10), thus underlining the significance of descriptive lived experience.
4. The art of writing and rewriting: It is through interpretation that the researcher comes closer to understanding the nature of the phenomenon through the lending of written words to those spoken. The crux is *re-writing*. Through re-writing what has been written the researcher can unpack the deeper layers hidden in speech. In my study, skiers articulate *their* stories which I craft into written scripts. Here in lies the hermeneutic nature of my phenomenological research, as it is through the process of writing and *re-writing* that stories unfold which germinate into greater depth in a mode

that allows the “intention and meaning behind the appearances” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 9) to be understood.

5. Maintaining a strong and orientated relation: The crux of van Manen’s point here is to remain orientated to the research question by avoiding distractions which may lead the researcher down an unfruitful track. As a researcher wishing to unpack the lived experience of skiing, I have found it essential to focus on what is germane to my study. The study area is broad in that it straddles recreation, sport, tourism, leisure and adventure. By remaining strongly orientated to what I am asking, I have been able to draw essential themes from the data and reveal deeper meanings that constitute the skiing experience.
6. Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole: van Manen asked “What is it? What is this phenomenon in its whatness?” (p. 33). In my study I seek to unearth the *skiingness* of skiing; the nature of *what it is*. To be reflective in this process I must be able to see the study in its entirety – the overall *structure*; and I must also be *cognisant* of the parts that comprise that whole and ask myself if my methods are “the right fit” in order to extrapolate meaning from the data.

Diverse phenomenological approaches are employed in order to delve into the lived experiences of people (Finlay, 2008). However all approaches share, through an interpretive paradigm, the common purpose of exploring lived experience and the personal life-worlds in which humans exist. In the next chapter I will explicate the six activities van Manen (1990) offered the researcher in greater depth.

I bring to this study my pre-understandings of what it means to ski. I understand what *my* skiing means (I have elaborated on my fore-knowing in the next chapter). In seeking deeper explication of the skiing experience I required the stories of others who had skied also, to reveal the *lived* experience of skiing in a manner that retained an ontological perspective. Phenomenology as a methodology appeared germane to this objective in that it allows meaningful inquiry into the arcane truths of what skiing *might* be.

Why phenomenology for this study?

Phenomenology arose as a denunciation of positivism (Lavery, 2003) and seeks to grasp the “every day, inter-subjective world of respondents and how that lifeworld is constituted” (Schmidt & Little, 2007, p. 227). Van Manen spoke of the lifeworld as “the lived world as experienced in everyday situations and relations (1990, p. 101); it is *existential* in nature. A lifeworld then is situated in the interminable, yet universally historical in its common consciousness. The process of unpacking it is guided by a desire to understand how people construct meaning (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000) and how people experience the “things” that make up the lifeworld (Patton, 1999). Sartre (1956) provided this wonderfully resonant narrative of being on snow, as an example of existential phenomenology:

I sink into the snow up to my knees; if I pick some up in my hands, it turns to liquid in my fingers; it runs off; there is nothing left of it ... To ski means not only to enable me to make rapid movements and to acquire a technical skill, nor is it merely to play by

increasing according to my whim the speed or difficulties of the course; it is also to enable me to possess this field of snow. At present I am *doing something to it*. That means by my very activity as a skier, I am changing the matter and meaning of the snow.
(p. 603)

Van Manen (1990) proposed that a phenomenological text finds its audience by inducing wonder (p. 5). In tempting the reader to fall into the text it must engender a “questioning wonder”. Existential phenomenology, if well written draws the reader in to a world that he or she recognises and becomes immersed in.

The majority of studies in skiing participation are based within the positivistic paradigm, that is, attempts have been made to *measure* aspects of skiing in order to then construct an understanding of what has been measured, for example, skier satisfaction of services (Clark & Maher, 2007). In contrast, the research for this study has called upon an interpretive paradigm, and I have chosen to capture the participant’s experiences through an empirical descriptive phenomenology, where I ask, “What *is* the lived experience of skiing?” What *does count* as phenomenon? What is the *meaning* of skiing?

The “fledgling” phenomenologist

How do I *know* that my research is phenomenological? My foray into the world of phenomenology as a fledgling phenomenologist has enabled me to dive into a deeper level of thinking around the *skiing-ness* of skiing. First I seek to understand what it means to ski; I seek to grasp the “whatness” of skiing, not the essence or core, but the “*whatness*”. Through this, “skiing” has slowly revealed itself as an *interpreted* existence; skiing being what skiing “might” be (that without equipment, or snow, it would cease to exist).

In addition, my bias and pre-understandings around the “world of skiing” presumed the outward appearance of the sport to be *the nature* of the sport itself. Although I have sought to come closer to understanding what skiing is, the true nature remains elusive, as it is a uniquely individual activity from which assumptions can be drawn (through a shared knowing amongst skiers) about what it is.

Finlay (2009) asked us to put aside (in the Husserlian sense) and “refrain from importing external frameworks and setting aside judgements about the ‘realness’ of the phenomenon” (p. 8). However Heidegger made it clear that “phenomenology” means “to let that which shows itself to be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself” (1927/1962, p. 58). In other words, we each bring with us a prior *knowing* about a thing, whether or not we have ever directly experienced it.

Through phenomenology the deeper meanings, layers and characteristics of the thing can slowly permeate through in order that we may come to “see them in such a way that they show up as they really are” (Wrathall, 2005, p. 9). Thus phenomenology as a framework and

underlying basis from which to present my study, fittingly attempts to express understanding about *being-ness* in the world of skiing.

Is it phenomenology?

Finlay (2009) argued that there is debate around how we “know” we are engaging correctly with phenomenology as a method and that some scholars may query the criteria of “rich descriptions of lived experience” (p. 7). She goes on to submit: “phenomenological research is phenomenological when it involves both rich description of the lifeworld/lived experience, and where the researcher has adopted a special open phenomenological attitude” (p. 8).

Heidegger posited (Wrathall, 2005), that in order to come to know things as they are, we must be situated in the world as an ontological being – as Dasein. In this sense, this requires of us (humans) a recognition that we always find ourselves within this world and in so doing, we bring our existential *beingness* with us into any situation.

Van Manen (1990) held “lived experience is the starting point and end point of phenomenological research” (p. 36). He emphasized that without language there would be no means through which to express the nature of lived experience, and thereby as a methodology which seeks to understand the everyday lived world, it is interpretive. Interpretation presents a distance from the data, and this is why the phenomena as ontological in nature, appears to both reveal itself and retreat. In this sense we can have an awareness of it (the experience) but it is a reflexive awareness where all at once the data falls back on itself. Dilthey offered:

A lived experience does not confront me as something perceived or represented; it is not given to me, but the reality of lived experience is there-for-me because I have a reflexive awareness of it, because I possess it immediately as belonging to me in some sense. Only in thought does it become objective. (p. 223, as cited in van Manen, 1990, p. 34)

Towards hermeneutic phenomenology

Edmund Husserl [1859-1938] is universally considered as the “father” of phenomenology.

Husserl was strongly influenced by Franz Brentano [1838-1917] but even though he “borrowed” the term “phenomenology” from Brentano (Crotty, 1998), Husserl’s views differed greatly from Brentano’s and were more developmentally complex.

Husserl could not quite part with his positivist roots and lived in (as Crotty argues) a “mathematized world” (1998, p. 27). He proposed that in order to understand something we must suspend (or bracket out) all prior *knowing* of that thing through a process that became known as “phenomenological reduction” (Dowling, 2007, p. 132). His focus thus was to understand the *essence* of a phenomenon in its archaic structure. Husserl thus asked in his phenomenology that we: “Set aside all previous habits of thought, see through and break down the mental barriers which these habits have set along the horizons on our thinking ... to learn to see what stands before our eyes” (Husserl, 1931, p. 43 as cited in Crotty, 1998, p. 80).

In this study I am seeking to unpack the meaning constructed from experiences of skiing (without suspending pre-conceived notions or understandings of skiing). As Crotty (1998)

proposed, meaning is not discovered (as an unseen, unknown entity waiting in the wings), but is *constructed*. Therefore I *cannot* set aside my reflective conscious understandings of skiing, as I already *know* the cultural context within which skiing is situated.

Heidegger's hermeneutics

Husserl's student Martin Heidegger [1889-1976] whilst acquiescent of Husserl's concern with lived human experience, rejected phenomenological reduction (Gadamer, 1985) in favour of existential "being-in-the-world". Heidegger saw this as an expression of how humans live as ontological beings and have an inherent "thereness" which pre-supposes our relationship with the world.

In this sense he saw the pre-understandings and understandings of a phenomenon as not distinct from one another, and in so doing Heidegger offered phenomenology the "hermeneutic circle"; that we can come to understand the nature of something through our reflective relationship to it. Crotty (1998) suggested the hermeneutic circle is one where we "understand the whole through grasping its parts, and comprehending the meaning of the parts through divining the whole" (p. 92).

"Hermeneutics" in its broadest sense is the "theory and practice of interpretation" (van Manen, 1990, p. 179). It has a rich history with its roots embedded within the interpretation of ancient biblical texts (Crotty, 1998). Crotty stated (1998, p. 96), that for Heidegger, "hermeneutics is the revolutionary aspect of 'phenomenological seeing' whereby existential structures and then Being come into view".

Van Manen (1990) conveyed that Heidegger's hermeneutics was an interpretive phenomenology, whereby the lived experience offered is not so much re-experienced through the *reading* of it (seeing the worlds and understanding what it is telling the reader), but *interpreting* through remaining cognisant of what the text might *reveal* to the reader. It is the interpretation of what participants in my study have expressed to me that renders it *hermeneutic* phenomenology.

As I seek rich detail in the participant's stories, hermeneutic phenomenology will allow for the expression of everyday experiences articulated through everyday language, without embellishment or an expectation of the *whole* meaning to reveal itself initially. This methodology allows interpretation of meaning from experiences to be presented in such a way that the reader is able to recognise him or herself in the story (the phenomenological "nod"); they are touched or moved when the story reveals a recognised lived experience.

Lindseth and Norberg (2004) articulated that being touched or moved by meaning "leads us to the truth, to lived truth as opposed to correctness, and it connects us to the ontological level of the lifeworld" (p. 148). Hermeneutic phenomenology enables me as a researcher to participate

in creating data through personal reflections on skiing which I argue have added depth to my study through the co-construction of shared knowing.

The dialogic nature of hermeneutic phenomenology will require that I return to narratives of the participants multiple times in a reflective unveiling of what their stories might be revealing about the nature and “whatness” of skiing. As Lavery (2003) suggested, only through a fusion of text, context, participants, researcher and readers; will a meaningful interpretation arise.

Hans Gadamer [1900-2002] essentially continued on and advanced the work of Heidegger (Dowling 2007). He conceptualized pre-understandings as a “horizon” and believed the researcher’s immersion in the interpretation of phenomena to be a central focus in coming closer to locating meaning from lived experience. Moreover, Gadamer insisted that through the traditions of language, humans come to understand their “common human consciousness” (Dowling, 2007, p. 134). Thus for Gadamer, hermeneutics is historically situated and reconciles existing and bygone ‘horizons’. I have not called upon Gadamerian phenomenology as a central methodology in my research, but his contributions in locating my previous understandings amidst current *knowings* are by no means redundant in my study.

Van Manen [b. 1942], a contemporary phenomenologist (Dowling, 2007), was heavily influenced by the works of Heidegger and French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty [1908-1961]. Merleau-Ponty was concerned with “corporeality”, that is, the way in which human consciousness dwells within the body (1948/2004; 1958/2005; 1964) and thus experiences the lifeworld. Van Manen (1990, p. 101) spoke of the *lifeworld* existentials (i.e., themes) of: lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality), which he claimed “belong to the fundamental structure of the lifeworld” (p. 102). Such existentials can illuminate the experiences of skiers in this study by situating them within these themes. For example I may refer to the *lived body* in the way an inexperienced skier experiences the physical awkwardness of his or her body on snow for the first time; or I might examine the fluidity an expert skier labels “being in flow” or “being in the zone”. I might then employ *lived space* to unpack what “the zone” actually is.

Van Manen’s (1990) scholarship on the lifeworld existentials has been frequently cited as a guiding phenomenological approach particularly in the area of health sciences (Fielden, 2003; Hilton & Henderson, 2003), and more recently in literature which seeks to unpack meaning in sport, the outdoors and movement (I use these terms broadly) (Brymer, 2005; Nielson, 2009; Wattchow, 2004). The *oeuvre* of van Manen along with other phenomenologists, Heidegger, Gadamer, Merleau-Ponty and French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre [1905-1980] can be called upon to dwell and engage with a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to my study, as these notable thinkers enable me to extend interpretive insight into the lived world of skiing.

Chapter summary

I draw on the writings of van Manen (1990) and other phenomenological philosophers to ground my study in an interpretive approach to the “beingness” and “whatness” of skiing. As van

Manen explained “phenomenological research aims at establishing a renewed contact with original experience” (p. 31). Through a hermeneutic approach and immersing myself in the rich narratives of the participants in my study, I was able to remove the “fuzz” and layers of what skiing could be or is assumed to be; and reveal what it is.



*"There is neither heaven nor earth,
only snow, falling incessantly".*

Hashin
(as cited in Carey & McGregor, p. 20, 2012-2013)

Chapter Five: Method

The following chapter reconciles the methods I have adopted in this phenomenological study. Van Manen (2002) held: “If we understand phenomenological method not as a controlled set of procedures but more modestly as a “way toward human understanding” then it may be possible that someone can lead us a way to it or into it” (p. 249).

To enable a “way toward human understanding”, I have been mindful that the methods I employed were germane to an interpretive phenomenological approach. Smythe, Ironside, Sims, Swenson and Spence (2008) suggested that a researcher remain open and reflexive through the practice of enacting methods; that being compelled to rush in to a systematic process-driven account could possibly disrupt the openness that is fundamental to phenomenological method. The authors claim: “Method, or ‘the way’ must also embrace Heidegger’s understanding of Dasein as being-there, being-open, being-in-the-play, going with what comes, awaiting the moment of understanding” (p. 1392).

Thus, in highlighting the methodological structure of my study; the ethical considerations that were essential to consider, the junctures with which I selected participants and curtailed possible risk, gathered and analysed data, I can offer a robust method which embraces rigour, credibility, dependability and acknowledges my prior understandings.

Ethical Considerations

Moustakas (1994) urged that when a researcher engages in human science research, basic tenets of ethical principles must be considered. One can never be certain how participation in research will affect a participant, therefore it is essential to recognise potential vulnerabilities. Initially I explored the AUT Ethics Knowledge Base (<http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics/ethics>) and sought to understand the implications of this for my study. Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) provides guidelines grounded in an awareness of possible outcomes that may expose participants (emotionally or physically) to risk as a result of research. Consequently AUTEC observes several underlying principles which are central to human science research and which I remained highly cognisant of during my research. The principles are as follows:

Key Principles:

- Informed and Voluntary consent;
- Respect for rights of privacy and confidentiality;
- Minimisation of risk;
- Truthfulness, including limitation of deception;
- Social and cultural sensitivity, including commitment to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti O Waitangi;
- Research adequacy;

- Avoidance of conflict of interest.

Other Relevant Principles:

- Respect for vulnerability of some participants;
- Respect for property (including University property and intellectual property rights).

(Retrieved December 5, 2012 from: <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics>)

Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti O Waitangi

I consulted with the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) Ethics Advisor prior to my research proposal submission, with regard to conceivable Maori cultural issues. Whilst I identified that there may be some cultural findings that could arise through the study, I did not specifically target Maori or any other cultural groups. However, the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti O Waitangi (Partnership, Participation and Protection) remain an inherent aspect of conducting ethically sound research in New Zealand and formed the basis for a relationship of respect between myself as researcher, and the participants in my study.

The Principles

Partnership:

An integral part of any research, partnership is essential to research aims. The stories and time that participants shared were deeply respected and I engaged in a process of reflection throughout the research to ensure I was interpreting the lived experiences of participants in a way that was germane to any cultural values they disclosed. I also remained reflexive toward my own values and beliefs, my cultural heritage and how these could potentially impact on the interpretation I offered.

Participation:

The AUT Ethics Knowledge Base asks the researcher; “How does my research design enable a full, reciprocal and free participation by everyone involved?” Participation in my study was completely voluntary and was clearly expressed in the “Participant Information Sheet” I provided each potential participant, along with the “Consent” form. There were no incentives to participate which emphasized the voluntary nature of the study, and all aspects of the study – what it entailed, the likely structure, the timeline and participant expectations were fully disclosed prior to consent being given.

Protection:

How I practiced participation protection in my study will be discussed in more depth as a separate section in this chapter. In pertaining directly to the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti O Waitangi, I remained attentive to protecting the values and rights of participants in this study. Returning mindfully to the tenets of the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti O Waitangi throughout the research enabled me to reflect on the nature and characteristics of a partnership; one of the fundamental values in a partnership is respect. In respecting all parties involved in the research journey, I was engaging in a reflective process of protection.

Ethical approval

My application for ethical approval to commence my study was made to AUTC, following the standard application process, which included the completion of EA8 “Application For Ethics Approval For Low Risk Research Projects”, as it was identified the nature of my study presented no ethical risk to participants.

Although the challenges presented in human science research can be at times both complex and dynamic (van Manen, 1990) due to its very subjective nature, my study sought to explicate and come nearer to understanding a human experience of a phenomenon through the method of interviewing, and as such presented no physical danger to participants. Ethics approval was thus granted from AUTC on May 28, 2009 (See Appendix A)

Confirming confidentiality

Participants in research have the right to anonymity which LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (1998) proposed exists when a participant’s identity cannot be linked through his or her particularised responses. Confidentiality denotes that separable identities of participants cannot be coupled with information they have disclosed and personal information will not be accessible to the public.

Venerating personal stories as a disclosure of lived experience compelled me to safeguard any identifying features of participants. All details pertaining to maintaining anonymity and confidentiality were clearly outlined in the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B), along with details of how, where and for how long materials related to my study would be stored.

I ensured confidentiality through the use of participant pseudonyms along with removing details such as age and place of residence in order to reinforce participant protection. However, the skiing community within New Zealand is relatively small and close-knit. I did explain to all participants that although I could take every possible action to ensure they were not identified as participants in this study, I could not control if they chose to identify themselves to other skiers as having participated.

One further approach to reduce identification of individual participants was to interview them separately rather than in a group setting. This method for gathering stories allowed participants to disclose what they desired in a safe context where only I was privy to our conversation. The individual interview also emphasized the participant’s right to determine what private information was shared or suspended.

All transcribed stories, consent forms, and any other identifying information remained in strict confidence between myself as researcher, the participant and my supervisors (of which there were two), as fully disclosed on the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B)

All written material, electronic material and audio material was maintained as strictly confidential, and access was only available to me (as researcher) and my two supervisors. Electronic copies of participant transcripts have been stored on a password protected computer at AUT and will be destroyed after storage of six years. All electronic data held will similarly be destroyed after six years, including audio-based voice recordings which will be erased to protect the identity of participants.

Engaging in research should be a beneficial experience for those involved. Benefiting for the purpose of extracting information without regard for fundamental human rights is ethically unsound and is the antithesis to the tenet Moustakas (1994) reminded us of; “do no harm”. I felt it vital therefore, to balance my need to meet the aims of the study, with the wellbeing of the people involved.

To mitigate potential issues that may arise, participants were offered debriefing sessions after interviews if they deemed it necessary (AUT offer three free sessions of counselling through AUT Health and Counselling). No participant undertook this offer. Additionally, I felt it important to be aware of reading how participants were managing the conversational interview and if they needed time to stop and re-collect their thoughts or perhaps, time to reduce any distress as a result of stories disclosed.

Participants were also afforded the opportunity to appraise transcripts once their stories were transcribed. At this juncture they could opt to revise or remove segments of their stories if they so desired.

Selecting participants

Selecting participants for my study was grounded in my deep passion and love for the sport of skiing. I had hoped and assumed people would share similar experiences to the ones I had amassed over the years as a skier. However, to enable a fuller and deeper understanding of the experience of skiing, I required a more balanced approach to developing my understanding of its nature.

Selecting participants therefore presented as an important component to explicating the deeper meanings of skiing in the lives of those who ski. Laverty (2003) asserted that the aim of participant selection in a hermeneutic phenomenological study is to select those who have the experience pertaining to the intentions of the study and that they ideally be diverse enough from one another to enable a rich array of unique stories of the phenomena to unfold.

Jones (2002) suggested that qualitative researchers be mindful of the question that directs and steers the study when establishing who will provide plentifully resonant data. As the present study sought to explicate lived experiences of skiers, selecting participants was based not on numbers but on the quality and depth I was hoping would be revealed through their stories. Smythe and Giddings (2008) asserted that participant number is best founded on methodology

type, expert advice (supervisors can play a large role here along with researcher who are well-versed in the methodology), and a “felt sense of knowing when there is enough quality data” (p. 18).

How and who

I was guided in selecting participants by the following criteria:

1. Participants were to be selected from a variety of ski areas from around New Zealand. I rationalised this approach with a need to contextualise possible skiing experiences which may distinguish one ski area from another. For example, a small club field may elicit different experiences from someone who has only ever skied in a large commercial area.
2. Participants were to be selected based upon current participation, skill and ability level within skiing to ensure a well-rounded representation of people who skied (I sought a balance of beginners, intermediate and expert skiers).
3. I aimed for an even balance of male versus female skiers.
4. Participants were to be those who would be able to clearly, honestly and openly articulate their very personal stories of skiing.
5. Participants were required to be over the age of 20.

I decided upon a three-fold approach to recruit participants. Five to eight participants were initially intended to be recruited through “convenience” sampling in order to first identify skiers known to me who may have been interested in participation.

LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (1998) recommended convenience sampling as advantageous for qualitative researchers as an undemanding way to gain participants. The disadvantage of this type of sampling however, becomes one of bias where participants may self-select, raising questions of motivation for participation. Given that I was only intending to use this as a “point of contact” for further sampling, I elected to continue with convenience sampling until such time as the convenience sample recommended other potential participants. I approached skiers known to me from the local ski area where I lived and worked to gather the convenience sample. Some of these skiers were on the committee of the local ski area, and through word of mouth they communicated to other committee members that I was interested in recruiting participants for a study on the lived experience of skiing.

This became a “snowball” sample which LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (1998) suggested as a method which “takes advantage of social networks and the fact that friends tend to have characteristics in common” (p. 262) and can lead to recommendation of others with analogous criteria. Some people who had originally been approached as a convenience sample provided me with contact details of people they considered to be appropriate participants who were interested in participating.

From snowball sampling a “purposive” sample was developed which LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (1998) advocated as an “increasingly common strategy in which the researcher’s knowledge of the population and its elements is used to handpick the cases to be included in the sample” (p. 255). I retained one participant from my original convenience sample, whilst the others were gained through the purposive sample which eventuated. Potential participants who had expressed interest through the snowball sample were contacted and details of the research intention were discussed with them. If they continued to express interest I provided them with the Participant Information Sheet and Expression of Interest form (refer to Appendix C) which they had time to consider before signing a Consent Form (Appendix D). No potential participants were coerced into my study, and as participation was voluntary there was no cost to them, nor did they expect to be paid for participation.

Initially I was concerned that I would not have enough numbers to elicit enough usable data. However I quickly came to recognise the rich material I was gifted from each interview. Consequently (and bearing in mind this is a Master’s thesis), my resulting number was a sample five of participants - three male and two female skiers who ranged in age from 40 to 67.

All the participants were skiers of above average experience, one was a ski instructor, one raced, and the remaining three were recreational skiers. Of the three recreational skiers, one was an active back country skier. That is, the opportunity to ski “off-piste” away from the main groomed trails and into un-patrolled terrain was taken at every opportunity. This particular skier then became responsible for his own personal safety and carried specialised avalanche equipment (transceiver, radio, avalanche probe and shovels) wherever he skied. Two skiers “dabbled” in off-piste, venturing off when conditions were suitable, but skied mainly on accessible terrain within the confines of the patrolled ski area. Conversely the skier who raced, avoided off-piste skiing and skied mainly on groomed trails and used this as an opportunity to develop race technique.

I felt this sample would adequately represent a cross-section of different “approaches” to skiing. However, I was mindful that it did not represent skiing ability as there were no beginners in the study and all skiers had over 20 years skiing experience. This certainly is worthy of further research in the future (the beginner experience of skiing) as one could suppose this sample does *not* reflect the general skiing population (my *assumption* being that the general skiing population would fall into the advanced-beginner to the advanced-intermediate category).

A further notable aspect of this sample was that all participants had a strongly identified passion for the sport and willingly participated in the study. I recognised the inherent bias in this notion of an explicit passion for the sport. I did consider that this may have reflected in the resulting sample, that being, they are highly passionate skiers more likely to *want* to talk about their experiences compared to those who have not developed as skiers or those who do not see it as a passion? Moreover, I did reflect upon the method of snowball and purposive sampling, that my resulting sample was skiers who were informed by *other* skiers of my study. Because of the

social networks inherent within skiing circles, I recognised the possibility of skiers having similar socio-economic backgrounds and therefore possibly more generic skiing experiences.

The ski instructor in my study, who earned his income from the snow, possibly represented the “odd one out” in this sample. Additional to selecting a sample that would best elucidate the meaning of skiing I had to be cognisant of my own position and how this may influence what I was seeking to unpack.

Germane to phenomenological research, I acknowledged my own biases but also remained reflexive of the stories each participant owned. That in the sharing of these stories (regardless of an explicitly articulated passion for skiing), there lay a shared knowing, a shared understanding that perhaps the sampling criteria was best able to elucidate.

Gathering data

Van Manen (1990) stated that “in phenomenological research the emphasis is always on the meaning of lived experience” (p. 62) and he reminded us that “the ‘data’ of human science research are human experiences” (p. 63). Whilst I thought I knew what skiing was, I recognised the only way I could meaningfully develop in my understanding was to gather the experiences of other people who skied. Keeping in phenomenological tradition; whilst I may grow a deeper understanding of what skiing is, I may never truly come to know what it *means*, thus “data gathering” asks me to remain orientated to my research question and a knowing that I might barely scrape back the surface of the true nature of skiing.

