

**GENDER AND MOTORCYCLES:
A STUDY OF BIKING CULTURES
IN KOLKATA**

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of
**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN SOCIOLOGY
OF THE
JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY**

Submitted by
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2020**

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**GENDER AND MOTORCYCLES: A STUDY OF
BIKING CLUTURES IN KOLKATA**

Submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur
University based upon my work carried out under the Supervision of

DR. PIYAL SUR

And that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Piyali Sur, for her support, her scholarly guidance and her way of helping me to think theoretically. I cannot thank you enough for the continued guidance and the suggestions that you gave me throughout my research work. I am grateful to Dr. Sur for giving me those theoretical suggestions which I never even thought to associate with this study and for supporting me academically throughout my thesis.

I would like to thank Mr. Kaustab Ghosh, my brother and a sincere friend for his immense support since day one with the notions on motorcycling and also helped me in editing. He gave me his valuable time to talk on and clarify issues that seemed extremely messy and incomprehensible to me.

I would also like to thank my parents immensely Mrs. Bithi R. Pal and Mr. M.M.Pal; Mr. Sudipto Pal, my elder brother for wanting me to complete this research project and for not letting me give up. I am sincerely grateful to my friend Mr. Subrata Boral to impart the notion of doing the research and not giving up on me in times of distress.

Last, but not the least I would like to extend my deepest regards and thanks to all those hundred respondents (18 women and 82 men) who have shared their motorcycling experiences with me, without them this research would not be possible. I am immensely grateful to them as they have made out time from their busy work schedules to be involved in my research. Out of the all I would like to express sincere gratitude to Mr. Suvanjan Banerjee, my friend and a brother for helping me with the research study.

Abstract

Title of the dissertation: **Gender and Motorcycles: A Study of Biking Cultures in Kolkata**

This research has been a venture to investigate the hitherto uncharted domain of the relationship between gender, risk, and motorcycling from a sociological perspective in Kolkata, India. This attempts to methodologically explore the rising distinctive culture of motorcycling in Kolkata. It should be noted that this study deals with those individuals who ride a motorcycle either professionally or passionately. The subjective notion of ‘riding passionately’ here means motorcyclists who ride motorcycles apart from mundane activities. This study has three main objectives. Firstly, to explore the rituals and significant styles associated with motorcycling only, forming a separate community of its own, resulting in a prominent culture. Secondly, to enquire whether motorcyclists are doing gender while riding a motorcycle and it is expressive of a particular kind of masculinity. Thirdly, it would explore what kind of risk men and women perceive and how they negotiate with those risks. This research has followed mixed methods approach which includes both purposive and snow ball sampling and face to face in-depth interviews with observations to understand the non-verbal behaviour. With semi-structured interview schedule hundred motorcyclists, eighteen women, and eighty-two men were interviewed. Conversations were taped at their suitable locations; pseudonyms were assigned to the interviews to protect their confidentiality.

My findings indicate the distinctive rise of motorcycling culture in Kolkata which includes normative rituals, style, specific vocabulary that is being transmitted from senior to junior motorcyclists. It should be also noted that the whole motorcycling community is bonded by the notion of brotherhood, where they would perform gender in various ways to portray their masculinities in order to be ‘the one’. Women in motorcycling are rejecting the traditional prescribed roles of being weak, expressive, emotional, and fragile. They tend to construct and reconstruct the notions of gender activities. However, even if women are at par with the men motorcyclists, still they have to face humiliation and taunting. Risks to my respondents are subjective and heavily gendered. They also report that risks are positive as adventure results in excitement or thrill, enjoyment as well as improvement. This helped them to grow more competently. There are various ways both the men and women negotiate the risk that is been associated with motorcycling. An interesting paradox that heavy technology, often associated with masculinity, is labelled as ‘She’ by most of the respondents in the research.

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Glossary

Abbreviations

BoBMC: Brotherhood of Bulletires Motorcycle Consortium

CC: (Engine) Cubic Capacity

CSS: California Superbike School.

EB: Eastern Bulls

FMSCI: Federation of Motor Sports Club of India

IBW: India Bike Week

Kms: Kilometres

LSR: Last Sunday Rides

MC: Motorcycle Club

MMRT: Madras Sports Race Track

NERM: North East Riders Meet

RE: Royal Enfield

RERM: Royal Enfield Riders Meet

RM: Riders Mania

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In recent years, there has been a rising interest in motorcycles and related activities worldwide. Motorcycle symbolizes independence, freedom, power of easy mobility, youth culture. Grounded on the conviction that women and men are ‘differently wired’ and women’s sphere should be limited to private space as a caregiver. Motorcycling is mainly considered to be a male dominated activity which often causes restrictions for women to pursue. The male domination in motorcycling activities has reinforced the paradigm that vigorous participation in motorcycling activities might wield harm on women and her feminine personality traits. Thus, male motorcyclists also symbolize dominance and masculine power over ‘the others’ because there is a materially and symbolically constructed relationship between men and technology that runs quite deep-rooted both historically and in contemporary societies. Such perceptions on pre-determined social roles and expectations are invisibly embedded in the control mechanism. Example of these control mechanism are family, then schools to universities followed by peer groups, workplaces, and media. These control mechanisms also generate a network of impediments for women motorcyclists and other aspirations associated with motorcycling.

In another context, Cohen has defined subculture, while interpreting skinheads and mod styles as a “compromise solution between two contradictory needs: Don't need to create and express autonomy and difference from parents.... and the need to maintain the parent identification” (Cohen 1927). Hebdige states subcultures itself means that are not privileged forms, “they do not stand outside the reflexive circuitry of production and reproduction which links together, at least on a symbolic level, the separate and fragmented pieces of the social totality” (1979: 86). Subculture expresses forbidden contents such as consciousness of class or any social difference in a forbidden form of anti-mainstream behaviour codes or law breaking. They are mainly as “map of problematic social reality” (ibid). However, Raymond Williams (1961) called the ‘Culture and Society’ debate where the quality of life, the division of labour, and how this mass society was created are all being discussed. As the above definition cultivates it shows culture is an ambiguous concept. The concept of culture is not

new rather it has been used for centuries. Therefore deflection of culture is quite evident. Hence, I have addressed this thesis topic as a motorcycling culture but not as a subculture since my target population (motorcyclists) under no circumstances are 'law breakers' or 'anti-mainstream'. It is discussed more distinctively in the chapter culture and motorcycling.

This research seeks to perceive an understanding of those motorcyclists who ride these machines both professionally or passionately, that is, just not riding for mundane activities. There is a rise of a distinct culture with rituals that includes behavioural as well as apparel styles mostly encircling males and these practices seem to boost their masculinity. Therefore women are mostly left out from these practices. Woman's profound alienation from technical abilities and technology is the result for historical and cultural construction of technology being masculine. Today's women motorcyclists continue to break down the constructed gendered barriers and stereotypes. Current generation women motorcycle riders are college graduates, and are more likely to work in a professional or managerial occupation. In addition, women motorcycle riders are safety-conscious and educated about their motorcycles. In spite of the above facts women motorcyclists are still undervalued and their ability is questioned now and then. Nonetheless, women's technical skills are rarely defined as technical because technology is pervasively a masculine cultural expression (Wajcman 1991). Masculinity, according to popular notions, is based on physical toughness and mechanical skills that get particularly strong when this is associated with dirt, loud sound and risk, and all of these are mostly present in any motorcycle activities. Walklate emphasizes that there is "a positive relationship between men and risk taking behaviours, and a negative one for women" (1997: 41). Therefore when women in motorcycling challenges the patriarchal ideologies by breaking down the constructive societal role of being feminine; the conservative notion of femininities shifts from 'pleasure' to 'power', or 'soft' to 'hard' or 'emotions' to 'reasons' which is difficult for the patriarchal society to accept this change.

An ideal rider in patriarchal society is one who voluntarily engages in risk, endangering himself to participate in motorcycling. It is highly necessary to achieve the yardstick of ideal manhood by portraying one's masculinities that dominates the weaker individuals. Motorcyclist tends to take risk while gaining certain opportunities to be more masculine, that otherwise would forego. Men are silently competing among themselves for this opportunity of being an ideal rider/man among the group of other riders. In this essence, when men choose to be less masculine, they are considered on equal grounds with women and often

judged as effeminate. With this notion, women participating in motorcycling are often considered a lesbian or labeled as ‘man.’

Risk factors are a part of any activity that people do in daily lives especially for motorcycling, because it exposes riders to unknown threats and that can be interpreted as thrill or excitement. In process of minimizing such threats or risks, motorcyclists often develop series of negotiations and strategies. There are some codes and rituals to be maintained and followed distinctively to achieve perfect control over one’s machine. As stated above, the risk adhered to motorcycling makes it a male dominated practice. It is a popular conjecture that while riding women may come across series of experiences regarding vulnerabilities and objectifications. Yet women are breaking the stereotypes and are getting into motorcycling with their own set of strategies and defence mechanisms.

Increasingly, Indian researchers have focused less on this seeming uprising distinctive culture all around the country. This research would look into those perspectives of risk, gender, and the motorcycling culture. This chapter further includes a brief overview of the existing global literature on motorcycling culture, which helped this study to perceive the distinguishing difference between the motorcycling culture in the west and motorcycling culture that is prevalent in Kolkata. The review of literature has also helped me in identifying the objectives of this study. It helped me in identifying not only the cultural aspects of motorcycling and the voluntary risk associated with it, but also in outlining the overall methodological parameters.

In the next section I have theorized the approaches I would be using throughout this study, which has guided this research in analysing as well as interpreting the collected empirical data in a more comprehensive and compact way. The results of this analysis will be presented in the following chapters ending with concluding remarks. Hopefully, this study will encourage more researchers to look critically in this area and reduce the gap in existing contemporary researches associated with gender, risk and motorcycling. It will also help in opening up different approaches and discourses to my best belief.

1.2 Relevant Literature

Any research cannot be accomplished without acknowledging the previous literature in a particular area of this study. Therefore I have tried to show the relevant literature that is available in this field. It was quite a difficult task to look for literature on this thesis topic. But through extensive research, I could only come up with the below-mentioned scholarly literature. Unfortunately, I never got hold of any Indian literature on this research topic. Since this topic is based on motorcyclist's relation to gender, culture, and risk; I have tried to provide a descriptive overview of all three. Since this is a pioneering topic to the Indian research, therefore it was very difficult to find any literature on any Indian perspectives. We would also find quite important differences between the two cultures (west and oriental).

1.2.1 History of motorcycling in West

During Second World War the usage of the military motorcycle was at its peak just to deliver the letter to the army personal posted for days in the battlefield and also to carry men and belongings from one place to the other. But soon after the world war was over these military machines were sold off to the civilians. Even those civilian people who were called for the duty in the war were now jobless after the devastating war. Some even bought those military motorcycles (on sale) and rode from one café to another just for fun and thus how this motorcycling culture began. This culture was found mostly in western societies after the Second World War as a medium of recreation. Men had no other job to look after as soon as the war was over, therefore the motorcycles that were used during the warfare came to help to overcome the boredom and monotony after the war. The young men who have returned from the Great War were always accustomed to harsh conditions and dangerous thrills were now looking for some similar ways of expressing their perspective of living life in edges. Therefore, to vent out their frustration and disgust started riding noisy motorcycles on public roads which were pretty dangerous. It was mainly to impress females and they also displayed antisocial behaviour. In late 1960 Robert Craig Knievel Jr. now a legend started performing dangerous stunts with a motorcycle that entertained people and inspired the youngster (Schouten and McAlexander 1995). This is how the motorcycling came into the scenario. But as the year passed the pre-conceived notions of motorcycling have largely changed and the motorcyclist is more aware and conscious about their safety and wellbeing. Motorcyclists

now use motorcycles either for daily commuting or for their passion for traveling to places on motorcycles or both.

1.2.2 Culture and motorcycling

Mike Brake opines “The bike is front and center. It is not only the means of entering the culture, it is the culture. It is both the symbol and the reality of the culture. Without the bike, there is nothing” (1980: 184).

Solomon (1999:377) states that *culture* “may be thought of as the collective memory of a society. It is the accumulation of shared meanings, rituals, norms, and traditions among the members of society. It is what defines a human community, its individuals, its social organizations, as well as its economic and political system”. Culture includes material objects such as cars, clothing, food, art or sport, etc. These are largely valued or produced by the young group of people. In the book *The sociology of Youth Culture and Youth subcultures* by Mike Brake (1980), Kroeber A.L. and Kluckhohn C. analyzed 160 definitions of culture from different social sciences and defined culture as “patterns, explicit and implicit of symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifact; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historical derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture system may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other conditioning elements of further action”. Andrew H. Maxwell states that mainstream Americans have embraced a communal lifestyle that is built around the motorcycle as a form of transportation. As a non-spatial community realized on the nation's transportation infrastructure of roads and highways, motorcyclists have undergone discrimination and risk of injury mainly by cars. This is largely because of the meaningful connections which motorcycling engenders. Such connections also enable motorcyclists to resist the social fragmentation which characterizes the post-industrial urban society. Motorcyclists thus negotiate culturally constructed class, race, gender, ethnicity, and age categories. This interpretation is facilitated by blending normative and behavioural models of community. The motorcycling community also has a symbolic and organizational feature that is the motorcycling club that they hold. They also organize gatherings called “rallies” (1998: 263). He also points out that their sense of community and commitment towards it is shaped, heightened by an external force. Internal interaction within the group contributes to maintaining the boundary. It has been largely argued here that “motorcycling's

ability to foster meaningful, on-going communal ties which buffer modern social fragmentation also derives from interaction with external force” (1998: 293).

Julie van den Eynde and Arthur Veno argued the Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs¹ (OMCs) have been variously defined by researchers as a deviant group, a subculture, a tribe, and a minority group. The OMCs are known by their club names like Hells Angels, Rebels, Gypsy Jokers, Coffin Cheaters, and Bandidos. These clubs reject the value set of middle Australia and are governed by their own codes of behaviour. Recent research by Quinn (2001) in the America, and Veno (2003) in Australia report OMCs have patriotic ideologies and are defined in terms of extreme masculine concepts such as brotherhood, loyalty, and an enforced code of silence. (2007: 96). Taking into consideration the criticisms of research on young women's gang members, they argue a similar flawed process has occurred with women who affiliate with members of OMCs. This research suggests a set of myths have been propounded concerning women who are associated with OMCs. These include that women in OMC are:

- (i) Subservient working-class woman,
- (ii) Used as objects for club sexual rituals
- (iii) Hard-bitten, unattractive, and politically conservative, and
- (iv) 'Money-makers' for biker men, and the club – i.e., the women are either prostitutes, topless barmaids, lap dancers or strippers, who are forced to hand over their money to the club.

They suggest previous research on women affiliated with OMCs is one of the least sexist research. Thus it can be portrayed that the previous researchers have used flawed methodologies. First, the myth maintains dominance over women by men. It disempowers women and reduces them to sexual slaves or 'vassals'– and never had any significance of any agencies. Women's roles were considered only in relation to men's sexual and economic needs, and their own experiences as women with the agency are not examined. Secondly, the disempowerment of women increases the unlawful acts of OMC men. If they were normal then they would behave well with their women which was never really portrayed in such research. Such deviant men can never have a normal life with normal partners. In a conflict between OMCs and the state, these misapprehensions and misleading notions are not helpful and do not work towards a just and fair society, and a respect for diversity. Rather, the myths amplify the deviance in men which in turn talks about the whole subculture which is also defined as 'Outsiders' (Becker, 1963), 'evil doers' (Cohen, 1980) and deviants. (2007: 109, 108)

Paul Wills spent several months during 1969 on a case study at a motorbike club in the Birmingham area – the *Double Zero*. The building was a disused church and church hall in a run-down area near the city center. He was studying with the use of participant observation and recorded group discussions on the role of pop music in the motor-bike subculture. However, the motorbike as an object was of such paramount 'symbolic' importance within the culture that it demanded separate attention for itself. He argues the motorbike was one of the main focuses of interest in the lives of our group, and most of their activities were based on this interest. A large part of the conversation was devoted to the motorcycle, discussing new models or comparing performance, or describing in detail how repair jobs are done. This short extract is from an official report describing a club exercise. *Double Zero* members had conducted a large number of road safety programs in the Birmingham area. One of the significant results of the exercise was that there was a live conversation in the events on those days with the old riders and the new-comers recounting of experience of personal oddities, difficulties in finding places, and of the impact of their presence in certain situations had caused, etc. This kind of conversation normally does not occur because technical jargon concerning the motorcycles seems to be the norm. (2007: 709, 710)

Joshua Robert Adam Maynard questions how masculinity is represented in motorcycling culture through the text of *Cycle Canada* magazine illustrates the point that performative identities in motorcycling culture are diverse and not easily categorized. He shows in this research, motorcycling culture may be distinguished from other cultures not only because of the particular affections motorcycling may evoke, but because of the cultural qualities people believe these machines to embody, there is never any question of who is controlling whom. According to this binary discourse, motorcycling is a state of being accomplished by the rider, not the machine. After a ride, the motorcyclist dismounts, breaking the illusion of the cybernetic melding of flesh and steel and reinstating the great dualist oppositions of human and machine, mind and body, emotions, and rationality. However, if we critically examine how technology modulates and optimizes the spatial, material, and temporal flows that comprise the social world, then the notion of a unitary body becomes only an idea, one which is formed through relations with other bodies that allow for their representation as a singularity. (2008: 12, 13)

Subculture of Consumption

John W. Schouten and James H. McAlexander introduced the subculture of consumption as an analytic category through which to better understand consumers and the manner in which

they organize their lives and identities. Recognizing that consumption activities, product categories, or even brands may serve as the basis for interaction and social cohesion, the concept of the subculture of consumption solves many problems inherent in the use of ascribed social categories as devices for understanding consumer behaviour. They did ethnographic fieldwork with Harley-Davidson² motorcycle owners. He argues that the most powerful organizing forces in modern life are the activities and associated interpersonal relationships that people undertake to give their lives meaning (1995: 43). They state that underlying the behaviours of a subculture of consumption is an identifiable ethos, that is, a set of core values that are accepted to varying degrees by all its adherents. Those values find expression in certain products or brands and their usages. Where many subgroups coexist within a subculture, expressions of the core values through symbolic consumption may reflect cultural or socioeconomic whereabouts of the subgroups. Commitment to key brands, here specific motorcycle that is Harley Davidson, and product usage behaviours may be held with religious intensity, even to the point of elevating certain brands to the status of icons. The popularity of such brands may be enhanced by certain specific behaviours on the part of enthusiastic religious members of the subculture of consumption (1995: 55).

Motorcycling and rituals

Solomon et al state “A ritual is a set of multiple symbolic behaviours which occur in a fixed sequence and tend to be repeated periodically. Rituals are related to many consumptions activity which occurs in popular culture” (1999: 520). Mark Austin observed that attending rallies for touring motorcyclists as a significant component of their motorcycling social life. It helps in both spending time with fellow riders as well as riding to those events. It is quite a distinctive ritual that western motorcyclists followed every year. Mark has also opined that this process of attending motorcycle rallies has ritualistic features and activities that help them to serve a strong bond among the members of this cultural community. He describes how a motorcyclist arrives at an event or a gathering. He also talks about the sacred symbol that the motorcyclists carry, which is basically the brand of their motorcycle and eventually their group symbol. Most motorcyclists carry camping materials where they can easily pitch their tents beside their bikes. The riders trust their tribes to such extent where he leaves the key in the ignition and very costly helmet and gloves unguarded. “The rituals, artifacts, and norms of *the tribe*³ are well-known; serve to distinguish the true members from the outsiders, providing comfort and identity to those on the inside” (2009:71).

“The ritualistic aspects of BMW rallies and motorcycling community seem to transcend largest social division, such as race gender occupation and social class” (Austin, 2009:82). Austin also talks about the stories that are usually shared in the event where riders talk about the places that they have visited, the experience they have gathered. Austin states “Nostalgic recollections of earlier owned motorcycles that should have never been sold, memorable trips and experiences, and past rallies are also potential topics of discussion” (2009:76). Discussions regarding maintaining a motorcycle are also important topics that are easily discussed in such gatherings. Telling a motorcycle adventure related story is also considered to be an art which gathers motorcyclists and increases one's 'cultural capital'⁴.

Thompson (1950) also talks about the motorcycling rituals at a gathering at Sturgis, South Dakota where almost all riders visit these gathering to meet up and share stories. When a rider enters into the parking space they hardly park their motorcycles (even if space is in abundance) in front of the series of bikes that are already parked. They usually enter the place to take a round or two to find a suitable place in the already parked line. That according to Thompson, it is also a ritual, to begin with, in such a gathering. He also states among the other rituals, walking up and down the streets purchasing Sturgis patch or t-shirt, and talking to people maybe for hours in the famous/infamous Sturgis bar is also quite important for the riders. The main point of this rally is to see or to be seen. Thompson pointed out “some attendees feel like they have not fully experienced the Sturgis rally unless they have participated in the ritualistic ‘burnouts’⁵, wet t-shirt contests, or concerts that comprise part of the annual entertainments” (1950:116).

Austin talks about the outsiders or posers where “group regards posers as those that dress and act as if they are motorcycle riders or bikers while actually riding very few miles and possessing questionable riding styles and skill levels” (Austin 2009:85). These posers are dressed up as a real motorcyclist and even the motorcycles are also properly apt with their dress but they hardly ride. Thompson 1950 also talks about such posers who dress up like a motorcyclist comes to the motorcycling events and mingle with the other real hard-core riders. But he also states that these posers are easily identifiable once a real rider interacts with them. He has distinguished between two types of motorcyclists: one authentic and two posers or wannabes (1950:10). Thompson also states rituals are quite important for such posers in order to make a mark in this motorcycle subculture. He considered them as 'neo-bikers' (1950:12). He called them neo-bikers as they have a distinctive numerical strength and are highly visible in today's American biking subculture.

Group Normative Ideologies and Behaviour

According to Austin 2009, behaviour BMW motorcycle rallies are much better if it is compared with the stereotypical motorcycle gatherings. In this kind of rallies, children are also encouraged to be a part of such gatherings. They have even reduced the registration fees for the children. Any motorcycling gathering is not without alcohol consumption but over here it takes place in a quiet and controlled manner. Aggressive and loud appearance after being drunk is a rare scene in such rallies. There is a common joke that the author has also mentioned in his research, that BMW Riders usually wake up in the morning when Harley Davidson riders go to bed after partying the whole night. Austin also states that BMW Riders always complain about loud noises and discourages loud behaviour including loud motorcycles. In motorcycle gatherings like Daytona Bike Week in Florida, the researcher has found out that BMW and Harley Davidson owners even have different places of camping. But whatever may be the differences between both the groups they trust each other and easily leave their keys in the ignition and costly jackets and helmets unguarded in their motorcycle itself. Austin (2002) states that there are significantly fewer women Riders in the BMW group but they are accepted as full participants which are quite not the case of other outlaw clubs and Harley Davidson clubs. Mellstrom (2004) points out that men's homosexual bonding experience with motorcycle and machinery excludes women, but this community transcends such typical gender differentiation. Objectification of women is quite common in any motorcycle community gathering but not in BMW gatherings, despite its male dominance in nature and its association has with masculinity.

Past research suggests that women were mainly introduced to riding by their significant male counterparts, for example, boyfriends, spouses, or brothers (Clarsen 2008, Thompson 1995, Veno and Winterhalder 2009). Therefore women are quite comfortable as well as adopted their behaviour, attitudes, and orientation to adjust to male dominated motorcycling communities and to fit into the sexist world of brotherhood. A rider riding high numbers of kilometers are much respected than the others. Women are also recognized well in such gathering that helps them confirm their status in such a community.

Brotherhood

Schouten and McAlexander (1995:51) state “the principle of brotherhood among the bikers carries religious connotations”. The 'bro' or 'brotherhood' is commonly addressed to the riders by the other riders literally signifies the membership of a rider into the motorcycling

community. They share a few common beliefs, thoughts, and experiences. Among the outlaw motorcycling group standing up for the community, unconditional loyalty is highly expected. They also talk about the collective strength of the community that “whether enthusiast or outlaw, by a feeling of marginality that goes hand in hand with the biker persona”. The supreme manifestation of brotherhood is participating in rallies and sharing the experience with the others. Riding with a big group demands proper formation as this formation moves just as a single organism. Brotherhood also has a darker side, a cultic side of this particular motorcycling or biking religion. Outlaw clubs are considered to be anti-Christ, they have their own rite and rituals of getting married as well the last rite also differs from the mainstream.

Thompson (1995) states brotherhood is a bond, a strong bond that goes beyond the only acquainted riders or just riders participating in a bike rally. It is also not about which sex or gender a rider belongs to. It is about the camaraderie of motorcyclists which is known as brotherhood. Brotherhood, though a sexist term but it involves women too. It is called 'brotherhood' because women were relatively less in motorcycling. Thompson also states cruisers and touring motorcycle mainly dominate this community or brotherhood. The brotherhood according to him also comes from brand loyalty. Harley owners would never buy a different genre of motorcycles. A sense of brotherhood also generates largely from brand loyalty. Within this brotherhood, the design of a motorcycle or loyalty towards a particular brand or riding style may create a subgroup but Thompson argues the connection between BMW⁶ and Harley is quite strong. In such a brotherhood well-being of a rider on or off the road is highly significant to others. They acknowledge each other on the road by few gestures as waving their hand to the fellow riders or just showing a thumbs-up. This wave is addressed as 'biker wave' by Thompson in his book. The bikers believe that this gesture is the only thing that makes a person a 'real' rider. Symbolically it is also known as a cool gesture a rider can muster while riding a motorcycle. Newbies⁷ tries to master the skill of being cool or performing this activity is also considered a ritual a biker follows. In addition, the above notion of 'biker wave' also includes warning to the fellow riders who are riding together in a formation. The rider leading would show if there is a pothole or some hurdle or some dead animal on the road. The same sign is shown by every rider to his next one in the formation. It helps in riding safely. The safeguard of the rider, riding together is of utmost importance. More evidence about the strong collective connection among the riders can be found through the help of the 'biker code'. This is basically an unwritten, non-verbal code where a rider

won't be ever stranded on the road during any difficulties. Difficulties might arise from several aspects as a flat tyre or any sort of mechanical failure. It is not important to know the rider beforehand but all are either connected through social networking sites or simply brotherhood. "If a lone rider peels off from the group, nobody proceeds until he/she is accounted for even if that requires riding several miles to the next exit and turning around to go back and find them" (1995:76)- this notion is quite strong within the riders. Thompson's research confirms that there is the untold norm among motorcyclists where they are well aware of the fact that 'look, but don't touch' the motorcycles and these norms are well maintained by ever riders around.

Women in Brotherhood

Brotherhood is a sexist term, but despite that Thompson (1950) found a distinctive number of women who participate in this sport. They might always not ride their motorcycles but they travel as a passenger or pillion. Despite the minority of women riders, they still consider them as a part of this male dominated brotherhood. Schouten and McAlexander (1995:54) state "In outlaw clubs, women are considered literally to be the property of one or more men and are completely subservient to the sexual and economic demands of the male to whom they belong". Women in non-outlaw motorcycling groups are treated not as servants but as accessories, who have never ridden the motorcycles but accompany the riders as pillions. Veno and Winterhalder (2009:62) summarized that "biker chicks certainly are women who choose to live an unconventional lifestyle...they are the attractions to the motorcycle, the adrenaline high obtained by riding and, for many, the sisterhood of riding motorcycles collectively". But in today's biking culture according to Thompson (1950: 86) women plays a much greater role than the so called 'biker chicks' and Thompson defer from the above concept of addressing women as a 'biker chick'. Thompson states that initially women associated with outlaw motorcycling clubs were identified with different names as mamas, sweetbutts, and old ladies (1950:88). But Thompson identified women as leather lovers, biker babes, two-uppers, and female riders. Leather lovers are basically women who are not riders nor are pillions but are simply attracted to these gathering or event and just 'hung around'. They are attracted to those fancy motorcycles and leather-clad motorcyclists and simply come to visit and hang out with the riders in the bar or any shop or just on the streets. Biker babes are women, young women who participate in bikini bike washes and wet t-shirt contests, or to serve beer girls as models. According to Thompson however small the gathering is, it would be incomplete with them or these activities. Basically, their wardrobes are mainly for

flirting or just posing in these gatherings. The next is two-uppers who are basically the passengers or the pillions, who might have never ridden a motorcycle but participate in such gatherings with their better half or significant other. Lastly, he talks about the female riders who ride their motorcycle and comes down to such gathering. Though women ride motorcycles for a quite long time; but were relatively less in comparison to the male riders (ibid).

1.3 Rationale of the Study

Despite the vast literature in motorcycling in the west, one would hardly find any existing literature based on oriental societies. Motorcycling in western societies has undergone a series of research work both on the empirical and descriptive basis. Therefore the need for research on a similar field in Indian culture was also quite necessary. Though works of literature on culture and risk perspectives concerning motorcycling are available in Western literature, but the perspectives on gender and motorcycling are majorly missing.

This research not only studies the perceptions of risk and its culture of motorcycling in India, specifically Kolkata but also it penetrates the various perceptions of gender in this field. As Indian society is largely a patriarchal and male-dominated society and technologies are predominately considered to be masculine it is quite interesting to know how *the others* challenge this notion of ‘machines are masculine’.

Lately, a distinctive culture catering around motorcycle is significantly visible in the parts of India, specifically in metro cities. Similarly, in Kolkata this culture is quite distinctive, and also the participation of male motorcyclists is way more than female catering to the notion of male dominance in such field. With this notion of male dominance the various notions of risk also generate among the female motorcyclists and a distinguished culture is formed which is uprising. Even if the said culture is male dominated, it also does not excludes the men from various risks while riding a motorcycle to places. It is also important to understand that this research only studies motorcyclists who ride motorcycles apart from the daily conveyance. Despite the strong gender divide in this culture women are venturing and challenging their limits in various aspects both professionally as well as passionately, that is riding a motorcycle apart for daily conveyance. This study deals with how men perform gender by riding a motorcycle while women on the other hand do not perform the expected gender norms in motorcycling.

This research focuses mainly on the aspects of culture, gender, and risk that are related to motorcycling. The predominant notion of motorcyclists, as lawbreakers, as portrayed by media is definitely not similar to this distinctive culture in the study. There was badly a need to distinguish between unlawful motorcyclists or miscreants on a motorcycle with the law-abiding motorcyclists.

1.4 Objectives of Study

Firstly, I would try to describe the various and distinctive ways how the riders follow certain rituals forming an own community and thus resulting a distinctive motorcycling culture in Kolkata. I would also try to explore what motivates people to pursue an activity which generally is perceived as extremely dangerous, in which one risks life and limb.

Secondly, looking at the components of motorcycling culture I would like to explore whether motorcyclists are doing gender and it is an expressive of a particular kind of masculinity. I would also attempt to observe how women riders are getting included in an activity socially perceived as 'male's'. How women riders are constructing their gender identities in this male dominated motorcycling culture.

Thirdly, I would also like to understand motorcycle rider's perceptions of risk and road safety. I would also like to explore factors influencing risk-taking and the use of protective measures. It would also include whether female riders' construction of notions of risk and danger differs that of male perceptions.

1.5 Methodological Parameters

1.5.1 Research Design

The methods of any social research are mainly based on the research epistemologies and research methodologies. A different epistemological perspective exists which reflects upon a numerous assumptions that is present in the social world. These assumptions of the social world are basically known as ontology whereas research epistemology is a rational way of knowing the social world. Now these ontological assumptions construct the epistemological foundation of any social research. However philosophical perspectives as well as practical issues are also taken into consideration in research methodologies. Research methodology is the philosophy of using research methods. The type of method which is being used by a

particular researcher may depend on his/her commitment towards a particular epistemological position.

The present study has attempted to use both qualitative (QUAL)⁸ as well as quantitative (QUAN)⁹ approach to explore the motorcycling culture that is prevalent in Kolkata. The research is mainly an exploratory study on motorcycle riders residing in Kolkata. This study is based on both QUAL and QUAN method utilizing mixed methodology¹⁰. Mixed methods analysis is a process where a researcher can integrate both statistical as well as thematic data analytic process and technique. The QUAN study is an *outcome-based evaluation* where “the emphasis is on whether a program has met its overall goals, typically measured quantitatively” (Teddle, Thashakkori: 2008). The QUAL is a *process based evaluation* where it refers to the process of how the program is executed and how it is presently functioning and operating and is processed qualitatively. Whereas in mixed methods both QUAN and QUAL components are studied separately but in a parallel manner or what Teddle and Thashakkori calls *parallel mixed design*, which helps the researcher in a more comprehensive way for understanding the topic. Parallel mixed design refers to a process where both the phases (QUAN, QUAL) are studied either in a parallel manner or simultaneously.

Hence in this present study ‘**Gender and motorcycles: A Study of Biking Cultures in Kolkata**’ I have used mixed methods research or what is called the third path (Tylor, Gorard 2004) or the third methodological movement or third research community (Teddle, Thashakkori 2008) to enhance the credibility of the research findings . It has emerged due to an alternative to the dichotomy of QUAL and QUAN traditions (ibid: 04). Mixed methods research is the type of research in which researcher combines both the elements of QUAL and QUAN research approaches. The approach to mixing methods is mainly because to understand the different but *complementarily* data on the same topic (Creswell 2014, Nagy and Biber 2010). Another very important reason to incorporate this methodological approach is ‘triangulation’¹¹ or more specifically *methods triangulation* (Nagy and Biber 2010). Triangulation enriches and fortifies the research’s conclusions which make the empirical research more acceptable. Mixed methods intends to bring together the differing strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses of QUAN methods (large sample size, trends, generalization) with those of QUAL methods (small N, details, in depth) (Nagy & Biber 2010). It uses both QUAL and QUAN viewpoint and data collection, analysis for better

understanding of the topic. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003:711) defined mixed methods as “a type of research design in which QUAL and QUAN approaches are used in types of question, procedures and for inferences”. Amalgamation of multiple methodological perspective and practices, empirical reasoning, and observers in a single research would be best because it would include complexity, rigor, richness and empirical depth to the study. (Denzin, Lincoln, 2008:07). Hesse-Biber and Johnson (2013:103-104) states that “Given the complexity of research problems that traverse any one disciplinary point of view, we argue for reaching out across our disciplinary divides to explore the deployment, when needed, of a plurality of methodological approaches and philosophical perspectives and methods techniques that are both multiple and mixed”.

Mixed methods design Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2004:429) states, “falls on a continuum from not mixed (i.e. monomethod¹² designs) to fully mixed methods, with partially mixed designs occupying regions somewhere between monomethod design and fully mixed methods designs”. But once a study includes both the QUAL as well as QUAN approaches to any degree then the research cannot be viewed as monomethod research design. Any study at this level is either using a fully mixed or partially mixed approach. While undertaking any degree of mixed methods study any researcher uses QUAN methods for one particular stage or phase for the study and QUAL methods for other stage or phase of study. Therefore, a mixed or QUAL and QUAN study is either conducted sequentially or concurrently. The basic difference between the fully and partially mixed designs is that “fully mixed methods involve the mixing of QUAL and QUAN techniques within one or more stages of the research process or across these stages, with partially mixed methods, the QUAN and QUAL phases are not mixed within or across stages. Instead, with partially mixed methods, both the QUAN and QUAL elements are conducted either concurrently or sequentially in the entirety before mixing at the data interpretation stage” (Leech 2007:267).

In this research my aim has been primarily to adhere to mixed methods blueprints, so that with the help of the combined usages of both QUAL and QUAN approaches will provide a better understanding of the research study. This study has embraced the partially mixed concurrent status design which includes both QUAN and QUAL data which are basically collected simultaneously but the QUAL data has significant importance in this study. While QUAL and QUAN data are not mixed across or within the stages when the partial mixed methods is applied. Here, in partially mixed methods both QUAL and QUAN data are gathered and combined either sequential or concurrently before mixing at the data

interpretation stage. Nancy L. Leech and Antony J. Onwuegbuzie in the article 'A typology of mixed methods research designs' have defined "primary mixed concurrent dominant status design involves conducting a study with two facets that occur concurrently, such that either facet has the greater emphasis" (2007:268).

Three dimensional typologies of mixed methods design (Leech, Onwuegbuzie, 2007: 269)

1. Level of mixing (fully mixed versus partially mixed)
2. Orientation of time (sequential versus concurrent)
3. Emphasis of approaches (dominant status versus equal status)

This research study has followed the *partially mixed concurrent dominant* status design. Here QUAL approach has given much more significance because this research focuses on respondent's various personal social experiences. These approaches have been used to gain more holistic and naturalistic understanding of the social environment. These above approaches have focused according to Denzin & Lincoln (2005) on understanding the phenomenon in their natural habitat or setting. Using this approach in this research adhere to the framework of QUAL methods which includes ontological and epistemological principles. Here I have used this QUAL approach epistemologically mainly to understand the rider's social and naturalistic experiences as a motorcyclist. It has also focused on the vivid differences between men and women motorcyclist's lived experiences and their approaches towards the social understandings of risk and gender. Apart from the above significance, another major significance is ontologically, the constructionist approach stress on the fact that 'gender' is culturally and socially constructed and also socially complement the motorcyclist's perception of risk. Hence for this kind of exploratory research study QUAL methods are more suitable. The data used for this research come from 100 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with motorcycle riders both young and old belonging to different social classes. Additional data were also collected from the informal conversation with many motorcyclists and many motor-mechanics¹³ of Kolkata.