The unstructured “conversational” interview

To stay orientated to my research question and remain close to the phenomenon required that I “capture the stories” (Grant & Giddings, 2002) of the participants. I also acknowledged the inter-subjective relationship with participants, that we had shared knowings, and that in a sense we spoke the “same language”. A conversational interview would best enable me to get as close to “the thing itself” (Grant & Giddings, 2002) as possible and would facilitate a slow articulation of stories as phenomena.

Dahlberg, Dahlberg and Nystrom (2008) argued that an appeal to come closer to understanding phenomena is “reason enough for research interviews” (p. 184). They suggested interviews can be seen as “collaboratively produced narratives that are not unlike everyday conversations that are open dialogues of carnal intersubjectivity” (pp. 185-186). As Jones (2002) submitted, “clearly, how data is collected influences what can be known, experienced and told by the researcher” (p. 467).

Van Manen (1990) reminded us that in phenomenological research we must be cognisant of attempting to separate out data collection from data analysis, as these two courses of action often occur simultaneously. He also alerted us to the participant as a co-constructor of

knowledge, as a collaborator in the hermeneutic research interview process. In this there exists a concurrent “gathering of and reflecting on lived experience material” (p. 63).

The how

Participants were informed on the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B) that I would gather data through in-depth unstructured interviews that could last anywhere from 45 minutes to two hours (this of course was entirely participant-lead). The place of the interview was of the participants choosing, somewhere they would feel safe and comfortable in, and somewhere that was conducive to a conversational atmosphere.

Two participants chose to be interviewed in café-style settings which proved to be relaxing, informal, and facilitated an atmosphere of equity. However these settings also proved to be marginally noisy and thereby distracting. One participant asked to be interviewed at his place of employment as this was the easiest way for him to be involved. This did require that I travel some distance to the city he resided in, however his office was a welcoming safe environment that afforded us the privacy needed to conduct the interview without distractions. Two participants chose to be interviewed in their own homes, which was ideal in terms of eliciting a relaxed open dialogue.

The interviews were digitally recorded using two hand-held voice recorders. The advantage of voice recorders was that if the participant wished for a portion of the conversation to be deleted, it could be done so immediately. Additionally the voice recorder is unobtrusive and captures immediacy in the inter-subjective relationship between researcher and participant.

Dahlberg, Dahlberg and Nystrom (2008) argued the way in which interview questions are structured is vital to enable phenomena to be revealed. I was initially nervous about how to begin each interview and I discovered that after initial “warm-up chit-chat” had dissolved, it became easier to guide each conversation with the open-ended prompt “tell me about your first experience of skiing”.

Dahlberg et al (2008) argued that the opening dialogue between researcher and participant should be simple and clear to enable a welcoming into the interview, almost as an invitation into a familiar world. Van Manen (1990) explained that the opening question or prompt in the conversational interview needs to reflect the underpinning question that is directing the research in the first place. He urged for a strong orientation to a focused or underlying question that propels the interview, rather than leaning on the interview to elucidate the research question.

As interviews progressed, it was often not necessary to ask questions; the conversations would unfold unaided. Occasionally if I required clarification on an aspect of the conversation, I would ask if the participant could elaborate by prompting them to delve deeper into the initial response. For example, when asked to elaborate on her self-analysis whilst skiing, a participant responded by describing how she knew she had performed a “lovely big turn” because “it felt

good". I then prompted further conversation around this by asking "what was it about it that made it feel good?"

Van Manen (1990) suggested however: "Often, it is not necessary to ask so many questions. Patience or silence may be a more tactful way of prompting the other to gather recollections and proceed with a story" (p. 68). With this in mind, I was aware of the need to allow stories to reveal themselves in their own time. Participants sometimes need "space" in which to think and recall, and the element of where a participant's memories go cannot be controlled by the researcher.

During each interview, I also wrote key words or questions I felt were pertinent to re-visit if possible. The interviews were guided by an atmosphere of shared reflection over lived experiences of a sport we all loved and lived for. I was mindful however that these were the participant's lived experiences, not mine.

The recorded interviews with each participant were transcribed in their totality. I had two different people transcribe an interview each, simply because both of these particular interviews were over 90 minutes in length and due to time constraints I elected to transcribe the three remaining interviews that were shorter in length. Transcribing the three interviews was invaluable for me in that I *re-listened* to them; I felt more connected to the stories rather than simply hearing them. As phenomenological research aims to come as close as possible to the lived experience, I started to gain a sense of the ontological nature of what each participant disclosed as I listened whilst transcribing. Each completed transcript was reviewed for corrections by each participant. I asked that they read and review them within a week and make any changes, corrections or omissions they felt necessary prior to returning them back to me. Up to this point they were still able to withdraw completely from the study if they desired. No participants made corrections, alterations or omissions to their transcripts.

Additionally to interviewing participants, I also viewed several documentary style skiing movies which captured a sense of what skiing means to those who participate. I had no intention of analysing the movies *per se*, but rather saw the potential in augmenting and scaffolding my growing understanding of the deeper meanings of skiing. There are, however, extracts from these documentaries with my data chapters because they resonated with my findings.

I also kept a journal of some of my own skiing experiences and used these in my findings chapter. I found in journaling my experiences I was able to somehow distance myself from my ways of knowing about skiing, from my skiingness, and hover over the text I had written as if I was seeing it from another view.

Van Manen (1990) submitted that journals may, "contain reflective accounts of human experiences that are of phenomenological value" (p. 73). I submitted parts of my journal as data

as it enabled me, through the reflective nature of writing, to come closer to understanding the phenomenon.

The analysis

Acknowledging bias and pre-understandings

My study is phenomenological. I seek the “whatness” of skiing. To do so requires a marrying of my prior understandings with the experiences of people who ski to come *towards* deeper understanding. Stanley (2007, p. 266) offered:

Phenomenology asks that we take our own experiences seriously: It is a project that aims to engage ourselves and language authentically to speak to the world as opposing to speaking of the world. In doing so, one engages in an on-going study of the lifeworld, that is, “the world” as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize, categorize, or reflect on it.

Prior to data gathering I was interviewed by my supervisors to reveal my previous understandings of the lived experience of skiing. Finlay (2009) argued that researchers should *not* pay specific attention to their previous understandings, and researchers should view the data with an objective eye, that is, view *the things themselves*. However, in *doing* hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher welcomes prior knowing, as it is considered unlikely they can be “bracketed” out (Smythe, 2000). In the *knowing* that the experiences I had were my “truths” of skiing, I was able to acknowledge I brought these truths with me into data analysis. Donalek (2004) advised “research is not truly phenomenological unless the researcher’s beliefs are incorporated into the data analysis” (p. 516).

In the analysis of findings, I acknowledged and remained reflexive of my “point of view”; the lens through which I view skiing. This lens was constructed of memories of childhood skiing with my father; of working as a ski instructor; of teaching my children how to ski, and of developing my own skiing and re-learning to ski after a break of two decades. It was also constructed from a love of mountainous environments, of memories of my Grandfather “yarning” about his adventures into the mountains he loved, of a background in the outdoors, of a yearning for lofty heights and an outlook from which to “view”, and from an inherent *knowing* that to ski is to engage with the aesthetic.

I welcomed my experiences as a skier and the way this situated me within the context of this study, as a *skier* talking to *skiers* about what skiing *might* be. Some of the pre-knowing I brought with me into the researcher-participant relationship augured a respectful “silence”. A silent understanding that we both “knew” the *world* of skiing, what it is like to *move* amongst that surreal whiteness, how we (as skiers) *look* at skis as potential to be “the skier” that we are, how our hearts lift as the thousand different snow-flakes fall, and how we *know* what this means. I *know* what it is to feel excitement and anticipation build as the first early season snow flirts with the mountain tops, alluding to a promise of a deeper relationship, a yearning that only wanes marginally when the first “true” snow-fall for the season enables access to skiing. I *know*

what it is to keenly observe weather patterns for hints of low pressure systems that might bring the promise of lighter fluffier snow upon which to glide. I *know* what it *is* to ski.

As van Manen posited: “If we simply try to forget or ignore what we already “know” we might find that the presupposition persistently creeps back into our reflections” (1990, p. 47).

Moreover, Heidegger might have argued that to bring my pre-understandings into this study would acknowledge its phenomenology – that it is *already* a phenomenology (Crotty, 1998).

Towards analysis

To engage in interpretive research means to explicate the deeper meanings people carry with them around certain “everyday” things in their lives (Crotty, 1998). Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology emanated from Heidegger’s stance on interpretation (van Manen, 1990). It asks the researcher to engage in a process of recurrent, on-going interpretation of what is presented until deeper meanings of phenomenon in one’s lifeworld begin to be revealed (van Manen, 1990). Analysis then becomes a creative, reflective process of synthesis that does not occur along a linear or pre-ordained plane, but rather in a series of over-lapping circles that eventually lead us nearer to the “whatness” of a phenomenon.

Smythe et al (2008) considered that “working” with the data is, in effect, an experience of ‘thinking’. Van Manen also (1990, p. 172) offered:

Human science research writing is an original activity. There is no systematic argument, no sequence of propositions that we must follow in order to arrive at a conclusion, a generalisation, or a truth statement, because that would be to see writing itself as technical method. Its claim to validity as a method of demonstrating truth would be by virtue of itself as method, as having satisfied certain steps or stages.

The analysis of recorded conversations began for me as I sat and listened to the participants tell their stories. *Right then* I was engaged in *being with* another person who was engaged in the *telling*. I had not yet read their transcript yet I could recognise myself in their stories.

Two long interviews (over 90 minutes in length) were transcribed by a transcriber. This was due to the length of the transcripts. In hindsight, I would have preferred to have transcribed these interviews myself. To *listen again* presents a chance to tune in to the subtleties of language and the way a participant may have altered his or her intonation when talking about a particular experience, or perhaps just being attentive to the silences in the conversation. Such nuances cannot be typed into a transcript. As van Manen (1990) argued, at times perhaps it is prudent to leave things unsaid. He goes on to say “Beyond the range of our ordinary speaking and writing there is the rich domain of the unspeakable that constantly beckons us” (p. 113).

I transcribed the remaining three interviews which were shorter overall in length. Once all the interviews were in a written form as “transcripts”, I was able to begin reading them. I read each individual transcript in its totality, thus engaging in the beginnings of *whole-part-whole* analysis and the indelible link between language and text, that van Manen urged (1990) is so fundamental to hermeneutic phenomenology.

Van Manen (1990) lead us to consider our position as researchers once we set about to interpret what has been captured for analysis. I have mentioned previously at the onset of the “methodology” section, how van Manen suggested we remain attentive to the “how” of *doing* human science research. I further elaborate here on the “six research activities” that van Manen terms as having “dynamic interplay” and suggested may provide useful guidance for researchers. These activities are not separate “stages” in analysing data, but rather present a way to clarify how interpretation can be allowed to emerge.

In van Manen’s first activity he asked the researcher to **“turn to the nature of lived experience”** (1990, p. 31) by which he explained a researcher must be wholly committed and given over to the quest of unearthing a phenomenon that interests and engages the researcher. Crotty (1998) argued that to begin to understand something in hermeneutic phenomenology, one needs to have a “rudimentary” understanding of what it is we seek to understand more fully. This implies we already have some understanding of the phenomenon, and therefore a starting point.

I have a deep passion, commitment and engagement with skiing. For me, to ski is to live. To be on snow, amongst the mountains, is to breathe life in deeply. To move on snow is to *be the snow* and to be part of the mountain upon which it lies. My commitment then was to come closer to a deeper understanding, a deeper engagement and therefore a deeper reflection in my interpretation of the lived experience of skiing. Van Manen argued “lived experience is the starting point and end point of phenomenological research” (1990, p. 36). Therefore as a researcher I am beholden to remain as close to the experiences of skiing as is textually possible through my interpretations of other’s experiences of skiing. I also had to be cognisant of *whose voice* was being heard through my interpretation (Jones, 2002). The experiences themselves, as told by the participants, are *their interpretation* of the experience, as they have “been and gone”, and they could not reflect on these experiences whilst engaged in the very process of amassing them.

Thus van Manen (1990) reminds me to stay orientated to the phenomenon and thereby to what it is we seek to *know* about, and in so doing we find our leading phenomenological “question” that guides the research. Therefore I asked: “what *is* the lived experience of skiing?” “What is it *like* to ski?” “What is the *whatness* of skiing?” Through a textual interpretation of the experiences of others in my analysis of their stories, I kept returning *back* to the phenomenon in order to gently reveal its nature.

The second activity van Manen asked the researcher to engage in is **“investigating experience as we live it”** (1990, p. 31). Here he urged the researcher not to conceptualize the experience but rather to “establish a renewed contact with original experience” (p. 31). Again van Manen urged us to stay close to the actual experience rather than that which has been conceived or conjectured. He suggested the researcher become immersed in already explicit

knowing's about the phenomenon and that this can and does include one's own lived experience. He submits "... phenomenological research requires of the researcher that he or she stands in the fullness of life, in the midst of the world of living relations and shared situations" (1990, p. 32).

The obvious starting point for me in my research journey was to highlight my own understandings and experiences of skiing. Thus I was interviewed by my supervisors prior to collecting data. I also immersed myself in literature and film (which explored the big-mountain skiing and outdoor adventure genres, such as high altitude mountaineering, extreme sports, hiking), the experiences of others as told through anecdotes and shared stories, and the *doing and watching* of skiing.

Smythe et al (2008, p. 1392) offered:

Further, phenomena need to be examined in the living world where people find themselves amidst twists and tangles, hopes and dread, doors that open and others that slam shut. To remove a story from its rich textual background is to remove meaning and thus the possibility of understanding the experience as it is lived, for we can only ever live in a context of time, place and situational influences.

This highlights the significance of investigating pre-existing experiences of others in whatever form is seen as offering something of value to the research.

Van Manen's (1990) third research activity is concerned with reflecting on emerging themes that are revealed from the text, which he described as "**reflecting on the essential themes which characterise the phenomenon**" (p. 30). Jones (2002) cautioned that it is not enough to notice recurring descriptions, words or ideas and call them a "theme". Van Manen proposed the fundamental notion of hermeneutic phenomenological reflection is in its ebbs and flows, its seeming nearness which as quickly recedes into obscurity, in its "nearly thereness". Thereby to become cognisant of what the text is revealing, one must allow the meaning to emerge when it is ready, or perhaps more significantly, when we are *ready* to see it.

Smythe et al (2008) proposed that themes are not simply the same thing that appears and re-appears, but an "understanding we have seen something that matters significantly, something that we wish to point the reader towards" (p. 1392). Dahlberg et al (2008) regarded this as "making clusters of meaning", which they view as a pathway towards "meaning" making from the text. In other words, a similarity in meanings that, "seem to belong together". I argue that this in a sense denies open germination of true phenomenological thinking as it imposes an order on what has been revealed through the text. Smythe et al (2008) suggested we develop our grasping of the phenomenon through the "understanding that is evoked by thinking and re-thinking the experiences participants share, always keeping new understandings in play and offering them to readers to further explore" (pp. 1392-1393).

Rather than offering a "theme" as a definitive "finding" from the text, remaining reflexive to how the emerging stories lead to further "knowing's" was an essential aspect of my data analysis. This may appear a vague notion, but van Manen reminded us (1990) that the everydayness that

is presented before us is difficult to perceive in a *reflective* manner. I understand what my own skiing is, how I ski, what it means in an everyday sense in *my world*, but this does not allow me to unearth a depth of understanding about what skiing is in the world of everyone else who skis.

Jones (2002) asserted that themes arise from an appropriate system of analysis and they must “convey a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation that relate to the theoretical perspective anchoring the research” (p. 468). Therefore, “themes” themselves as I understand it, are not concrete “labels” of something *about* the phenomenon, but rather a nuance, feeling, or notion that leads us closer to an understanding about the phenomenon. Van Manen cited themes as “the stars that make up the universe of meaning we live through” (1990, p. 90). If we were to gaze upward to a sky devoid of stars, we would not “see” the universe. In other-words, through allowing themes to emerge, the phenomena will reveal itself.

The development of themes in my data analysis began with reading the text as a whole, seeing it as a whole and then engaging in a reflective “seeing” of the thematic elements of the experience of skiing that appeared. It was this “appearing” and “emerging” that began the *part* aspect of “whole-part-whole” analysis, and an elemental attribute in the hermeneutic circle.

I am aware that there are computer programmes such as “in Vivo” which can systematically search for keys terms and words and substantially reduce analysis time. I elected not to use such a programme as I wanted to “see” the data emerge with my own eyes, with my own seeing, and thereby remain closer to the experience of skiing.

Jones (2002) asserted that, “... findings also emerge from the sense, intuition, creativity and artistry of the researcher” (p. 468). Literally then, I took pen to paper and I highlighted similar concepts in each transcript in a single colour for a visual representation of “like” emergent meanings. Hermeneutic reflection asks that we do not just halt at the first notions of meaning. It requires that we continue further and deeper to look *beyond* that which first appears and reflect on it for hidden layers or directions it may be pointing us in.

After colour coding “like meanings” with the same colour, I created an over-all phrase or word that best expressed the presented meaning. Again I would engage in re-reading the text. From this point, I could craft the stories that emerged from these overall meanings (Caelli, 2001).

Further analysis then occurred where I looked deeper into each story. Once more I highlighted aspects that seemed significant or in some sense suggestive of something pivotal in the phenomenon. For example, against a story of a skier describing how she finds it difficult to “rein back” her desire to ski fast. I noted: “*The feeling of speed ignites her desire to push boundaries*”. On deeper analysis, this story culminated in revealing aspects of “risk”. As a finding of this research, skiing as “risk” was one of the most salient outcomes, and urged me to unpack notions around what “risk” actually was, what did it *mean*, and how people engaged with risk in skiing and in other activities. Were people even aware they were dancing with what

some people deemed to be “risky” activities, and how does society view risk? Has it been re-packaged and down-played?

Subsequent to this I began to group these revelations into “headings” that summarised an overall underlying concept. This was not without reading, re-reading, writing and re-writing of participants’ stories. Fine, Weis, Weseen, and Wong (2000) called this crafting and re-crafting into the “telling” of a story, a “ventriloquy” where the voices of others come to the fore through the art of constructing their story in a way that holds the reader.

In gathering what van Manen (1990) termed as essential themes, I was able to bring a nearness to the lived experience of skiing and enable an emerging from the cloudy fuzzy obscurity of what I thought it was, to what the participants revealed it to be for them. Some of the emerging themes were developed using a loose engagement with van Manen’s (1990) lifeworld existentials. Van Manen particularly discussed *lived time*, *lived body*, *lived space* and *lived relations* as guidelines for reflection. However whilst I did not specifically use these as reflective “themes” per se in thematic analysis, I drew on aspects of them to explore and understand some of the characteristics of the experience of skiing. For example, “lived space” van Manen (1990) suggested, will affect how we feel where we find ourselves. I explored how some participants in my study pushed through the physical barriers of the “spaces” in which they skied, perhaps through a defined “comfort zone” and into a space that may have presented “risk” or uncertainty. I was then urged to explore what the “comfort zone” was and whether it changed. Were skiers actually *aware* of their own comfort zones (if indeed they had one), and what happens when one stretches beyond the perimeter of a comfort zone?

Additionally I called upon Merleau-Ponty (1948/2004) whose work on perception and embodiment in movement provided an invaluable back-drop in unpacking the *feeling* of moving and perceiving on skis. This further compelled me to unpack how the skis were “feelers” with which one negotiated the physical “feeling of one’s way” on snow. Also, Sartre’s writing (1956) offered much insight into how the *seeing* of ourselves by others incites degrees of ownness, in that the skiing became possessed by the watcher. This is a particularly valuable notion in the context of skiing when one considers the visually public nature of the sport.

Hermeneutic analysis asks that researchers engage in a seeing of the *whole* before looking deeper into the parts and that we return to the whole as an aspect of the on-going connection with the hermeneutic circle of reflection (Crotty, 1998).

Heidegger’s (1927/1962) “hermeneutic circle” was primarily engaged with Dasein; that to bring our pre-understandings into the phenomenon we seek to unpack, we come closer to Being and therefore to the ontological nature he argued existed within Dasein. As we come close, we reflect again on our fore-knowing, on the nature of Being in the world, and thus engage on a reflective “circle of understanding” (Heidegger, 1962).

The third activity van Manen (1990) asked of researchers is perhaps one of the most engaging. Through remaining cognisant of the hermeneutic circle, of whole-part-whole analysis, I was able to develop some “knowing’s” that further explicated the lived experience of skiing. As Smythe et al (2008) offered: “Students must learn to trust that understanding will come, but not without the circling discipline of reading, writing, talking, mulling, re-reading, re-writing and keeping new insights in play” (p. 1393).

This leads appropriately to van Manen’s (1990) fourth suggested research activity, the **“describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and re-writing”**. Here van Manen urged that to read and write is the same thing. What I write gifts to the reader an invitation into the experience as it is being read. The writing *is* “the object” as van Manen put it, of the phenomenological research process, it is the art of reflection, it is what brings to life the experiences of participants who have shared their experiences with me. It is what brings me closer to understanding, and closer to the “nod” of shared knowing. It reveals the hidden meanings (Moustakas, 1994) and allows understanding to permeate.

Writing gives me vision and a way to see towards the ontological nature of the phenomena. The writing in my study was the “crafting” of stories; the re-telling of experiences as articulated to me in recorded interviews. It was about respecting the stories that were theirs and forming them into an expressive text that conveyed meaning whilst exposing a little more of the nature of skiing.

In the re-writing came further analysis, and in further analysis came re-writing and a re-wondering about the phenomena; a continual reflective re-situating and shifting of understandings. Smythe et al (2008) offered clarity in what at times presented as unclear, cloudy and muddled:

As the thinking emerges as written word, the phenomenologist is lost in something that feels somewhat mysterious. Writing comes, finding its own way; speaking in its own voice ... Writing as thinking does not start with a conclusion in mind as to what needs to be said. Rather there is a listening to the insights that emerge ... Heidegger talks of ‘wakefulness’. Such wakefulness needs openness and a stillness that expectantly awaits. Yes perhaps more often the writing articulates what we already know yet have somehow forgotten. Writing brings the unsaid into the open space where ideas are exposed to interpretive gaze, to wonder and to ask still more questions.
(p. 1395)

Activity five as suggested by van Manen (1990, p. 33) is **“maintaining a strong and orientated (pedagogical) relation to the phenomenon”**. Smythe et al (2008) reminded us that in Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology, researchers are called and compelled to endeavour towards “profound thinking” (p. 1396). In this sense, to engage in phenomenological research is to “jump in with one’s boots on” – to fully commit to the phenomenon being sought and to not be side-tracked by superfluous notions of illusion. Van Manen (1990) urged the researcher to orient strongly to a way of unearthing phenomenon, to make a link between “theory and life” (p. 135), that it is possibly easy to become disenchanted or even perhaps complacent about one’s research approach and start “grappling” or “flailing” for answers.

I enabled a robust orientation to the phenomenon by immersing myself in the world of skiing whenever snow season began, through reading literature, viewing documentaries and retaining an avid interest in the northern hemisphere snow season once it was complete in New Zealand. I conversed with friends who were skiers, reflected on my own personal experiences of the season and looked forward to the commencement of the next snow season. I was always attuned to fresh snow on the hills, or a southerly change that could chance out-of-season snow. I was continuously *thinking* about skiing, reflecting on past skiing and *wondering* about the skiing to come.

Finally, van Manen's (1990) sixth research activity is that of "***balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.***" Van Manen asked the researcher here to look at the research text as a whole made up of constituent parts; he suggested that we stay close to what it is being sought without being "bogged down" by wordiness that provides no avenue for illumination. Being able to stand back and allow the text to give forth its hidden meanings is also germane to developing an argument that steers the reader in the intended direction; it steers *towards* meaning and *towards* the understanding of the experience being unpacked.

Careful planning is what van Manen suggested (1990) will elude the phenomenologist, as remaining open to what reveals itself from the text is not a process that begins and ends with thematic analysis. To be fully engaged in the hermeneutic circle of whole-part-whole analysis commits the researcher to an on-going emerging unveiling of a lived experience, rather than a definitive "thing" that can be labelled, packaged and defined after a particular systematic regime. Thus, even though the research proposal may outline the plan intended, the resultant contextualised outcome may have deviated somewhat from the original intention. This needs to be "kept in check". Van Manen suggested the researcher must be very clear about the object of the research (1990), what *is it* that one wishes to reveal? However, he also reminded us that human science research is such that the unsystematised nature of it requires writing as *creating* rather than as a technical process.

When researching a lived experience there is vast space for broad analysis – such is the nature of interpretation. Therefore it is prudent to be certain about how one intends to collect and analyse data and how one then intends to write about it. In this sense van Manen (1990) suggested the researcher stay closely aligned to the underlying research approach; that the methods used to elucidate the over-arching question are the "right fit" to enable clarity. Inherent in this is an ethical obligation to write as close to the experience as possible, as Merleau-Ponty (1958/2005) expressed "to the extent that I understand, I no longer know who is speaking and who is listening" (p. 97).

This does however bring to light that in hermeneutic phenomenology, one does not *arrive* at a final "answer"; one does not "stop" analysis. If meaning has been captured, if the reader recognises her or himself in the stories, if poetry in the writing brings a heightened clarity and a

towardness in understanding a lived experience, then there is room for “wonder”, there is room for thinking, for pondering, and for crafting further meaning.

Rigour

Sandelowski offered a resonant commentary:

Research is both a creative and destructive process; we make things up and out of data, but we often inadvertently kill the thing we want to understand in the process. Similarly, we can preserve or kill the spirit of qualitative work; we can soften our notion of (rigour) to include the playfulness, soulfulness, imagination, and technique we associate with more artistic endeavours, or we can harden it by the uncritical application of rules. The choice is ours: (rigour) or rigor mortis.
(1993, as cited in Tuckett, 2005, p. 29)

Hermeneutic phenomenology is a methodology in the exploration of human experiences. Therefore it was elemental that my research strategy emanated directly from my research question which thus steered me toward the aim – to come *towards* an understanding of the lived experience of skiing through presentation of “alive”, evocative, animated rich descriptive interpretation. How plausible was my study, how trustworthy were the findings that emerged out of my interpretations of the stories of others, and what relevance does this have to current theory and practice?