1.5.2 Methods adopted for the research

In this study primarily I have used in-depth QUAL interview. This is because through this interviewing process a researcher can very well interpret the different perspectives, various meanings and interpretations that the respondent holds towards the motorcycling culture and

its whereabouts. As Orbach mentioned that the interviewing process helps in identifying “culturally embedded normative explanations (of events and behaviours), because they represent ways in which people organise views of themselves, of others, and of their social worlds” (1997:455). A semi-structured interview schedule was used as a tool to conduct the interview. According to Rosalind Edwards and Janet Holland “The structured interview is at the QUAN end of the scale, and more used in survey approaches. The rest of the scale, semi-structured and unstructured, is the area occupied by QUAL researchers, with the interviews characterized by increasing levels of flexibility and lack of structure” (2013: 2-3). This in-depth interview process with the semi-structured interview schedule would also provide subjective and cultural information related to the research as well as a proper understanding towards the theories I incorporated. Thus in this study I have followed what Denzin and Lincoln states the “favourite methodological tool of QUAL researcher” (1994:353). It is very well believed that to access self-reflexivity among the respondents which will lead them to share stories about this culture would eventually show us the reality of their social world and help the researcher in critical understanding and theorizing the world. “Respondents may reveal feelings, beliefs, and private doubts that contradict or conflict ‘what everyone thinks’, including sentiments that break the dominant feelings.... In other cases, interviewers will discover anxiety, ambivalence, and uncertainty that lies beyond respondent’s conformity” (Ibid 137).

Narratives are considered a particular form of representation, implementing signs which take place in human discourse. It is also showing or the telling of the events and the mode selected for that to take place. Respondents describe their lives and their experience, this experience are in form of narratives that helps the researcher for a clear understanding of the research approaches and also helps the researcher to introspect and interpret the social situation more intimately. While answering a particular question the respondents tends to narrate a life experience which helps not only the researcher to understand its credibility but also it makes the entire process of interview more lively and substantial.

In this study the target respondent was 100 motorcyclists. Here, I will be referring only to the motorcyclists or riders, who might ride a motorcycle to commute on a daily basis to satisfy mundane activities like going to the work, college or to carry groceries but also, rides their motorcycle distinctively out of love and passion. Passion, here in this study is described, as the feeling one is associated with the motorcycle, where they ride their motorcycles either

professionally or for extreme trips to unknown places. It is caused by the strong feeling or belief that the rider is significantly fond of. The notion of affection towards the material structure that is the motorcycle is strongly embedded into their thoughts.

In this study I have also used photographs in the manner described by Hill (1991) to assist in “reliving the lived experience”, and also as visual records of symbolism encountered in modes of dress, grooming, motorcycle customization, and other behaviours in those biker communities. Sample photographs will be included in the thesis to portray various themes. I have tried to interpret the meanings of symbols in the context of their use within the culture. Close reading of such magazines as *Biker*, *Easyriders*, and *HOG Tales*, as well as many rally brochure, all have me assisted in the interpretation and triangulation of interview and observational data. I have also watched several motorcycling movies that helped in framing and distinguishing this culture from the west. Movies such as *The Wild Angles*, *The Wild One*, *Indian* etc. and documentary such as *Why We Ride* and other documentaries on bike stunts has immensely helped in identifying this culture distinctively.

The deviant culture in motorcycling is ignored in this study which constitutes a minor part of biking in kolkata. The methodological reasons are that this research would like to portray the distinctive positive side of the motorcycling culture which includes law-abiding motorcyclists rather than hooliganism, it includes motorcyclists who helps in maintaining a sheer gap between them and motorcyclists who just ride to break laws re-producing the foretold image of the ‘deviant motorcyclists’ which is quite popular in media. The focus is more on the organised and institutionalised part of this biking culture. I have mainly studied the motorcycling clubs (MCs) to get a detailed sketch of information about this distinctive well organized culture who are largely law abiding citizens.

1.5.3 Unit of Analysis and composition of the sample

This research mainly is concerned with the members of the motorcyclist club in Kolkata who ride motorcycle not only for mere transportation or daily conveyance but also professionally or goes to distant places with their motorcycles. Men and women who participate in any motorcycling activities apart from daily commuting or are members of the motorcycle clubs were the unit of analysis in this research. This research was conducted in areas of Kolkata with includes Barasat, Birati, Dunlop, Shyambazar, Seldeah, Dum Dum, Lake Town,

Kakurgachi, Ultadanga, Bhawanipur, Deshapriya Park, Golf-green, Naktala, Jadavpur, Baruipur and Behala. Therefore my sample size was 100 motorcyclists. Initially the plan was to interview equal number of both male and female respondents, that is 50 each but it was shocking when not more than 18 female respondents were found. This sample also involves a diverse range of age, income as well as educational qualification. The average age of the respondents was 30 years. The youngest respondent's age was 18 while the oldest was 58 years. The education of the respondents ranged above the post-graduation to below secondary. But none of the respondents were illiterate. Only 3 male respondents studied till secondary, 2 male respondents have passed the higher secondary, 28 have acquired diploma, 41 had graduation degree, 6 have passed post-graduation and 2 of them have doctorate degree. The women respondents I have interviewed, 2 of them have passed higher secondary doing graduation. 9 female respondents have graduation degree and 7 of them have acquired post-graduation degree. The average age of female respondents was 25 years. The monthly income for the most of my male respondents was from 1 lakh to 1.25 lakh but for most of the women the monthly income ranges are 50 thousand to 1 lakh. Respondents are engaged mostly in business and many other professions like teachers, doctors, lawyers, government employee, managers, motor mechanics, musician, artists, graffiti painter, tour operator, web designer, stunter, motocross rider, yoga instructor etc. The details of demographic info of the respondents are attached in the appendix B.

1.5.4 Sampling Technique

Initially I came into contact with some known persons, fulfilling the criteria (respondents belonging to the below mentioned motorcycling clubs). Eventually, I have approached them for their time for the interview over phone. I was treated standoffishly by some but politely by others and gregariously by many. I took the help of both purposive and snow ball technique¹⁴ because it was difficult to find women riders. 'Purposive' because the first women interviewed, was known to me. In spite of that I could interview very less number of women motorcyclists in comparison to men motorcyclists. There was a prominent difficulty in looking for women motorcyclists, couple of women motorcyclist was known, and others through a snowball effect. Four (4) women pillion/passenger were also interviewed as they ride with their partners (boyfriend/husband/fiancée/fiancé) on their motorcycle. Though they are not much knowledgeable about the technical parts of the motorcycle but duly contribute in the motorcycling culture. I have also use the same technique for interviewing male

respondents too. The only difference is known male participants were more in number than females. The age group was never restricted to a certain limit but since the study was on motorcycling and in India an individual receive a driving license only after 18years of age. Therefore the lower limit (age) of my respondents was below 20 and the upper limit (age) of my respondents was 51 and above, as there is no specific retirement from motorcycling.

1.5.5 Data Collection

Initially after calling the respondents I made sure to explain in brief about the interview and assured them about the confidentiality of this process. I have also explained them about the time (2-3 hours) it will incur and of course about the voice recording. Once they have agreed and have sorted the place and time, we met at least twice or may be thrice depending on time and dates they were comfortable. Finally I have taken face-to-face in-depth interview with the help of the semi structured interview schedule. I partook in informal discussions with many motorcycle riders at the events. The majority of in-depth interviews were recorded in the interviewee's home or their convenient places. Initially I went with a semi-structured interview schedule and later hearing to the respondent's narratives many questions were added to understand the culture in depth. The groups that were interviewed referred themselves as North Calcutta Disha, Last Sunday Rides or LSR, Highway Cruisers, The Royal Bulls, Rolling Wheels, Xplorers, Eastern Bulls, Live 2 Ride, Pheonix Trails, Tornado etc.

It was important to understand the perception of risk the respondents holds towards this sport as it is largely a voluntary risk taken activity. Therefore the interviews were not commenced until and unless I was confident and shared a good rapport with them. Conversations were taped; pseudonyms were assigned to the interviewers to protect their confidentiality. The interview was more of an interactive conversation or story-telling activity where the respondent narrated how they started riding what made them comfortable with motorcycle but not any other vehicles. They often talked about certain detail which was not required for my research but I patiently listened to it, to understand their perception. The interview had mainly broad questions fulfilling the criterion of the objectives. In this interview schedule the constructed questions were largely utilized to guide the interview mainly in such a direction that it will ultimately help exploring the research objectives. The same questions were asked

to every respondent.

The first part of the interview included questions about personal details or characteristics such as age, education, family income and work experiences. The next part was mainly for the understanding about the culture and its rituals. Then comes the part of gendering the machine and performing a specific character traits followed by the perception of risk in motorcycling. There was also a separate part added to the interview schedule only dedicated to the women motorcyclists or to the women passenger/pillions. I faced difficulties with few respondents to make them understand about few specific questions about objectification of women in this male dominated field. I had to cite examples of shaving crème advertisement¹⁵ in order to make them understand the process of objectification, which they would easily relate. This made the process of interview a bit easy.

After interviewing 30 respondents it was necessary to add another question therefore they were again contacted and they answered that question either physically or over phone or by text message or by WhatsApp. This work has also included various discussion and interaction with hundreds of others who was involved in attending Motor races, rallies, motorcycle shows. This is because I wanted to understand the various different perspectives of others too mainly the newcomers. I also wanted to understand their understanding for participating in such a risky culture.

1.5.6 Data Analysis

With this backdrop I have tried the best to present quantitatively the basic demographic questions. I have also presented some univariate tables throughout the chapters and the demographic data however, since the work is primarily based on QUAL approach therefore the data regarding cultural aspect and that of the interrelationship between gender, culture and risk has been mainly presented qualitatively. Generally interviews, I recorded over my mobile phone and transcribed. If taping was not feasible I usually jotted down the skeletal notes during the interview and soon fleshed them out as soon as possible. I always played back those interviewed recorded notes as prompts for creating more detailed field notes. Clarification was even asked after the analysis of transcripts. To analysis the data that is been recorded initially, was transcribed. For both in-depth interviews and narratives I largely followed thematic approaches and finally coded¹⁶ them.

The first important task for any analytic procedure is to transcribe the data from the recording soon after the interview so that the original content is retained (Silverman 2000). Similarly I have also tried my best to retain the originality of those interviews. In this study pseudonyms were assigned soon after transcribing the voice of the entire respondents, in order to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of my respondent's identity. I have gone through those transcribed interviews several times in order to understand every aspect of the rider's perception. It is the primary step to understand or find out the codes. With the help of reading it several times I could easily derive codes. According to Gibbs codes are "a description of the analytic idea it refers to and ways of ensuring that the coding is reliable, that is, carried out in a systematic and consistent way" (2007:41).

Coding the data was quite important and length task. Primarily it was a difficult task to find a suitable order in creating the thematic codes. Though it would be inappropriate to state that the themes of coding, of the transcribed data totally originated for this study. Initially the little literature review on this topic helped me with the primary idea of codes, mainly for two main objectives that is, culture and risk about motorcycling. But the codes for the other objective that talks about gender and motorcycling completely originated from my research. I had no prior notion about it. I have analysed, what Gibbs (2007) calls 'descriptive', 'categories' and 'analytic' codes from the transcribed data in order to derive the specific themes. Indeed I have critically analysed the constructed codes of my respondents to explain the realities of their life with motorcycling. Going through the transcribed data repeatedly I finally could finally locate the analytic codes. This process though was quite lengthy but I coded and re-coded the passages several times to develop the appropriate themes. I have also compared the code with passages to be sure. I have also kept aside the suitable quotes (I felt necessary) of the respondents while coding, in order to write them in the thesis. It was also necessary to create typologies to locate the key differences in the data. Hence I have created typologies of different genre of riding a motorcycle. However as my work is essentially has a mixed approach (QUAN & QUAL), therefore I have also tried quantifying few data apart from the demographic info. Mixed methods according to Nagy & Biber (2010) is a way where a researcher may use qualitative approach may eventually find points of connection to qualitative data while doing the analysis.

1.6 Chapter Distribution

Chapter two is solely based on the theoretical framework that has been used largely to guide me with the interpretations of my findings of this study. Chapter three deals with the distinctive culture that is quite significant, that is emerging in kolkata. It also deals with the specific motorcycles and its cultures which include certain rituals, norms and regulations respective to their particular motorcycling groups. The fraternity is largely patriarchal while women are challenging that space. Chapter four deals with the gender and motorcycling where it deals with how an individual especially men motorcyclists are doing or performing gender through motorcycling and how women are challenging this gendered space by downplaying femininity. It also reports the how men motorcyclists confirm the notions of hegemonic masculinity and women refute. Chapter five analyses the risk associated with motorcycling for both the genders. This study will also explain the risks that are associated with motorcycling for both men and women. Strategies and negotiations what are perceived and negotiated on a daily basis by women as well as men motorcyclist are also accounted for. This chapter also explores the main sources of fear information and their relative importance to both in shaping of men and women's perception of fear. Here the riding body is subjected to a series of voluntary risk taking activities which is a structural factor that has been identified in the Kolkata motorcycling culture. With the help of the notion of edgework this chapter also explains that the risk involved in riding a motorcycle mainly depends on the stage that the motorcycle rider is at. I would also like to argue that the perception of risk holds the major position in a motorcyclist which is largely embodied into motorcycling.

CHAPTER II:

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

In this research, I have tried to use theoretical perspectives from a number of theories to analyse and study the motorcycling culture and its relation to gender and risk. The theoretical frameworks are used as a guide to the inquiry and the interpretations of the findings of the study. This work is largely exploratory, wherein I have attempted to incorporate different theoretical perspectives.

2.1 Doing Gender: A Process

2.1.1 Defining Gender

To understand the process of doing gender we need to interpret the notion of gender and also the three-fold structure of it. Gender is basically structured and is processed by the mundane conduct of life which is largely organised the basis of the reproductive arena which is eventually defined by the process of human production and bodily structures. According to Connell “gender is a way in which social practice is ordered” (2005:71). This arena of gender also includes childbirth and Infant care, differences and similarities of bodily sex, and also course and sexual arousal. Connell identified this not as 'biological base' but 'reproductive arena' to emphasize the historical process which involves the body but not a 'fixed set of biological determinants' (Connell 2005). Gender is largely a social practice that is repeatedly referred to as bodies and how bodies perform. Gender is definitely not a social practice that is being reduced itself to the body. Biological sex never determines the gendered practice in any contemporary society. The process of historical transition replaces the biological evolution as the form of change. Social practice is largely constructed on the basis of a particular contemporary situation responding to a definite framework of social relations. In all documented societies, the distinctive structures are formed by the reproductive arena which is being organized through gender relations among people and groups. This structure relates to the series of actions that create a pattern of everyday interaction constructed through historical events but never is built through isolated acts. These actions are configured on a larger basis making them a nation-wide pattern of gender relationships. Masculinity and femininity are those configurations of gender practice. It is basically ‘organisation of practice’ where femininity and masculinity are understood as ‘gender projects’ (Connell 2005). He also states that “gender is organised in symbolic practices that may continue much

longer than the individual life (for instance: The construction of heroic masculinity in epics; the construction of 'gender dysphorias' or 'perversions' in medical theory) (Connell 2005: 72-73). Connell also put up an example of US military in order to show how the practice of masculinity is institutionalised.

The gender structuring of practice needs to have nothing biologically to do with reproduction. The link with the reproductive arena is social. This becomes clear when it is challenged. An example, in the recent struggle within the state over 'gays in the military', i.e., the rules excluding soldiers and sailors because of the gender of their sexual object choice. In the United States where the struggle was most severe, it's made the case for change in terms of civil liberties and military efficiency, are going in effect that object choice has little to do with the capacity to kill. The admirals and generals defended the status quo on a variety of spurious grounds. The unadmitted reason was the cultural importance of a particular definition of masculinity in maintaining the fragile cohesion of modern armed forces. (Connell 2005: 73)

Institutions such as the state, the work place, the school are largely masculine in nature. Just not metaphorically, but institutions are gendered substantially too. The organisational practices of a state are largely structured and are highly related to the reproductive arena. There is a gender configuration for promotion or for recruiting an officer in such institutions, here for instance military, making the majority of office holders men. This process of gender configuration also involves division of labour, policy making, control system, the practical routine of the particular institution, and also mobilizes consent and pleasure. The three fold model of relations Connell 2005, points out to understand the structure of gender are: a. Power, b. Production and c. Cathexis or emotional attachment.

- a. *Power relations*: The axis of power revolves around the subordination of women in contemporary society with the dominance of men, or what is named as 'patriarchy'. There might be some local reversals but still the structure prominently exists. As for example, male students with female teachers or households run by a woman. Despite strong resistance what we call feminism, this general structure exists in contemporary society. The politics of masculinity survives and which has become the problem of legitimacy.

- b. *Production relations*: The division of labour is highly gendered where women are supposed to work inside the house and men outside the house. The economic productivity of gender divisions of labour never paid equal attention. Not only women are into un-paid labour while working inside the household but also faces equal wage rates and a glass ceiling while working in an office with other men. “A capitalist economy working through a gender division of labour is, necessarily, gendered accumulation process” (Connell 2005). Therefore the social construction of masculinity is not women but men control the private fortunes, construct significant corporations and institutions. The amalgamation of wealth is strongly associated with the reproductive arena.
- c. *Cathexis or emotional attachment*: Social practice and interactions construct and shape sexual desires which are largely an expression of gender order. Connell 2005, states that “accordingly we ask political questions about the relationships involved: whether they are consensual or coercive, whether pleasure is equally given and received” (p 75). Sexuality, according to feminist analysis, majorly questions of men's dominant social position with heterosexuality.

In general, gender is structured through social practice but not any special practice and it also involved unavoidably with any societal structures and it also interacts with other social factors such as race, class, or even castes. Coming to the framework of doing gender it is largely a process that is constructed through a series of historical gender interactions and finally making it a pattern of everyday lifestyle.

The framework of **doing gender** points about that gender is “much more than a role or an individual characteristic; it is a mechanism where was situated social action contributes to the reproduction of social structure” (West and Fenstermaker 1995:19). In other words, gender is basically accomplished, it is also contextual that it changes from one situation to the other, and it also has the nature of holding an individual accountable for how they do gender by interacting with other members in the respective society. Doing gender theorist Fenstermaker 1985, describes gender as “an active, behaviourally based, and demonstrable accomplishment, a situation all accountable feature of sexually categorised human beings” (p. 190). An individual do gender because of the reason that there are several social norms constructed by the respective society on gendered behaviour through repeated interactions by which an individual learns the appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour. Individuals are

held accountable repeatedly through interactions over time for upholding the gendered behaviour which is been expected that men and women should be naturally distinctively different (West and Zimmerman 1987).

Doing gender largely means creating a strong divide between both the genders (girls and boys, women and men). These differences are created since birth, which is neither natural nor essential, neither biological. But once this difference is created and established between the genders then they are largely used to reinforce the 'essentialness' (West and Zimmerman 1987:137) of gender. The conventional process of being a boy or a girl is because of sex roles socialization that takes place since birth rather starts before birth itself. As in western societies, there are gender-revel ceremonies. That is the mother and the father would cut a cake or burst balloons or some innovative process of gender segregation where a boy child would be marked by blue and a girl child would be marked by pink. Even in the hospitals the boy and the girl child are segregated by wearing colours pink and blue new-born apparels. The child once is born are fed up with games, TV shows, activities either which is will make think this distinction an essential one. There is a constant problem arising through socialization that is inherent as it arises because of such sex-role differentiation. This process of socialization relies on a general assumption that chooses to maintain the sociological difference of being a man and a woman. Cahill (1982) talks about the experiences of preschool girls or boys who unconsciously practice sex identities. Cahill cites an example where a boy child carried a neckpiece but when told to wear it, he refused to wear it because it was girls'. Here it shows how the boys are being concerned about his image and cannot wear something that's meant for a girl. While subsequently little girls are taught to value their appearance, where they can easily manage themselves as ornamental objects. This is how both the genders learn as well as manage the sex differences and recognition in any kind of interaction is definitely not at all optional but is very much mandatory. Therefore girls or boys learn to display the attributes that are essentially male or female. This is largely the way any new member of the society gets involved in a self-regulating or self-policing process to be accepted into the framework of the society.

This recruitment process according to West and Zimmerman (1987:142) "involves not only the appropriation of gender ideals (why the valuation of those ideals as proper ways of being and behaving) also gender identities that are important to individuals and that they strive to maintain". Hence, the socio-cultural shaping or the gender categorisation of being 'essential female and male natures' achieve its objective status. This is how gender is given natural or normal features of being typically a man or a woman. This is how the process of doing

gender starts right from the birth itself through these series of interactions of the outside world differentiating them from a man and a woman. All institutions starting from family helps in this differentiation of becoming a man and a woman. To understand the complex process of this theoretical perspective of doing gender more clearly I need to explore the principals of it. There is mainly four belief of this process of 'doing gender' according to gender theorist² they are first, doing gender is an activity which is accomplished instead of just a role and status, secondly, doing gender is accountable to the other societal members, thirdly, doing gender is situational and contextual, finally doing gender involves both structure and social practice and agency.

Principals of doing gender

1. *Accomplishment*: The major belief is the doing gender is largely an activity which is accomplished instead of status or role. For theories of doing gender and also many sociologists claims that gender is necessarily not a biologically fixed feature but is generally constructed socially. West & Zimmerman 1987, Messerschmitt 1993, claims that gender has nothing to do with the biological representation of an individual. The behaviour that an individual engages in everyday basis is not biological at all. Just because an individual does not expose their genitalia in the public space therefore the judgement of being male and female is not based on genitalia alone. This is basically based on appearance that is cloth in makeup or the gendered behaviour that is masculinity or femininity which is been learned since a young age through socialization (Connell 2002, West and Zimmerman 1987).

This is the sole reason why sex role theory is highly criticized which claims the predetermination of sex-role for each man and a woman which is largely unchanging. That is the reason feminine behaviours are portrayed by a woman and masculine behaviour are portrayed by a man that is considered to be inherently in the sex role. Gender traits are not fixed but are largely created. Genders are socially constructed entities. So gender theorist argues that gender is an accomplishment or an activity. In other words, women or men are not naturally born with the traits of being masculine or feminine. Rather socialized to produce, express, and also to accomplish femininity from situation to situation. Therefore the word feminine shifts from being a noun (i.e.,

femininity) to a verb (i.e., doing or performing femininity). Individuals, therefore are held accountable routinely for their performance of gender.

2. *Accountability*: The second core belief of this Framework is the idea of accountability. West and Zimmerman 1987 points out:

The key to our formula of gender as an accomplishment is the notion of accountability- that is, the possibility of describing activities, state of affairs, and descriptions themselves in serious and consequential ways. In so far as societal members know that their conduct is accountable, they will frame their actions in relation to how they might be constructed by others in the context in which they occur (p.29).

In other words, both men and women in any society are strongly held accountable for their behaviour which is highly gendered. Male and females have to express masculinity and femininity in every situation as society places strong demand for them. If they are unable to portray such gender behaviours they can be “called out” for not engaging in the expected behaviours (West and Zimmerman 1987). Individuals are held accountable series of interactions that validate the distinctive characteristics between males and females by viewing such differences as very much natural. Here we can also state about Goffman (1973) where he talks about how the gendered behaviour as is repeatedly portrayed or 'displayed' in front of an 'audience' therefore and the audience will react appropriately.

So doing gender is basically true series of interaction where an individual show their ability to be masculine or feminine. Women and men are anticipated to act in certain gender appropriate ways. This is largely taught through the series of interactions since their birth which is largely called socialization. Series of interaction will become the pattern of their lives teaching be the younger generation to act accordingly. This is the reason the majority of individuals can act as expected. For example, a man who plays football if want to cry after getting a strong hit in response to pain which is absolutely natural but 'shake it off' because boys don't cry and crying are a sign of being weak. An individual does this because they could anticipate interactions with others (West and Zimmerman 1987). As women before going to a grocery shop would fix her hair and puts makeup otherwise she might be accountable for not portraying her

feminine identity. Hence, an individual do gender on the basis of anticipatory interactions.

3. *Contextual or Situational:* Doing gender is also situational and this is the third belief of doing gender theorist. That is they believe that any action is highly contextual or differs from every situation to the situation west (West and Zimmerman 1987). This indicates an individual may find himself or herself in different situations they need to present themselves indifferently in every situation therefore we can claim that doing gender is definitely not a stable process across every situation an individual encounters. In a household, a private sphere a woman is supposed to take care of her sick mother and father or husband which is a traditional gender norm. This is largely an act of doing femininity which portrays ladylike behaviour according to societal expectations. While on the other hand, a woman who is a nurse of a hospital which is a public sector also does the same for her patients. Now here since it is a public space she is not engaging in any femininity whereas portraying her power, expressing status, influence prestige that is assigned by society. Here both women are basically engaging themselves in traditionally accepted feminine behaviour of taking care. But taking care of her household may be viewed as a form of femininity but taking care of the patients would not because of the status and prestige associated with it. Therefore doing gender varies from every context.
4. *Agency:* The last component of doing gender is that it not only involves structure but also social practice or agency. Socialization for both men and women starts since birth itself. They are fed with the social gendered norms that society expects them to perform. For example, while growing up children learn to like boys don't cry or play with dolls, girls don't fight, etc. So they are expected to produce such gender norms which are highly based on societal expectations. This is what differentiates men and women as natural differences which are learned through a series of social interactions. So at any structural level, through social institutions (family, school, workplace, and media) gender is repeatedly produced and reproduced.

As we know according to the gender theorist doing gender is a compulsion because gender order keeps on reproducing its ways. But there is always a choice for an

individual or human agency to reproduce gender. They can either engage in reproducing the gendered order or can also resist doing it. But according to West and Zimmerman 1987, individuals showing resistance in producing gender can be punished through their interactions with others.

Goffman (1977) also states about such creation of institutionalized structure where the natural or normal sexiness is easily enhanced or enacted. Here Goffman cites the example of sex segregation of North American public bathrooms that differentiate between the men and female toilets which are fundamentally biological, even though both “are somewhat similar in the question of waste products elimination” (Goffman 1977, p. 315). Goffman also talks about organized sports which shows a similar institutionalized framework of masculinity. Qualities that are known to be apt or proper are mainly the expression of masculinity or being ‘macho’, for example muscle strength, endurance, or competitive spirit are always been celebrated by all the parties- participants as well as spectators. Such masculine strength is demonstrated by the sportsman and largely celebrated. West and Zimmerman (1983) state that men often interrupt women in a speech in public spaces that is because of the way of 'doing gender' as well as 'doing power'.

Gender is routinely portrayed in such situations where women are mostly considered to be helpless when they are next to heavy objects or flat tires (West and Zimmerman 1987). But Goffman notes that these situations (messy or heavy) can be easily socially constructed from any social situation “even though by standards set in other settings, may involve something that is light clean and safe” (Goffman 1977, 324). It is quite clear that from these kinds of situations a stage of “essential sexual natures” (West and Zimmerman 1987) can be easily depicted. Therefore Goffman states that these above typical situations “do not so much allow for the expression of natural differences as for the production of difference itself” (Goffman 1977: 324).

2.2 Hegemonic Masculinity

2.2.1 Defining Masculinity

In recent years there have been significant changes in man and masculinity. One can also find major concerns about the gender relations and that they are not exogenously imposed. The dominant gender order that prevails in society is always taken for granted. Connell argues about men and masculinity issues are now ventured worldwide. It is important to understand

the notion of masculinities in order to understand the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Connell in his book *Masculinities* defined masculinities by four different approaches. It is evident that 'masculinity' can only exist in relation to 'femininity'. The concept of 'masculinity' is relational. That is to say, "un-masculine person would behave differently: being peaceable rather than violent, conciliatory rather than dominating, hardly able to kick a football, uninterested in sexual conquest, and so forth" (2005: 67). Hence this conception also has taken for granted and believe in personal agency and individual differences. That is it is mainly constructed accordingly to contemporary society. The definitions of masculinity have followed different strategies to describe who is masculine and who is not and also have taken for granted the cultural standpoint of contemporary society. According to Connell 2005, the four major strategies are differentiated logically which are often used in combination while in practice.

Firstly, *Essentialist* definitions usually define a specific characteristic of the core of the notion of masculine and show detailed men's lives. An essence of masculinity is varied: risk taking, responsibility, irresponsibility, aggression..(Connell 2005). Secondly, *Positivist* social science, states a simple definition of what men originally are. This is a logical definition based on psychological scales of masculinity/femininity, as they differentiate statistically within a group of women and men in their respective contemporary culture or it can also be called *pattern masculinity* according to Connell. This definition is quite problematic because of its certain difficulties as epistemology would never recognize a description without a standpoint, common-sense typologies of gender, and contradiction with masculine and feminine personality. Thirdly, *normative* definitions tend to offer a standard definition. Male sex role often mixes with essentialist definition with normative one. Connell states "few men actually match the blueprint or display the toughness and independence...."(2005:70). Finally, *Semiotic* approaches reject the level of personality while defining masculinity as a symbolic contrast between masculinity and femininity. Masculinity is defined as non-femininity. This approach is largely used by the post-structuralist cultural analysis of gender, feminists, and cultural analysis. Masculinity is a symbolic authority in semiotic opposition.

The dominant form of masculinities is **hegemonic masculinity**. In this research, the notion of hegemonic masculinity is incorporated. Hence to discuss this term hegemonic masculinity, it generally refers to the hierarchical interaction between diverse masculinities and also indicates how some individuals (men) make these interactions appear normal and also

evidently necessary where men usually subjugate or dominate the other weaker gender and even weaker men. This current ideology of hegemonic masculinity also describes the position of gender relations in contemporary society which is itself a system or a constructed pattern of mundane life, where masculinity or masculine domination is reproduced socially and culturally through the patterns of interactions.

Hegemonic masculinity, particularly as it appears in the work of Carrigan, Connell and Lee, Chapman, Cockburn, Connell, Lichterman, Messner and Rutherford involves a specific strategy for the subordination of women. In their view, hegemonic masculinity concerns the dread of and flight from women. Architecturally idealized form, it is both a personal and a collective project and is the common sense about breadwinning and manhood. It is exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal, and violent. It is acid or natural, tough, contradictory, crisis-prone, rich, and socially sustained. While centrally connected with the Institutions of male dominance, not all men practice it, though benefit from it. All the cross-class, it often excludes working class, gay and black men. It is our lived experience and an economic and cultural force, and dependent on social arrangements. It is constructed through difficult negotiations over a lifetime. Fragile it may be, but it constructs the most dangerous things we live with. Resilient, it incorporates its critiques, but it is, nonetheless, 'unraveling'. (Donaldson 1993: 645-646)

The significant emergence of hegemonic masculinity can be understood from the above discussion are: Firstly, according to Howson 2006, “it is possible to see an axiomatic position that hegemonic masculinity has assumed within the literature as both the symbol representative of the legitimate masculine ideal, as well as the focus for a critique of masculinity”. In other words, to understand gender in this contemporary society, it is largely essential to understand how the hegemonic masculinity work or manipulates the contemporary system. Secondly, hegemonic masculinity is not external to the gender relations that exist in contemporary society rather they are significant emergence from the mundane pattern of everyday interactions. That is it develops from the socio-cultural milieu itself. Howson 2006, states “it (hegemonic masculinity) legitimately develops, it effectively takes control of the gender order by directing the whole gender polity in line with its own ideality” (p 5).

Connell postulated that hegemonic masculinity has four types of relations which are largely hierarchical. They are *dominant, complicit, subordinate, and marginalized* (Connell 2001). The dominant position of masculinity is basically the ideal form of masculinity in any contemporary society. Such as the hegemonic male individuals are an 'ideal type'¹ Connell notes that this image of being hegemonic changes over place and time and also the individual is subjected to contestation within a particular society or culture. Hegemonic masculinity is the major feature that can also be understood as dominant masculine hegemonic and operates according to Connell (1995:77) “as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees (or to guarantee) the dominant position of man and subordination of women”. Two major aspects of the above Connell definition of hegemonic masculinity support its dominative nature. First, is basically based on the claim that these dominant features of the masculinity 'guarantees (or it has taken to guarantee)', that is the position of women subordinated by men. Secondly, hegemonic masculinity demonstrates the ‘currently accepted’ answers to the guarantees that are generally given by the hegemonic principles. Dominant masculinity refers to the socially accepted ways of male (Connell, 2001).

Complicit: Normative definitions of masculinity according to Connell 2005, have a lot of problems as men hardly meet with such standards. Men performing or practicing a hegemonic pattern of masculinity is distinctively small in number. The majority of men have no direct connection with any masculinity as originated by Connell to be hegemonic, subordinated, or marginalized. They neither think of engaging nor seek to engage in such ideals of gender practice. Yet men performing masculinity benefit from the patriarchal system of contemporary society, which engages them in overall women's subordination. However, a benchmark exists in accordance with the above hegemonic symbolised ideals through which they gain an advantage by accepting the ideologies. This nature deals with the idea of complicity.

Complicit masculinity according to Connell “are often seen as lesser version of hegemonic ideal because their advantage is never are clear cut, and it is often made without the tensions or risk bring on the front line of the system brings” (1995:79). This issue of having a benchmark also creates a problematic identification and forms a vital component of the project to reject the major characteristic of hegemonic masculinity's project for continuation. This is because of the current gender order that is being maintained by constructing a strategic unity between men and women on the basis of hegemonic principles. Therefore

unlike subordinate or marginalized masculinities, complicit features of masculinity usually challenge the principles expressed in hegemonic masculinity that are very much weaker than other subaltern masculinities (Howson 2006:65). However, the ideals of hegemonic masculinity are not fully adopted by complicit masculinities. By this process, certain features might diminish the purity of the dominated hegemonic project at the personality level and are expressed as Connell refers to 'protest masculinities' (1995: 109-112). Protest masculinity being structurally complicit at an individual level might also challenge the hegemonic principles by showing egalitarianism towards both the sexes and certain behaviour that traditionally considered being subordinate.

Subordinate: As hegemony is known as the cultural dominance of contemporary society hence it is well understood that a part of the same society is dominated. Hence basically majority is dominated by the dominant others. Within such a social framework there also exist specific gender relations of subordination and dominance within the group of male individuals. Connell in the book *Masculinities* 2005, states in European and American society there is a prevalent dominance of heterosexual men who subordinated homosexual men. Homosexual men were culturally stigmatized. He also states “gay men are subordinated to straight men by an array of quite material practices” (p. 78).

These practices included cultural and political exclusion, economic discrimination, abuse (culturally, as in US gay men are the symbolic target of the religious rights), violence (legally: imprisonment under sodomy; street violence: bullying that extends to murder at times), and boycotts. Among men, homosexual masculinities are the bottom of the hierarchy of gender. Homosexual men are oppressed by the heterosexual ones in contemporary social situations not only in western societies but also in Indian societies. Hence this oppression is world-wide. Therefore “gayness is easily assimilated to femininity” (Connell 2005: 78).

“Subordinate masculinities emerge as a product of a particular relation some men have within the structure of sexuality that inverts the hegemonic cathectic focus towards the feminine (as heterosexual) back upon masculine (as homosexuality)” (Howson 2006: 62). From the point of view of hegemonic masculinity, the concept of homosexuality emphasized gender differences to that extent that blurs differences in sexual orientation. It is obvious that's gay masculinity is subordinated but it is not the only one to be subordinated. However, many heterosexual boys or men are also kicked out from the circle of dominant masculinity since they are unable to portray hegemony. The process is carried out by several vocabulary cases

of abuse as a nerd, sissy, mother's boy, geek, candy ass and so on. Here obviously we see symbolically the femininity is blurred.

Marginalized: Subordination, complicity, and hegemonic they are all concerning the gender order process in contemporary society. The Other structures of society as caste, race, and class create a further relationship within the masculinities developing the concept of marginalised masculinities. These relations function exogenously within the gender structure but always operate by interacting with gender (Connell 1995: 80). These structures although never seen as historically deviant, hence they are rejected by the dominative hegemonic masculinity. Certain groups of men do not conform to such masculinity as they are the de-privileged (Howson 2006).

Connell opined that the emergence of information technology redefined the middle class masculinities during the arguments regarding the labour of working class men (2005: 48-50). Racial relations such as black masculinity are a symbolic role in creating gender construction for white men. It is also claimed that man as a group, at the expense of women generally enjoys certain institutional privileges. Connell claims “marginalisation is always relative to the authorisation of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group” (2005: 80-81). Therefore the black athletes in US are the exemplars of the dominant masculinity. But this generally does not yield social authority for black men. He also states that “the relation of marginalisation and authorisation may also exist between the subordinate masculinity” (pg 81). We can easily analyse the specific framework of marginalisation/ authorisation on one hand and hegemonic, subordination/ domination, and complicity on the other. These are two types of relationships that Connell has opined. The form of masculinity, hegemonic and marginalised do not have fixed character types but changes in structure and about each other with the accordance of practice that is created in a particular situation.

In my research, I would refer to hegemonic masculinity as I will show that motorcyclists are in contestation with the fellow motorcycle rider to portray hegemonic masculinity in the above said motorcycling culture. Connell also argues that the dominant masculinity in western societies mainly stresses the notion of competition, aggressiveness, wealth, and heterosexuality. Hence men who hold class privilege, wealth and are well represented in the respective culture would be considered primary to negotiate masculinity within this domain. These socially constructed notions are symbolised in a male centric society with the help of different institutions that can be family, media, education and even religion. With the help of

these constructed images and symbols we tend to adopt these images of hegemonic masculinity as the ideal men are which is largely constructed. The relation between the four components of is evidently hierarchal. Connell (1985) distinguishes between the culturally dominant forms of masculinity which are 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'subordinated' or marginalized forms. By hegemonic, he means the dominant cultural ideal of masculinity that need not be practiced by the majority of men. It is rather a culture way of life or a culture code or norms they practice day to day activities. This hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to femininities and in relation to subordinated masculinities (Kvande 1999). According to Connell the ideal hegemonic masculinity in current societies is a heterosexual, aggressive, risk taking, independent rational man. Riding a motorcycle is indeed considered and is closely connected to hegemonic masculinity due to the heavy representation of machines and technologies. Powerful emotions and pleasure that is derived from the interaction with the machines, here motorcycle to be specific are important for the self-esteem and joy for the motorcyclists. Such emotional traits are culturally coded as masculine, and practicing such emotions day to day is confirming the cultural coded norms of hegemonic masculinity. According to Connell (1985) 'hegemony' does not refer to ascendancy based on force, it is not incompatible with ascendancy based on force, rather it goes together. Hegemony does not mean total cultural dominance or obliteration of alternatives. It is rather achieved within a balance of forces that is a state of play. Other patterns and groups are subordinated rather than eliminated. Practices of hegemonic masculinity institutionalize men's dominance over women, in the sense, hegemonic masculinity must embody a successful collective strategy in relation to women. Thus, hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to women and to subordinate masculinities.