The term “academic rigour” conjures up images of the absolutes one might seek in quantitative research. However, it can simply be seen as a collection of methodological benchmarks (ideals) coupled with appropriate methods which ensure a particular academic level of attainment in the research has been achieved (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Use of the term “rigour” pertains particularly to the quantitative paradigms, whilst the term “trustworthiness” is preferred by the qualitative paradigm researcher (Koch, 1999). In any interpretive paradigm, surely we wish to know that what has been disclosed as “findings” is as close to the “real” or “actual” experience as is possible?

For the purposes of this section, I will refer to “rigour” as “trustworthiness” except where referring to an academic source or directly quoting from a source. Whittemore, Chase and Mandle, (2001) suggested, the challenge therefore arises in balancing the inherent tension that exists in qualitative research, between rigour and creativity. As a phenomenological researcher, I aim for a creative, rich, descriptive, evocative, deeply resonant interpretation of other’s lived experience as I craft their stories and work towards my findings.

Janesick (1994) proposed that the term “methodolating” defines a “slavish attachment and devotion to method” (p. 215) that risks situating *the method* of “methods” to the exclusion of artfulness and creativity. In the phenomenological approach, one does not use “method” as one would in other more process orientated approaches (Lavery, 2003); the *methodology* itself becomes *the way* and requires the researcher possess the capacity for reflective, insightful and sensitive language (van Manen, 1990). However, given the creative licence of phenomenological hermeneutics, it is prudent to ensure the findings do show to represent the phenomenon in

question. As Osborne (1994) argued, it is crucial that the methodology reflects a clear understanding of the underlying philosophy which flows through and guides the study, thus providing a platform for trustworthiness to dwell in.

How to ensure one retains quality in the research process and remains supported by the chosen underlying epistemological approach presents a curious challenge for phenomenological researchers. For example, it is very easy to become side-tracked amongst sexualised stories that bring no value to the overall study, and furthermore confusion around the under-pinning philosophy can and will distance the researcher from the intentions of the study (van Manen, 1990). Koch (1994) suggested researchers have a responsibility to state very clearly what they consider will threaten the validity of their study and how they have specifically mitigated such threats.

What *has* been done to preserve the integrity of the research? How much influence did my own philosophical stance have on the methodology chosen and the resulting structure and outcomes of my study?

Ajjawai and Higgs (2007) suggested that trustworthiness and credibility go “hand in hand” (p. 631) and they further add that for the research to “be credible the process must be rigorous.”

What a researcher must therefore make transparent in the research is:

- the relationship between the paradigm employed and the subsequent methods utilised (is there a “fit” that appropriately unpacks the data to enable engagement with analysis?)
- has there been “dwelling” with both the phenomena and the participants? Has there been enough time to allow the phenomena to reveal itself, or have the “gaps been filled in”?
- do the data collection methods support each other (the conversational interview can be supported by observations, notes and journaling; reading related literature and observing related visual works)
- is there a research trail? Can the development of the research be clearly seen? Does the argument put forward develop in a logical sense of flow?

LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (1998) proposed that qualitative methodology is typically given appropriate criteria (not used in a quantitative paradigm) with which to assess the trustworthiness of a study. Such criteria are: credibility, dependability, reflexivity and transferability.

Rice (2000) alerted us to three ways a researcher can scaffold trustworthiness into their study:

1. ***Consistency between methodology and focus of enquiry:***

My focus of enquiry was to come towards a deeper understanding of the lived experience of skiing. To engage in knowing such a phenomenon in greater depth, enough to unpack its characteristics, its nuances, its *skiingness* and its *whatness*

required that I work with a methodology that was germane to my underlying way of seeing. I already came to this study with a way of seeing skiing and experiencing skiing. What I required was a way in which to further explicate how *others* saw, lived, understood and experienced skiing. Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology was the link that enabled a deeper exploration in a manner that inculcated meaning rather than definitive answers. Through engaging in whole-part-whole analysis through the hermeneutic circle, I was able to re-think interpretations and ask myself if I was staying close to the lived experience itself. Dialogue with my supervisors enabled an “outside” view of how I was progressing through the “stages” of my study.

Dialogue with others who “know” skiing fostered a sense of purpose and direction and also enabled on-going orientation to the focus of enquiry. This was an in-direct form of feedback in a sense as it provided an informal confirmation that I was “on the right track”, that I was grounded in my study direction and that the answers I was seeking were not generalisations or assumptions, but *meanings* and *knowing*’s. Smythe et al (2008) suggested:

The trustworthiness of a study is known first by researchers themselves who test out their thinking by engaging in everyday conversations with those who share the interest or who are living the phenomenon. Resonance, an attunement that is ‘known’ but cannot be pinned down, is the hallmark of trustworthiness.
(p. 1396)

2. ***A clear well-articulated research approach, with a clearly defined research design that augments a sense of flow and overall direction in the study.***

I clearly articulated that my underpinning methodology was Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology and this reflects both in the title of this study and its aims. I engaged in acquainting myself with the philosophy of Heidegger and that of many of the scholars who have informed contemporary phenomenology. This was in order to “make sense of” how this approach would best bring to the fore what I was seeking in my research question.

I collected data in a manner germane to the interpretivist paradigm, allowing the conversational interview to evolve into further possibilities for knowing, rather than a “guided tour” of topics I wished to discover (and in some way control).

In allowing the conversational interview to be an open dialogue between myself as researcher and the participants, I was sensitive to body language, to the *pause*, to the reflective silences, the opportunity to re-visit some aspects of the conversation, and also the reflexive element of staying orientated to the research question.

I engaged in the hermeneutic circle, where I would view the text in its wholeness before looking for emergent meaning. I would make notes on the transcripts, reminding myself that something significant had *shown* through in ‘this or that’ part, and that it could lead

“somewhere”, much like a signpost in the road, something to come back to later and reflect on and also to re-visit in terms of how it related to the “parts” that I had started to cultivate. I remained cognisant that in *doing* phenomenology the “things themselves” would appear with careful consideration of how I worked with the data; how I was able to “dwell” patiently with the data and allow meaning to be revealed without me *pushing* it forward. Smythe et al (2008) noted “as phenomenologists we live with the ‘restless to and fro between yes and no’” (p. 1396).

3. ***The interpretation offered the reader, links directly with the data that has been collected.***

Jones (2002) urged the researcher to consider every aspect of the study, that there is a responsibility to ensure responsible reporting. She explained that every aspect of research is a decision-making process that culminates in a textualised interpretation of someone’s lifeworld experience, therefore rationale must be provided for the structure of the study along with how it is presented and why. My responsibility here was to remain close to the lived experiences of the participants, to give voice to their stories but to leave them as *their* stories. I was, as Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) put forward, making use of “rich description ... and the use of participants words to allow them to speak for themselves” (p. 632). Smythe et al, (2008) again provided clarity:

We do not ask the audience to accept everything (or anything, for that matter) we say as truth, for we ourselves keep open to questions of truth. We rather invite others to share a journey of exploration, to bring their own questions to each interpretation, and to arrive at their own understanding of meaning.
(p. 1396)

Such responsibility required an approach that would best honour the stories told by participants. I offer that in my study I retained the integrity of participants’ stories and balanced this with a steady orientation towards the phenomena in a gentle yet intentional way that was germane to the tenets and philosophy of phenomenological methodology. I turn now to the remaining attributes that contribute to trustworthiness in my study:

Credibility

What is the “truth” value of my study? Smythe et al (2008) suggested that the researcher must leave it up to the reader to determine the resonance of their interpretations. A study can be considered “credible” if it maintains the sense of “truth”, if it holds true to the lived experience of the phenomenon in question (Guba & Lincoln, 1982), if it invites the reader to “nod” in knowing, if the reader becomes not the reader interpreting the text – *but the* lived experience described within the text.

How did I ensure my study was credible? I dwelt “in” the phenomenon; remained orientated strongly towards it in my reading, my conversations with those who had experienced skiing, and those who were acquainted with the world of skiing. I became aware of my “seeing” of others in the world of skiing, how my “skiing” lenses viewed this world and how this influenced my interpretation (as a researcher) of the emerging data. I began to delve deeper into the data,

not to look for “new themes” but to be sure that I was not fixated in one area and closed to the possibility of other people’s ways of skiing.

By engaging in an open stance, and being open to the possibility of new ways of seeing, I was able to reveal meanings I had not considered in skiing before. This augmented reflection in the hermeneutic circle, challenging my own assumptions and urging me to apprehend something deeper than I thought existed. I was committed to being aware of *slowly emerging meaning* that illuminated further the lived experience of skiing, as presented through the different voices in the study. I “self-checked” this understanding through reading a wide range of related literature. I became familiar with the environment of the extreme skier, the big mountain skier, the high-altitude mountaineer; I watched documentary movies that depicted the lives of big mountain skiers who earned their living through their professional ski movie roles. These “actors” talked about risk, of the beauty they seek in their skiing, of the freedom it imbues into their lives and of the aesthetic nature of being at one with nature.

I additionally ensured that participants had an active role in the research process. This formed a type of “member checking”, where they were able to check their transcripts, remove parts if desired, edit aspects and comment on accuracy. Nevertheless, the interpretation is my own. Whittemore, Chase and Mandle, (2001) argued that the “emic” perspective must be accurately portrayed in order to lend a credibility and authenticity to the researchers “perspective” (p. 530) to stay “true” to the phenomenon.

Transferability/fittingness

How transferable are the findings to other contexts or “actors” in the research? How useable is it in other contexts? Is there an appropriate enough fit between the research question and the specific context that may be transferable to other contexts? This may prompt other researchers to question if it revealed these findings in *this* situation, it may lead to further research in *this* context.

There is some debate amongst scholarly circles that if research is not transferable then it is of little use (Horsburgh, 2003), and certainly this has been a mainstay of the quantitative paradigm for decades. In my study I sought to reveal the deeper meanings of the lived experience of skiing. I consider the transferable nature of the findings to be applicable for other areas of outdoor recreation activities. For example, “risk” presented as a substantially salient finding in my research. A researcher might then consider if this was contextualised within a specific aspect of skiing, or if “risk” is a concept likely to occur in other environmental settings, and how it might change with development of self-confidence.

Dependability/auditability

This aspect of research refers to the manner in which the research is explicit in its steps and transparent in its journey toward explicating the phenomenon in question (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). How *auditable* is it? Carcay (2009) argued the “audit trail” is a pivotal aspect of ensuring

the trustworthiness of a qualitative inquiry, and is possibly the most crucial part of the research in emphasising that the correct theoretical, methodological and analytical resolutions have been made in the study. In this sense the research should be observable from start to finish, in a coherent articulation of rationale for what has been carried out and how. It should also be accessible, not hidden or covered over, or a presentation of guesses.

The findings should have been arrived at through an approach that incorporated the most suitable way in which to recruit a sample, collect and analyse data, and report findings. In my study, the journey is overt; from my proposal through to the final presentation of my thesis. I have maintained a stated orientation towards the phenomenon and sought a methodology most applicable which embraces both the intention of the research along with my epistemological stance. I have employed methods germane to my chosen methodology and used them in the appropriate way at the appropriate time, thus augmenting weightier credibility in the findings.

Researcher reflexivity

In qualitative research there must be acknowledgement of one's own fore-knowing; of one's pre-assumptions and biases (Horsburgh, 2003). The very notion of reflexivity fits well within phenomenological research, as van Manen argued (1990), we are aware of something *reflectively* and it is in this reflection that we bring *knowing* into future contexts. Lavery (2003) also posited that once a decision is made to engage in interpretive research, there is a self-reflective phase that one journeys through. This is the awakening of possibilities in a sense, that we *know* something exists worthy of our deeper probing, and it also invites us to become aware of what we already know.

I have written on my fore-knowing at the beginning of this section, and I re-state my case that to remain reflexive is to engage in a process of ethical as well as methodological praxis. Gadamer (1985) argued that only in knowing our pre-understandings can we come closer to comprehending the nature of something.

I have previously mentioned that I was interviewed by my supervisors prior to commencing data collection to enable my fore-knowing to see light. I did not intend to sit these neatly to one side, but rather to allow my inter-subjectivity to inform and re-mould my subjective place as a skier. Koch (1996) argued that a researcher should engage in reflective journaling as a measure of self-awareness that can be referred to during many stages of the research (i.e., post interviews, observations), or perhaps to journal subjective experience of the phenomenon.

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument (Jones, 2002) and thus we enter the research realm with a particular viewpoint - an interpretive viewpoint – that develops us as researchers. As Jones elucidated, "Researchers both write 'the word' and are written by the life stories and the experiences that the research is designed to document and understand" (p. 472). Thus, remaining reflexive asks the researcher to remain cognisant of whose story is being

told; am I presenting the stories as their lived experience? Am I honouring their experiences or detracting from it so that the meanings remain hidden?

Prior to interviewing participants, my own personal interview to elucidate my fore-knowing's widened my views on what I thought might be revealed through the conversational interview. I was both surprised and heartened that my personal interview lead into areas of my skiing that I had never before pondered. I was able then to just "be" in the conversational interviews, and allow the dialogue to gently unfold into where it needed to go, rather than to where I *thought* it needed to go.

Understanding my pre-assumptions and fore-knowing kept me attuned to how I interpreted the transcripts. Did I *want* to see specific themes revealed because I *knew* this represented an aspect of my own skiing experiences? Or was I enduring enough to allow notions and concepts to reveal themselves as something that was not yet 'labelled'? Maintaining a focus within the hermeneutic circle provided an avenue to ensure that I did not land steadily back on my biases, but rather that I kept questioning them and thereby ever-widening my understanding of the lived experience of skiing.

Reflection allows for the construction of multiple realities, and a recognition that many knowings exist around a single phenomena. Lavery (2003) maintained that interpretive reflection will continue until we "come to a place of understanding and meaning" (p. 22), and that this place might still be "tentative". It is the tentative nature of reflection and remaining reflexive in phenomenological research that provides the sense we have "arrived" at *something* unique and special.

Chapter summary

The methods that were germane to maintaining the focus of enquiry have been unpacked in this chapter. I have emphasised the value and importance of orientating closely to the phenomenon using methods which "fit" and which enable the phenomenon to be further revealed through a progression that "makes sense" and demonstrates an understanding of research procedure. Moreover, central to any research undertaking, is the consideration of ethics and how I have a responsibility as a phenomenological researcher, to tell the participants stories as close to the experience as possible, in a manner that stems from an ethically considerate position.

I have also discussed trustworthiness, a crucial concept in the critique of one's research. Trustworthiness, which is evident through development and consolidation of credibility, transferability, dependability, and researcher reflexivity, has been adequately established in my study.



*“Antisthenes says that in a certain faraway land the cold is so intense
that words freeze as soon as they are uttered
and after some time they thaw and become audible
so that words spoken in winter go unheard until the next summer”.*

Plutarch

(as cited in Caery & McGregor, 2012-2013, p. 28)

Chapter Six: First the equipment

The following chapters capture the nature of the experience of skiing as described by the participants. Alongside their data are relevant extracts from literature and film that capture similar insights. Each experience is particular to that individual; yet as the data reveals, it somehow communes with a shared *knowing* and a shared meaning that exists within the world of skiing.

It seems that learning to ski is first of all an encounter with the equipment of skiing. These stories reveal how the equipment of skiing, the skis, boots, poles, clothing, also the snow (as a surface upon which to glide), are constituents of the *skiingness* that is skiing.

Tools of the trade

Ski equipment is recognisable as “tools of trade” and is a highly visual representation of an *intention* to ski. Such equipment also places the user into the world of skiing even if there is no prior experience of such equipment. One instantly *knows* what a set of skis on the roof rack of a passing car means, and implicit within that is a “set” of expectations around the use of such equipment. In skiing, the skier finds his or her place in the world of skiing using the skis as the “feelers, feeling one’s way through the experiences of being a novice, through to an expert. This occurs as one is able to gain “control” over the equipment using the body as the driving force behind such control.

Embodied learning

Veronica (not her real name) relays how for her, the beginner experience involved feelings of frustration as she experimented with the new sensation of her body on skis: “I would go up every weekend because I was passionate, and it would take weeks of frustration going up and down and up and down on my own until my forearms were absolutely burning” (Veronica).

There is an implicit trust placed in the skis to deliver the skier from one place to another, to deliver the skier to another world. For the new skier, it is a world in which they are encumbered by the trappings of equipment, a world where they wish to see themselves as “a skier” but a crucial link remains unseen. Veronica describes those early experiences with a sense of determination. Her passion and commitment to develop as a skier leave her physically exhausted as she learns to come to terms with the equipment that is draining her energy. She describes being “on her own” which implies a sense of “getting on with it” even though she has been left to deal with the equipment, the newness of the mountain and the unfamiliarity of the world of skiing. She desires to be part of this alluring world, but because of her newness amidst it, this world remains hidden and somewhat hostile.

Patrick (not his real name) remembers his introduction to skis: “I don’t think I got on the skis and felt at all in control of what was happening. I think I realised and knew before-hand that it was a pretty big learning curve” (Patrick). Patrick discloses that he had *fore-knowing* of what his first

skiing experience might be like. For the new skier, the experience is inextricably fixated on the skis themselves, not as extensions of one's feet but as awkward additions to one's body. Patrick had accepted prior to his introduction to skis that the new relationship might be tenuous initially. He was primed to ride the curve that embodied his learning yet desires a sense of control over the equipment, a sense of mastery.

Patrick relays the notion of being a new skier in an unfamiliar environment and reveals urgency in mastering his skiing during those early experiences. He could visualise the learning curve that lay ahead. Mastery over the equipment would identify him with a specific group of skiers, those who can "ski", those who are "skiers", and those who know how to control the skis and therefore make themselves available to a greater world of experiences.

Heidegger maintained that Dasein comes to live an inauthentic life (Breivik, 2010) in situations where we do what is expected, play the part that is seen to be the norm, and follow without question. We are called to question when we are thrown into a world that is alien to us, a world of unknowns, and a world which calls our authentic Being into light. Being new to skiing reinforces the sense of thrownness that may exist for the beginner.

Nairn (not his real name) describes how the beginner skier might "fall back" into what his or her body already knows:

I think our bodies have been prejudiced by other things that we do, so we get a notion that something will work even though it won't. Because a lot of what we do in skiing is counter-intuitive, you think "twist to the left" and you try, you lean and none of the things work.
(Nairn)

Skiing in itself becomes noticeable as problematic, a wrestling match with unfamiliar "stuff", with the snow which may have revealed itself to be different than originally perceived, with the transportation offered at ski areas, chairlifts and the like that appear tricky to ride because as a beginner we do not ski as the expert does. We do not "know" this "stuff" as the expert does. Veronica relays those early feelings of coming onto the snow as feelings of bewilderment as if she has been placed in another world of which she has no idea: "I had no idea what I was doing when I first started. I did love the white snow, and the crispy air, the beauty of the mountain, and the happy lightness of the people. Those things captured me" (Veronica).

Veronica describes not knowing what she should do. She was thrown into the skis, onto the snow, much like a tourist to a foreign country where the language is strange, the road rules are different and the culture alien. Rather, she was captivated by the environment within which the equipment is contained. One could liken it to being a purveyor of food, but not knowing how to cook.

The novice skier may view the equipment, (skis, poles, and boots) as restricting, binding, confining, and perhaps even confusing. At what point does the novice skier view him or herself as "a skier"? When does one become "a skier"? Is it when mastery over the equipment has

ensured the control the skier is seeking in order to confirm to the appearance that one knows as “skiing”?

Grappling with equipment

The beginner skier has much to grapple with in terms of equipment. Arms with poles attached are flying in all directions as he or she develops new levels of proprioception conducive to order and control on the skis. Ski tips frequently cross frustratingly as the newness of unfamiliar long planks under one’s feet alters the way one’s body negotiates space. The energy poured into attempting to gain that control is insurmountable, as the skis may appear to have a will of their own. The boots may be perceived as constrictive and ill-fitting and therefore become a focus and an attribution for the experience at that level.

Here Nairn recalls the feeling of first skiing:

It looked so easy to ski that you think you’re gonna be successful, and you find out once you got on the equipment it wasn’t like that at all. I felt like I should have been able to ski from the beginning, but it’s like having the feeling of being in the car going down the road at 60 and the steering wheel doesn’t work, and the brake doesn’t work, and you don’t know how to make the car function ...
(Nairn)

Nairn’s experience of driving cars at high speed is translated to his desire to instantly be adept at “driving” his skis at high speed. However he acknowledges that there are many variables he cannot control, for example, the physics of skiing, that will impact on the mastery of the equipment. “Skiing is governed by the equipment, the terrain, gravity and physics; but physics doesn’t change. It’s how we get there and figure it out that’s important” (Nairn).

There is congruence implicit in Nairn’s understanding of skiing at any level. As a beginner skier one fights the uncontrollable aspects of it. One resists giving in to these aspects and in doing so the skiing-ness of skiing remains hidden. Nairn reveals an understanding that as our expertise and mastery over the equipment increases, our fight with the variables fades, in so doing, skiing as skiing, begins to show itself. As the mastery improves is there an unseen “void” in which the beginner skier exists, waiting for his or her skiing to reveal itself?

Heidegger addresses the issue of “paraphernalia” for living and the purpose for which we attribute the equipment and “gear of human life” (Blattner, 2006). He asked “how do we discover what a piece of equipment is?” (Heidegger, as cited in Devine, n.d, p. 8). Nairn talks about his growing understanding of the ski as a “tool” in his early skiing experiences:

I was about 35 or 36 years old when I first skied, and I borrowed an old set of gear from someone which was very ill-fitting and I went over to this little ski area. I started to be able to do certain things so I wasn’t in a complete panic. I stayed on easier terrain and I started to figure out on my own how the ski worked so I had some semblance of control and so that I wasn’t terrified.
(Nairn)

Nairn expresses here an acceptance that the ski will respond favourably with persistent practice, and hence enhance his skiing experience.

Heidegger (Blattner, 2006) unravelled our understanding of equipment being heightened when it is not used in the manner for which it was intended. Its “misuse” then becomes a focal point, and perhaps a point at which we question for that tiniest split second, our being and place in this world.

My friend took me half way up the hill and said ... “ok go down”. It was exciting to go down the hill on your feet and although it wasn’t a very good experience overall because the equipment gave me problems, I always knew there was something for me in the sport ... it was almost like it was just me because there was minimal equipment involved, and it was like being able to run at 40 miles an hour.
(Nairn)

Nairn recognises the skis have value for him as a “tool” which he can harness to chase the experience of speed and unity with his environment. When he drives a car at speed he feels united with the car. His mastery and control is such that he can make use of the laws of physics to heighten his sensations of control. On skis as a beginner he longs to be at this level of control and to be able to overcome the laws of physics in the same way he has done when he drives his car. In fact he feels even more so that he should be able to master the skis as they are nearly “not there” on his feet. He speaks of feeling as if he is running at speed, running naked, with minimal equipment.

Nairn’s desire to overcome the equipment which provokes discomfort and perhaps frustration is tempered by an extreme sense of accord with the equipment as a vehicle for experiencing naked raw speed, as if he is “running at 40 miles an hour”. The equipment is intended for use in a specific way, and he recognises the potential for attaining the feelings he desires; of speed, thrill, excitement, freedom, once he gains control over it.

Heidegger lead us again (Blattner, 2006) to consider how we come to understand the “gear” of the worlds in which we find ourselves; that it can connect and unify us with our surroundings. This brings to mind an image of my ski boots. My boots sit in the hallway of my home. My boots are tools through which to connect my skis to the snow. Without ski boots, the skis themselves would be rendered useless. In the context of my hallway, the ski boots are rendered useless. They are not boots to be used for hiking, or mowing my lawns. They are boots made specifically to hold my ankle in flexion whilst attached (through rigid bindings), to the ski beneath them. My ski boots confer meaning only in relationship to a set of skis.

Equipment as resistance

There may be a particular resistance towards equipment that is required to participate in an activity, or to get something done, especially if it is very unusual or foreign to us. Learning to accept the equipment as an essential component towards mastery of the activity urges us to become familiar with it.

Blattner (2006) noted that we may begin to pay particular attention to the context of our equipment if we are very unfamiliar with the surroundings we are in. It is almost as if we are

attributing the wave of anxiety that may engulf us in unfamiliar surroundings to inadequate equipment. Nairn again invites us into his early experiences on skis:

My ankles were killing me, my feet were killing me and actually there was a problem with the equipment – my skis kept popping off and it wasn't a very good experience. I discovered the problem with the equipment and started renting equipment. I was more successful.
(Nairn)

Nairn's foray with ski equipment as a beginner clearly placed him into the constructed world of "the skier". His mastery of the equipment involved embracing it as an extension of himself and a heightened awareness of his being-ness in this world. It required he saw the skis as extensions of himself rather than as "equipment" with which he needed to grapple.

The nice thing about starting later, being older, is I greatly remember the beginner experience. I remember all the fear, anxiety, and all the things that get in your way. This helps me get in the psyche of it. How we figure skiing out is the creative side.
(Nairn)

For the new skier, the equipment represents this unfamiliarity of a new world where it calls for a heightened focus and cognitive dissemination of the objects in use. Until the skis are mastered, and as they are mastered, during the very process of mastery itself, the level of cognition diminishes as the environment takes on the familiar; as the tool (the skis) become an extension of oneself.

Skis as "feelers"

As Veronica's skiing begins to show itself for what it is, her level of cognition towards the equipment and gear of skiing recedes as unessential to the experience of skiing. "Today I felt rapt. I did a lovely big carving turn and I thought "that felt good" and it felt like it looked good. I'm just feeling the snow ... I just feel the snow" (Veronica). There is a suggestion in Veronica's description of feeling the snow that she is confident her skiing at that time looked good. The skis are simply two long planks of materials that when viewed on their own are simply objects.