The crucial term while referring to hegemonic masculinity would be 'power'. Masculinity is not a standard, uniform behaviour rather it is a gender identity it is expected to be particularly masculine Connell (1995) has termed hegemonic masculinity. Connell (1995) defined hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) permanent position of men and the subordination of women". Men motorcyclists embody the ideals of hegemonic masculinity and often take benefit from the patriarchal dominance over women. This specific hegemonic masculinity occurs through interactions with women or less masculine men. Wajcman (1991) points out "mastery over this technology does best awesome power on these men, in relation to other men women who like

this expertise, in terms of material rewards this skill being, and even in terms of their popular portrayal as ‘heroes’ use of technological progress”.

2.3 Risk

The significant amounts of academic discussion are being held up on the concept of risk. I have mainly used the concept of ‘voluntary risk taking’ Walklate (1997) and the theory of ‘edgework’ (1990). The logic of risk changes with the socio cultural setting as knowledge information varies from situation to situation. Sociologists are keen on investigating how this risk logic is established or sustains or changed from time to time. It often seems that the alternative rationalities that are put up by different experts might be irrational or incorrect, which again makes rational sense to the individuals placed within that risk. According to Lupton (1999:152) “the reflexivity of lay people in relation to risk may develop from where observation of the ways in which everyday life operates and from conversation and interactions with lay actors”. Lupton also states that people “develops a fatalistic attitude” because they have a preconceived notion of life does not “play by rules” (1999). For example an individual with a positive attitude towards exercise healthy living might die young whereas a heavy drinker and smoker might die very old. Therefore whatever preventive measures are taken would be useless if fate intervenes. To create a self-identity in a social group or sub-culture, risk positions become important for the individuals, here to the motorcyclists. So according to Lupton individuals who tend to live in ‘high risk zone’ consider themselves as ‘positive survivor or battlers’. Lupton (1999, 153) “those who voluntarily engage in risk-taking, such as mountain climbers and parachuters (or even, these days, cigarette smokers), may see the shared challenge as a unifying force”. High risk zone here in this research would be motorcycling sports as rally or mountain biking, where a careless individual would face serious threats of death. Tulloch and Lupton (2003) state “.....risk understandings in a variety of Western countries has demonstrated that people’s concepts of risk often interlace pre-modern notions of fate and lack of control with late modern notions of reflexive control over risk. Further, people tend not to have an overarching, all pervasive fear of risk. The risks they identify are highly discrete and contextual”.

2.3.1 Edgework

Edgework essentially means “skirting the edge between safety and danger” (Cockerham 2006:11). The concept of edgework is mainly borrowed from the journalist Hunter S Thompson. He mainly used this concept to explain his experimentation with drugs. Thompson uses the concept of different types of edgework which provides quite a powerful expression to the characters he studied. The central theme in Thompson's work is mainly negotiating the boundaries between life and death, insanity and sanity, and consciousness and unconsciousness within his study. (Thompson 1971). Lyng first analysed the framework of edgework within a social scientific framework where he states “risk taking experience can be understood as a radical form of escape from the institutional routines of contemporary life” (2005: 5). Lyng (1990) in his five year ethnography case study looks on the group of skydivers. He being a 'jump pilot' had easy access to the complex of the culture of Skydiving. This research was done on the skydivers with the combination of participant observation, semi-structured interview. Therefore he also became sufficiently well integrated into the group and also had access outside the weekend jumping activities. Because of his personal access to the primary data on the sport of Skydiving, he therefore could have easily focused on the substantive illustration on the edgework concept. He also talks about voluntary-risk taking as edgework are essentially voluntary risk takers. Edgework also help an individual to break the stereotypical bondage and encourage one to take up the risk. The activities that fall under such notion are skydiving, rock climbing, scuba diving, mountain biking, extreme motorcycling etc.

Lyng (1990) has organised three separate categories or dimensions of edgeworkers.

“Discussing edgework in terms of the first dimension demonstrates the broad scope of the concept while directing attention to the features common to all forms of edgework. Focusing on the 2nd dimension helps to identify the individual level factors that reflect most clearly the microstructural determinants of the edgework pattern. And finally the third dimension is concerned with the empirical patterns belonging to perhaps the most private level of individual experience” (Lyng 1990).

They are first, edgework kind of activities that is eligible as edgework secondly, the specific individual characteristics and capacities that are relevant to the edgework experience. Individuals embrace risk and lastly, subjective sensation associated with the participation of edgework.

1. Edgework activities: the experience of any edgework activities will result in injury and sometimes fatal too, that is death if an individual is not capable enough to perform these activities or to meet up with the challenge. It is either do or die. Participants in these activities have to push off their limits. It demands pushing off one's physical limits and also mechanical limits of the machine (motorcycle/bike) or parachute (paraglide or skydiver's parachute) or equipment (rock climber or scuba divers' gears) they rely upon.
2. Skilled edgeworkers: Lyng also discusses the reasons for taking up such edgework activities by the individuals. Participants in these kinds of activities are thrill-seeking as they are willing to take up risk which is a temporary escape from the mundane life according to Lyng (2005). They also confirm that the developments of such skills have brought significant changes in their lives. The experiences of such activities are valuable to them. Participants tend to work beyond their limits to test their capabilities and this eventually helps them to create a distinctive or prominent identity in the respective field. While stressing one's limit, it includes sets or risk which are sometimes fatal too.
3. Edgework emotions: taking part in different kinds of edgework it not necessarily means that all the edgeworkers can relate to the same emotions or sensation. But participants talk about our sensation while participating in life risk activities as Lyng 2005, state self-determination, self-actualization. Edgework participants when they reach this final stage of this phase of experience where fear overcomes the feeling of excitement. In such a condition a participant can negotiate with any life-threatening situations.

These are the three stages on an edgework activities pointed out by Lyng. In my research, I would attempt to use this theory and the above-mentioned stages in order to understand the risk encountered by the motorcyclists and how they deal with it.

2.3.2 Construction of Risk

The meaning of risk varies greatly from centuries to centuries. Previously, in the mid-16th century, the word risk appeared in German in references and the late 17th century in English.

The risk was mainly considered to be an objective danger. For example, catastrophic events which include storm, epidemic or floods; or any Act of God. The concept of risk then, completely excluded human fault and never considered it to be their responsibility. The scientific notion of risk came up since the 18th century with the help of mathematical ideologies related to probability. The risk now can be predicted, calculated, and also avoided due to scientific and technological advancements (Beck 1992). It was followed by the modernist notion of risk which is somewhat different. Risk can be both good and bad. Therefore from the above notion of risk being both 'good' and 'bad' emphasizes the neutral position of risk, where the magnitude may differ. In other words, risk can be of 'good risk' or 'bad risk' (Lupton 1999). Till the 19th century, the above concept of risk was predominated. But in contemporary society, this notion of good risk and bad risk is almost lost. According to Douglas (1992:24) the use of this word: Risk “has not got much to do with probability calculations. The original connection is only indicated by arm waving in the direction of possible science: the word risk now means danger; high-risk means a lot of danger”. Short (1984: 711) contends that the risk is all about the negative potential outcomes rather than positive ones. He also states “scientific and social policy analysis of risk is typically concerned with negative potentials, and they focus on a very limited range of things people value”. Luhman (1993: 71) states “By taking risks we gain opportunities we would otherwise forego.....Risk is a quite specific form of dealing with the future in that it has to be decided on in a medium of probability/ improbability”. Rigakos and Law (2009:80) argue that to provide an ontological explanation of risk one must assert the following: “risk by its definition does not exist”. They also state “risk is not a material thing, but an unrealized potentiality which is changed the microscope of science is trained on, the moment it is measured..... Risk is a *normative assertion*- it is a moralizing statement. Contained in the notion of risk is an attempt to calculate the foreseeability of harm....harm is obviously an event to be avoided, circumscribed, or controlled”. Thus risk implies the “potentiality of a negative occurrence which must be understood for the purpose of avoidance or control” (ibid.:81).

Walklate talks about risk taking and construction of the risk. Risk is culturally constructed and largely masculine in nature, so as to space. Walklate claims “the social construction of science, of challenging authority on the basis of reason rather than emotion, privileged a masculine worldview. The desire to control nature through science and consequently through the increasing technical management of risk articulate one link between science, risk analysis, and masculinity” (1997:38). So it can be argued that the ‘risk knowledge’ and its

whereabouts are largely masculine in nature. It results in a “musculinist interpretation of what counts as risky behaviour, thus endorsing some behaviours for men as acceptability risky and some behaviours for women as unacceptably risky” (ibid.:39). In other words what behaviour is risky and what is not is been decided by the individuals who portray the features of masculinities. This is how risk and space are being sexualized and gendered. Green and Singleton contribute significantly towards the understanding of the processes where “space and risk are gendered, sexualized and racialized and how such relations are key components in the construction of social space and the built environment” (2006: 859).

Motorcyclists tend to construct their theory of risk. The risk to them is subjective. For the one who does it, it could be a calibrated action. Therefore, I opted for this concept of voluntary risk taking to understand how the motorcyclists are willingly or unwillingly take up risk and deal with it bravely. Motorcycles according to Bellaby and Lawrenson (2001) are eight times more likely to involve in major or minor accidents than cars. They also conclude women are less into motorcycling compared to men because of socialization. “Male and female appear to have been socialized differently and those who choose motorcycles appear to have been socialized in the ways that lead to a history of accidents in a variety of circumstances” (ibid). It is a generalized dominant view to consider ‘outside’ public space to be dangerous, while its falsely depicted ‘inside’ spaces, private to be safe (Pain 1997, Sur 2013).

While Bellaby and Lawrenson 2001, pointed out the contradiction between the subjective and objective view of risk. The objective risk shown by the statistical analysis is quite high while motorcyclist’s subjective perception of risk is low. It is also argued that in contemporary society, the mobility of motors also produced many tensions mainly generated by car or motorcycle in the automobility system. Even though these automobiles would grant freedom, accessibility, and easy mobility but in the long run would clog traffic (Bellaby and Lawrenson 2001, Jderu 2013, Natalier 2001).

Geography of violence suggests that women should be more fearful from the people they know (private space) rather than unknown people (public space). But women generally perceive fear and risk mostly in public spaces rather private spaces. (Valentine 1992: 24). Though women are more prone to encounter violence within the family but are made to believe or feel that women are more vulnerable in public spaces. Risk lies in public space than private, comes from the notion of social construction of ‘made to feel at risk in public spaces’ and they encounter the ‘male gaze’ both accentuates to women’s fear. Hence it can be

well said, risk is constructed. Furthermore women feel fear at certain places like dark lanes, car parks, less travelled areas or shady hotels etc. It happens because women's bodies are constructed to be more vulnerable and that increases with one's age (Green et. al. 2006, Sur 2012, Lupton 1999). This space is highly gendered and "are hierarchically ordered through inclusions and exclusions, and as important markers of segregation they reinforce social power structures" (Phadke 2012:52).

In already established literature of sociology and criminology, it is stated that young men generally are the victims of violence, but it cannot be overlooked that a prominent percentage of women are fearful of the interpersonal crime because they perceive are a unique threat that is generally not felt by men. There is a tradition of mapping fear of crime which is usually limited to explaining the collision of sexual and physical violence which is largely a residue of gender inequality. The social constructions of space into a *safe* and *dangerous* place are being constructed since the birth of the child through the patriarchal lenses. The social control of women's space is also been created through the patriarchal lenses.

Pain 1991, argues "the attachment fear to public space, and the precautions which women take, as a result, constitutes a 'spatial expression of patriarchy' reproducing traditional notions about women's role and the 'places' which are considered appropriate for them to use".

In other words, constructions of dangerous places are largely patriarchal. Ideologies that are being constructed through the primary and secondary groups are central in this process of building up the ideology. There might not be any violence in a particular place but still violence is the fear of violence. Once an individual has witnessed violence in either television or social media, she will definitely fear violence everywhere she visits, even if its completely out of danger. Therefore the construction of fear is created. It is created in several ways, through social networking sites, television, newspapers, and also through talk. The main problems lie when the victims fail to report the crime to the police station. They are generally threatened by the social construction of the society they live in. Women being a woman not have the right to talk. The initiate is quite negligible. Feminine identity builds up with a strong notion that the individual will talk less. The more she speaks more will be into trouble. Geographers have made a distinctive contribution towards the understanding of women's fear of violence by challenging the past descriptions criminologist (Pain 1991). Hence the next subhead 'geography of fear' explains how it is formed.

Geography of fear

The geography of violence suggests that women should be more frightened or fearful at private places than public places. There is a distinct disparity between the *geography of violence* and *geography of fear* that is the actual and perceived distribution of violence against the weaker sex. This construction of gendered space is mainly because women are identified historically at home. Men are associated with public space. Women despite taking care of the household chores, men are always considered to be head and had authority over the entire household and its economy. These images of families are similar in every patriarchal society. During the 18th and 19th centuries because of development of the industrial production and industries all around the economy, family labour came of a man to an end. This created a gulf between the roles for men and women where men went out for production purposes in those factories. This produced notion of femininity which resulted in a gender divide within the society by constructing and reconstructing the domestic virtues. By the process of urbanization, this divide achieved heights.

Valentine (1992) states

That crime statistics suggest women are more at risk at home from known men but women are still encouraged to perceive the home as a heaven of safety and refuge and associate with the public world where the behaviour of strangers is unpredictable with male violence. The social construction of masculinity has on the other hand defined the male stranger as potentially aggressive and powerful and on the other the male partner as not only the family provided but also its protector with conjugal rights.

Even other sociologist states that the violence against women mainly generates from men at home (Campbell 2005, Pain 1997, Sur 2013 & Valentine 1991). Policy responses against crime are been criticized heavily (Pain 1997) that no longer holds much importance now. It is quite difficult to measure the objective risk of violent crime against women, fear is subjective and is not possible to compare. Pain states “fear involves such a complex set of emotions and cognition that to label it with polarities such as rational or irrational has little meaning” (1997). It has been suggested who are marginalised and isolated and feel the sense of powerlessness within our society are more fearful of violent crimes. Fearful feelings that are related to the unknown or unease results in fear of crime. Pain (1997) states “general feelings of unease become more focused on specific fears about crime and are manifested in spatial perceptions and behaviour”. Smith (1986) has argued that “the unintended consequences of formal reactions to crime include the reproduction of patterns of dominance, subordination

and resistance that are expressed in national political economy”. That is crime is basically reproduced through prolonged dominance of men over women.

For women geography of fear involves a broad framework. Valentine (1991) discusses the role of ideologies of gendered space formation that are the reproduction of patriarchal structures. Pain states (1997) the spatial constraints imposed by wall incline can be observed into levels. Firstly effects of lifestyle possibly would be found out by the responses of the perceived threat. Secondly, the psychological and emotional effects which result from the fear of violent attack. These are the main constraint that builds up the notion of sexuality and femininity. These activities limit an individual's social mobility and moral policing starts with an unofficial code of appropriate dress and proper behaviour. The threat of crime has a distinctive ability to construct and shape the experience of place and space. There are many differences and contradictions and difficulties that the feminist theory has approached for example Rain (1991) and Segal. Pain (1997) comments “it is monocausal, isolating sexual violence as the key determinant of physical operation. It implies that all men benefit from the social control of women which results from the fear of rape and that male/female relationships are inherently unequal”. *Feminist Social Control Theory* has challenged the notion of considering images of women as universally vulnerable to male abuse and they maintain a passive state in terms of operation. Women are not considered passive because they are well aware of the constraints that are been imposed on them since birth by violence and they definitely show their disgust and anger, sometimes they even give the effort to limit the effect of these restrictions.

2.3.3 Vulnerable Bodies

According to Gardner (1988) women often feel offended by some behaviour portrayed by men as neutral or playful such as street remark that man makes about women in public spaces or sexual harassment in today's life. Campbell (2005) states harassment rape or molestation is not the only perversion of men's sexual needs but rather it is a way to dominate the weaker sex. Fear of violence interferes substantially in women's mundane activities. Campbell states “the notion that women are more at risk is promoted across a plethora of institutional, political and cultural terrains and in particular through some dominant strands of criminology and victimology discourse” (2005). The body is primarily the operation of power as well as it operates *on* and *through* them. These are basically subject to knowledge where social actor always regularises and normalise them in memorizing the social construct which has been

taught through socialization. The process of memorizing or normalising is not always coercive. It appears that social actors willingly accept and support and even confirm to the bodily practices because they are widely experienced within a preformed self. Cause for the threat of rape or molestation women encourages in surveillance and safekeeping acts which becomes normative femininity. Rape is an ontological reality that is considered to be a *fact of life* and also represents differences between men and women. For Butler (1993) “the body is not a priori given, what is dynamic, always in the process of materialization stabilizers overtime to produce the effects of boundary, fixity, and sciences we called matter”. A body is produced by gender norms or the cultural norms that largely affects bodily size shape strength hormonal makeup which usually grows the distinction between physical and social body. Social and cultural expectations are embedded into one's individuals flesh. The ability to speak act or move is subjectively embedded in an individual's social construct. The female body is considered to be weak and helpless which is guided not to be strong when attached or confronted by the dominant sex. It also constructs that the other hegemonic discourses which stages femininity and limits or discourage activities such as weight lifting, sky diving, motorcycling, football, boxing etc. These activities are discouraged because the feminine body is vulnerable and are subject to violence easily than men. Such heavy muscle-related activities require strength and aggression which is largely unlike to femininity. Women are socialized by the strong notion that their bodies are essentially fragile and deficient and though the above stated activities their body might be at risk.

Routine activities theory assures that if the rapist is not given the opportunities to rape, he might not indulge in such crimes of rape. This does not state that women should restrict their mobility or women should accept the process of victimization. But the ideal feminine body seems to confirm this notion. Campbell (2005) states “muscled body of the women simultaneously undermines the ‘quasi-invincibleness’ of the male body and helplessness of the female body and so is doing it make no longer inevitable. To keep themselves safe women adopt coping up strategies that are based on perceived images of danger. The dominant strategy is to simply stay away from potential attackers.

To conclude, I would use the above theoretical frameworks to support my data in this thesis. I would show with the process of doing gender how the motorcyclists are portraying their masculinities in motorcycling. These theoretical notions also helped me in understanding how men are also trying to be hegemonic while portraying masculinities, which they wish to

achieve. I would also show how women are struggling to make the stand point challenging the masculinities while riding a motorcycle. Finally, I would explain how and why they take up such risk voluntary taking activities and how they negotiate life-threatening risk that is involved in motorcycling activities.

CHAPTER III

CULTURE AND MOTORCYCLE

3.1 Introduction:

Motorcycles are frequently used convenience to travel from point A to point B. It is a best economic way to carry mundane groceries or commute easily. But by purchasing a motorcycle does not make an individual a rider rather a motorcycle owner or commuter. A distinctive difference can be found between a motorcycle rider and a motorcycle commuter/owner. It is commonly said *to be a motorcycle rider one just need to go for a ride rather than just deciding for a ride*. Motorcycling is not only an attribute in an individual's life, but basically a disciplined practice. An outsider or non-motorcyclists might call this madness as it includes the risk of losing one's life or limb. Taking up motorcycle for sports or entertainment or professionally, requires dedication and madness. Madness is precisely the quality that drives a rider into riding which largely includes voluntary risk taking. They may indeed carry the features of madness, and this madness is "rooted in a peculiar rationality" according to Ohlsen (2009). This 'peculiar rationality' of riding a motorcycle other than just commuting constitutes a distinctive culture further stated as motorcycling culture.

Culture is a cohesive force that binds the social actor together but also lacks consistency within them. Culture as a concept is not neutral; it is ideological, historical and obviously specific. A major feature in motorcycling is it possesses a multitude of more or less distinctive culture, prominent feature of collective identity and 'we-ness'. Two dimensions of motorcycling identity can be very well considered. Firstly, the sense of boundedness and secondly wider pervasiveness or the influence of this motorcycling culture. The former deals with a clear distinction which is constructed between 'us' and 'them'. While the later deals with the fundamental feature of this motorcycling culture which is quite dominant within the society. The values and norms of this particular motorcycling culture tend to penetrate the social order of the wider society which also influences the people outside this culture. Under certain conditions, motorcycling and the values related to such culture tends to influence the non-motorcyclist. Thompson (2012) states a non-motorcyclist would never really know what is to be like a motorcyclist. The various forms of risk, danger and uncertainty with the feeling of accomplishment with excitement to achieve something unknown would have been completely different to a non-motorcyclist. A motorcyclist while returning from the race

track or dirt track or rally or any rides after two or three weeks often feels cut-off from the wider society they live in. Therefore motorcycling to some extent appears to be a strongly bounded one, and this sense of boundedness results in prompting masculinities. Values and norms of a motorcycling group may come into conflict with those of the mainstream values.

Prominent men and women in the motorcycling field are often given public heroic status. Motorcyclists who excelled in the field of track race or professional rally or made Guinness world records are often addressed as *living legend* or *king* or *queen*. In the theses with the help of narratives I would like to show how this distinctive culture is formed and maintained. I would also show how the cultural patterns of motorcycling, which are generated since early 80s by some prominent rider and are maintained by the young generations. We can also find a major link between motorcycling and construction of masculine body. Motorcycling is closely associated with the construction of masculinity. Motorcycling culture, if taken as an institution shapes and moulds masculinities internally for the system. The image of a motorcyclist will typify the 'real' motorcycle rider in the wider society, where they will portray this culture's core norms and values of motorcycling. The overlapping of 'true' motorcycling values and societal practices does not always exist. Lastly, I would also show how few family members of the respondents reported about the whereabouts of this culture, where their 'significant one' is into.

3.2 Motorcycling Culture:

To establish a more generalized sense of motorcycling culture, I would like to refer to the emergence of significant "micro-societies" where people of both young and old age groups share their social experiences related to riding or maintaining motorcycles which are expressed collectively and they accumulate under a network of people, commonly referred as 'brotherhood', who share similar essence of particular ideologies along with the construction of a distinctive lifestyle in a more institutionalised way. This adaptation might be from part-time to full-time depending on the magnitude of their personal and professional inclinations. The word 'culture' is used instead of 'subculture', though 'subculture' is a better technical term, but former is used in order to avoid a sense of diversion that is usually given to the latter term 'subculture'. Mainly this term 'subculture' is used to identify deviant groups, mainly youth deviant groups. Throughout the book *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, Dick Hebdige expounded the concept subculture as "a form of resistance in which experienced

contradictions and objections to this ruling ideology are obliquely represented in style” (1979, p.132-133). It would be absolutely wrong to state motorcycling culture as form of resistance to any ruling ideology. Women motorcyclists do participate in activities which challenge the stereotypes on gender, but it can never be viewed as a resistance towards the ruling mainstream ideologies. According to Sebald (1975) “subcultural institutionalization often allows for behaviour that would not be permitted within the structure of the larger society”. Any subcultural system is denoted as static or closed and also homogenous. Fine and Kleinman (1979) states “Our assumption that change is endemic to culture also calls into question the general assumption that subcultures are homogeneous, closed social entities isolated from the ‘larger society’. Change arises because those who share subcultural traditions interact to varying degrees with others in the society who do not. Some subcultural elements will emerge from these encounters, although they will be transformed through incorporation into the subcultural system” (p.6). This motorcycling culture cannot be considered as a homogeneous or a closed social entity. According to Hebdige (1979) “subcultures are not privileged forms; they do not stand outside the reflexive circuitry of production and reproduction which links together, at least on a symbolic level, the separate and fragmented pieces of the social totality” (p.86). The motorcyclists are definitely cannot be considered ‘not privileged’. The change in terminology was necessary because it also changes the ‘way to interpret’ the object (here ‘motorcycling culture’), emphasising identity rather than marginalization, giving importance to strategy than appearance, from criminality and lawlessness to leisure time activity, from images to actors and from a deviant lifestyle to more institutionalized form of behaviour. According to Brake (1980) subculture can be easily distinguished from culture because of its distinctive deviant connection, as for example hippies or punks or skinheads. O’corner (2004) argues “that youth who cannot achieve according to social norms, who cannot do well in school or find good jobs, create subculture. The idea was that youth who do badly at school create their own little societies in which they can achieve status by smoking, being tough or engaging in petty crime”. Taking all these into consideration I would prefer to denote *motorcycling culture* rather *motorcycling subculture*.

Motorcyclists through this distinctive motorcycling culture tend to legitimize its control over the subordinate strata, which is the daily motorcycle commuter/owner. Motorcyclists are born into different social classes; thus heterogeneous, therefore they are the part of a complex stratified position. They maintain a distinctive way of lifestyle which is highly modified by the motorcycling group they are into. They are highly influenced by the norms, values and

behaviours of the motorcycling group they are associated with. They had built an identity which reproduces the ideologies of the old/senior riders into the new members. As Reid and Hogg states “People in groups use other member’s behaviour as information to construct a group norm” (2006: 17). Through values and embodied meanings, this distinctive motorcycling culture is reproduced among the potential motorcyclists. Through this process members do not have freedom in any absolute sense, but different round of alternatives bounded by a distinctive social structure. Resulting in a struggle of what is permitted and what is not. As for example:

Rupam (29, Doctor) *“my group strictly restrict members from drinking and riding or intake of any kind of drugs while riding, is absolutely not permissible. As soon as we reach the destination members are free to drink”*.

3.2.1 Generation of motorcyclists:

It is clearly seen, in most of the cases the interest in motor vehicles is generally passed from father to son, or from other male relative to the individual. Most of the respondents had similar conditions. Here I would like to show how the sense of riding a motorcycle is passed on to the younger ones. Particularly, five of respondent’s fathers are still working in some motors related work or motor vehicle industry. They have their own motorcycle garages. Both son and dad own different motorcycle garage in two different parts of West Bengal, one in Kolkata another in Jhargram. Few respondents work with some renowned motorcycle or motor vehicle brands, describing it to be their dream job.

Ranabir (36, RE ride coordinator) *“this job I always dreamt off. I love riding and so does my job”*.

Others, most of the remaining respondent constructed their own fantasy world largely based on motorcycles by watching movies or advertisements etc. These men are induced by automobile technologies since there childhood.

Neeraj (30, Service) *“Since my childhood I used to collect posters of motorbikes from the magazine that I bought from the pocket money. The four walls of my entire room were fully covered with pictures of bikes”*.

Fathers induce the motorcycling culture since childhood by gifting their sons bicycles as soon as they are able to reach their feet to the paddle and finally a motorcycle after getting the

licence or just before it. Walker (2000) also found such “analysis of this form of gender based familial cultural reproduction from father to son. And the mass media reinforce the father’s message”. Many respondents shared ‘serious interest’, experiences and memories from the first bike itself.

According to Niladri (27, Service) *”I was 19 when my best friend’s dad brought him a motorcycle. So my interest was largely influenced by him even in school I thought of riding my dad’s motorcycle. My first bike was Yamaha RX 100, red and saucy looking. A two stroke engine is always looked upon by my friends I road past them”*.

It is always a collective endeavour to learn the attributes of motorcycling culture. It started by the first bicycle they were gifted from their parents to ride till the tuitions or school. The friend circle or the peer group of school or college or tuition played an important role in generating the components of culture- competitiveness, displaying the technical skill, speed, freedom- in them. This bicycle was the substitute of the ‘real toy’, the motorcycle. Many men can be easily empowered by participating in such culture.

The age when maximum male respondents learnt to ride was below 20 years, that is 41% and for female 44% in the age group of 21 to 25. They started learning either on their friend’s motorcycle and/or their father’s and/or uncle’s motorcycle.

Milton (35, Teacher) *“My uncle had a bike, TVS Victor¹. That was the first bike I rode”*.

22% of male and 11% of female started riding in the age group of 10 to 15. 39% of female respondents started riding in the age group of 16 to 20yrs. 24% of male started to learn at the age group of 21 to 25. Only 6% of female and 10% of male started riding above 25yrs.

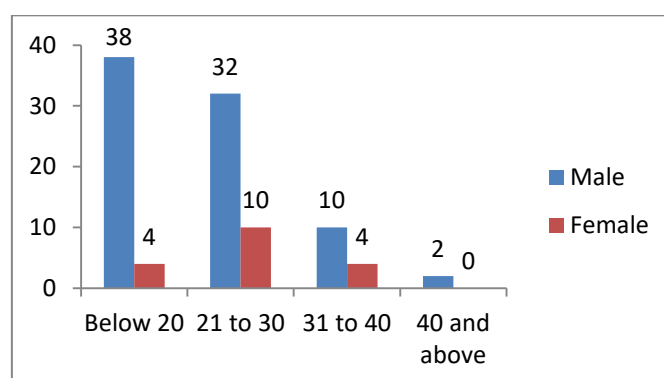


Figure 3.1: Age of respondents when they learnt to ride

Initially riding for few of my respondents were just either for fun or to show off during their school or college times. Some got to riding only to race and to look *cool* or to race initially, but later on with maturity the perception towards riding changed.

Anish (23yrs Service) comments *“I have been riding since class six. One of my friends taught me how to ride a motorcycle. I always wanted to ride. I learned motorcycle on Hero Honda Glamour⁴. He brought his bike to my school, so I took keys from him and showed it to every one of my friend that I have brought a bike”*.

Deep (36, Business) *“there was no passion in particular. I was in school and then it was a fun to race on a bike. I have started with a Splendor⁵, a friend’s; and bike was not allowed at my home. My first bike was Yezdi 350⁶ in 1994 at that time I was below 18. But things has changed, I don’t race anymore (laughs) rather concern about the safety”*.

Therefore it can be derived that women were not allowed to ride or learn motorcycles from a younger age as it was for men. So it can be very well stated the social construction of the patriarchal society never allowed women to be at par men since their childhood. This effect can be very well seen in the motorcycling culture too as women hardly participate in this culture like men do.

3.2.2 Distinctive styles

It has become a routine to fashion oneself in some way or another. Everyday self-fashioning as for example dressing for work, dressing for a dinner, dressing for a date, dressing for a party is an act of constructing the body for a public display. This prominent style can serve for socialization and/or social control or, conversely, for liberation (Crane and Bovone 2006, Austin 2008). Similarly the important aspect of motorcyclists is the use of a distinctive style. Membership of any actor in a particular role includes his or her posture, gait, behaviour, attitudes to certain artefact, likes and dislikes, the clothes he or she wears and perspective he or she expresses. Styles are expressed significantly by a group of people resulting in formation of a distinctive cultural group, which becomes symbolic in nature. This symbolic style of specific dominant motorcycling group or motorcycling culture as a whole may collide with those of mainstream values. Style also indicates the lifestyle of a motorcyclist. According to Brake (1980) *“style, then, is used for a variety of meanings. It indicates which symbolic group one belongs to, it demarcates that group from the mainstream, and it makes an appeal to an identity outside that of a class-ascribed one”*. Motorcycling culture flourished

in a certain space where it is neither static nor homogenous. The boundaries of this culture cannot be identified easily as it keeps on changing by numerous styles. Motorcycling culture consists of both young and aged. It's difficult for young people to identify themselves with one single style, they easily get motivated by other styles results in making up their own style. The style is learned through social interaction with the prominent motorcyclists, who carry that image sincerely thus reproducing the motorcycling culture. This construction of the style continues even after the first generation of motorcyclists. Symbolic objects and artefacts of motorcycling culture have been reproduced by the next generation motorcyclists and newly placed in social context which generally communicate with the others and has fresh acts of meaning. This is a form of 'performance skill' argues Brake (1980) which can be often tested by the other cultures and their members.

Style here I would say, comprises of three main components:

1. **Appearance:** Self fashioning is important in motorcycling culture. It is the notion in which motorcyclists create their own bodies to represent themselves in front of own or other group members. The significant appearances are the motorcyclist's possessions. Possessions, here are the apparels and gears that are used by the riders, can be an important part of self-identity (Belk 1988; Tharp 2007) and leisure experiences are influenced by the equipment utilized by participants (Chambers 1983). Ohlsen comments "it requires armour: you pull on stiff black boots; zip yourself into a thick leather jacket with Kevlar plates⁷ at the shoulder and elbow; squeeze into your helmet, buckle the chinstrap; pull-on long leather gloves with hard knuckles" (2009). She is referring to a specific clothing⁸ or accessories⁹ used in motorcycling. As for example riding gear¹⁰ used by the motorcyclists for their own safety as well as to denote a specific styles. Dress or attire don't just express them (motorcyclists) rather expresses the harsh and risky environment of riding. Appearance or image also includes hairstyle and jewellery that are been frequently used by them while on ride. The hairstyle or jewellery according to Wills, in the book *Sociology of youth Culture and Youth Subcultures* by Mike Brake "is not primarily a functional exigency of riding a motorcycle. It was more crucially a symbolic extension of the motorbike and amplification of the inherent qualities within the motorbike..." (1980). This specific appearance helps in construction of a specific style of motorcyclists eventually a motorcycle group and finally the motorcycling culture as a whole. "Clothing is one marker of territory" (Austin 2009: 84) just like the choice of their motorcycle or for the tribe (MCs) because it serves what Austin (ibid) states is to

distinguish between members and non-members when riders encounter each other in any setting such as during the trip or a rally etc.

2. **Deportment:** Deportment or behaviour that mainly comes from the expression of their attitude and how they carry themselves in front of the others¹¹. Behaviour constructs the norms and values of a particular social group. Therefore presentation of one's behaviour is important because it creates a symbolic feature of motorcycling culture. It is the attitude or behaviour that basically makes a statement of how a person generally is. The motorcyclists riding superbike (a very expensive motorcycle above 600cc) tend to talk rudely to the other commuters. Commuters on the other hand show interest in those big, macho, unlike, non-identical motorcycles. They out of curiosity and ignorance frequently questions about the details of that motorcycle are inquired on the road in traffic signal. The frequently asked questions are sometimes stupid and irritating to the rider. As for example,

Abhishek (29, Business) a superbike rider argued *“keep your business out of this, you are neither capable of buying such motorcycle nor riding or maintaining this spectacular machine”*, when asked about the price and mileage by a fellow commuter while waiting for the traffic signal to turn green. But this is not exactly same with all the riders. They are kind at heart and also participate in numerous cause rides as free tree plantation, save and teach girl child, educate young and old on sanitation etc.

Subhojeet (34, Service) states *“every year 15th of august we make a point to donate exercise copies, story books, pencil boxes, bags and water bottles to underprivileged children”*

Ramneek (32, sales executive) *“every year on 24th December night since 8-9yrs, we collect old and new warm clothing from every part of kolkata and distribute them among the underprivileged children sleeping in the footpath in the main parts of kolkata”*

Motorcyclists attitudes matters to the non-motorcyclists as well as the motorcycle owner or commuters. As motorcycling is a distinctive culture it also serves as an institution, where there is an amalgamation of different individuals with different deportment.

3. **Jargon or dialect:** Language or jargon is one of the most important components of style. Jargon is the special vocabulary that is being used by motorcyclists largely when they are meeting up with their motorcyclist friends for a ride or any gathering. The language differentiate motorcyclist from the non-motorcyclist in a distinct way. There is a special role of jargon for communicating within the motorcyclists. There is a role of special language and signs that helps to maintain a distinctive identity of the members of the collectively.

There is a role of unparliamentary or non-standard language in motorcycling culture that is usually known as slang or argot. According to Johnson, Bardhi, Sifaneck and Dunlap (2006) “slang is a kind of language occurring chiefly in casual and playful speech, made up typically of short-lived coinages and figures of speech that are deliberately used in place of standard terms for added raciness, humor, irreverence, or other effect”(p 47). By slang or argot I mean words that are largely used by motorcyclists on their own way which is commonly used in their own crowd. Motorcyclists are largely members of two linguistic communities, firstly, that they speak with their family and secondly, a distinct form of language that involves speaking with fellow motorcyclists or peers. Use of such language serves to identify motorcyclists as a culturally distinct group. It also helps to pass on the values and norms and to express feelings of opposition, approval or disapproval and other attitudes. This special language plays a significant role in the social development and it helps to create the differentiation between ‘us’ and ‘them’¹². It is found that men motorcyclists have greater access or knowledge to such kind of unparliamentary language than female motorcyclists. Another prominent fact is both the sex’s knowledge of argot is greater for younger than the older motorcyclists. The differentiation of language around the sexes is largely because of the impact of peer or secondary socialization. There is a continuous introduction of new argot languages within motorcycling culture, while the other terms become unfashionable. This is largely because of association and intermingling of motorcyclists all over India in interstate events¹³ like NERM that happens in different states of North East every year, BOBMC rider mania, RM happens in southern India every year. These expressions are common in motorcycling culture it might not be the same in other fields. These events are often restricted to a particular brand of motorcycle. Events from all over India, apart from very few, are mostly restricted to the Royal Enfield brand. Choosing the right brand of motorcycle is apparently important (to participate in these events) for the motorcyclist which will be discussed in the next sub-head. This creates a strong divide between riders using metal and non-metal motorcycles. But the concept of brotherhood¹⁴ and few other motorcycle events in Kolkata preach bike secularism, discussed in the next sub-head.