Heidegger (1927/1962) suggested that the objects of our experiences are viewed as "things invested with value". The skis appropriate a skiing future for the person wishing to *become* a skier. The skis therefore provide access for the skier into the familiar world for which they are intended. Veronica goes on to say. "I finally got my skiss to carve, and I wasn't sliding. That felt in tune but it took me all day to get there" (Veronica).

For the new skier, these things are the unfamiliar, mere objects that show themselves as things that disrupt one's normal sense of movement. However, for Veronica, the time comes when the skis disappear. Instead of feeling the planks beneath her feet, she feels only snow. Perhaps in that moment she became a "skier". She offers. "If you analyse it too much rather than just feeling then you get in a mess" (Veronica).

Veronica recognises the value in allowing the skis to recede. In this sense her skiingness is revealed as the skis appear to "sort themselves out" and simply become objects upon which

Veronica can skim the surface of the snow in much the same way as her body is an object (Meijer, 1988) through which she experiences skiing. Van den Berg (1952) offered: "The qualities of the body, its measurements, its ability, its efficiency and vulnerability can only become apparent when the body itself is forgotten, eliminated and passed over in silence for the occupation for whose sake the passing is necessary" (p. 108).

Skis reflect the moving body

Veronica's skis become extensions of her body; there is no end and no beginning to these extensions as they continue on from her feet. Furthermore the "movement" of skiing would not occur should these extensions be absent. The skis therefore represent a reflection of all the movement her body is doing in each given moment. If she is out of balance, this will reflect in the position her skis are in; if she is defensive, this will reflect in the way she uses her skis as a brace. Sartre stated:

This body of the subject, as the end of its migration is realized as utensil, as domain it defines itself through the chair on which it sits, the pavement on which it walks and the threshold over which it stumbles.
(as cited in Van den Berg, 1952, p. 115)

Sartre's offering here reinforces our awareness of the body and its movements as related to surrounding equipment. In this sense, the immediacy of skiing itself may be suspended until the next time we are re-acquainted with the equipment of our "trade". When one skis the ritualised movements of boots on, stepping into bindings, tightening the clips somehow reinforces the *Being* of skiing. In this the immediacy resurfaces once more, skiing makes itself known again and it begins to show itself.

Patrick recounts how he does not tighten the clips of his ski boots until the moment he is poised to slide downwards on snow:

I don't do my ski boots up until I get to the top of the mountain. Once they're done up I'll never undo them, but when I put my skis on at the bottom, and ride the 2 chairlifts to the top...I just have no intention of skiing until I get to the top.
(Patrick)

Heidegger said "Dasein projects its being upon possibilities" (1927/1962, p. 188). The things we invest with value, are invested this way not because of the things themselves but for the projection of possibilities. Therefore he suggested that the things, the objects, withdraw as the purpose for which we use them comes forward and makes itself known.

Awareness of intention

We then become aware of the things, when they malfunction or are unfamiliar to us. Patrick has no need to ski until *he is ready*. Therefore, the boots are extraneous, surplus to his needs until such time as he is ready to descend. He tightens his boots, clicking the clips tighter until the perfect resistance of shin against boot is found, and he does not touch his boots again until the end of the day. Patrick might come back to his boots, (become suddenly aware of them), if he senses a problem. Perhaps they feel too tight, or perhaps snow collects under the sole

preventing him from engaging with the ski bindings. And indeed, the skis themselves are merely objects with no purpose until such time as he stands on them. At this point their intention comes forward.

Johns (as cited in van Manen, 2002) referred to Danby's painting known as "the hockey player in the dressing room before the game". In describing the player tying the laces of his ice-hockey boots, Johns stated: "During the game he will unthinkably rely on that extension of himself with no necessity to attend to it until he returns to the dressing room after the game" (p. 3). In a similar sense, Patrick too will be called back to attend to his boots at the moment he removes them.

Drawn into meaning

When Heidegger (1927/1962) asked how are we to discover the *is-ness* of a piece of equipment, he suggested that equipment with an obviously valuable use appears to require less "figuring out". This builds on the notion that we are conscious of the hammer as an object of intent; it invokes a unity between the object and the way in which it is used.

Paula (not her real name) relates here to the intention of carver skis:

If I feel I have carved a really good turn (certainly you can ski without doing that and have a good day), but we are always thinking about the racing side of things. The fact is the better you carve, the faster you get to race. There is that need, but I don't feel I have totally mastered it yet.
(Paula)

Paula here discloses a specific desire to improve her carving as a means to race faster on her skis. She sees these skis as having a direction for her in moving her toward being the racer she wishes to be. In this desire she places a large burden on her skis to deliver this promise. The promise is a faster time culminating through precise, exacting movement.

Kretchmar (2000) suggested if people become very drawn to the minutiae of a movement they may procure so much meaning from it that it becomes the core of their activity. In this sense, the equipment becomes the world and the world becomes strange and foreign. Paula therefore becomes the carver skis in order to perfect the movement, and the terrain at this point recedes as something only to be negotiated by mastering finer movements upon the skis. In other words we bring our own meaning to things so in their disclosure it is a disclosure both of the thing itself and our intention for that thing. This involves an awareness of the object and ourselves as subject, as Crotty (1996) suggested, an existing unity. "There is no thing, which in any meaningful sense, exists independently of consciousness" (p. 46).

Toward disruption

As Heidegger noted (Blattner, 2006), equipment fades back until such time as it malfunctions or does not perform as one would expect. In Nairn's case the focus on his skis detracts from the experience of skiing, and he feels a need to "correct" them, in order that they recede back to their proper place, a place where he does not consciously consider them. "When the skis are

dull I switch because you're more on the inside edges. I ski on them like this until I feel the edges have deteriorated a bit and lots of times I tune them before that happens" (Nairn).

Kretchmar (2000) described this as being moved *along*. The skis dullness interrupts the "normal" flow of Nairn's skiing day, and they become a focus that he must correct in order to continue his usual daily activities (perhaps of ski instructing or free-skiing).

Crotty's interpretation (1998) is that a thing cannot exist on its own, in a state of nothingness. Rather, it exists because humans confer existence onto it. The dull ski is just a ski, but for Nairn it represents an interruption, for Nairn it *means* he must invest time in correcting the anomaly. People and the environment they are in, the context within which they exist, are deeply intertwined. Nairn *cannot* continue if the edges of his skis fail him. If he feels stilted and disrupted on his skis because he deems they are not performing the way he requires them to, then they will become a distracting focal point.

Chapter summary

This chapter reveals how the equipment might initially be viewed as an external object of irritation, something that is perhaps viewed as being simple to master until one actually steps on skis for the first time. These findings show that slowly over time, the skiers begin to accept the equipment as extensions of themselves, as body parts to be embraced rather than resisted as foreign and external. The skiers who bridge this adjunct begin to "get it" as they awaken to the potential such mastery invites for them.



*"It was a big drop his ski tips hung over, but at least it was onto snow.
He backed out of sight and when next I saw him, he was in the air – perfect body position, legs
pulled up, arms in tight,
a magazine cover ...
It would have been a good jump".*

(Leslie Anthony, 2010, p. 60)

Chapter Seven: The seen-ness of skiing

The personal battles that bestow one's relationship with the paraphernalia of skiing are open for interpretation from onlookers. The following chapter explicates the very public and visual nature of skiing and the ways in which skiers "look at" one another.

Being seen

Skiing is visual. Unless skiing in the back-country away from the lift lines, the snow-sport schools, the vantage point of the chairlift, the crowded groomed trails are all exposed and one *will* be seen. The watching of other skiers is a way to assimilate into the world of skiers. There is a culture of skiing, a *way to be* on skis, a way to dress and identify as a skier. There is a *way to be* on a ski field. There is a *way to be a skier*. It is a way of *knowing*, a way of becoming and there is a *way* of seeing skiing.

Sartre was very concerned with the concept of being looked upon or viewed by another person (Brosman, 1987). His own splay-eyed features may in fact have been the catalyst for such an obsession, but certainly vision, being seen, and *see-ing*, constituted a large component of Sartre's work on embodiment and the experience of moving and being *seen* moving. He related vision as an aspect of one's body, as a "point of view" or a way in which "consciousness takes aim at an object" (p. 63), in that we see and therefore our body follows.

Awareness of being

Ingold (2000) mentioned "people see as they move" (p. 226). Sartre (1956) suggested they cannot see themselves move, that is for *others* to bear witness to. In considering that people are also *seeing as they move*, Ingold stated "our knowledge of the environment undergoes continuous formation in the very course of [our] moving in it" (2000, p. 230). Conceivably then, as one skis a slope the slope recasts itself, it transmutes somehow as the skier's awareness of being observed is alerted.

Veronica remembers an instance when she became aware for the *potential* to be scrutinised:

One time I went hurtling down a slope and there was a whole group of ski instructors at the bottom and I thought "gosh, there's a whole group of ski instructors" and I stiffened up and my skis went out from underneath me and I landed on my left hip.
(Veronica)

When a skier is engrossed in the movement and act of skiing, perhaps the inner vision of oneself skiing becomes the portal through which to grow and develop as a skier. Patrick questions his own skiing when he uses comparison with other skiers to contextualise his experience of his body moving on snow. "Well I question whether my technique is ok. I think, "well, what do I look like ... could I do better"? Sometimes you just can't help but think when you are skiing ... am I looking ok"

(Patrick)

Perhaps Patrick is orientating his inner view of his skiing self, towards the skiing self he wishes to become. It could also be that Patrick does not actually ski in the way he views himself. There is a sense of wanting and desire embedded within Patrick's contemplation of "looking ok". He goes on to say:

I think as a skier who is deemed to be reasonably good, you like to think your style is good. I know I sometimes get myself into trouble in certain types of conditions that having lessons could iron out ... but there are a few reasons why I haven't had a lesson. A good skier looks good and you can pretty much tell how long a person has been skiing by looking at their style ... by the way they ski; legs together, feet together or apart, type of turns.
(Patrick)

Perception of a skiing self

Unless one actually sees one's body in the midst of skiing, how does one objectify one's skiing? When a person has been a "skier" for a long time, there becomes a *knowing* of how that stage of ability should appear. As Patrick acknowledges, it is easy to recognise a person's skiing experience by their movement patterns, the stance on skis. Possibly Patrick is acutely aware that when he gets himself into what he deems to be "trouble", it is about him acknowledging that if he *did* ski that slope he might not *look* as good as he should for a skier of his experience and ability. He is not prepared to take that risk. Veronica describes here how she "sees" herself skiing. "When I roll my tape I see a very beautiful skier going over the bumps. I probably don't look like that so I know it's a misconception" (Veronica).

How *does* Veronica *know* her perception of her skiing self is different from her actual skiing body? Has somebody told her? Has she *seen* herself filmed? There is a fleeting sense of worry about how she looks on skis, enough perhaps to cause her to take on a consciousness about how her body moves. There is urgency in her notion of feeling a miss-match between her inner skier and her embodied skier. Here, through re-play of her personal inner video-tape, Veronica can reaffirm her place as a skier by a process of continuous comparison between her imagined skiing self, the skiing self she feels in her own body, those around her, and perhaps the way she knows she should look.

Disconnection

Nairn recounts how he feels when he is being filmed for movement analysis in his role as a ski instructor: "Whenever I have video analysis, I could be skiing ok until they put the camera on me then I perform horribly" (Nairn).

This gaze of "other", as Nairn tells in his experience of being video-analysed, may bring about a construction of awkwardness as he actively absorbs himself in attempting to look "the part." Nairn's sudden realisation of his skiing-self takes him out of his body, perhaps momentarily as he is forced to view it from the perception of the other. Van Manen (1994) suggested we discover our body as an object once we disconnect with it, when it takes on that mode of being something other than our own, owned by those momentarily who are watching or observing it. He stated (p. 5):

At that moment when our wellness is disturbed then we discover, as it were, our own body. We might say the body reflects on itself as a body. We discover the object-like

nature of our body when the unity of our existence in the world is broken. This happens when we notice something that is conspicuous such that we begin to reflect on it.

Perhaps this creates Nairn's admitted feeling of awkwardness as he becomes aware of what he considers to be a "critical" gaze upon him.

The exposing

Why is it that Nairn perceives he is skiing satisfactorily until the moment he knows he is being watched? Is he now aware of his body movements more so than when he thought he was not being observed? Perhaps the notion of being critically analysed is what keeps Patrick from taking the ski lessons he knows he needs in order to "iron out" some of his concerns around his own skiing. Opening oneself up to critical observation by another person is allowing a part of oneself to be exposed. Perhaps this is Nairn's fear too, the fear of being exposed ... *seen*. Merleau-Ponty (1948/2004) suggested that we might estimate, through observation of a person (i.e., their body movements, positions, gestures etc), how a person may be feeling. He made here the link between mind and body and how one's inner world is expressed *through* the body. "So the process of looking at human beings from the outside – that is, at other people – leads us to reassess a number of distinctions which once seemed to hold good such as that between mind and body" (p. 83).

If a new skier is anxious or fearful about an approach or a slope, this will reflect in his or her skiing body, for example, the posture being "defensive", and leaning *up* and *into* the hill to gain a sense of security (an intuitive form of facing away from danger). As Nairn describes, when he knows he is being watched and he *feels* his skiing performance deteriorating, this is a reflection of his anxiety:

I tend to think if you're not being scrutinised, looked at – you tend to try more things; experiment more and push more because you know no one's watching. Whenever we had voluntary training sessions I wouldn't go because I was always worried they would see how poorly I skied. I was intimidated because you're skiing with such good skiers – although very supportive – there's still that ego in there and you're always comparing yourself to this guy or that guy.
(Nairn)

Nairn's skiing counterparts may in fact perceive his skiing (as observer's) quite differently. They may be able to interpret his skiing body in different phases of anxiety as represented by tensions taking over where they may have previously observed flow and fluidity in Nairn. Perhaps they have scrutinised Nairn before devoid of his knowledge of any surveillance, and therefore *know* how Nairn would habitually ski. Van Manen (1994) noted that the objectified body, (the body as viewed outside by another), may be perceived dissimilarly to how the person *feels* his or her body to be at that time.

The analytical eye

It is an interesting concept that one engages with analysis as a companion in skiing. It appears as if skiing becomes almost a struggle to maintain control and composure and to ski as *others* expect a skier to ski. There is a notion of ownership in one's skiing, yet there is a shared

commonality of “how we ski”, and more specifically, how we *ought* to ski at given levels of experience.

Martin (2010) argued that Sartre saw *his* skiing as a kind of conflict, somewhat akin to a challenge against the mountain. He spoke of “wanting” to be a skier in the way that the mountain was a “mountain” (2010, p. 45). He therefore, wished to embody the skiing itself – to *be* skiing. Sartre was somewhat affronted that the “ideal” skier or skiing experience could never (in his view) be reached. It remained perpetually out of reach, like an illusion, however his thrust was that his skiing was seen from a point of view – his own - and, thus, such subjectivity could not be eliminated. His view of himself when skiing, was that of a total embodiment of skiing – *the* skier. The truth however, he realised, was that such ambition melted away on the snow (Martin, 2010).

How one sees oneself moving in one’s body is a complex notion. One must become objective, within a subjective experience of *being* that skier in *that* body. One must view oneself from a distance, or as Sartre suggested (1956), a vantage point, from which one can then recognise oneself in the act of moving. Nairn’s confession of being aware of being watched, leads one to consider how the skiing-ness of one’s own skiing is perhaps then momentarily owned by the person watching.

But when you are in an instructor uniform, you are always aware of people watching you ski, and this makes me a little nervous coz I don’t want to make mistakes, and people will always analyse how an instructor skis.
(Nairn)

Brosman (1987) argued that Sartre saw skiing as a type of “visual possession”, where the gaze of the other upon one’s skiing establishes a prickly uncomfortable experience. Here, the consciousness of the other, has taken aim at Nairn’s skiing. Nairn feels no longer (but only momentarily), in control of his moving skiing body, almost as if the gaze of the other has somehow disabled it. The gaze of the other upon one’s skiing steals it away somehow, but it also validates it. It makes it real (at least for the onlooker).

Sartre (1956) was adamant that everything in this world is witnessed from a particular point of view, that being the subjective viewpoint. In so doing, Sartre considered that it is only in the “seeing” that something becomes something; a thing to be seen, judged, contextualised, recognised and perceived. He also believed “the body was passed-over in silence” (p. 56) when we exist within it, perhaps meaning that in our ordinary everyday-ness one does not consciously think of the everyday things the body encounters until one is *called* to take notice of it by an outside source. Nairn relates the feeling of being in an instructor’s uniform and thereby being open to public scrutiny. “Just on a general skiing level, I know that when I am in a uniform people are watching you coz people like to watch instructors, and when people are watching you, you’re going to ski more conservatively” (Nairn).

The uniform labels Nairn as a better than average skier, as somebody who should be doing it “right”. He has expectations to live up to in order to meet what he perceives the watching public expect. With this in mind, he skis in a manner that is less open to flaws.

He skis mindful of a critical audience. While he may exhibit good technique, he does not ski his best. Nairn recounts:

Skiing is an ego sport and although I ski at a reasonable level I don’t want to be under the microscope. I don’t want to be flamboyant, but I want when someone’s gaze passes over me, “that guy’s a pretty good skier” – not “wow! Look at THAT guy!!!” I don’t want the WOW ... I’m not looking for that much attention.
(Nairn)

Nairn speaks of skiing as an ego sport. It is, he feels, orientated towards the self. How do I look on skis? What do other people think of *me* whilst I ski? Am I better than this or that person? He knows he skis well yet he describes the feeling of being watched (as if being a specimen under a microscope, to be inspected up close amidst the milieu of the mountain), as something he prefers not to invite into his world. He possibly sees the gaze of the probing onlooker as an intrusion that may require him to remodel his skiing, and hence he does not wish to attract too much attention. Rather he desire to be *seen* fleetingly, at a glance, as a total package that appropriates expertise.

Inciting tension

There exists in such wanting, a tension. A tension between what Nairn feels at *that moment* and the possibility of how he *thinks* a passer-by might view his skiing. It is transitory, momentary and impermanent, perhaps only arising again when he is next conscious of being objectified.

Sartre’s thought (1956), was that existence of “things” has no beginning and no end; simply the things are the things themselves (existing) whether or not people are around to witness them. Nairn’s skiing will always be Nairn’s skiing regardless of whether or not someone witnesses it. Heidegger suggested (Overgaard, 2004) perhaps, that seeing, watching (and the knowingness of being watched), and perceiving the other, creates a certain angst. Sartre (1956) questioned, “What does being seen mean for me?” (p. 282). He suggested that in being looked at, being the object of another person’s perception somehow distanced that person whilst simultaneously holding them close (for the looker). Thus the object of the gaze is conscious of *being* looked at. Being aware of one’s gaze makes the look real, close, and momentarily threatening.

Nairn suggests that there are different ways in which to be looked at. He seeks only that someone’s eye passes over him fleetingly, perhaps not long enough to offer an analysis of his skiing. To be looked at for too long might mean for him that *he* is seen, that he is somehow revealed in a different light. Nairn acknowledges that there exists lightness in skiing for instructors when out of uniform. The uniform invites analysis and an anxiety for the instructor, who momentarily is visually possessed by the onlooker. Such visual possession suspends the skier in the onlookers:

I did have a friend of mine say ... “wow it was really great to ski without a uniform”. He was uninhibited, he crashed, no one cared. I think, if you are not being scrutinised, looked at – you tend to try more things and experiment more and push the envelope a little more, because you know no one’s watching you.
(Nairn)

Is it the *knowing* in being watched by others? Perhaps if one does *not know*, the skiing regains its presence. Perhaps if an onlooker gazed momentarily without resting his or her focus on another skier, seeing more as a curious onlooker, again skiing might retain its presence for the skier.

Passing over

Sartre (1956) maintained that whilst the body was the tool through which we brought a point of view to an object, our bodies could not be subjected to our own gaze, as an onlooker would gaze upon us. This differs of course from viewing oneself in a mirror, where the left and right sides are transposed and we cannot see behind ourselves. Whilst Sartre (1956) suggested that our bodies are “passed over in silence”, van Manen (1994) offered that our body is never completely bereft of our cognisance. He maintained that the “silent” body is *prereflectively* the heart of our being and even whilst at times not actively aware of it, the body “remains the source of all our activities and feelings” (p. 6).

Sartre’s thrust was such that in attempting to answer his own question “what is the meaning of skiing”, he felt he had to *become* skiing, *become* snow, in order to somehow elude consciousness. Skiers talk about being “at one” with the snow in order to make real progress in skiing. Why then is skiing seemingly embedded within conflict?

Nairn speaks of being “comfortable” within *his* skiing as an instructor (with a certain level of expectation from the skiing public). This is skiing that *he* owns.

I know where I fit in. I know I’m not as good as this guy and I know I’m not comparing myself, this is where I’m comfortable, this is where I’m effective. I hope to get better, but I’m not banging heads with this guy or stepping on this guy because I’m comfortable.
(Nairn)

How does Nairn *know* he is not as good as this guy or better than that, if he is not engaging in some form of watching, and seeing the other, from an onlooker perspective? Nairn *must* be reflecting on where he fits in. He articulates that he *knows* he is not as good as this guy or that, that he *knows* where he fits in.

A place on the slopes

The process of always weighing up one’s skiing against this or that level is a conflict-ridden one. There is an urgency and anxiety around needing to be (and acknowledging the need) to be better. Nairn discloses this about his own skiing, that he “hopes” to get better. Hope carries anxiety. Hope is not set in stone. It is aloft and intangible. “Hope floats”.

Needing to improve one's skiing is borne out of comparison (being aware of those around us) to those who are seen to ski better. Patrick offers:

When you are travelling up on a chair lift you look down, you look at skiers a lot of the time. You're looking at people that are going down below you and you will identify people that have a particularly good style. Straight away you see that you identify what level people are at with their skiing.
(Patrick)

If we were to never see another person ski, we would not hold ourselves to comparison. The comparison then takes away *skiing-for-ourselves*, and lends it to the realm of *skiing-for-others*, for is it not the anxiety of being watched, noticed, gazed upon, looked at by others that arouses one's sense of self-awareness? If no-one were to perceive us, would we exist in moments of awkwardness?

This awareness is what Merleau-Ponty (1958/2005) suggested keeps a person (the skier) coming back to his or herself. Perhaps the skier would remain intact within his or her skiing world, unaware of the physical act of skiing (rather than skiing as an act of being), until he or she becomes aware of someone watching. In a way this becomes a reflection of one-self, someone has *seen* me and therefore validated that I exist here in this time, in this space, doing this act of skiing. It forces the skier into a conflict and an awakening at the same time. Stenseng, Rise and Kraft (2012) noted "Awareness of oneself is a fundamental facet of human learning and development, but enduring self-awareness also may be demanding and tension evoking" (p. 21).

Once awareness of oneself in the *doing* of an activity is emphasized, the activity itself takes on its own characteristics. Its own-ness is accentuated and in this way it can be examined separately from the body that has become somewhat of an adjunct to it. In skiing, perhaps the *skiing* then becomes distinctly separate from the skier's body, as awareness of oneself skiing brings the skier back to the place of an observer. Patrick recounts. "When I'm skiing if I'm thinking about the style then it's about everyone looking" (Patrick). Patrick acknowledges that skiing is a *watching* activity. We watch and we learn from the watching, we also rank ourselves from the watching and thus know where our place on the slopes is, where we can therefore ski and perhaps even who we can ski with. The watching of others also presents a rawness and "there-ness" in our skiing.

Invited immediacy

If we are skiing for escapism, once we are aware of the gaze of others, immediately our escape is stolen from us. We are shunted back into a temporality, a sudden awakening. Stenseng et al (2012) looked at self-awareness in activities. They discussed flow states, where people become so engaged in an activity they liken it to a sense of flow, a total dissociation from the compartmentalisation (that normally occurs in everyday activities) of their bodies whilst immersed in activities engaged in for escape. They called this flow state a "temporary dissociation" which leads to experiences of time transformation and reduced self-consciousness.

The immersion of oneself fully and wholly in skiing may reduce awareness of how the body is actually (at that time) moving. Such total immersion may reduce self-evaluation (Fejfar & Hoyle, 2011) until such time that an awareness of a gaze from outside the self comports the skier back into a reflexive evaluative state. Patrick submits:

It's about the instructor going up on the T-bar looking at me and thinking, "ok, that guy can ski" and it's about the novice on the chair lift going, "one day I want to ski like that". I probably haven't said that out loud before, but that's it.
(Patrick)

Patrick's assertion is that, for him, *his* skiing in a public domain is about the people who *matter* perceiving his skiing as appropriate. It is an interminable state of comparison, a state in which everyone's skiing belongs to all others.

The Own-ness

One could argue that such blatant watching of people on ski slopes is an inhibiting force that strips the skier of his or her own-ness. It brings one back into a state of self-monitoring where momentarily escape from this position may have been occurring. In our everyday pursuits we have little chance to avoid the gaze (and subsequent monitoring) by the world around us, by others, our families, work colleagues, and people we encounter. Participants in this study who have cited skiing as a form of escape or restoration from their "everyday" worlds may purposefully wish to avoid the gaze of others.

Being looked at, acknowledged, apprehended by others forces us outside ourselves and into a position of monitoring (and gazing upon) oneself (am I acting appropriately? Am I saying the "right" things? Am I behaving the "correct" way? What will others think of me?). Stenseng et al. (2012) suggested that people participate in their preferred activities as a mode to "unwind" from an unceasing checking of the self. When one is *looked-at* by another, it serves to interrupt the ownership the person has over his or her activity as it is temporarily passed over to the observer. Van Manen (1994) called this "the experience of encumbrance of the other's body" (p. 6), whereby our being comes "under the eyes of someone else" (p. 6) and thus *becomes* the observer's experience.