3.3 Bike Secularism: Choosing a particular brand of motorcycle

Here, I would like to show the most preferred and least preferred brand of motorcycle according to the respondents. Preference largely depends on a social construction of the physical appearances of the motorcycle (metal and non-metal) which creates a divide

between riders often leads to the concept of hegemonic masculinity¹⁵. It is also largely seen that the divide between the motorcyclists are reduced by the notion of brotherhood. Even motorcycle events largely in Kolkata preach bike secularism, apart from few, where motorcycles are not distinguished in terms of its weight or physical appearances or its cubic capacity (cc)¹⁶. Here I would show how and why there is a difference between both the metal and non-metal motorcycles prevails. I would also show how the notion of brotherhood holds these two categories together in spite of such disagreements.

38% of male motorcyclists choose to ride Royal Enfield while 50% of female motorcyclists choose to ride Bajaj. The major difference is because the height and the weight issue of the both motorcycles. The Indian standard of height for women is less compared to women outside India.

Raima (24, Housewife) member of Lady Biker states *“the most important was the bike’s height; I had to choose a bike which will suit me as I am only 5ft 4. Secondly it was in my budget thus I have finally bought it”*.

It is a major barrier for most of the women riders to choose motorcycle where Bajaj Avenger¹⁷ suits the bill. Respondents Mouha (30, Web Designer) a female motorcyclist and Masaum (31, Business) a male motorcyclist are quite disappointed with the market scenario of motorcycles because none other than Avenger, is available for their standard of height. Respondents had no opinion of choosing different motorcycles. As for example:

Twinkle (31, Tour operator) states *“when I started riding a motorcycle it was all together a different experience. I was not exposed to the other brands of motorcycle much as Royal Enfield, all my friends and my elders used to ride RE¹⁸ only. I chose Thunderbird because I ride with the spine injury where I could not lean and ride. After riding almost for 5 years now, I wish to try some other brands of motorcycle too”*

Whilst Deep (36, Business) states *“I bought an Enfield because it overtook me when I was riding ESD 350 then”*.

23% male motorcyclists choose to ride Bajaj because it’s economic. While 28% of women motorcyclist choose to ride RE. The next in hierarchy would be Yamaha, 15% of male chooses this brand because of its quality standard.

Adi (27, Business) “I use to ride an RE but now I got an Yamaha, I need more of a reliable form of machine where I don't have to think about jugarh (easy ways to fix something for the time being) instead ride freely without being tensed”.

11% of female motorcyclists ride Honda while 5% of male motorcyclists choose Honda over other others. 6% of male riders choose KTM¹⁹ over other brands. KTM model are quite powerful while being lean and slick. Riders who are not into faring bikes tend to buy KTM.

As Rupam (29, Doctor) states “firstly I am not into faring motorcycles and I always wanted a power hungry machine so KTM”.

Anupam (31, Service) “Very honestly I wanted to buy a Royal Enfield 500 cc bike and landed up with Duke on my birthday. My friend Rahul owns a KTM, he and my other friends repeatedly told me not to buy an RE. So I took a test ride and when I sat on the KTM and while the first gear down and it just went.... it was crazy. That day itself I decided this is sort of my touring purposes bike. It has speed too and it serves the both”.

The female respondents I interviewed never choose KTM or Kawasaki motorcycles. While negligible percentages of male riders are into these brands. KTM has potential customers in Kolkata while Kawasaki models are preferred by motorcyclists who choose to ride Superbikes.

Abhishek (29, Business) owner of Kawasaki ZX-14R²⁰ states “I always use to ride which is comfortable. This makes sense to me. I am a track racer so I have to have a bike which has to be fast on track. It worked absolutely fine for me”.

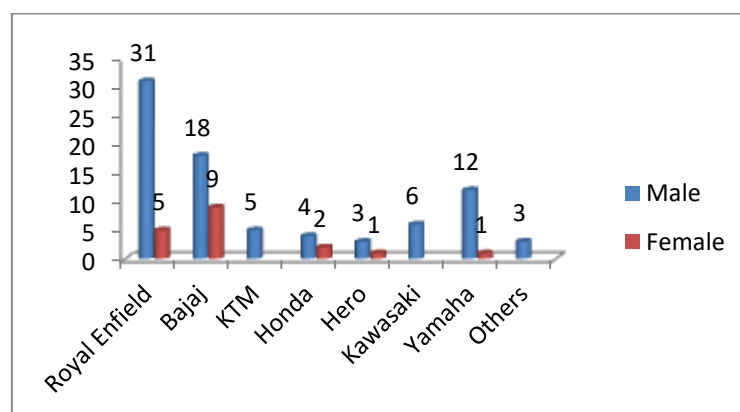


Figure 3.2: Choice of the respondents (brand of motorcycle)

Therefore choosing a right band is very important to a rider as it is the only material thing that they trust with their lives while on road. This is highly important because accidents

sometime fatal might jeopardise the whole ride and life. As for example, on September 2018 a motorcyclist died because of tyre burst while coming back from Delhi. The genre of motorcycle he chooses was wrong as he was riding the bike continuously for 10-12 hrs. So it is important to choose the motorcycle wisely which will help them to pursue what they wish for and also be comfortable riding the same.

However, there is a socially constructed divide largely found in motorcycling culture. This difference is on the basis of what genre of motorcycle the riders owns and ride to places. It is a socially constructed divide that deals with the physical appearance of the motorcycle and its durability. This notion is found in embedded form among the junior riders too. The embedded notion of metal and non-metal motorcycle's divide in today's motorcycle riders is a major drift that prevails in Kolkata's motorcycling culture. Lot of disagreement, heated argument even brawl occur based on this unjustifiable preconceived notion.

Soumyo (37, Hotel Industry) states *"It just goes around, I take all such things in a jest and have seen a lot of battles which has result in nasty things, and riders are crazy about it and fight"*.

The major difference can be found in the respective genre of motorcycle, one is denoted as 'plastic' (or non-metal) and other as 'metal'. 'Plastic' motorcycles are made up of plastic/fibre body specially the tank, and the both rear and front mud guards. While the 'metal' motorcycles are with metal tank, and mostly rear and front mud guards are of metal. Metal motorcycles are Royal Enfield make, weighing at least 180 kgs and above while the plastics (non-metal) are not Royal Enfield make that is, motorcycles from KTM or Bajaj or Honda or Hero weighing at least 112kgs and above.



Figure3.3: Bajaj Dominar400cc (plastic/non-metal) and Royal Enfield motorcycle350cc (metal)



Figure 3.4: Royal Enfield 411cc (metal) and KTM Duke200cc (plastic/non-metal)

A major conflict is centred on these genres of motorcycles, that is, Royal Enfield (RE) verses all other brands of motorcycle available in the market. Only motorbikes that are kept out of this disagreement and fights are Superbikes. The metal motorcycles (RE) with at least 350cc (cubic capacity) is socially constructed to be superior only because of its net weight which is quite higher than *others*²¹, and also its durability in a crash. The *others* are with at least 100cc and above which is considered to be inferior as it is lighter in weight as well as not that durable in a crash. Disagreements, fights are quite common and are easily found in groups over the same issues. In *motorcycling groups by model*²², consumers are quite loyal towards the same; it arises out of love and attachment towards the motorcycle they ride. As for example motorcyclists riding Royal Enfield or metal motorcycles only prefer buying metal motorcycles but not *others*.

Sayak (32 Motor Mechanic), a vivid motorcycle tourer and runs a workshop of all genre of motorcycles state *“though Royal Enfield has some electrical issues still I would prefer to be a metal ride. You see I out and out an Enfield person. Even if it has some problems, but the feel of riding a metal is definitely unique, that feel you won't get in any other non-metal motorcycles”*.

Similarly many motorcyclists only prefer non-metal motorcyclists as those are hassle free and light weight and economic.

Supratim (22 student) states *“I will be changing my Apache 160 and buying 200 soon (non-enfield).I won't buy a RE as while riding if it topples I won't be able to control it, it's too heavy”*.

Loyalty towards the brand/model has a lot of significance as it helps them to understand their motorcycle a lot better and also they get accustom with the posture of riding and maintenance of the motorcycle because it's easier.

This negativity has initiated with the prominence of this culture itself. Not only in Kolkata but it prevails all over India very strongly. These notions are also strongly generated with the help of only Royal Enfield events that happens every year all around India. Non RE riders are not allowed to enter such motorcycling events. Events like RM, RERM, NERM or OneRide are strictly restricted to Royal Enfield riders.

Suvanjan (22, HR) owns and rides a non-metal motorcycle states *“I would love to go there but the fact that if I don’t have Royal Enfield I will not be welcomed”*.

Jayanta (35, Buisness) *“These all depends on the person’s mentality. People differentiate because if someone is saying bad about Royal Enfield Himalaya that means that person cannot ride or maintain that bike and hence he is saying negative about that bike”*.

Hierarchy are maintained through this particular genre of motorcycle unlike to the other events where various genre of motorcycle are allowed. The othering of motorcycles is not new and prevails all over the country. Other bikes are looked down. Similarly for people who used to ride Pulsar and Apache or any other non-metal motorcycles would call Royal Enfield riders arrogant. They would say Royal Enfield riders are not necessarily *Royal*. This perception becomes highly volatile when it comes to metal and non-metal fights. Perception as *plastic bikes are toys and toys are just for boys and bullets are for real men*²³ make things worse. However, this behaviour or loyalty towards a brand of same genre of motorcycles may have positive side. As it will foster a strong ego and will establish a sense of goodwill and trust in relationships within the in-group (Hooghe, Reeskens, Stolle, & Trappers, 2006). Respondent maintain a strong we-feeling in between those who ride RE and finally creates a strong brotherhood. Though the notion of brotherhood increases through the help of similar motorcycles but the notion of *othering* is poisonous too.

However things are much lucid now with more people purchasing the ‘others’ category of motorcycles which is more cost effective. Heavy motorcycles are quite difficult to maintain and ride it on a regular basis than the ‘others’. These differences are now becoming more coherent as respondents reported of purchasing both the genre of motorcycle one (Royal Enfield) for long rides and other (non- Enfield) for daily city commuting. Thus it calls for a new concept of being secular and accepting both the genre of motorcycles. Secularism is a belief system that generally rejects the notion of believing that one own religious belief is superior.

Ramneek (32 Sales Executive) states *“motorcycle clubs are like religions, every person thinks that his is the best”*

The principal of separating one’s religious thoughts and belief from the mainstream system and accepting the notion of tolerance for other religion is secularism. If motorcycle clubs are nothing less than religion, then secularism is largely important in the motorcycle culture. The notion of brotherhood is getting stronger and hence is helping in ‘bike secularism’. Riding together makes a group firm and it helps them to deal with other minor difficulties with ease. One of the response when asked about the how comfortable they are within the group.

A group member Sagar (27, Service) states *“We are like-minded people riding together so at times we fight and then again we clear our confusion over a drink and go on for a ride”*.

There are also events that preach about bike secularism. Wheels United (WU) is definitely a relief of motorcyclists where every genre of motorcycles is welcomed. WU has successfully completed its eighth year. WU is a forum where bike secularism is majorly practiced by each and every individual. Hierarchy is definitely maintained in this event through seniority basis or through the number of tough or difficult trips or the odometer the rider has completed. World motorcycle day (WMD) is one more event that helps in putting up the notion of secularism in real practice. Few places in India have also taken up the similar notion of bike secularism. As for example in Gujarat²⁴ it has been three years where riders meet, be a solo or group rider or aspiring rider are welcomed which is similar to WU. This notion has opened up lot of prejudices between metal and non-metal motorcycles, where riders or the motorcycles are never segregated. This is united colour of brotherhood and this leads to bike secularism. This is highly important to get into ever Indian states to overcome those prejudices that are pertaining since ages. Bike secularism is about given each motorcyclist the equal respect. 100cc to 1000cc motorcycles are treated equal in the eyes of such events. Neither 100cc motorcycles are looked down nor are 1000cc motorcycles preferred.

3.4 Creating identity: A particular genre of riding

While purchasing a particular brand of motorcycle, riders also choose the distinctive genre of riding. This decision also helps them in constructing their unique identity. Riders are largely identified through their riding style. As I have visited the motorcycle events and many gatherings I have segregate them into the following:

Learner: are the 15% of male and 11% of female respondents. They consider them as beginners or learners. They started riding just one or two years and consider them as a learner of the technique of motorcycling.

Pammy (19, Student) states “*Motorcycling is an art and it takes much patience to be good at it*”.

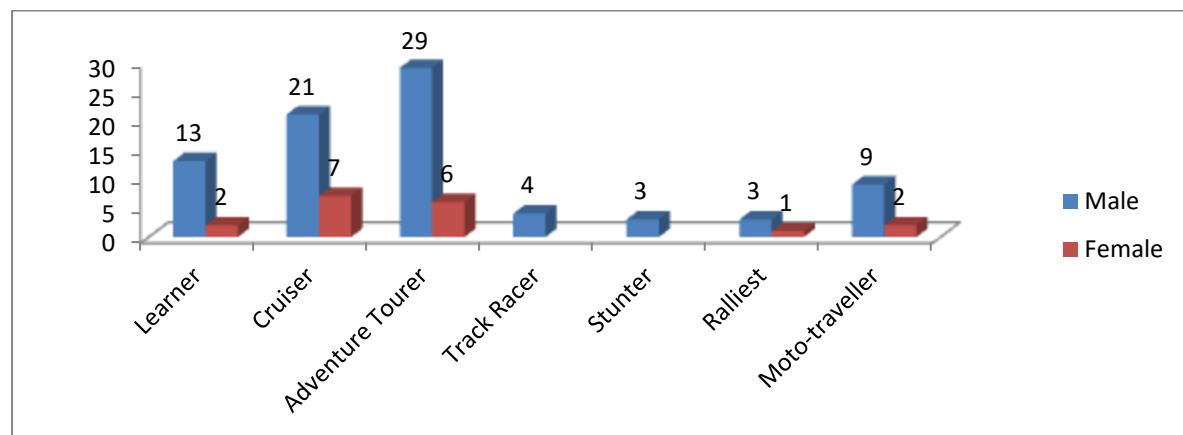


Figure 3.5: Identification of riders

Some learners are also wannabes tries to get unwanted attention. The senior riders talk and criticize about these wannabes. They also sometimes jokingly humiliate them. Newbies learn and adapt quickly the way of the motorcycling culture by mixing with the adventure tourer or rally riders. Learners are always expected to respect the elders or senior riders. They are also known to be a prospect if they wish to join a motorcycling club. Seniority in motorcycling is not in terms of age but experiences of rides and kilometres in the odo (odometer in motorcycles).

Cruiser: 25% of male and 38% of female identified them as cruiser. Motorcyclist who usually prefers riding in long highway sometimes solo, long stretches in four or six lane highways excites them from any other form of riding. People who cruise usually prefer a constant speed of 80 to 100 kmph and strongly believe that it is a part of meditation which will connect them spiritually to the environment. Riding in straight line without taking corners without knee dragging is a part of riding in this style. Motorcyclist who connects to such environment usually prefers long tarmac roads where they can ride long stretches without any hiccups or potholes. A smooth long empty lonely highway fit the bill. This notion might be something similar as Robert Pirsing (1974) explained in his book *Zen and the art of motorcycling Maintenance*. He states “instead you spend your time being aware of things and meditating on them. On sight and sound, on the mood of the weather and things

remembered, on the machine and the countryside you are in, thinking about things at great leisure and length without being married and without feeling you are losing time”. Rider might not know enough to do minor repairs apart from fixing a flat tyre may be. The person identifies with this type of riding are pretty comfortable with low excitement and almost no technical skill but still connects with his motorcycle and the environment he is riding. Almost every motorcyclist passes through this phase of cruiser lifestyle. They pray for roads with less traffic and more scenic with definitely better preference for road conditions. The routes they usually follow are previously well planned and do not bother about the time. The preference of riding at dawn is definitely more preferred than in dark.

Adventure tourer: 35% of male and 33% of female belong to this category. In one word they are called crazy/mad by others. The kind of madness they are in, the lust to explore and to take random risk also being impulsive is the basic features of being an adventure tourer. The motorcyclist will travel be it mud or slush or sand and whatever the rider faces on his/her way. It’s basically listening to one’s heart and follows them without any limits. He might ride in plains as well as in hills. Motorcyclists in this genre look forward to where the tarmac ends. They love off roading, camp anywhere or everywhere for a night halt. They usually wear riding gears that are brought after a lot of saving. To them the ride must be cost effective but with full of adventures. They are knowledgeable, prepared for any risk and are well equipped. The sense of thrill is supreme and they can easily gamble with roads. The least customization would be phone mount and phone charger. Few motorcyclists in this phase have unique sense of pride for the roads and situation they overcame.

Track Racer: Speed, racing lines, lap timing are almost everything they talk about when they meet the other motorcyclists. They are more disciplined and consistent in terms of riding than the cruiser and the adventure tourer. They know their motorcycle the best, no one other than them, know their motorcycle well. They are highly sensitive to the limits of motorcycle and are more aware than others. Negligible percentage of track racer are found in Kolkata, only 4% of male belong to this category. The major reason for this is the lack of facilities that are available in Kolkata. No racing tracks are in Kolkata, motorcyclists usually travel to MMRT, Madras or Chennai or Bangalore for the championship and practise. One of the respondents had the opportunity to travel to California Superbike School. This is the best institution all over the world for learning to race in the track according to Abhishek (29, Business), a student of CSS.

Stunter: is a motorcyclist who love various acrobatic manoeuvring of the motorcycle and sometimes themselves. They love attention. They does brilliant paint job on their motorcycle as they showcase them in any events. Only 3% of male fall into such category. None female respondents fall under such category.

Ronit (23, Student) a renowned stunter in Kokata states *“I would love to accept a female stunter in your group. Even we were looking for some female capable stunter who can join us while we go to perform shows. But, sadly since we don’t have proper infrastructure here at kolkata to practice stunts it is now more difficult to find a girl or even a boy who has the capability”*.

They consider stunting as a different art form and the rush of adrenaline is the most supreme in this genre. Professional stunter are disciplined enough as they has to practice almost on a daily basis to achieve the perfection of each stunt. They always care about their safety and prefer wearing helmets even while practicing.

Rally Rider or Ralliest: 3% of male falls under this category while one female interviewed fall under this category. Rally riders are people who know the pros and cons of being late or even early at the schedule place. A rally rider would inculcate penalty for being early or late during a rally. They know well to coordinate with other in a best possible way than any other rider in the above categories. They are more ambitious and wants more recognition and fame for the hobby they have already chosen. They score highest in maturity than the other riders; as this demand a lot more calculative decisions than any other above stated categories. Professional rallies held under the supervision of FMSCI known as Raid the Himalaya in himalayas, Baja event at Rajasthan, Sojoba at Chandigarh etc.

Moto-Traveller: constitute 11% of male and 16% of female motorcyclists. They mainly consider them as traveller or moto-traveller as they travel with their motorcycles.