When Patrick talks about the *watching* that occurs from a chair lift, he speaks of an awareness of skiing being judged by others. He engages in active monitoring of others, ranking them according to their body position, and how the skier looks. He says:

I see that guy can ski that slope (and that's not an easy slope to ski), and you look at him – crikey, he's hunched over and he's tense – and then you'll see the person behind him just gliding down the slope and it looks good.
(Patrick)

Already Patrick exerts his ownership of the *skiing* he views from the chairlift. He sees not the skier, but rather the *skiing*, and thus anatomises the action. The person he describes as gliding, becomes the epitomised skier – the action is spoken of – *gliding* and lends itself towards not requiring any further scrutiny or ownership by Patrick. *Is* that skier tense because to Patrick he

appears tense? Is the skier who “looks good” actually *feeling* good on their skis, or do they in fact feel tense, awkward and ungainly? Does that person sense the gaze of Patrick upon them, assessing them, classifying them, monitoring them? Is it in the space between the gazer and the skier that skiing unfolds? As Merleau-Ponty (1948/2004) argued, the gazer has no way of knowing the thoughts or feelings of the other. The person watching someone ski who appears “tense”, is basing this notion on the outward appearance of the skier’s body, and previous knowing’s about *how* one should look when skiing.

Chapter summary

This chapter brings to the fore, the very visual nature of skiing. It is visual because skiing largely occurs within the domain of public ski areas which provide an open context for scrutiny. The skiers who seek the back country are less available for the gaze of others and can perhaps dwell more within the moment of skiing rather than being anxious over what others might think. They may have greater “ownership” over their skiing. Skiing in a very public setting may pass ownership of one’s skiing over the watcher, as the skiing is dissected and analysed. Skiing becomes a sport to be visually analysed as there is a mastery over the “gear” of skiing that needs to progressively occur in order to *become* a skier. This chapter further reveals an anxiety that might co-exist for people as they ski, even for the expert skiers, as they possibly stand out from the average skier on the hill. The anxiety appears to be bound up with notions of what is acceptable and appropriate for a certain stage of one’s skiing ability – something reiterated by the ski instructor who felt anxious when skiing in uniform as he knew he would be more closely scrutinised by the public around him – whether he was or not is only his perception.

Watching and looking that is part of skiing. Some of the watching/looking inculcates learning, some invites fear and anxiety; some cements one’s place as a skier and thus germinates an awakening construction of meaning.



“You are a bird, dipping, swooping, darting, through pines, over rock outcroppings, down narrow chutes, alert at all times for terrain dangers, because up here, there are many. But the feeling is akin to the purest ecstasy. THAT’S the secret”.

(Wayne Johnson, 2007, p. 312)

Chapter Eight: Skiing towards risk

This chapter, the third of four findings chapters, reveals how skiing is often a journey towards risk, decisions and actions unfolding moment by moment.

Skiing as moments of ...

Skiing is experienced as a series of moments. The skier skis into his or her skiing from one moment to the next, with an internal commentary trailing one moment behind, providing feedback, judgement, and corrections perhaps and lessening the void that exists from that moment to the next. One moment could invite anxiety, whilst the next might cement our mastery, as Veronica explains:

I like speed but I have a fear of skiing in deep snow. My fear is my ski tips will cross and I will fall and break something. If I go the speed I would love to go then I think about how I have a job and I have already had lots of time off work. When I go down I tell myself not to go fast, to rein it back.
(Veronica)

A tension exists for Veronica between doing what is right and expected of her, and the desire to push. She expresses how she is aware of the consequences of falling at speed. Such awareness creates for her a dual anxiety where she is troubled by both the possibility of falling and the sensations she will be missing out on if she does not yield to her desire to ski fast.

Eric Pahota reflected on his awareness of responsibility and the desire to push:

You know back then I didn't have kids or a wife; it was me-me, I-I. You just keep stepping it up and you just want to keep pushing it see how big and steep you can go without killing yourself. It's the ultimate paradox ... the closer you come to dying the more alive you feel.
(as cited in Obenhaus, 2007)

Veronica, like Eric yields to her inner commentary telling her she has a job, which implies a certain responsibility she has not to push too hard on the snow. There exists a tension between her wanting to push, to be the skier she feels she is and ought to be, and being the skier she feels she has a responsibility (to others) to be. In this sense Veronica is "in between"; there exists a "thrownness" which transports her focus towards an under-current of anxiety surrounding her desire to "just ski fast"; tempered by her awareness of the risk involved. Blattner (2006) alerted us to Satre's belief that when we are in the midst of experiencing "dread and alienation" (p. 169) only then are people able to contextualise the true extent of their freedom and accountability.

Heidegger (1927/1962) suggested that it is through awakening anxiety that one engages the possibility of authentic existence; the engaging notion of one's own mortality. Anxiety throws Dasein back upon that which it is anxious about – its authentic potentiality for being in the world. Anxiety individualises Dasein for its own most Being-in-the-world, which as something that understands, projects itself essentially upon possibilities (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 232).

Anxiety reveals for Veronica the fear of falling, and hurting herself if she skis at speed or in deep snow. She senses that delicate balance between control and risk; however she is skiing towards her Being as a skier, and as she does so perhaps the veil of fear recedes.

I'm not competitive but I do have a problem with speed. When I go down I think I had better not be silly but it's hard to control that feeling. Today I had the brakes on because I have seen some horrific accidents.
(Veronica)

It is sometimes during that void of nothingness that the skier might for a brief instance become acutely aware of the environment. Aware enough that there could be space for considering possible risks and how one should or could adjust with, (or perhaps submit) to it. There is time enough for fleeting anxiety. De Benedetti expressed the delicate nature of awareness and its relationship to anxiety, when he reflects on his skiing experiences:

I knew that day I would find my "perfect moment". In the perfect moment ...there was no space for other thoughts, when you want to make a turn and you are at the top of a steep vertical turn and in this situation if you fall you die ...You act like a different person. You act with all yourself. You are making a completely different experience and in some way you are discovering yourself. This is the magic of the mountain ...you can accept to die for this ...you don't want to die but to live so close to the possibility of dying you understand what is really important and what not.
(as cited in Obenhaus, 2007)

Life and death are so very close in these pinnacle moments of skiing experience; and perhaps paradoxically, it is the possibility of death that makes the living so exhilarating.

In Breivik's (2010) Heideggerian Analysis of Skydiving, he discussed the notion of "being-in-the-void". Breivik proposed that we largely exist through our day with no conscious awareness or analysis of our mood until we are struck by something that arouses a specific mood (such as fear, anxiety, dread) which is often orientated towards something. For the skydivers in his study, the action of jumping out of the plane into nothing – into a void, prompted his statement: "in anxiety the world as such glides away from under one's feet" (p. 35).

This is very much akin to anxiety at times expressed to me as I instruct new skiers; the feeling of the world "gliding away", as if there is limited or no ability to control one moment to the next. It is in this glidingness that *in-the-moment* decisions are made, acting with all of oneself towards discovery.

Blattner (2006) proposed "in the experience of anxiety and death the world collapses into meaninglessness" (p. 157). Heidegger maintained this alerted one to a "pull towards being" (as cited in Blattner, 2006, p. 157); an existential call towards consciousness – it is there, and then it is gone.

De Benedetti further described his heightened awareness of being:

Perhaps only in these moments am I truly aware that this is my mode of expressing myself, that this is my mode of speaking to the others of freedom. I knew when I reached the top of the mountain it was possible to ski.
(as cited in Obenhaus, 2007)

The experience of skiing is in “moments”, when possibilities open before one in both exhilaration and fear. Yet one seizes that, knowing that “it might be possible”.

Containing the moments

Patrick finds comfort in certain situations in limiting room for his anxiety to burgeon. He puts a lid on his fear. He defines what he believes is possible: “When I am up there by myself I might push myself a little more but I know my limitations”.

(Patrick)

By “knowing his limitations” does Patrick then distance himself from risk, which in turn provides protection from fear? What are his “limitations”? Are they static or do they change depending on Patrick’s mood? Patrick’s fear highlights how he submits to the world around him; the world that whilst familiar, becomes unfamiliar if the terrain is beyond his capabilities. Wrathall (2005) might have proposed that Patrick “takes the world as it shows himself to him” (p. 34).

Heidegger suggested that in being human, there exists a space “in between freedom from and submission to our world” (as cited in Wrathall, 2005, p. 32).

This concept is captured by Paula:

Skiing was something you did. I never thought of it really as a risk. I broke my ankle as a beginner but I didn’t even think of it as risky then. Now that I am older I look on it as more risky ... I was always quite pleased at the end of the season if I’m all in one piece, because as you get older it takes longer to heal.

(Paula)

Heidegger’s space “between freedom from and submission to one’s world” is suggestive of nothingness; a void perhaps in which there is room to allow the world to fall back, whilst anxiety and fear exert themselves (Brievik, 2010). Is this what Paula acknowledges as she recalls that skiing was just “something you did” that fell outside the realms of the abnormal for her? It is only now, as an older woman that she notices her view has changed. As a younger woman, Paula’s Being-in-the-world did not pause to consider what she should fear; her skiing was contextually situated within a familiar world of skiers, a world of unity and shared knowing where her skiing was perhaps more natural to her. Perhaps she was once more willing to submit to the “everydayness” of inauthentic Dasein than now when she is older and submits more readily to possible outcomes.

Heidegger maintained the only way to come nearer to the authentic self is to experience authentic living realised through confrontation with one’s own impermanence. If one lives day to day in a familiar world that is reinforced by those around doing and Being in a similar modus, then it could be supposed that authenticity eludes one.

Doug Coombes provided a skiers glimpse of that impermanence: “Every mountaineer, every skier realises the mountains are a living breathing thing. There’s always bad luck ... and I don’t know where bad luck comes in but it’s definitely there” (as cited in Obenhaus, 2007).

Acknowledging one's impermanence may be the crux of risk as a concept. For skiers, particularly those who engage in back-country skiing, many of the fears rooted in anxiety may be around falling, getting caught in an avalanche or possibly becoming lost. Perhaps for Paula her fears are based around what risk might represent, that she might not be able to ski race anymore, that it might remove for her a whole world she is deeply involved in. Things can and do change in an instant. Breivik's view (2010) of the world gliding away brings to light that there exists something to glide away from.

I suggest it is the towardness in which fear and anxiety are based. Skiing beyond one's level of ability or comfort makes a fitting comparison for the analogy of the world "gliding away" where, in the gliding of skis on snow, a world that comprises all that someone knows themselves in, becomes unfamiliar and unfriendly. It becomes a place where the unknown inculcates fear. The sense of moving on snow becomes one not of gliding (a gentleness), but of being swept away on the torrent of a raging river where the only reaction is to brace oneself for the worst possibility, the possibility of death, but almost certainly the possibility of rendering control.

Skiing within the zone

I come back to Dasein; the average everyday Being. Dasein is wrapped up in the immediate world of skiing, which is that of the average everydayness on the mountain. Heidegger called this "average everydayness", "the One" or *das Man* (Wrathall, 2005) and it referred to the way in which Dasein seeks the middle road, the average, the normal. Brown (2008) referred to this as the "comfort zone" perhaps, the way of every other Dasein. Such a way keeps authenticity distanced.

Patrick may keep fear or anxiety to manageable levels in choosing to keep these things distanced from his world, from his skiing.

Getting myself into a challenging position probably scares me. I just wouldn't challenge myself. I'll happily ski off-piste if I know I can do it, but I do not push those boundaries. I ski well within myself. I've never had a serious accident, but people do die up here.
(Patrick)

In Patrick's admission that he would feel scared in a "challenging position", is it the being in control aspect of "getting" himself into the position in the first place, or the actual position (of challenge) that creates his anxiety? Does he fear that he cannot judge if he is skiing on dangerous terrain or terrain he perceives will lead him into danger? Again, there exists a thrownness in Patrick's skiing; a thrownness where his skiing-self projects into the "what if's"; into the possibilities; into another skier that *is* Patrick, but not the Patrick that would ski that challenging terrain, the Patrick that would ski out of a defined comfort zone.

Patrick's skiing becomes insignificant as it falls away to be replaced with a focused awareness of his surroundings, something Heidegger may refer to as a "mood", as Patrick's familiar world is replaced by one of heightened tension and fear. At this point, Heidegger would maintain that Dasein is unsettled (Breivik, 2010) as Patrick dances fleetingly with his own finality. Perhaps

Dasein is unsettled as it is suddenly confronted with a “pull towards being” (Blattner, 2006, p. 157). When a skier finds him or herself in a position that creates fear and uncertainty, it can appear as if the world has taken on a chaotic atmosphere as sense is sought in the immediate situation.

Read here the story of my first experience skiing for the season.

My first fall in over two seasons happened before the end of my very first run on easy terrain today. The fall brought a despondent mood over me as I analysed what had gone wrong. I felt anxious and fearful about the rental skis I was on, all of a sudden viewing them as the enemy and not as extensions of myself. I fell! It eroded immediately the possibility of skiing the towers. I did realise the ridiculousness of this notion, telling myself that one small fall was not the end of my day; however I was engulfed by a mood. I was afraid. I was tentative. I had submitted to fear and the rest of my day was controlled by it. I skied conservatively, awkwardly, fearfully, and it was almost a relief (as if I had been released from a type of torture) when the time came for me to catch the bus down the hill to my car.
(K. Clark, Field notes, June 30, 2010)

In my falling, I was thrown into an immediate sense of chaos. This chaos arose out of a sense of disconnection from myself as a skier. There was no recognisable order or “things” to grasp me back into the familiar. My falling was unexpected and therefore aroused feelings of anxiety. I felt alien-like on the skis, afraid to push in case I fell again, and in this thrownness my skiing became limited. I attempted to maintain some control in a situation where I felt I had none. This was a ridiculous notion of course, because I did have control, but the fall created a thrownness that unfolded before me an array of possibilities I had not considered. Confronted with my own apprehensions moulded into tangible fear, my “safe” place was to retreat back into the ordinary, into the path of least resistance, the average everydayness of skiing.

Breivik (2010) noted that anxiety can be characterised by a disposition that transmutes our immediate world into a world that seems somewhat uncanny. Heidegger (1962) described this as “unheimlich”(uncanny) as a world where one is no longer feeling “at home”. One feels alien to and at odds with the world at that point.

Knowing/finding self

If we look at the unspoken “rules” of skiing, it would appear alien or out of place for a person who questions his or her confidence to stray onto slopes beyond his/her capability. Other skiers may silently observe such “out-of-placeness”. The people who die are “other” people who perhaps do foolish things. In Patrick’s world, those people are ones who push, who take risks, who are “fear-less”, and in-so-doing Patrick senses there is a part of that person who exists within him. Patrick sees the consequences of risk-taking. He recounts:

We all wear helmets now. People die up here just about every year from head injuries and it’s scary. Every time you see a ski patrol rush past or every time you see someone go down in a banana boat, or every time you hear a helicopter you just think the worst. I’ve seen a person die skiing – I’ve been on the mountain when children have died and it’s the mountain ... the terrain that might place me in danger. That’s what scares me.
(Patrick)

This is perhaps what he fears, his comportment towards Being, towards an exposure of his authentic self (but is it his authentic self – to ski towards the edge of one's own limits?).

David Breashears, the maker of the IMAX cinema movie "Everest" and world-renown mountaineer, submitted: "The risk inherent in climbing such mountains carries its own reward, deep and abiding, because it provides as profound a sense of self-knowledge as anything else on earth. A mountain is perilous, true; but it is also redemptive" (1999, p. 304).

One could wonder why, people need to go to such extremes to earn self-acceptance or self-knowledge through challenges such as big-mountain skiing or climbing. Surely there are paths to "finding one's-self" that are far less severe and carry less perceived risk? If we look to the martial arts, one seeks self-knowledge (enlightenment and clarity), through pursuing a state of "presence" (zanshin), by existing in the here and now (or as martial artists in Japan call it "Mushin" – no mind). One could argue that to engage in risk-taking sports, one needs to be "in the moment" because surely if one were projecting towards possible outcomes, the activity would not be adopted so readily? If one is to remain in the moment then the fleeting awareness of anxiety becomes just that – fleeting.

One could ask how many mountains does one need to climb, how many cliffs does one need to leap off, how many planes must one fall from in order to become an authentic Being? How does one come close to knowing-the-self; conquering one's fears? It is a paradox that one's Being is interminably engendered by the pursuits that are presumed to unearth it.

Heidegger's proposition that Daseins, are able to "take responsibility for the way they exist in the world" (Wrathall, 2005, p. 12), reinforces the confrontations that human Beings face in moments of anxiety or fear. Nairn offers: "Life experience inhibits you. So the older you get it becomes more difficult; not that you can't overcome it, you're just a bit more conservative about hurting yourself" (Nairn).

Nairn speaks of the way in which as we age. We may hesitate before leaping into the unknown; as we run a script through our minds of all possible outcomes before weighing up the risk. Does one pause longer (as one ages) to consider the unburdening of risk? Is authenticity then knowing when to ski away and knowing when to take that leap? There is a transitory hiatus when a decision must be made; "do I ski this steep slope that might cause me to seriously hurt myself if I fall ... or do I ski where I always ski, where I know my skiingness, and where I am safe in the familiar?"

This opportunity to face up to death (Wrathall, 2005) forces the skier to re-enter the world of skiing, as the autonomic is replaced by the cognitive and the doing of skiing comes flooding back into significance. Nairn explains:

There are feelings of anxiety that can affect my performance because you think you are going to repeat that bad experience; that you will fail. I think it's emotional. It inhibits you enough that you just can't make that commitment.
(Nairn)

It (skiing) becomes a stunted process, a reinforcing of old fears, an opening to inhibition and submitting to the familiar, whilst seeking freedom from the unfamiliar; from fear. Yet fear itself is paradoxically a familiar skiing “companion”, always there, always reminding the skier of potential unfolding perils. Nairn goes on to further elaborate:

There are some trails I have skied at where I was somewhat inhibited. Your brain flashes back to the bad experience and it becomes an obstacle. Sometimes it inhibits you and you have to force yourself to make that commitment.
(Nairn)

Nairn has a sense that distancing one’s fear is to embrace commitment. The falling is secondary. “You cannot hesitate; you’ve got to commit to something without worrying about peripheral things like falling” (Nairn).

The feeling of skiing is what matters in Nairn’s world, however for Patrick he cannot dwell in his skiing world if fear and anxiety ski with him. To create distance from these things, (that could become close to him at any time that he determines), he makes conscious choices about containment (he “puts a lid on” risk). He keeps them somewhere where he can see them in his periphery, perhaps as a reminder that “people do die up here”, but he never comes to know them; he never comes close to them.

The draw

There exists an attraction that draws one towards skiing in its totality. It hovers, ever present only to appear in moments of clarity as if a sudden awareness comes forward. David (not his real name) talks about the proximity of risk, as an attraction of skiing:

The element of challenge and risk that you don’t necessarily get in the same way in other aspects of life, are what really draw me to skiing. You know you’re actually pitting yourself and your wits against a mountain that doesn’t really care about you at all.
(David)

David speaks of an “element of challenge and risk” that remains separate from the everydayness of his life. The challenges that he seeks in his skiing, bring with them a package that exist alongside what he knows to be “safe, controlled, contained” skiing.

This package can be opened at will much of the time, and is largely controlled by David’s own mood of the day – where he decides to ski, with whom and how hard. Occasionally this package is opened by the mountain itself, (uninvited), thus presenting the greatest challenge for David if it is unwrapped before he is ready to accept it. One miscalculation, one mistake, can have fatal consequences. This reality is embraced by David and mutes the seductive pull of romanticising the mountain. It is what it is; beautiful, magnificent, capable of evoking intense experiences, but, potentially deadly. He speaks of “pitting” himself and his wits against the mountain; a mountain he perceives at times to be hostile and unfamiliar as if it is an entity that is actually attempting whole-heartedly to unravel David’s skiing-ness; yet in doing so, it brings him closer to the thing that makes him feel most alive; his authentic self. This skiing towards his authentic self constructs for David the notion that the mountain is to be respected; that ultimately it decides what David should pay attention to. Breashears (1999) again offered:

“You can climb that mountain a thousand times, and it will never know your name” (p. 259).

The influence of the mountain both highlights and reinforces the nearness of risk, and the only way to manage the experience is to remain attentive and attuned to what the mountain is revealing. Shane McConkey a big mountain skier who died on skis in 2009, described the flirtation with risk:

You're skiing 1000 vertical ... and it's real ... THAT'S big mountain skiing ... standing on top of those peaks in Alaska, is to me one of the coolest feelings I've had in my life. It's all up to you at that point to take care of yourself. And it's a pretty cool feeling knowing your'e about to do something dangerous ... you're about to drop-in ... it's ... it's really addictive.
(as cited in Obenhaus, 2007)

The tangible sensation of straddling both risk and excitement is something McConkey described as being “addictive. Is it perhaps that once risk is censored one becomes less sensitive to the possibility of danger, or is one just more able to disburden risk more readily when it arises? McConkey described the knowing of being completely responsible (at that point of no return), for his own actions. Harper (1979) stated:

And it is the awareness of this personal responsibility which characterises the man who really knows he is alone in the sport experience. In his aloneness the obligation to himself distinguishes his sport experience from the ‘other’ determined experiences of the everyday world. And it is this reliance upon his own special capabilities and potentials, and not the public panaceas that allows the sport participant to realise his unique individuality.
(p. 126)

One could suppose the mountain invites David to skim over its surface in order to “feel out” the potential for risk, to accept the risk (if it exists there) or to leave it for another day.

It is worth considering when pondering the concept of risk, as people gain more confidence with pushing their physical limits, are they prepared to push towards “riskier” activities? Brymer, (2005) in his unpublished thesis, suggested that participation in risky sports may be somewhat of a “circular” phenomenon where engagement in one activity may certainly open up the doors for riskier undertaking in others, or perhaps more risk-taking within the activity as it is being mastered. Could it be also, that someone who has a near death experience whilst engaging in his or her sport decides not to push anymore? Or does this invite embracing death as a part of life, and a deliberate seeking to live each day as if it was one's last? Certainly there exists an ambiguous kind of trade-off; to add value to one's life by risking it.

Being thrown towards

Heidegger (1962) spoke of “thrownness” and the way we “always find ourselves ‘thrown into’ or ‘delivered over’ to circumstances that are beyond our control” (as cited in Wrathall, 2005, p. 35). Skiing promotes thrownness into another world; a world where accepted norms inculcate everydayness that is the surface appearance of skiing. To really come to know skiing however involves a willingness to be thrown into it from the start, as it is such a grand departure from the taken for granted environments in which we live our everyday lives.

The following stories emphasise how skiers ski toward possibility through thrownness. Veronica here recounts her first experience on skis as an almost other-worldly “landing”. “We were going skiing tomorrow and I thought “that sounds nice”. It was my first experience of being dumped in it” (Veronica). Veronica describes here the newness of the skiing world. She felt “dumped” as landing like an alien onto another planet. “Dumped” also implies a certain sense of being left. This notion of being “dumped” breeds the feeling in the non-skier of an unfamiliar “other” world, a world in which the culture is completely different from that which they know, where the underlying ethos is akin to an unfamiliar religion, where the skis are worshipped as if they are capable of transporting the skier into a land of permanent fluffy whiteness, a world where the air is thick with the anticipation of adventure. This world seemingly, is one of a foreign language where one must make sense of it or risk being lost within it.

Stephane Dan understood the shared knowing of what skiing invites in people:

You know in Chamonix there is a lot of people ... there's a lot of very good extreme skiers from everywhere in the world. They come here for the same things. After a powder day it's ... you can feel the energy ... they are the same spirit ... so it's very special.
(as cited in Obenhaus, 2007)

Certain thrownness exists within skiing; a kind of becoming from a tentative cautious new skier, into the emergence of one's skiing to a place of expertise, autonomous embodiment, and purveyor of freedom. Veronica talks about the “creation” of her own “feel”, a world perhaps that has been crafted by what she has come to “know” about skiing, a world in which thrownness landed her in a pot-pourri of sensations that she has since come to be associated with her skiing.

I created my own feel of each experience, each time I go up, or we go skiing. Because for me the skiing is about going up, and literally the night before I am looking on the internet to see what the snow conditions are; is it windy, is it snowing, how many centimetres. It's the build-up that gets me a bit excited.
(Veronica)

The thrownness is in the element of the unknown. The new skier will relate to the feeling of being “thrown” onto the snow on peculiar equipment (that is known but not known) and expected to make sense of Being in this strange world. Veronica continues:

I can remember thinking “how do I click it (the binding) down?” Because I had snow stuck on the bottom of my feet I looked at somebody else, and they seemed to be kicking the ski and I thought, “I wonder why he's doing that?” And then I saw the snow flying out from his ski.
(Veronica)

It is a world devoid of pre-understanding for the new skier. Having never experienced the equipment, the sensation of moving on snow on two unfamiliar extensions to one's own body, the new skier is thrown into an awkward reflection of oneself.

Dreyfus (1993) reflected that the awareness of coping within a particular situation is heightened when out of one's “normal” surroundings. He suggested that the body is “solicited” by the

situation it is in, and it seeks the right “relation” with its surroundings. For example, an expert skier feels at home on expert terrain; the body is not deviating away from a normal body-environment relationship. This particular skier may experience a sense of flow as if the body and the environment are in unison (Merleau-Ponty, 1948/2005). For the novice skier this may appear as a series of chunks; breaking the skiing experience down into components, that is, down this slope ... shift the weight over this ski ... head down that slope ... over towards that flat area ... down to the base area; all perhaps with the intention of arriving safely (and possibly with a sense of relief), where one began. There exists here what Heidegger (Wrathall, 2005) would term *intentionality*.

Skiing as movement

Searle (1983) proposed that intentionality exists within intentional content. He argued that the expert skier does not *need* to make a conscious intention to arrange his or her body over the skis in a particular way to pre-empt specific movement. The expert has autonomic skill; the skill that presents itself without seemingly conscious thought. Heidegger termed this “skilful coping” (Blattner, 2006) during which no intentional goal is formulated; it is as if it happens without the skier even noticing or realising he or she has skied the slope.

Merleau-Ponty (1958/2005) suggested that the bodily movement experience happens simultaneously with the body moving, and therefore the skier *could* be aware of the sensations of skiing the slope as and when s (he) is skiing it. Perhaps this awareness stems from the manner in which the skier's surroundings change from moment to moment.

He stated:

There is, then, no movement without a moving body, which bears it uninterruptedly from start to finish. Since it is in no way inherent in the moving body, and consists wholly in its relations with its surroundings, movement cannot dispense with an external landmark, and indeed there is no way of attributing it strictly to the ‘body in motion’ rather than to the landmark.
(p. 337)

Heidegger, even in his arguing that skilful coping denotes a certain kind of detachment from the actual experience of moving, maintained that the intentionality of the movement is derived not from consciousness but from Dasein (Heidegger, 1982). Merleau-Ponty (1948/2004) further elaborated:

So that, in thinking clearly about movement, I do not understand how it can ever begin for me, and be given to me as a phenomenon. And yet I walk, I have the experience of movement in spite of the demands and dilemmas of clear thought, which means, in defiance of all reason, that I perceive movements without any identical moving object, without any external landmark and without any relativity.
(p. 338)

In this, Merleau-Ponty captured the mystery of movement in, talking of the more straight forward act of walking. How then is the experience of moving on skis? For a new skier such movement down slippery snow covered slopes may elicit feelings that accentuate their surroundings. As skiing becomes relative to the surroundings it may elicit being aware of one's speed perhaps, relative to a landmark or possibly to other skiers. The unfamiliarity of the new surroundings may

also accentuate a heightened awareness of the body moving. Here David recalls his first experience on skis:

It was a beginner's slope, so, I remember it being fairly flat. I was learning to get my balance and coordinate, things like that. The weather was rubbish, it was snowing and blowing at the time but I must have enjoyed it enough to want to try it again.
(David)

David's description of the weather being "rubbish" may have impacted on the overall sense of newness of being on a mountain. Such external aspects may present a kind of distraction from the task of becoming a skier. If indeed the intention is to develop one's skiing ability, the environment becomes integral to the overall experience and could possibly affect a person to the extent that they do not repeat it.

Projection of what one could become on skis is all around the new skier, but it requires a shared responsibility from other skiers to show the new skier how to be a skier. Veronica describes being dumped by her more competent and experienced friends, who represent to her the possibility of her becomingness as a skier, and who in doing the dumping, disinherit their opportunity to share ways of knowing on skis. Veronica recalls:

My first experience of skiing was when I was 18 years old at Whakapapa ski field and it was a beautiful day. I was left to my own devices, no-one to help me and no-one to guide me because they were all experienced skiers. We were up on the mountain and they said "there's the mountain" and yee-haa, and they left me.
(Veronica)

Being dumped and alone, left to her own devices to "figure out" and make sense of this new world, isolates Veronica from other Dasein, as she is left to exist in her authentic self, unsure and possibly fearful of being "alone" with the equipment. She goes on to further describe that initial meeting with skiing: "I had no idea what I was doing or how to ski. I didn't realise you could go and get an instructor. I hadn't researched it before because it was all impromptu."
(Veronica)

Veronica describes this introduction to skiing with a sense of resignation, almost as if the experience had not been so isolating she may have found the environment and skiing itself less puzzling. She expresses her unknowingness about the world of skiing that does not reveal itself until she is actually on the snow. This comes almost as a surprise to Veronica. The impromptu nature of this encounter throwing her into an immediacy, calling her to take note, to do as other skiers do in order to make sense of it.

Moving towards risk

It could be imagined the competent skier DOES know the unknown. "I don't think I have ever really been in a situation where I think "no, I really shouldn't be here ... I shouldn't have made that decision" (David).

It could be surmised that the element of the unknown, the potential for risk, and the trajectory towards a particular outcome (the thrownness) are things the competent skier accepts as a part of skiing. David describes a knowingness of his abilities, and understands and knows that an

error in judgement, a mis-timed jump, and a split-second bad decision can all set in motion a disastrous outcome. Often these self-judgments happen reflectively. Perhaps if he is in a situation that clearly presents as risky, he has no room for re-considering if he is in the wrong place at the wrong time; such is the temporal nature of experience. There exists for David pre-understandings of the nature of risk, but again at *that moment* – *the moment* of actual risk, is he aware?

The awareness and the proximity of death as a possibility, keep the expert skiers in check. David considers the potential of skiing towards being “unsafe”. He explains here this notion; “Obviously some participants in the sport take those (risks) to fairly high levels of extreme risk ... to the point that they’re running fairly serious chances of killing themselves doing whatever it is they’re going to do” (David).

It is the everyday “average” skier who is more likely to become what he or she fears, that is, injured, or pushed beyond their comfort zone into a place of apprehension, trepidation and dread (an unfamiliar space). Fear becomes this skier and in this thrownness skiing is seen as something risky, dangerous and unable to be controlled.

David goes on to suggest that we are looked after too much in today’s society, that perhaps parents are not prepared to allow their children to experience risk to the extent of having to be in control of decision-making and consequences for such decisions. He suggests this contributes to people ending up in risky situations (it being the decisions they make rather than the situation itself), and Brown (2008) augmented this by suggesting that exposure to risk is essential in developing the ability to recognise it.

The feeling of fear reveals itself as quickly as it recedes (Heidegger, 1927/1962) perhaps only to appear again if the skier feels thrown again into an unfamiliar space. It could be said that some skiers are “an accident waiting to happen”. Perhaps if a skier has no concept or sense of risk in his or her skiing, they may be more willing to push limits in a manner other skiers may consider risky.

Perhaps such “recklessness” could lead to an accident resulting in injury or possibly even in the skier’s death; a thrownness which may have appeared beyond the skier’s sense of control. The skier who perceives no risk, may never get to the place of realising that a decision needs to be made, and may continue on his or her path which may ultimately lead to his or her demise or perhaps to his or her ultimate freedom.

Voytek Kurtyka, when being interviewed about the death of his close climbing friend whom he considered to have taken: “too many chances which were not proper” (O’Connell, 1993 p. 174), responded to the question: “Was it inevitable then, that he would die climbing?” with, “No, but I would say it was predictable”. Seemingly events which should be (in hindsight) controllable, are at the time, possibly out of one’s control. They may be compounding, all leading to something.

In skiing, as in mountaineering, the decisions are sometimes the same, to push or submit.

David remembers a time when the potential for danger was of great concern to him when ski touring with his then young son.

There is a particular section on the traverse where it gets quite icy – it's quite a steep slope, and we weren't geared up for it to be icy and so we weren't geared with crampons and things that we needed to get across there, and so it was quite hair-raising. I was quite concerned about it.

(David)

The decision to push was essential, to get to the "safety" of the hut and also to convey calm for his son. However he describes his obvious concern, which perhaps was exacerbated and more urgent due to being with his son. The concern throws David into the possibility of serious harm for both he and his son as he is face to face with his fears. This moment of projection into what could be, throws David back into Dasein, into authentic *Being*.

It could be proposed that when one feels safe one is more likely to take risks. When considering the potential outcome of "unnecessary risk", one first needs to consider, what is "necessary" for the skier to "be" a skier, and furthermore, what is "risk"?

Flirting with risk

The skier, at the moment of decision-making, is projecting towards a possibility. There is a thrownness in which the skier manifests his or her Being towards a discovery or a new truth.

Nairn reflects:

There were a few trails that I skied when I didn't ski at the level I ski today; where I did not have necessarily stellar experiences and now, or when my ability got to the point where I could ski stuff that was difficult or more difficult. I have to admit yes, when I went back to some of those trails, I was somewhat inhibited because your brain flashes back to that bad experience and it becomes a bit of an obstacle, there's no doubt. There's probably a couple of trails ... if I went to, I would have little feelings of anxiety and certainly they would affect my performance until I figured out ... this isn't as bad as I remember.

(Nairn)

If for a skier, the feeling of being a "little on the edge", aware of his or her relationship to death, brings about a sense of clarity then perhaps "risk" taking is essential and necessary.

Furthermore an experienced skier is more likely to be gauging the level of risk (and possibly feeling safe within that level), and is in an autonomic state of weighing up "is it worth the risk?"

Emily Coombes voiced her experience of weighing up risk when reflecting on a first descent in Alaska. "I just thought well either I'm going to die on this run coz it's going to avalanche or it's going to be the best run of my life. So ... I'm just gonna do it. It's worth it"

(as cited in Obenhaus, 2007). It could be argued that both death and delight are expected possible outcomes of throwing oneself into a ski line.

Nairn provides some insight into how an expert skier may consider the potential for Being in a world where the sense of risk overtakes one's ability to make decisions around safety:

I now have a fair amount of confidence in my ability and now having the level of knowledge of knowing what works – not necessarily being able to perform to the level of knowledge I have because of certain inhibitions and fears and things, I would say that occasionally I might have a little doubt.
(Nairn)

Purveyors of “venturesome” sports would argue those who indulge do not blindly stumble into them without thought for possible endangerment. Laviolette (2007) proposed such consideration of risk allows people to manage risk “self-reliantly.”

Patrick talks about the possibility of being somewhere on his skis that creates a feeling of apprehension for him. He is sure in his notion that he will not ski certain runs, or off the groomed trail with people who happily accept such challenges. His thrownness is explicit in its containment:

If my friends say we are going to ski this extreme run or traverse to this drop-off, I quite happily say I'll meet you at the bottom. I'm quite happy to ski down some groomed trail but not powder, I cannot ski it. I see the tracks in the powder snow and I think I wish I could do it, but I just wouldn't enjoy the experience.
(Patrick)

Already Patrick has a projected expectation that he will struggle in powder snow, he will not enjoy it and amidst this anxiety he may crash or perhaps be seen as incompetent. He chooses to ski in a defined, pre-determined, planned and “safe” way. There is no proliferation of new narratives for Patrick; it is this way for him and possibly always will be.

Heidegger would suggest this “way” of Being as existing in a significant, yet somewhat “fateful” manner (Nichols, 2000), in which the horizon of possibility open to Patrick is realised, yet knowingly suppressed. Patrick is at that moment “in the truth” (Heidegger, 1927/1962), of skiing within a certain degree of authenticity, in that he is skiing “ahead of himself” towards the possibility of his finality as Dasein. He is thrown into a world of truth where there exists knowingness between his “safe” skiing of the past (that moment right there and the moments, days, weeks and years preceding), and a knowingness of what could eventuate in his future.

If *Being* human is to be “thrown back on one's self” (to a state of just “being there in a “Beingness” that is Dasein), then Patrick's notion of projection towards possibility is a state of authenticity. It is a moment of coming to know his mortality, his finiteness. It is a moment of truth. Patrick's pre-understandings of danger, safety and risk seek to call him back into himself, therefore amplifying the notion of thrownness in his skiing. Patrick comes closer to an authentic understanding of his Being through transporting himself to the possibilities that being “unsafe” yields.

Paula considers her experiences as a downhill ski racer, an aspect of her skiing that she did not take up until she was older. Here she reflects on her own surprise at her willingness to let go in terms of her speed on skis (speed in itself is offering a thrownness in its potential for risk). Perhaps Paula's letting go is about trusting herself as a skier as she has gained further confidence in her ski racing, and as she has learnt to trust in her equipment. There is *thrownness* in the process of racing, in the course inspection prior to the event and the

expectation of how the race might feel or perhaps look, what her time might be and how stable she might feel through the course at speed:

You have to have a training run on the downhill; you can't just go down it, race cold and have to do a run down the course. They start early in the morning with floodlights in the dark. So you start looking at the course and you gradually go down and it helps build confidence. I suppose compared to a lot of people my age I ski really fast. I won the downhill in my age group and I was fastest oldest woman in the field; there were two others racing but I was way in front of them and only a couple of 10ths behind Graham (not his real name). I am getting more confident with speed ... I think it's the equipment ... you feel safer and more stable.
(Paula)

Through her experiences with racing, Paula has come closer to understanding her skiing; what she is capable of and her implicit trust in her ability to project herself towards the end of a race. She revels in the newness of speed now, as if it is an experience she has previously only flirted with. She is willing to take on the newness of speed (as she has perhaps been somewhat inhibited at times; weighing up how going fast might actually be – particularly when she has watched her husband and children ski straight steep runs). Perhaps it is in this welcoming of speed more readily into her skiing that she has become more acutely aware of the conceivable hazards. She reflects on experiences skiing steep runs in USA:

It's terribly steep at the top. I'm fine as long as the snow is good but I get a bit nervous and I always worry about what other people are doing, whether they are in control on those steep slopes. It's quite challenging.
(Paula).

Paula's nervousness is accentuated by surroundings which although familiar in a sense (snow is snow wherever one is), there is a certain unknowingness about skiing in USA. She relates feeling "fine" as long as she feels the snow beneath her to be "good". This feedback is perhaps provided after she has "felt out" her skiing space. It is one thing for Paula to take her own risks, but it is another thing to expose herself to the out-of-control skiing of others. Her life is not solely in her own hands, her expertise as a skier may not be enough to save her from impact with others.

Chapter summary

In skiing there resides a towardness, a constant transitioning from one stage to another, over seasons, years and decades, as a skier departs from one stage of development and passes into another. The transitioning and maturing of participant's skiing could be viewed as a series of moments leading towards one being a skier. Such moments were shown to be at times dappled with anxiety, a "dance" on the edge of risk, and for some participants perhaps inculcating a sense of play on snow. It appears that skiing becomes a complex component of a "skiers" life, creating a dynamic that is both freeing and containing as the skier moves between fear and elation, whilst skiing toward an ever-evolving skiing self, drawing the skier in as if pulling them into a promise of authenticity

Containing the moments (a pot-pourri of risk, anxiety, fear, elation, play, freedom) illuminates the significance for the participants in keeping themselves "reigned in". Such moments enabled

them to define their limits and to recognise responsibility for the choices they made on skis. Some participants spoke of those moments of “in-betweenness”, where there may exist the “what-if’s”. They also described moments where they have felt to be skiing beyond their limits. This is recognised after the fact.

Knowing and finding self, emerged as being pivotal to the experience of awareness of having *pushed through* a previously defined barrier. Risk is a salient concern for any person spending time in a mountainous environment, and here skiers have described experiences which have alerted them to the possibility of their own finitude. Some skiers have talked about *how* risk could be recognised and perhaps mitigated, that possibly some risks could be avoided, but it sometimes comes down to choice; to embrace risk or leave it for another day.

In summary, the participants have described the dynamic nature of skiing as an opportunity to embrace life and contain it as if it is there, in the mountains, where “life” is most tangible.



*"This snow is so light, to turn in it you only have to think of turning
and effortlessly, you scoop left, then right again, in some avian rhythm.
This, truly, is what flying feels like.*

*You've had moments of it ripping backcountry runs... but this goes on and on, and on.
Over two thousand feet of it, you skiing like some dream, through pines and firs higher up, then
strands of quaking aspen below, you singing some nonsense song that just bubbles up out of
you, out of this ecstasy"*

(Wayne Johnson, 2007, p. 328)

Chapter Nine: Freedom to...

In drawing conclusions from the previous chapter, this final findings chapter extends previous insights by considering notions of the freedom that is perceived within the experience of skiing. It also considers the restorative qualities some people might seek from their skiing amidst places which might hold potential for re-creation.

Letting go of boundaries

Freedom – *being* free, transports our mind into a world where we are free from constraint, perhaps *restraint*, unencumbered from the “normal” rules of society, autonomy and perhaps a sense of responsibility to no-one but oneself. Heidegger insisted that freedom opens the door towards the essential nature of truth (Nicholls, 2000). One cannot exist without the other.

Being “free” implies a prior state of Being – of being “bound”, caught-up. There is, as Nicholls (2000) proposed, an historical component to the condition of freedom in Heidegger’s interpretation, and therefore perhaps thrownness is embedded within the concept. Such freedom, is moving *towards*, projecting forward into a “truth” that could be seen as having positive foundations. Heidegger also speaks of a negative freedom (Nicholls, 2000), one in which Dasein is *freed from* (restraint).

Free from

What the public “knows” about skiing could portray a sport that inherently appears free. The skier gliding effortlessly down a powdery slope, the snow rising like a plume behind the skis and tell-tale snaking trail left behind as evidence of one’s existence on the snow, all add up to “look” like “freedom”.

Sartre (1956) proposed that skiing would be better ‘if the snow re-formed itself as we passed over it’ (pg. 605) suggesting perhaps the trail “gives away” one’s presence – hence there is, in essence, no true freedom. In his unpublished PhD thesis on extreme sports, Brymer (2005) suggested that some sports may adopt an appearance of freedom-seeking where the concept of freedom “has been forced on (extreme sports) by those who wish to be seen as what they consider to be free” (p. 234).

An unburdening

The stories from the present research speak here of freedom in the sense of an unburdening from *something*, as an uncoupling from the “train” that represents the expected pathway of one’s lives. To accept an invitation into freedom is to step out of the structures that define our daily endeavours. The participants in this study expressed a willingness to depart somehow from their daily routines and disclose the value of skiing in their lives as a way to reinforce freedom *from* binding strictures.

David's view is that skiing is "unstructured." I wonder if because of David's experience and level of ability, he has grown to see skiing as unstructured. Therefore it is David's *own* skiing which in truth is unstructured. He goes on to say:

From the time you actually click your skis on and start off skiing it's pretty much unstructured – you know ... what's the snow like? Where's the sun shining? Where's the best place to go NOW? Who do I want to ski with today? Who DON'T I want to ski with today? What challenges do I want to set for myself – do I just want to cruise or do I want to go and do something I haven't done before?
(David)

In a sense David *owns* the snow under his skis. The snow that he has just ridden over was his, but is now open for some other skier, or some other time. It has been and gone, that area of "freedom" has been skied, yet it remains captured in his memory. David expresses here the notion of being free *to* ski anywhere, ski with whomever he pleases, to ski *towards* a freeing of all binding prohibitions. The things that bind him in his everyday life-world are those things he skis away *from* (work, routine, pressure, responsibility); in this sense he is also seeking freedom *from*. Smelter (2008) reflects on his skiing:

According to Sartre, skiing is a type of appropriation, turning the snow from mere crystalline particles into a support for my project of freedom. In other words I make the snow mine. The freedom expressed here is as much a freedom "from" as it is a freedom "to". In one sense skiing is a freedom *from* the responsibilities and often-meaningless routines of everyday life.
(as cited in Hemphill & Smelter, 2008, p. 26)

Being one

Sartre (1956) spoke of skiing as "sliding" or "skimming" over the surface of the snow, and in so doing his sliding on skis meant that the skis themselves did not "take root". To not take root implies a certain detachment, a certain freedom. He spoke of *sliding* being more ideal on water, that in this action there is no trail of where one has been previously:

Sliding on snow is already less perfect; there is a trace left behind me by which I am compromised, however light it may be. Sliding on ice, which scratches the ice and finds a matter already organised, is very inferior, and if people continue to do it despite all this, it is for other reasons. Hence that slight disappointment which always seizes us when we see behind us the imprints which our skis have left on the snow. How much better would it be if the snow re-formed itself as we passed over it!
(p. 605)

Sartre's search for freedom involved an internal battle with the snow and ultimately with the mountain itself. Martin highlighted how in approaching skiing as a battle – Sartre saw it as him *against* the mountain; and that he did not want to be *just* a skier, but "*the* skier in the way that the mountain is a mountain" (Martin, 2010, p. 45).

Whilst participants in the present research describe their feelings of freedom in their skiing, perhaps within that *freedom* there hides restrictions which only reveal themselves during moments of displeasure or frustration. If one holds on securely to an idea of what the skiing experience should be like on any given day, is that freedom? Sartre (1956) viewed the snowy slopes of the mountain as restraining; like a monster lurking to somehow trip him up, like a battle zone (as if conscripted there without choice). This is certainly not a context he would dwell comfortably within to seek freedom. He continued, "Here the snow is identical with *the*

other, and the common expressions “to overcome,” “to conquer,” “to master,” etc indicate sufficiently that it is a matter of establishing between me and the snow the relation of master to slave” (Sartre, 1956, p. 606).

Freedom from

Heidegger’s (1927/1962) notion of “freedom from” is evident here in David’s description of the sport as “unstructured”. However by its very nature, skiing would appear to have some very specific boundaries, limitations and structure around it, in that there is evidence of a counter-culture, where those who “extreme ski” and appear to flout the common rules around skiing (skiing out of patrolled boundaries, cliff jumping, para-skiing), and those who adhere by the structure and “norms” of skiing (skiing on-piste, or if off-piste, in patrolled areas). Even those who participate in ski-touring “play by the rules” by being geared up with avalanche probes, radio’s, shovels, flares and other potentially life-saving equipment). Either way, both directions conform to a structure that is “normal” for that context. David goes on:

Skiing for me is about looking over at a particular run, or that slope over there and saying “oh that looks interesting I think I’ll go and do it”, and you can, and you just go and do it. It provides a sense of freedom for me – that is very much part of it, and exploration – you know, being able to go into places I have never been to before as it broadens the boundaries and enhances that element of freedom that I seek in skiing. (David)

David talks about the freedom that ski-touring provides. His proposition of boundary broadening is suggestive that in skiing on-piste there *is* a sense of playing by the rules and following the expectations set down by the ski area rules. Paradoxically, skiing (as in any sport) imposes its own rules. Metheny (1979) offered explication around “rules” inherent within the “freedom” of sport participation:

They restrict in order to be free. But within these restrictions, they offer a scenario whereby every man might make full use of all the energies of his mortal being, unhampered and unhindered by the demands imposed by the realities of his existence. (pp. 232, 233)

Seeking freedom therefore becomes a vital element to David’s skiing, perhaps without which he may not be as involved in the sport as he is or gain as much satisfaction. David also describes the “freeing” nature of ski touring as the antithesis to ski racing, where he sees the latter bound by rules and regulations. “Racing, I think never really appealed because it’s quite a structured thing from my observations. They seem to spend most of their time standing around waiting to race instead of actually skiing” (David).

Paula would perhaps argue that for her freedom comes with pushing her own personal boundaries during her ski racing, as skiing fast and hard being something she really enjoys with her skiing. She reflects: “Frankly we like empty slopes so we can ski fast. We tend to go first thing in the morning and ski hard before the slopes fill up and we do that down south as well” (Paula).

Paula speaks of her ski racing as fun, which almost suggests a relaxed notion of “play”, even though she is required to travel at high speed in often icy hard slope conditions; conditions other people would perhaps find extremely inhibiting and restricting.

She goes on to say:

I’ve done the downhill at Coronet peak which is great fun. You do it before the field is open to the public, so it’s closed off. You follow a trail down to the bottom with a few controlled gates but it’s basically straight down to the bottom. It’s who can go fastest and straightest. They have it at Mt Hutt where you go straight from the very top. Apparently they had one of those things for testing you on the roads ... they clocked me at 97 km/hr ... that was quite exciting to find I had been that fast!
(Paula)

Freedom appears to be a crucial ingredient for those who participate in skiing.

Patrick describes skiing as opening the door to a taste of doing something by himself: “It was probably for me one of the first things that I can remember that I could do outside of home - something I wanted to achieve on my own” (Patrick).

Heidegger claimed (1927/1962) a negative notion of freedom is that in which freedom is sought *from* something. For Patrick, he sensed from an early age that skiing could provide him with a sense of autonomy from the confines, boundaries and rules of home. It was freedom *from* home, perhaps from decisions made for him about what he could and could not do, from the day-to-day rules of living in a household and perhaps the day-to-day rules imposed by society. Smelter discussed what being free represented for him:

Skiing is still my freedom. I am free in the sense of facing a decision to live a routine life or one filled with challenge. I am free also in the sense of putting myself on the line, risking what I am for a fuller sense of being. I am also responsible for and to myself; there can be no stand-ins for my performance, and no one to blame for what I fail to do (as cited in Hemphill & Smelter, 2008, p. 28)

I think the participants engaged fully with the notion of self-responsibility. I think this is what frees them *from* the responsibilities *to* other areas of their lives. It is perhaps in such *freedom from* that they came close to the very core of why they ski.

Invites *Being*

Sartre (1956), suggested that freedom must not be seen as an escape *from* being; as if *being* would exist alongside a being that is free, but rather as something which comes *before* being; something towards which a being may project. He asserted:

Freedom has to be behind itself this being which it has not chosen; and precisely to the extent that it turns back upon it in order to illuminate it, freedom causes this being which is its own to appear in relation with the plenum of being – that is, to exist in the midst of the world.
(p. 508)

This notion suggests that freedom in itself is an existence towards which people, (skiers perhaps), desire proximity with. Freedom might take on the form of non-being, and it is this feeling (the feeling of being able to be something other than what we are for a very brief time) that may attract some people to skiing.

Sartre (1956) called this a “paradox of freedom” in that there exists freedom within a specific context, and there exists a specific context *through* freedom. Hemphill and Smelter (2008) again invite us to consider freedom:

Skiing is also freedom to explore, to test and invent myself. I welcome the risks and challenges of skiing – the difficult ski runs, unpredictable snow conditions, not to mention the fear of humiliation or injury when I fall – for it forces me out of my comfort zone. I ski not with reckless abandon, but rather with controlled exuberance. Central to the value that I place on skiing is the aloneness, not skiing by myself mind you, but the individual “moment of truth” when I confront my fears, act and take responsibility for the outcome.
(p. 26)

Here the nature of responsibility for oneself is highlighted. In this exists a certain paradox, that of skiing as a freeing activity that can be pursued for this end, whilst simultaneously asking us to be mindful of our responsibility to others – to those that would worry should we not return from a backcountry jaunt.

Escape

Markby (2007) offers: “Skiing is exhilarating. That first downhill run through crisp air and dry, powdery snow creates a euphoria which is the skiers reward for the early morning preparations and journey to the slopes” (p. 10). Here Markby alluded to the “going to”, where it could be argued, there exists a “place” in which recreation occurs. The word “recreation” itself, urges us to consider the prospect of renewal, of *re*-creation.

Seagrave (2000) argued that there exists opportunity for escape and respite within sport and recreation, a chance to indulge in a break from the everyday “complexities and confusion of everyday life” (p. 61). Rothman argued skiing to be a vehicle towards escaping “the pace of life in the industrialised world” (1998, p. 149). What skiing offers to the skier may well be a refuge from the daily grind, especially as skiing takes place within an almost surreal environment, further reinforced as having some magical quality by having to travel to a place to ski, a place that typically we may not travel to if it were not for the snow. Coleman (2004, p. 2) provided an eloquent offering:

Through the act of skiing, skiers could enter a landscape that felt wild and natural – they could gain access to something fundamental, pristine, and authentic – and they did it during a century when “nature” grew both increasingly appealing and elusive.

The following stories remind us that people need an escape from the “normal” routines of their daily lives. Here participants in the present research share their experiences of how skiing enables a sense of escape, fosters a sense of re-creation and why such escape occurs in specifically chosen places.

Patrick offers insight as to why the mountains hold such value for him. “The mountains for me are part of me, a big part of me as a person and they’re just a big piece of rock but there is something about them which makes them a huge part of my life” (Patrick).

Merleau-Ponty (1958/2005) talked about the spatial archaeology of the lived body – in other words, the body's inhabitancy in the space around it. He said, "Experience discloses beneath objective space ... a primordial spatiality of which objective space is merely its outer covering and which merges with the body's very being" (as cited in Shengli, 2009, p. 136).

Patrick speaks of the mountains being a *part* of him. There is no beginning and no end in experiencing the mountains as they are immersed deeply within him; they are an extension of him and define a part of who he feels he is. The skiing then becomes the *vehicle* through which Patrick can experience that part of himself.

Kockelmans asserted:

Merleau-Ponty believes the body is in the world like the heart is in the body. The body makes the world continuously alive, breathing life into it and sustaining it from inside of it, so that they inseparably form one system.
(1970, p. 278)

As Patrick feels such a vast connection to the mountains where he resides, he chooses also to recreate on them, thus inculcating a sense of familiarity – that he is at "home" in this other space and therefore comfortable within it.

He *trusts* being in the space of the mountains to provide him with what he is seeking, perhaps even more so than in his own dwelling. Here Bollnow (1961, p. 35) helped us to consider the place we are in:

Strangeness stands in contrast to what is his own. Strangeness is the area where man no longer knows his way around and where he therefore feels helpless ... he is outside the trusted area, in a hostile world and the feeling of strangeness can overpower him. We all recognise the feeling of inexpressible homesickness.

For Patrick, escape to the mountains offers him a chance to feel he "fits in", where he *can* feel the mountains are a part of him rather than some alien land where he feels "strange". Stoddart (2004) maintained that whilst people may vary in their individual ways of skiing, the connection a skier may hold to the landscape upon which he or she skis, may vary considerably, thus highlighting the inimitable relationship one might have with one's skiing-scape. He stated. "Skiing landscapes are not homogenous; they are local and specific, and need to be experienced for their specificity" (p. 44).

Restoring potential

"Restoration" implies that a thing needs to be put back somehow right; as if it has been previously emptied, removed, laid bare. *Re-creation* has the potential to be restorative, and restoration implies a process that one must go through in order to be "repaired". Such a place for re-creation might have its specific purpose set aside seasonally – such as mountains for skiing in winter during "snow season". Perhaps one would visit the same mountainous refuges over the summer and walk the rocky trails that in winter offer a snowy path; or perhaps it is only *in* winter that ski slopes hold potential for restoration. Being able to interact with "non-human

nature” as Stoddart (2004) calls it, appears to be an essential component of the restorative process.

Patrick sees the potential in the mountains (and in particular Mt Ruapehu as his “home” mountain), in providing a base for his recreational activities all year round, regardless of the season, and thus the potential for his re-creation.

Paula talks here about her experiences living and working at Mt Robert ski area during its operation:

It was very special. The fact that you are away from everything really and living on the snow. All our kids went to the ski school there – they’ve all got this incredible feeling about the mountain and they all keep in touch now. This group has actually bought one of the small huts from the club. They wanted to reproduce the same sort of similar thing for their own kids.
(Paula)

Paula highlights being “away from everything”. This for Paula held a special appeal as a small isolated world, where people had to row across the lake and then hike for almost two hours into the ski area with one’s equipment, requiring a monumental effort in order to reach the area. Therefore in this way, its re-creative capacity was accentuated.

The notion that mountains hold potential as a restoration place is nothing new. Veronica explains the pull of the mountains for her: “You’d think after a long time that it would become ho-hum “let’s go to the mountain again”, but it’s not like that ... every trip is another new experience and provides me with another full battery” (Veronica).

She heads to the mountains to re-charge; to top-up her battery; to re-new her *depleted* self. She goes on to add, “When I am tired I draw motivation from Lynn to go skiing. I am tired from work and skiing gives me a different kind of tired which is restorative. I become lighter from work stuff” (Veronica). For Veronica skiing and the mountainous environment allows her to unpack from her demanding job. She feels “lighter”, unencumbered perhaps and in doing so steps out of the heaviness of demands in other areas of her life and into a world where she can become re-newed.

People have been drawn to the mountains and snow for decades, and stories of personal growth, and achievements borne out of clambering up great heights are the “stuff” legends are made of. Mountains have potential to change people. The change comes through the detachment from everyday life and the process of “being” in the “everyday world”, through stepping outside of “normal” space and into the space set aside for recreative purposes; a space Heinegg (1976) called “nature humanised” .

Patrick provides us with insight through his own experience with the mountains he lives near and recreates amongst:

It doesn't matter how many times I've flown over them or how many times I've skied on them or walked on them, the next day is still like the first time I've ever been there; it's a strange experience or a strange thing to say perhaps.
(Patrick)

Patrick sees the mountains with fresh eyes, a re-newed understanding and possibly a deeper unveiling of his feelings for the mountain each time he views it. Even flying over it for him holds a special value; it provides him with some semblance of closeness to it as it permits a view that not many people get to see. He discloses:

I take photos from the aeroplane flying over it. The photos look down on it and so those photos – the reason I take them is that they're unique. You can look at the mountains all day long but never see the top of them, and so few people actually have the opportunity to actually see it.
(Patrick)

Patrick is quite adamant that people might be able to look at the mountain but they do not really get to see it. It is almost as if it becomes more intimate for Patrick, that his vantage point from above the mountain allows him to know the mountain a little better, to come closer to it somehow.

Martin (2004) provided a description of his back-country skiing experience which supports the impression that to ski is to enter a world unlike no other. That to do so necessitates a commitment to this other world, a full emersion, a state of absorption into the snowy whiteness that forces an abandonment of all other worlds. He states:

I'm not often tempted to use the phrase "Shangri-La of skiing", but that day on a pristine face somewhere beyond Queenstown on the South Island of New Zealand was definitely one of those times. No ski lodges, no bars, no tracks. Even the helicopter discreetly took itself off somewhere. Remote, off the map, lost in space and time, a tabula rasa of unpolluted white stuff, floating somewhere in the brilliant blue sky.
(Martin, 2004, para 5)

The snow and sky merge into one, and the skier becomes part of the fabric of the mountain, synergistically drawing energy from and giving energy to, the mountain. It is as if the mountain itself has life; *is* life. It is as if the "other world" of skiing is entered only through complete separation from the daily places of our lives. It is as if this world is indeed encapsulated within a snow-globe.

Exploration of self

David shares insight into the world he steps into once he dons his skis:

I don't just confine myself to resort skiing. I go out and do quite a bit of ski-touring as well, so for me there's that aspect of being able to go into places I have never been before. Terrain is a big part of why I go skiing where I do.
(David)

Ski touring provides David with a world *outside* of the world of skiing – the chance to get away from the crowded groomed slopes. This aspect of his skiing provides him with an invigorating connection with his surroundings, satisfied by his curiosity of what lies beyond the patrolled area of the predominant landscape. It is as if the skiing-scape where David chooses to ski tour, is a

scape *constructed* to fulfill his desire to connect with the natural environment around him; it is the meaning *he* confers in this environment that holds value for him.

This ski environment is in stark contrast to Patrick's ski environment. He prefers *not* to ski off-piste. He is there to connect with the mountain as closely as he can and does not feel skiing off-piste will bring the mountains any closer. For him it is about the *being there*. His experiences of skiing hold a physicality that he finds both demanding and engaging, that allows him to draw closer to "his" mountain. They draw him into his "place" on *his* mountain landscape:

I don't worry about getting my money's worth; it's as good as just being here for me; doing one good run ... so another run isn't going to make a difference. I don't need to be skiing from 8.30 till 4.30, just being here ...
(Patrick)

Greider and Garkovich's (1994, p. 1) suggested "landscapes" could be seen as:

"Symbolic environments created by human acts of conferring meaning to nature and the environment of giving the environment definition and form from a particular angle of vision and through a special filter of values and beliefs".

Patrick skis to feel refreshed, to come to *this* place that he feels holds special significance for him. His mountain (Ruapehu) holds particular significance for him – it is his *symbolic environment* – the place where he comes to feel significant. By doing so he comes away with a physical tiredness but a deep mental clarity and feeling of connectedness that affords him a sense of renewal and re-affirmation. He takes in the *whole* experience of *being* a part of the mountain, so much so that he avoids distractions that he feels will detract from his connection:

I might listen to music to relax, but I could not ski with it – it introduces another dynamic that is totally foreign to what you're doing. I wouldn't enjoy skiing anymore. I like to be part of the whole environment around me. I like to know what's going on.
(Patrick)

Perhaps Patrick would feel that "dialling" in to music in this environment removes the restorative aspects that he seeks in spending time in such an environment; perhaps it somehow makes the mountain less authentic. Technology is a taken-for-granted aspect of society, but for Patrick it seems out of place on the mountain; it disturbs him. Perhaps it unsettles and disrupts the connection and deep relationship he has worked hard to maintain.

Becoming ourselves

Seagrave (2000) offered another wonderful insight into the world of sport as an escape from the monotony of everyday life; as an opportunity to escape our "other" selves and become perhaps our true selves for a short time. He states:

When we enter the world of sport, we enter into an alternative universe, one in which we deploy certain actions and submit to our fate. It is also a world that allows us to forget, disguise or shed our everyday personality in favour of another, a world in which the normal rules of etiquette and demeanour can be temporarily suspended, in which we can act to a certain degree with impunity, in which we can become an illusionary character and behave accordingly. In fact, the opportunity to act as we will for one fleeting moment rather than as we are or as we are expected to be is both appealing and cathartic. To a certain extent, the arenas of sport offer us the possibility of a distinctly different ontology.

Seagrave's analogy of the "arenas of sport" could apply to any space in which sport takes place. For the skier, this is the ski area, the mountains. For the tennis player it is the court, prescribed, defined, marked out as a space within which the player steps out of his or her "normal" self.

Patrick describes how skiing is his way of escaping his normal day-to-day routine. To be routinized is part of being human; it is part of what Heidegger may refer to as inauthentic living. However it is a feature of human nature to do what we have always done, to do as others do, to accommodate some sense of control and predictability in our lives.

Studies in recreation and leisure do indicate an escape from routine (in domains such as work and family), as a primary motivation for seeking recreative and restorative experiences. Degenhardt, Frick, Buchecker and Gutscher (2011) go so far as to suggest the type of work people do may even influence the places where outdoor recreation is sought. Patrick here describes his desire to get away from the "other" person he is in his normal day-to-day life:

I ski to get away from the day-to-day routine. Yesterday I came home completely whacked, every muscle in my body ached. I woke up dehydrated with a headache, so I don't think it recharges my body, but it recharges my mind.
(Patrick)

The day-to-day routine could be seen as binding, as constricting, as stifling, or for some perhaps it could represent a predictable security from which no escape is warranted or desired.

Patrick's experience of skiing is deeply related to how he feels *on the mountain*. He talks about just being on the mountain as providing him with a sense of restoration and he derives a deep level of renewal from the environment. Oosterhous, Legg and Darville (2007) proposed that people are drawn to outdoor environments for reasons that range from exploring new scenery, to seeking solitude, to connecting with nature and even to get away from crowded areas, whilst Turner (2010, para 5) also captured this sentiment:

How we choose to experience the environments we inhabit and what we find there is ultimately a matter for personal discovery. Our diversity ensures that we will always be finding new perspectives and new expressions for the role that mountain wilderness plays in our lives. We learn these things gradually, over the course of a lifetime, and soon enough discover how important time is to our understanding.

Interestingly, to go from one's "normal" routine into a skiing-scape, one enters a surreal world where *something* is sought from the environment.

Landscapes of freedom

From my own observations, the ski slopes are a miniature cosmos, with rules and regulations, landscapes that confine and those that are free; a world of "actors" who inhabit the space in a skiing "appropriate" manner. There appears to be a common theme running through recreation as a restorative forum, and that is the need to get away *from* something. The "getting away", provides the sense of renewal and re-creation. It is an interesting prospect that people strive to

“get away” from something. It is a transitional prospect; a prospect that in re-creation we may become a renewed and perhaps become a better version of ourselves.

We are going *away* from ourselves and projecting *into* ourselves which in the act of skiing, becomes renewed. Sartre (1956) called this instance a “point of departure” in which we leave the obstacles of our existence and go “towards” another place.

This notion brings me back to the concept of freedom. Sartre (1956) proposed that the precise moment of departing (ourselves towards another place), is in fact our engagement with freedom. Does a restorative experience require one to escape “from” something or does one merely put things aside momentarily as we “go toward” something that promotes a sense of renewal and a re-creation?

Hull and Michael (1995) found that the restorative aspect of recreation was not necessarily enhanced if one sought nature or the outdoors as a recreation back-drop. They argued the restorative aspect comes simply from the idea of solace *from* the routinized aspects of one’s daily life, and this could potentially occur anywhere (i.e., outdoors or indoors).

David refers to skiing as providing opportunity to remove some of the structure from his normal routine. “There’s no structure to it; you do what you want ... you know ... getting away from the office; the day-to-day pressure of daily living ... getting away from it all” (David)

For David getting away from it all means finding restoration through the outdoors and in particular through his skiing. The opportunity for David to become submerged in his skiing is what he looks forward to during the summer months. He readily admits to being pre-occupied with thoughts of skiing, even in the off-season during the summer months, indicating the sense of place he finds amongst the mountains in his “getting-away-from”.

I don’t really preach about my skiing but if someone wants to talk about it then sure I’m happy to talk, but obviously being involved with the ski field it’s a year-round thing even in the height of summer because we’ve got things to think about up there. I try to go away during the summer; go skiing in the northern hemisphere. I get magazines too – a subscription to “Powder” magazine that regularly turns up during the summer, so that keeps me tapped in.
(David)

Patrick too speaks of the part the mountains play in his life. The energy he pulls from being on or in proximity to “his” mountain is extremely significant. He speaks of “taking some time”, as if the mountain offers it to him in a way that no other aspect of his life can. “There’s something there and I just love it on a day like yesterday – blue sky, no wind, beautiful weather; to be up there and to just take some time” (Patrick).

The connection Patrick feels to the mountains as a skier is a common thread running through the themes found in many works based around mountain climbing, hiking, and other outdoor adventure recreation pursuits. Baugh (2010) suggested people may be drawn to recreate in environments that provide a sense of place outside of their normal daily dimensions within which their lives are lived.

Spiritual space

Even though one may seek an experience that indeed is different than the daily routine, there exists a fundamental desire to find connection with the space or place in which one seeks to re-create. Patrick says:

There's a huge spiritual aspect to where I ski, I think that's it for me. I don't think that I can overlook that; that's just become part of my fabric. I don't think skiing is a spiritual attraction. For me it's the mountain.

(Patrick)

This is an innate part of our being-ness, of *being* a person in the world. Patrick expresses that the place where he skis is "part of his fabric"; it is "spiritual". This implies a *searching* for connection that runs beyond skiing itself; it is simply the being there – on this particular mountain that fills Patrick's spiritual cup. Sartre argued that "place" is defined by specific order (1956), in the sense that it (our place) becomes obvious in relation to the things around us or things that have culminated in us *being* in that place (how we may have found ourselves where we now are).

Places past

Perhaps the places we seek out as providers of solace and renewal are in fact influenced somehow by experiences of places past and that perhaps somehow it is inevitable certain people might seek out the mountains for recreation whilst others may seek the ocean or the garden to quench the same desire for restoration. Kuentzel and Heberlein (2008), and Scott and Lee (2010) have both discussed how previous life experiences can influence the choice of leisure and recreation activities and have suggested that there may exist a trajectory along which leisure choices are defined.

Veronica describes her early memories of watching her parents ski, secured on moving film and evoking images of a world she wished to be in.

Those were things that captured me about the mountain. The nostalgia I felt which actually came from my parents, because we used to watch movies of my Mother and Father in the old flicker tape and we used to sit there as a family and watch the water skiing, the snow skiing and they weren't great skiers but they were dressed in the sixties and the tight gear but they always had fun and it created a lot of laughter. Their movies projected that, and for me it made me think "I wonder if I would get that same sort of high".

(Veronica)

Perhaps for Veronica going to a place to ski brings her back to those memories, back to a space in which she can connect with parents who portrayed an escape from everyday life. Somehow she may be reaching for the feelings such family connection instilled within her. Possibly skiing offers such a place for her. She goes on to further explain: "To this day I don't know how they did it, but that one memory sparked off a, perhaps an odd twenty years, thirty years skiing for me" (Veronica).

As Veronica develops in her own skiing, it appears she comes closer to understanding the experiences of her parents. These experiences she wishes to emulate and to somehow capture for her own self.

Inviting solitude

What is it to ski on a mountain in a seemingly isolated world? Is one so absorbed in the act of skiing that the world fades back? Does the aloneness heighten the skiing experience? Does it enable the skier to fall back into his or her skiing body more readily? Does skiing alone attune one with more acuity to the surroundings, or does one dissolve into the snowy monotone and *become* skiing? Seth Morrison, professional ski-film skier stated:

I take these risks coz it's the ultimate. It's all about the powder and the experience of being out on the mountain. Getting dropped off on some crazy peak. The heli just has to come in sideways ... and stop and hover and let you out ... and it's just room enough for you up there.
(as cited in Obenhaus, 2007)

White and Hendee (2000) suggested there exists a positive relationship between outdoor recreation experiences of solitude and development of "self". They contended that such experiences are appropriated in a genuinely "natural" setting rather than a constructed "wilderness" setting (i.e., a "developed recreation area") thus, allowing people to gain true benefit from being alone.

When one considers skiing, we might think of it as a solo activity; one that we undertake alone – not as part of a team – where we are a skier alone on a mountain full of other skiers (who are also "alone" in their skiing). Patrick offers us insight:

I've always been quite happy skiing by myself. I spent all that time in Austria by myself, so I'm quite happy. I have days off during the week and so I just go by myself and there's always someone I'll run into and I'll have a few runs with them, but I'm happy by myself.

One cannot doubt that whilst skiing could be *seen* to be carried out within the greater context of others, in a very public setting, ultimately the skier is alone.

Ski areas bring people together to one place for a common cause. Hollenhorst and Jones (2001, p. 56) defined solitude as:

... psychological detachment from society for the purpose of cultivating the inner world of the self. It is the act of emotionally isolating oneself for self-discovery, self-realisation, meaning, wholeness and heightened awareness of one's deepest feelings and impulses. It implies a morality that values the self, at least on occasion as above the common good.

Are all skiers seeking to better themselves or attain a greater sense of self-awareness through solitude in their skiing? Not all skiers *can* experience the drama of the back-country (to be *truly* alone) as Seth Morrison can or David strives to. Stoddart (2004) when referring to the picture painted of skiing by ski magazines, stated: "This dominant discourse of skiing and the sublime mountain wilderness glorifies a particular type of skiing that relatively few people experience.

Most skiers inhabit ski hills which are marked by the constant presence of other people, rather than isolation” (p. 55).

Could it then be surmised that unless one explores the further reaches of the defined ski area, solace on the snow will elude them? What if being solitary presents for someone, a sense of risk?

Shared knowing

For David the experience of skiing is heightened by sharing it with others:

You're doing it with your friends, but you know ... getting away from it all. I think it's best if you can get away with friends or family, and nowadays I do ski with my family a lot. That's been a really important aspect of our family life.
(David)

Stoddart (2004) found that participants recalled their best days skiing were those where they skied with family or friends. David describes the importance of this. “Once a year we go away to Wanaka, rent a bach, because you can as a family. We usually take some friends with us ... or the kids friends” (David).

Veronica too feels skiing to be better when shared with her partner:

The trip up to the mountain provides us with a wonderful quiet solitude; a platform where we actually discuss stuff that we haven't had time to during the week. It's lovely as I'm not distracted and Lynn has a captive audience. We will look at the mountain as we drive and it's just so beautiful with the snow on it; we feel that awe.
(Veronica)

For Veronica it is about sharing the special moments with her partner that bring about that quiet sense of specialness in their time together. It is almost as if the trip to the mountain – before they reach the slopes which are inevitably crowded with other skiers – provides the peace and solitude that the mountain itself might bring but does not quite deliver. Both David and Veronica find their solace perhaps in being with others whilst appreciating the environment they are in.

Veronica clarifies further:

I value that journey between getting up. I don't care what happens along the way; if we have to stop for sheep I never feel titchy because I just think “so be it”, and it's just part of the trip. It's like we are in a bubble and that time is our separate space which is special because no one can talk over us, nobody can change our conversation, there are no telephones to distract us – it's just Lynn and I.
(Veronica)

Veronica recognises the time towards the mountain as precious for she and Lynn as it provides a sense of solitude from the business of their daily lives. This is time they can provide for each other, as once they reach the mountain it is *present*, and urges immediacy.

Chapter summary

This final chapter revealed that perhaps ultimate freedom can be found through the restorative nature of skiing. Such restoration invites a re-creation of oneself. This vital aspect of one's skiing may be the key to allaying one's fears or construction of risk, or perhaps it may open one to the possibilities of risk that are freeing to dwell within. Where one goes to re-create is also a

fundamental aspect of the unique relationship some people might have with their skiing. This present research has been revealed that through connection with certain skiing places and spaces, and actively choosing to ski in specific areas over others, (or perhaps to ski in the backcountry as opposed to the very public and often crowded groomed slopes of commercial ski areas). It was revealed that for some skiers, there dwells a very valuable connection that enables a restorative process. Such a process may in fact bring about feelings of a spiritual nature – perhaps a profounder connection to the world or even a greater clarity, and innate sense of self.

For some skiers it is not the place where they ski, but rather the *skiing* itself which invites restoration and re-creation, and for some this may have been inculcated through engaging in riskier aspects of the sport which has “kept them on their toes” and invited a greater sense of gratitude for their lives.

In this chapter it was revealed that being alone may represent a vital element of the skier’s experience. Some participants chose to ski backcountry for this reason – to be away from the crowds and to augment the sense of adventure and discovery that forces a self-reliance and self-responsibility. Embedded within this notion is how one may seek escape *from* the everyday rigidities of one’s “normal” life (work, home, family) and a freedom *to* engage with the outdoors as a mode of gaining a sense of self – or perhaps a sense of control over oneself – one’s authentic self.



"The snow doesn't give a soft white damn whom it touches"

E.E Cumming
(as cited in Carey and McGregor, 2012-2013, p. 21)

Chapter Ten: Skiing toward

The following chapter draws together the foremost understandings that have surfaced from this research, the aim of which was to explicate what the lived experience of skiing is. It sought to unpack the meaning of skiing for those who ski and to come closer to a greater understanding of the place skiing occupied in the lives of skiers. The lived experiences of the skiers in this research uncovered a “towardness”. This towardness dwells within the potential skiing holds to modify and shape a skiers experience. Towardness dwells within risk, within freedom, within moving and negotiating with the “gear” of skiing.

I will discuss how these understandings add value to and correlate with existing knowledge within the world of skiing, and in the wider area of sport and recreation. I will also discuss how this research highlights the need for further enquiry into some aspects of the outdoor experience, particularly skiing, and also the implications for education and practice. The limitations of this research have been identified through the research process and will also be discussed in this chapter.

Towardness

When unearthing the deeper layers that permeate the construct of skiing, it became clear that it was concerned with perception. A perception of the meaning of equipment, of being watched, of possible outcomes, of what accepting risk might lead to, of how it might influence choices all shape experience. In perceiving the “what-if’s” or perhaps even lack of the “what-if’s” there was a towardness which revealed itself.

Equipment becomes embodied

Feelings of control and flow in skiing were described as germinated from disengagement with conscious movement. Sartre suggested one’s body is “passed over in silence” (Johns, 2010, p. 120) when one becomes so absorbed in moving that the moving of the body as a “thing” goes unnoticed. The beginner skiers experience was recalled as a strange dissociation from the snow. The focus on equipment and their body was so intense that the snow itself faded into the background until such time as they perhaps fell on it, or it became lodged in their boots or bindings. As skiers become more proficient they come to forget the equipment; their body simply skis towards the exhilaration of the experience.

Watching

The time of noticing the beginner skier body was revealed as a sudden awakening to how one might look on skis. There was a “noticing” other skiers, how they moved and what “good” skiers looked like. The freedom to move bodies and equipment was replaced by a “way” to move, a “how” a skier should move to become like the other skiers. Sartre (1956) wrote about ways of looking and being looked at. One’s freedom is taken away in the objective gaze through momentarily “owning”. An instructor discussed his ways of looking at a beginner skier. The

skier is under the critical and scrutinizing gaze, expectantly awaiting an analysis of what the instructor “sees”. There is no freedom. Both instructor and skier are working within an equation, a process, a regulated and paced plan to construct another better skier out of the existing one.

Skiing as risk

“Risk” has surfaced as a salient topic in this research. Skiing has shown itself to be a “risky” activity that can be situated alongside other well-researched “risky” activities such as, rock-climbing, sky-diving, and high altitude mountaineering (Abramson & Fletcher, 2007; Breivik, 2010; Brymer, 2005; Priestly, 2012). “Risk” in this context has shown to be conceptual; supported by Priestly (2012) and other writers (Booth, 2007), who argued that risk is a construct, a notion that must hold different meanings for different people otherwise perhaps we would not see such high participation in seemingly risky activities.

What has been revealed in this research is how risk assumes different meanings at different times in a skier’s life or perhaps during the course of a single day on the snow, or during a split second fleeting moment. This finding is well supported by other academic writings where “risk” in the outdoor context is a central theme. Zink and Leberman (2001), and Hetland and Vitterso (2009), for example, support the present findings with respect to the experiences sought through risky activity. That is, it could indicate the level of actual risk they attribute to the activity (e.g., downhill skiing varies in risk from park skiing or big mountain skiing).

In Pederson’s study (1997), participants were asked to rank sports in terms of how risky they deemed them to be and there-by how attractive they were, whilst Larkin and Griffiths, (2004), Willig (2008) and Guskowska and Boldak (2010) found that participants in extreme sports specifically seek constructed risk-taking that they can use to stretch their own boundaries whilst experiencing the thrill of participation. These studies indicate there can be intense feelings attributed to risk-taking compared with more “sedate” sports.

Many sports within the “outdoor” genre encapsulate aspects of risk as an attracting feature (Abramson & Fletcher, 2007; Laviolette, 2007) and certainly it has been revealed in this research that within skiing, risk is a dimension that skiers flirt with – whether intentionally (to push) or by chance – they happen upon it and realise its potential reflexivity. Risk has revealed itself in the present study as a multifaceted concept and one that is highly subjective yet open to public scrutiny as to what constitutes “acceptable” and “unacceptable” elements of risk in a person’s life. Certainly Heidegger (1962) argued that through heightened awareness of one’s finitude or mortality (1962), one can come closer to authentic living. In the following sections, I will discuss the most significant revelations that have emerged through exploring “risk” as a finding in this research.

Risk as imagined

There was an element to risk situated within the unknown, of imagining what might be in store for the skier. There was a notion that to accept risk was to open oneself up towards a swell in creativity and a becoming (Farley, 1991). The imagined risk expressed in the stories of these skiers extends the concept of risk as something known and sure, to something that is possible and lurking; much like the monster under the bed.

The present findings revealed a falling into the lure of speed downhill, and that this required a cognitive “pulling back” in participant’s skiing (because there could be disruption to one’s life outside skiing), or a desire to ski as they perhaps truly desired. If they “went for it” what did they ski towards?

There was a tension that arose in the imagined risk, as the skiers weighed up and made decisions about whether or not to embrace what they imagined lay before them.

Risk as assumed

Assumed risk is the knowing. Risk was revealed as something participants could see, something solid and tangible, such as a cliff or rocks, or powdery snow. It was accepted that people died at times, due to risks being incorrectly assessed or weighed up.

My findings revealed a consideration in consolidating the existence of risk. Assumptions required reflection, for example, that to ski off-piste might not bring something dreaded. Often it was known what the significance of skiing in this or that area meant, and that it could lead towards something, something understood as unknown. In Obenhaus (2007), there was unbridled commitment to “throwing” oneself towards something, often leaping off unimaginably high cliffs, plummeting headlong down a 60 degree Alaskan slope, or dancing through snow-covered trees. Skiers described a commitment and necessity to live and be in the moment, without which there develops more room to pause. In the pause, there germinates anxiety.

Risk as play

There is a growing body of interest around the commercialisation of risky activities and the re-packaging of these as “play” (Salome, 2010), particularly within the growing adventure tourism industry in New Zealand (“the Adventure Capital of the World”)

(<http://www.thewordaustralia.com.au/new-zealand>). This has essentially been a topic beyond the realm of this thesis, however, “risk as play” has revealed itself to be an attractive aspect of skiing involvement.

This present research revealed feelings of “being in the zone”, that skiing was “thrilling”, “fun”, “fantastic”, “challenging”, and a “high”. Such descriptions allude to a sense of playfulness on snow, a sense of lightness, a sense of nearly *thereness*, a sense that it might perhaps be a dance or even a flirtation with the mountain itself, something spirited and teasing, as if it is not to be taken too seriously. “Play” certainly conjures connotations of being in the flux and not

“playing by the rules”; always mindful that the play draws one in and shapes events (Gadamer, 1960/1982).

The “playing” body

Merleau-Ponty (1964) concerned himself with the relationship of the body to one’s world. This is a salient aspect when considering how one “plays” in skiing, that skiing is experienced through one’s body but also in relationship to how one’s body mediates the environment. Heidegger (1962) asserted that this is influenced through the equipment used to mediate with. A skier in Obenhaus (2007) cited that when being filmed for a movie he asks himself how he can make it appear “fun” and “playful” for the camera. He talks about the skis as providing the ability to play; the skis are his “tools”; the tools through which he mediates the mountain slope.

The slope itself offers what appears to be gently convoluted chutes, berms, bumps and other natural playground features that support the skier through his gravity-defying acrobatics in much the same way as a child pursues the heady sensations on a merry-go-round or a playground swing. The sheer speed and determination with which he “attacks” this mountain almost screams “I am not playing by YOUR rules!”

Risk as being “outside the comfort zone”

In the present research risk also appeared as something to be feared, to be somehow contained. There was a sense that the participants skiing took place within clearly defined boundaries. If one skied close to or over those boundaries, then one was engaging with risk, real or imagined. It is assumed risk exists in skiing on some level, for beginner skiers and those who are extremely experienced.

Obenhaus (2007) revealed how some of the skiing “actors” acknowledged risk as an “occupational hazard”; that some days there were no comfort zones. Some days they had to figure out what went wrong with those who died. In this slow realisation that skiing was inherently dangerous, many of these skiers candidly spoke about the risk they took on in their lives, how it impacted on their relationships, and how it steered the course their life had taken. Some of the skiers viewed in the documentaries are now dead from skiing accidents. Risk revealed as latent until participants were awakened to their own sense of having somehow engaged with danger. Some skiers know when they have skied beyond the self-prescribed limits of their comfort zones. Some skiers saw this as a platform for further trust in their own skills, judgement and ability to perceive risky situations.

There is much scholarship around the concept of using comfort zone “stretching” as a way to inculcate self-awareness, self-development, self-esteem, resilience and so forth (Brown, 2008; Zink & Leberman, 2001). Holford (2010) called the space beyond the edge of the comfort zone the “panic zone”, and describes it as a place no one would willingly want to be. There is some literature that supports the notion (Breivik, 2010; Leberman & Martin, 2002; Roil, 2012; Rosen, 2007) that some people engage in risky or extreme sports because they do in fact wish to be in

the “panic zone”; that it is in the zone where they truly experience “life’s purpose”. Heidegger called this “authenticity” (Blattner, 2005).

Risk as tension

The notion of “weighing-up” revealed itself frequently. The weighing-up between embracing or rejecting risk which could open doors towards realised emotions and experiences such as freedom, emancipation, adventure, joy, elation, courage. Here-in dwells “the tension”. This is supported by the writings of Buckley (2012) who cited the lure of the “rush” as highly attractive for people engaging in high risk activities.

Participants who accepted risk described how in reflection it could inhibit future encounters or enable a freeing depending on how they committed themselves to “taking the leap”. Heidegger would posit that to reduce that tension – to “weigh-up” the risks - could bring one closer to authentic living (Breivik, 2010) in so far as it situates oneself away from mainstream thinking where we are born, live and die in set order; not that the possibility of re-birth could occur through engaging in risk-taking.

Risk as “tension between”

My research revealed the tension between doing what is “right” and skiing with an embracing of risk and an embodiment of “freedom” (deemed to be somehow “wrong”). Some participants skied with a reticence that held them back from the exploration of new experiences. Some were content not to explore “the edge”, as they were concerned about what it could lead to, where it might go, how it might end up. Here, anxiety was revealed, in having to make a decision to push or a decision to hold back. There was a conflict in this notion between embracing and restraining.

Breivik (1996) considered that personality could influence avoidance in seeking potentially risky situations to elicit feelings of excitement and pleasure; that simply the unburdening of risk might provide skiers with the sensations they seek from skiing. Skiing uninhibitedly shows itself as a desirable attribute in the Obenhaus (2007) ski documentary. The licentious manner with which the skiers throw themselves into the slopes invites the viewer into a world of abandonment. Even watching the skier’s in-motion incites intense feelings of emotion. To be so “at one” with the mountain lends itself to the perfect description of what “freedom” should look like.

Skiing as freedom

“Escape from” is suggestive of being bound by something that one needs to be “freed from”. My research revealed skiing provides a sense of freedom. “Freedom from ...” was uncovered, usually represented by work and responsibilities, with skiing offering the perfect thing to escape to in order to experience “freedom”.

Plentiful academic scholarship is situated around the subject of freedom in the outdoors. Straker (2005), offered much reflection around the concepts of negative and positive freedoms

(these being freedom from compared with freedom to). This has been a pivotal finding in my research where participants have cited how skiing provides them with freedom to push, explore, experience, grow, reflect and engage with. It also provides freedom from work, commitments, stress, busy-ness, and rules.

“Freedom to” was revealed through moments of embracing the environment and exploring the potential world they were in. Freedom may have come in donning “skins” and venturing beyond the patrolled margins of the ski area into censored terrain, thus representing a freedom from the constraints of the ski area as well as a freedom to ski where they pleased under their own rules, responsible for their own safety.

Freedom as solitude

What is it to be truly alone? In my research “solitude” did not feature as a predominant matter, but was revealed to be a desire to be away from busy-ness as rendered by interacting with other people. Wray (2009) suggested a commonly noted feature of solitude is the need to be (get) away from other people as a route towards self-restoration and re-creation. Solitude and its relationship to outdoor and “wilderness” experiences is a well-researched area of both the tourism and outdoor recreation genres (Loeffler, 2004; Hall, 2001; Cole, 2011-2012), however, in the area of skiing, I suggest that given the very public nature of the sport (Stoddart, 2004) solitude may not be an important motivator. However, for the skier who ventures beyond the ski field boundaries, solitude may be an important focus. This is an area worthy of further academic focus.

Marsh (2008) studied back-country, telemark skiers and snowboarders and identified solitude as a potent antecedent to arousing a spiritual element in the participant’s experiences of the mountain environment. Skier’s in the Teton Gravity Research Documentary (2011) “Further” cite being away from all the trappings of urban life – phones, computers, traffic, people – as being crucial to inculcating a sense of solitude. My study revealed freedom as being away from others, *alone*.

Freedom invites images of being somewhere where no-one else is. The “oneness” that participants at times described in terms of their relationship with the snow, with the mountain, perhaps indicated a level of freedom they gained from. Sartre (1956) described his desire for snow to dissipate after he had skied it – that it would somehow melt away the tracks of his having been there. For Sartre this would indicate the ultimate freedom in a primordial sense; that if one could not see the tracks of his skiing, then he was at one with the mountain ... he was therefore the mountain. If he was the mountain then he was truly alone, truly free.

Freedom and meaning found in a “place”

The value of having the mountains to go to as a place to be free from daily lives was unearthed as a salient theme. In the going to, there dwelled a sense of restoration and a sense of re-creation. There is increasing recognition of the importance of having places within which to re-

create (Fry, 2006; Veenstra, 2007) however, it appears that it is not so much the activity that incites feelings of restoration, but the place in which it occurs.

Attachment to a certain ski area or mountain appeared to arouse a sense of calm, clarity, happiness, freedom, a defined sense of belonging and a sense of meaning in participant's skiing. McNaghten and Urry (2000) suggested the place one has a connection to will best provoke feelings of restoration and meaning in one's chosen pursuits.

Summary

Skiing reveals a "towardness" on snow as skiers slide *toward* the meaning that dwells in the spaces inhabited by ones experiences on skis. It resides as a tension between accepting or discarding risk, or perhaps in exploring an openness to stretch comfort zones.

It dwells as a tension also in *freedom to become* the embodiment of "perfect" skiing, the freedom to "play" on skis in an "open-to-the-moment" manner (Smythe & Norton, 2011). There also dwells in "play" a release from the regulations and rules of one's world of "responsibility" *towards* the "freedom" of playing by the rules of skiing.

Limitations

I have recognised this study draws upon the wider areas of sport, recreation, leisure and the outdoors. Within these genres there exists a multitude of meanings that are diverse in how they label an activity. Skiing has been labelled as embodying moderate to high risk (Pederson, 1997; Zuckerman, 2006). Given the dearth of qualitative literature pertaining to risk-taking in snow-sports (skiing and snowboarding), I consider "risk" could have taken a greater focus in my study. However, my background is not in sport psychology. I am a skier, with a passion for mountains, snow and skiing; with a Sport and Recreation degree. I acknowledge therefore that the fore-knowing I brought into my study framed my approach to the process. I wanted to know everything I could about the experience without directing the questions in a particular manner.

Another limitation was the sample was small (but not untoward for a Master's thesis) and I argue that a wider range of skiing abilities (the participants in my research were all competent skier's) would have presented a broader range of experiences that is likely to have expanded my understandings.

A further limitation was that of sample bias. The findings may have been quite different had the sample not been so willing and enthusiastic to engage with the research intent. The fact that this sample had an invested interest in skiing reflected, in part, on the phenomena that was revealed.

Research implications

Implications for practice

This thesis is situated appropriately within the realms of current available sport and recreation literature and I believe adds value to current knowledge through unmasking the lived experience

of skiing. It is through unpacking lived experience that one comes toward understanding what it means to be human in this world (van Manen, 1990). This approach is also highly applicable to the wider sport, recreation, leisure and outdoor industries, as these are *people* industries, and they are attuned to making experiences available for people. Therefore it is crucial to understand the lifeworld's people dwell, in order to draw them into potential experiences that exist with these industries.

New Zealand skiing is becoming an attractive option for northern hemisphere skiers wishing to maintain their sport all year round, particularly for some international ski racing teams who use New Zealand as a training ground during the northern hemisphere summer (Fairfax NZ News, 2012; NZSki, 2012). This holds promise for people currently employed within the ski industry where the underlying reasons people come to ski are prudent to consider.

Consider the ski instructor tutoring a person who has never before experienced snow, the mountains, the sensation of skis under-foot, the bulky restrictive clothing. Such "alien" introductions into a person's lifeworld may incite intense emotions, memories or be a platform to inculcate fears, anxieties and insecurities. The "knowing" of the beginner experience that has been revealed through my research adds value to the lifeworld of a ski instructor – in developing more awareness of *how* one "looks at" the beginner (and how the beginner experiences "the look").

Considering skiing as "play", adds a valuable element to the notion of skiing towards freedom. Within the realms of governing the containment and control of skiing on a ski area, the ski patroller and ski instructor become the "police". In the context of the slopes, they are "the law and order" and might quell and dampen one's intention to experience freedom through play. Hemmingway's (1996) work on emancipating freedom appropriately examines this topic and perhaps prompts reflection on the "systems" that exist to mitigate risk for skiers; perhaps within these structures freedom has no room to flourish and play cannot be exhibited. One must "play by the rules". Playing "by the rules" however removes the freeing aspect that *play-ing* encourages, and conversely restricts, binds and perhaps narrows the skiing experience.

The relationship between risk and attraction, to those sports considered "risky" (e.g., climbing, sky-diving, deep-sea diving; mountaineering) has already been well documented (as noted above). However the skiing community will strongly benefit from an enhanced awareness of what draws and enfolds people into skiing. Skiing presents as a way to introduce challenge into the lives of people where they can to a certain extent, control the amount of risk they are willing to pursue.

As a secondary school trained physical education and health teacher, and a tertiary tutor in the area of sport and recreation, I am attentive to literature that pertains to developing life-skills in young people through the outdoors. This is often pursued in a "pushing comfort zones" model (Brown, 2008). I see great merit in this, however, I argue more scholarship is warranted to

unearth the deeper meanings earned from exposure to potentially challenging situations without necessarily exposing people to risk.

Through my thesis, I aimed to reveal the lived experience of skiing. This involved revealing some of the more hidden meanings people have around skiing participation, particularly in the areas of risk and attaining a sense of freedom. Skiing presents as a way to introduce challenge into the lives of people where they can to a certain extent, control the amount of risk they are willing to pursue. Attuning to this knowledge adds value to the domain of sports psychology in seeking to understand what it is people *need* from sport and why they engage with certain activities over others (i.e., is it sensation-seeking, risk-taking, to feel free, a sense of solitude, to re-experience a sense of play?).

Additionally, within the domain of outdoor education, adventure recreation and outdoor adventure/recreation, the phenomenological under-pinnings of my research will add to the burgeoning understanding of the significance skiing plays in the lives of those who pursue it as a sport of choice.

Implications for on-going research

Through the lived experiences articulated to me, and through my hermeneutic analysis of these experiences, this research has revealed the significance that “risk” played in the lives of the skiers. From this insight, and from my analysis of current scholarly literature, I consider that the beginner experience is particularly salient as an area for future research which could be deeply explored in a phenomenological study to draw out the meaning it holds in the beginner skier’s lifeworld. The beginner experience appeared to be a perception of engaging with a “risk-laden” activity that aroused feelings of anxiety and tension. Further research of the beginner experience could provide greater understanding for instructor education and assist in developing alternative models for education that could draw on the deep insights derived from a phenomenological approach.

There is a burgeoning interest in the lived experiences of people who engage in extreme sports such as BASE jumping. Even though free-skiing, big-mountain skiing and downhill skiing have been cited as risky sports, I did not come across any literature pertaining specifically to the lived experiences of extreme skiers. An exploration therefore into the meaning of “risk” in the lifeworld’s of big-mountain and extreme skiers through a phenomenological methodology would steer towards a profounder depth of understanding the lived experiences of the men and women who ski and live “on the edge”. Such skiers are depicted in the ski documentary movies I have drawn on to support my findings.

The rules and regulations which abound in skiing and impact upon the skiing experience also warrants further unpacking. This is would also have relevance for any sport considered to be “risky” or extreme and where participants seemingly flout socially constructed expectations of responsibility and “rule-playing”. To delve deeper into “sport as play” and the seeming

juxtaposition of regulation, might reveal deeper meanings for sport engagement and would add value to literature which seeks to understand motivations for participation.

Another area that urges further study is that of “the gaze”. Being watched and watching is a central aspect of skiing. Skiers “pass over” one another in silence; the watching is “secret” but it has potential to shape and modify one’s experience of moving on skis. Further studies that call upon the philosophies of Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Van den Berg and van Manen in a phenomenological methodology would support the slowly growing body of scholarship around the embodied experience of movement, being observed in movement and who “owns” that movement once it has been observed.

Has the question been answered?

I set out asking the question “what is the lived experience of skiing?” Through supportive philosophies and a phenomenological approach to unpacking what it is to ski, I have revealed that skiing is dynamically multi-faceted in its nature; that it has potential to both push people into new realms of self-discovery and pull them back into a reflective state of Being. This has been explored through unmasking the deeply personal experiences people have had in their skiing lifeworlds. This research revealed the significance of risk and the place it holds in the construction of meaning; that it could push towards authenticity and incite a deeper awareness of one’s place in the world. This research also revealed the significance of freedom; that freedom has diverse meanings for different skiers and there exists a freedom from constraint along with a freedom to explore new boundaries; a freedom towards play.

The unpacking of these lived experiences lead to a conclusion of “towardness” in the phenomenon. Skiers ski *toward* something. They ski toward risk; they ski toward freedom; they ski toward becoming a more adept, a more confident, a more embodied skier; they ski toward authenticity; they ski toward ownership – *their* skiingness; they ski toward re-creation and restoration and finding a place of clarity amongst the mountains; they ski toward meaning.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethics approval



MEMORANDUM

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

To: Liz Smythe
From: **Madeline Banda** Executive Secretary, AUTEC
Date: 28 May 2009
Subject: Ethics Application Number 09/103 **Living the lift line: Towards an understanding of the nature, essence and meaning of the lived experience of skiing.**

Dear Liz

Thank you for providing written evidence as requested. I am pleased to advise that it satisfies the points raised by a subcommittee of the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) at their meeting on 7 May 2009 and that the Chair of AUTEC has approved your ethics application. This delegated approval is made in accordance with section 5.3.2.3 of AUTEC's *Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures* and is subject to endorsement at AUTEC's meeting on 15 June 2009.

Your ethics application is approved for a period of three years until 28 May 2012.

I advise that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 28 May 2012;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 28 May 2012 or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner;

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are reminded that, as applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

Please note that AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to make the arrangements necessary to obtain this. Also, if your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply within that jurisdiction.

When communicating with us about this application, we ask that you use the application number and study title to enable us to provide you with prompt service. Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact Charles Grinter, Ethics Coordinator, by email at charles.grinter@aut.ac.nz or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 8860.

On behalf of the AUTEC and myself, I wish you success with your research and look forward to reading about it in your reports.

Yours sincerely



Madeline Banda

Executive Secretary

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Kerensa Clark kerensa_grant@hotmail.com, AUTECH Faculty Representative, Health and Environmental Sciences





Date Information Sheet Produced:

30/03/09

Project Title

“Living the lift line: A phenomenological study of the lived experience of skiing

An Invitation

Dear fellow skier, You are invited to take part in this study to explore the lived experience of participation in skiing. Your participation is voluntary. Your expression of interest as a participant in this study will be indicated by your signature on the tear-off form at the bottom of this sheet. Please sign, date and return to the researcher as soon as possible.

What is the purpose of this research and who is the researcher?

My name is Kerensa Clark and I am a Master of Philosophy student at Auckland University of Technology. I am undertaking this research in order to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning skiing may hold in people’s lives through the experiences they have had. Information gained from this study will provide value to the leisure and recreation industries and specifically the snowsport industry. The final output of this research will be in the form of a written thesis which will be held in the Auckland University of Technology library. Other related writings may include publication in relevant industry journals or through presentation at conferences or seminars.

How was I chosen for this invitation?

You may have been referred as a potential participant for this research by someone; or you may have been approached by the researcher to assess your interest in participation. You will be a skier of over 20 years of age with an ability range from beginner to elite racer and be able to fully and willingly articulate your lived experience of skiing. Ideally I will seek participants who ski in a variety of surroundings, from small club fields to larger commercially operated ski fields.

What will happen in this research?

You will be asked to give your full and voluntary consent to take part in this study. Individual informal interviews (of approx 60- 90 minutes) will occur to listen to your stories of your skiing experiences, which could also (if you choose), be depicted with your own photos which you may bring to the interview. No photos containing identifying features or details of individual participants or people will be published, and only photos for which permission has been given, will be published. All photographs remain the property of the participant. The interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. You will receive a copy of both the recording and the

transcript. The stories gathered in your transcript is your narrative and will be used to look for common themes with other skier's narratives which can be used to better understand the meaning of skiing experiences.

It may be required that we meet again to clarify any salient aspects that have arisen from our first interview. You will be able to have any part of the transcript deleted if you so desire.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There are no discomforts or risks. Risk of identification will be minimised by the use of pseudonyms during the interviews and no photographs depicting participants or people will be published.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

No one will be knowingly subjected to any harm or discomfort during this study. You can choose what to talk about in the interviews or withdraw from the interview and/or the study at any time prior to completion of data collection. Debriefing following the interviews will be offered.

What are the benefits?

There are no immediate benefits to you for taking part in this study. You will be contributing to a growing area of leisure and recreation research, which is finding increasing academic value. In addition, the experience of being part of innovative research can be extremely satisfying.

How will my privacy be protected?

Interview recordings, transcripts and photos (if used) will only be available to the people directly involved in the study; the researcher, my supervisor and any other members of my academic research team. No information identifying you as a participant in this project will be included in any reports or publications. All identifying information on consent forms will be stored separately from recordings, transcripts and photos and will be destroyed after 6 years of storage.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There is no cost to you other than your time in interviews and subsequent validation of transcripts and narrative interpretations. These aspects could be rather time-consuming so it is important to think carefully about your involvement in this study.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Please take some time to consider this opportunity to be part of this study, and return the attached form within 1 month, indicating your interest to proceed further. Please feel free to contact the researcher to elaborate on any details regarding this study.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

You must complete, sign and date a consent form to take part in this study. This will be provided to you once you have indicated your interest to participate. Once you have completed the consent

form and it has been received by the researcher, you will be contacted regarding what happens next. If you have any questions at all concerning your possible participation in this study please feel free to contact me by phone or email.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You will be actively involved in this study and will have an opportunity to review your narrative. This study will take approximately two years in total until a final written draft will be available. If you desire, a copy will be made available for you.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, **Liz Smythe PhD, 09 9219999, ext 7196; liz.smythe@aut.ac.nz**.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTECH, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz , 921 9999 ext 8044.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

Kerensa Clark, 0273211275; Kerensa_grant@hotmail.com

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

As above.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 19 May 2009, AUTECH
Reference number **09/103**

Project Title: "Living the lift line: A phenomenological study of the lived experience of skiing

NAME:

ADDRESS:

PHONE:

Email:

- Yes I am interested in participating in the study titled above.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary.
- I understand that I can consider my participation without duress or pressure.
- I will undertake to indicate my commitment to participate or not within a month of receiving the participant information sheet.
- I understand that if I indicate my interest, I will be asked to sign a consent form if I intend to participate, but that I am still able to withdraw without penalty prior to the completion of data collection.

SIGNED:.....

DATE:.....



Project title: “Living the lift line: A phenomenological study of the lived experience of skiing

Project Supervisor(s): *Liz Smythe, PhD.*

Researcher: *Kerensa Clark, Masters Student AUT.*

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 30/03/09.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that participation in this study will involve in-depth interviews that may last 60 minutes to 90 minutes duration with the possible requirement for a follow-up interview.
- I understand that I will be under no obligation to answer any questions that I feel are invasive, offensive or inappropriate.
- I understand that I can have access to my transcript and recorded interview if I desire for purposes of correction.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be digitally recorded and transcribed.
- I understand that I may elect to use my own photographs as prompts for the interview process, and that photos cannot and will not be included in the final publication without my permission, and that I may withdraw the use of my photos at any time. No photographs depicting people or any identifying feature particular to the participant will be used in this study.
- I understand that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including recordings and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I understand the purpose of this research.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

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Participant's name:

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Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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Date: **Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 19 May 2009 AUTEC Reference number 09/103** Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.