Aaheli (29, Teacher) a RE rider states *“I ride to travel, my purpose is to travel. Now when I have risk taking capabilities I ride, later with aging I might be travelling in a car or will do backpacking. Motorcycling definitely helps in achieving that feeling of freedom in a better form than a car”*.

A moto-traveller has a unique sense of travelling to places, love travelling solo most of the time. They usually never think before staying at a place regarding their safety. They tend to pitch tents and stay at dorms. They talk to random people, make friends and even stay at their

place if possible. They usually tend to consume local made food. They also prefer not wasting a lot of money on food. They travel quite cheap and economic than any other mentioned in the above category. All the above mentioned category rider have a purpose behind riding a motorcycle, or what drives them into riding; which is been discussed in the next sub-head.

3.5 Reason that drives riders for riding

The different purposes behind riding their motorcycle makes this culture unique and distinctive. Here I wanted to know why does my respondents rides, how they feel connected with their motorcycle through riding. I have categorized those feelings under certain sub-heads.

Thrill: Thrill is state of being reckless. But the motorcyclist I interviewed never confirm of being reckless apart from few. Initially riding a motorcycle has been a little reckless but later with the age and maturity; the motorcyclist rejected the notions of being rash or reckless. Thrill is associated mainly with the riders who are into stunts and track racing. Manoeuvring a motorcycle and weaving in and out busy traffic is also considered to be are part of thrill. Thrill is a rapid stimulation that is mainly associated with track racer and stunter. *Adventure tourer and stunter* consider thrill to be a part of their riding. 17% and 9% of respondents, male and female respectively identifies thrill to be the purpose of riding. I will try to incorporate the framework of edgework by Stephen Lyng (1990) in understanding the notion of risk for the motorcyclists. With the help of the rider's perception towards risk I would discuss this in the chapter *risk and motorcycling*. Edgework essentially means “skirting the edge between risk and safety” (ibid).

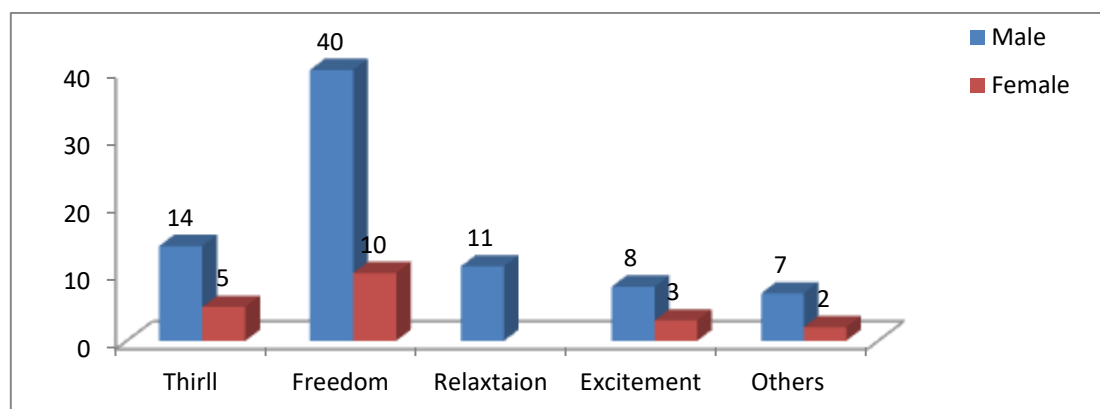


Figure 3.6: Feeling associated with the ridings

Excitement: It is definitely not being reckless. It's more of a positive experience and energy that result in certain kind of movement or activity which benefits the motorcyclists to achieve the sense of motorcycling. 10% of male respondent reported they ride for excitement. But stunningly I found no female respondent who have talked about excitement. Excitement is more of a lovely feeling when a motorcyclist takes his or her significant other to a joy ride. Excitement is also riding till a roadside inn in pre-monsoon shower. Excitement is more of a gentle and progressive feeling that helps one plan better and also helps motorcyclists to be prepared for any situation they come forth.

Freedom: Motorcyclists are very closely related to oneness and spirituality that provides them a serene feeling of motorcycling and the environment. That meaning of tranquillity that offers thorough motorcycling is freedom to my respondents. The riders under this category are ready for the consequences of their actions and are not afraid to lose anything that might be time (couple of hours) or a day (24 hours). Freedom of movement in a motorcycle is definitely more than any other vehicle and also the risk factors are greater. But the sense of unrestricted freedom through motorcycling overpowers the consciousness of risk factors. Both male and female motorcyclists associate with freedom more than any other feelings in the categories. Slightly less than half of the sample interviewed, that is 49% of male motorcyclist associate with freedom while 13% of female motorcyclists relate to freedom. This analysis shows the restriction that prevails in respondent's lifestyle. Restrictions are from different areas as monetary problems that limit them to go on holidays, limiting resources that prevail in every individual's lifestyle. Restrictions for women is mainly riding alone or in *male only* groups as motorcycling is strictly dominated by men. Restriction has also come from the society that stereotypes both men and women. Restrictions are also from familial ties.

Relaxation: *Cruiser* relate to relaxation more than freedom. Breakfast rides and *dhaba* rides are mainly for relaxation, which happens almost every Sunday. It is basically a stress buster from the mundane activities that they are up to, for the whole week. Sunday is the day when they can vent out the whole week's frustration and relax by riding a motorcycle to their favourite diner or an outing with other motorcyclists. 13% and 5% of male and female relate to relaxation while they are out for riding.

3.6 Pre-ride rituals/ Pre-stunt rituals/ Pre-race rituals

Before the riders ignite their motorcycle for a ride or for performing stunts or for rallies, the pre-ride rituals are mandatory. There are certain procedures that are strictly followed before an individual sets out with the motorcycle. These procedures are mainly to check the engine oil level, checking the tyre pressure, clutch and breaks and also the indicators etc. These are followed by *cruisers*, *adventure tourer* and mainly for motorcyclists who are into *stunts* or *professional rallies*. These series of pre-check of the motorcycle, I term them as pre-ride rituals. Austin (2009) states “in Goffman’s view, we have rituals to maintain society and they occur in our everyday encounters. Even though emotions that are produced in ritualistic settings can be temporary ceremonies are essential for the social order point out that many of the studies that focus on ritual have examined religious and/or sacred aspects of social life”. These pre ride rituals are sacred to almost every motorcyclist because pre ride rituals only confirm the smooth running of the machine they only trust.

Anish (26, service) a hard core motocross²⁵ rally rider states “*these procedure is highly important because without that while on riding on the stage (dirt track)if something goes wrong, in that speed we won’t just survive*”.

This is very important because this is what keeps a motorcyclist on the ride otherwise it will be difficult to ride for long; it’s is important to be careful about the basics or otherwise one might be strolled at the roadside which is not expected. It’s better to have a prolonged ritual rather get stranded on the road. If the vehicle does not work properly, destination cannot be reached so net utility of riding might be reduced.

Sukumar da (35, motor mechanic) an avid rider or categorised himself as *adventure tourer* states “*if you have done the right checks and carry the spare parts and all the ticks are there in the check box before the ride starts then there won’t be any problem and even if some problem arises I know to fix it. But while on ride I would not take those chances.*”

Austin (2009) also states “A **sense of belonging** through assuming a particular material form in which inhabitants both present themselves to others and present themselves to themselves”. Respondents feel the strong sense of belongingness with their motorcycle and in order to maintain its durability they would go off the limits. They consider it to be a part of themselves or what Jderu (2013) calls ‘axis mundi’²⁶.

Ranabir, (36 RE ride coordinator) *“basically I follow all these rituals before going for a long trip as I think all these activities are equally important. Motorcycle is just a part of me; taking care of it is also my duty. Previously when I use to go for trips I did not use to follow all these and have faced few problems where I understood the need of the same. Before starting my motorcycle I can understand her breathing as I ride every day. It’s not like a new girlfriend it’s your old wife (laughs)”*.

For Souymo (37 hotel industry) *“basic check-up of the bike because that is your soul mate so to start up with the tyres or other parts²⁷, if needed to be changed, I go for it, don’t even think twice for it.. Apart from that what’s the use of keeping you and your machine in the jeopardy when you could take care of it”*.

For motorcyclists who are into stunts portrays a similar view too. In addition for them painting their motorcycle in odd colours is necessary as it will help them to attract more audiences.

Subho (29, stunter) *“servicing of the bike, extra spare gears, proper gears, proper equipment ensuring safety. For stunt show - bikes are major part of the entire show, we want our machines to look good - the paint job/graphics on it, even some of the bikes we have rims painted in different colours. It will look attractive. We have those concepts, we were also planning to get LED lights incorporated on the bikes and doing a night shows kind of thing. Branding of the show results in maximum audience, make a poster, video launch on youtube, look for proper promotions are also necessary”*.

Rituals, for few of my respondents are **learnt through riding experiences**, where the motorcycle gave up. As Srikant (40 Business) *“This happened once I got into touring since 2004 onwards. I got into problems during touring and I learned from those problems. Then when I started proper touring with my bullet along with that royal Enfield group, I learned a lot from them”*

They also learnt with the help of tube channel or internet. Experience shows the ways the motorcycle should be treated. According to Sagar (27 Service) *“I learnt these from the riding videos, guidelines or randomly.”*

Now that respondent have already selected the genre of motorcycles and style of riding the next step is choosing a motorcycle establishment or motorcycle club (MC). It is important to choose the correct establishment as it serve as an identity in the riding fraternity.

3.7 Motorcycle establishment/Clubs (MC)

Motorcycle establishment or clubs are networks, informal associations, support group where many riders belong to. It creates a sense of belongings among the riders and also provides additional information, services and mutual respect among motorcyclists. Motorcycle establishment are generally formed either by brand of motorcycle or make of motorcycle or around a similar type of riding. Type of riding can be cruising and/or adventure touring and/or stunting and others. Every motorcycle establishments varies largely in their objectives. Typical mainstream registered motorcycle clubs or associations have elected president, chairman from the members and also have annual dues and one time registration fees. To socialize and generate new members they often sponsor rides and events or rallies annually. There are also specific only women group in Kolkata named *Lady Biker*. The oldest motorcycle club in Kolkata was established in 1992 naming *North Calcutta Disha*. North Calcutta Disha is also registered in Guinness book of records as well as Limca Book of World Records for their outstanding motorcycle trips to Everest Base Camp and to highest altitude achieved by a motorcycle. Other renowned registered and non-registered motorcycle clubs are *Easter Bulls*, *Rolling Wheels*, *Team Caravan* and *Motion Wheels*. *Highway Cruiser*, *Last Sunday Rides(LSR)*. *Motonomads*, *Xkmph (Kolkata Chapter)*, *Xbhp (Kolkata Chapter)*, *Royal Riders*, *Gravity Freekers* are few recent motorcycle establishments. Motorcycle establishment promote the culture of motorcycling and helps to carry forward the culture hence forth. The clubs are established with the simple notion of riding together mainly and finally results in being a family.

Faizal of EB (43, entrepreneur) states “*My clan are my family even I don’t call my family members I call them first*”.

Motorcycle establishment are formed on the basis of brands, group according to model or extreme sports.

Groups by brand: Motorcyclists are quite famous for separating themselves into groups and subgroups that are based on either brand and/or model of motorcycle (Austin 2004, Pierson 1997; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). In kolkata too there are groups that prefer a particular brand of motorcycle. They typically go out for highway rides on weekends or on special events and exhibits of their bikes. They are the *Superbikers of Kolkata*, who owns more than 600cc motorcycles.



Figure 3.7: Groups by brand: Superbikes in Kolkata

Groups by model: groups like *Eastern Bulls* or *Royal Riders* where only members riding Royal Enfield are encouraged to be a member of it. It is a more specific group which prefers a particular make of a motorcycle made by a particular brand. Similar *KOG* (KTM owners group) or *AOG* (Apache owner group) maintains the similar status.



Figure 3.8: Groups by model: Royal Enfield riders group & KTM riders group

Groups by similar genre of riding: Groups that are formed by the similar type of riding. Members in this group do not ride similar type of motorcycle but the perceptions and notion of travelling or riding is similar to each other. A group member who only performs stunts also falls into this category. As for example *Gravity freekerzz* where each member of the group performs stunts professionally. *Motology Adventures*, where each member are hard core off roader.



Figure 3.9: Groups by similar genre of riding: Gravity Freekerzz performing stunts.

Although few riders are not members of any formal organization or establishments, they often benefit from some of these establishments in various ways through the notion of brotherhood that is discussed later.

According to Aaheli (29, Teacher) *“riding solo is bliss, you don’t need to take any headache for staying anywhere, stopping anywhere you like for a smoke. Riding with a group restricts your freedom a lot. I keep on talking to local people on the road, even stay at their places. Had that been with a group I could never have done that”*.

Few motorcyclists prefer riding solo not because they don’t enjoy riding with a group but they just want to be alone that help them better to socialize with native people and get along with their culture they are travelling to. Socializing with natives might also happen while riding in a group but it also put constrain on them for taking decisions of visiting a certain place which the whole group does not want to.

3.7.1 Procedure of selecting members

Motorcycling clubs are either open group or closed group. Open motorcycling groups accept the new members provided they suit the criterion of the respective group. Few open groups are ready to accept members easily and for others, new potential members have to undergo strict rules and regulations that are mentioned below. While closed groups like *North Calcutta Disha*, *Wolves on Wheels* do not accept new members.

According to Abhishek of Wolves on Wheels (29 owner of Yamaha showroom) *“we are a closed group and not any other are to be allowed to be there, we want to maintain this chain”*.

But groups like *Motonomads*, *Highway Crusiers*, *LSR*, *Motion Wheels* and others are open groups. Candidates are treated as '*prospects*' initially for being potential members in near future. The candidates are evaluated through a tedious process. The evaluating process is mainly of three or four steps depending on that respective motorcycle establishment's rules.

Step 1: the '*prospects*' are initially preferred to just 'hang around' with the respective motorcycle club members. This phase includes social learning from the already existing motorcyclists for acquiring membership into the motorcycling groups or clubs they are into.

Step 2: The group leader or administrator would then evaluate the candidate's style of riding, attitudes of treating the other members both young and old in critical times while on short road trips.

Step 3: Prospects are then entrusted with handling some responsibilities which are quite tedious and which they have to carry around, with no questions asked. This step is sometimes skipped, depending on the particular motorcycle organisation's normative rules.

Step 4: Finally inclusion of prospects as members is based on the decisions made by the majority of group members eventually.

After the tedious process of selection, it is expected from the member to choose their action wisely. They have to be quick enough in mastering the technique of motorcycling which also includes some *normative behaviour*²⁸ which they have to learn from the senior riders in their group. Ried and Hogg (2006: 18) states "Traditionally, norms are conceptualized as reflecting the individual's use of others' behaviour as information about the nature of reality or as reflecting behavioural compliance to gain social acceptance and avoid social censure"- hence the normative behaviour should strengthen when new members are not sure about their perspectives or when they wish to impress the senior members, present in a ride or gathering. Deviations for the norms and rule may result in expulsion from the group. The group members performs certain rituals to promote their group's identity whenever they visit events or rallies by wearing the group t-shirt or group helmets.

Patikrit (41, Business) of LSR states "*my group has now printed helmets with LSR logo and my group was the first one to do so. Previously we wore only t-shirt but now we wear both t-shirt and helmets*".

Wearing club t-shirt or helmets are mandatory for the creation of group identity and also for making a mark in the events that the members are participating.

There are also motorcyclists who do not believe in group establishment. They prefer riding solo to places. There are lot of people who are motorcyclists but don't belong to any group. But they do receive help in need, in various ways from these establishments.

3.7.2 Features of MCs

Every motorcycling group generally have few similar characteristics. The most important feature of them would be the **common interest**. A similar interest would prevail in all motorcycling group that is riding their own motorcycles. The interest and ideologies to some extent are common. It is for the realization of those common interests they meet together and formed an organisation which they look up to.

Suvanjan of Motonomads (22, HR) *"We are bunch of patronizing likeminded people and likeminded fraternity we definitely gel well and there are always a lot of issues because its 10 boys you know so issues are normal but then we share the same kind of thoughts and that is the reason we are all together"*.

Similar behaviour of the members of the group is draws them together.

Twinkle (31, tour operator) *"they (my group) are my family with whom I can sing with them, dance with them, drink with them, even try marijuana with them"*.

They behave in a similar way for the pursuit of common interest. Similar behaviour leads to **we-feeling** among the motorcyclists. The members of the group help each other and defend their interest collectively.

Abhishek (29, Business) states *"we love to ride, just like a family, same colour, it like listening to same music. It's just like maintaining the same pace"*.

Therefore the relationship of the group is interrelated to each other. **Reciprocal relations** form an essential feature of the group.

Soumyo from Team Rollers (37 hotel industry) *"it's completely a different skin but the same blood. It just the real wavelength we just relate to each other. We might not meet or speak for months but once we meet we just kick it out of everything; it's like your silence do all the communication"*.

Last and the most important feature would be the **norms are regulations**. Every group has its own rules or norms which the members are supposed to follow. Deviating from the rules

might result in suspension or expulsion from the group. Norms such as carrying proper documents in a ride, wearing proper gear (minimum boots and helmet) while riding, not to drink and ride etc.

Rupam (29, Doctor) a LSR member and admin states *“when deep da (founder & admin) came to know I and Rowdy drank just a sip of beer, was furious. Then he suspended us from three LSR rides, three months we were suspended”*.

Thus motorcycle clubs or establishments are like religions or cult. They have their own set of rules of accepting members which also generate brotherhood as well as carry forward the motorcycling culture.

3.7.3 Brotherhood

Brotherhood is a special bond that is not restricted to motorcycling only but way beyond that. It is more than just being acquainted or taking a part or meeting in same motorcycling events. It is more about being loyal not only towards the MC's member but also to any motorcycle riders. Thompson states *“it is less about sex and gender than it is about camaraderie and esprit de corps²⁹”* (2012: 67). Although it is more of a sexist term but it is an appropriate description of the motorcycling culture. According to Walker *“car and bike culture prevent to some extent isolation and anomie and endangered a sense of freedom and equality, a sense of pride through the admiration of significant others, and a feeling of importance through standing out as an individual because their cars/bikes are belonging to a special group”* (2000). Basically brotherhood is like a big family where riders can vent out their feelings both in relation to motorcycling as well as personal.

Debdutta (25, Sales Manager) states *“Irrespective of which field you are working, from which background you are from. And no matter who you are, when it comes to biking we all are equal. Like a: friend in need is a friend in deed, bikers are like that too”*

Deep (36, Business) founder of a MCs states *“Biking brotherhood is whom I trust somebody whom I care for and somebody who would care for me; it's a bond which does not depend on factors like religion, education, economical condition, geographical location it's a bond of certain mental condition the love for motorcycle. The person may be a stranger I might not meet the person ever again but he will help me going out of his or her way in need, without any expectation. I would also do the same”*.

Brotherhood is helping some rider without any intention of getting something in return, just because of the love for motorcycling fraternity. Motorcyclists who do not belong to any group (MCs) also are considered to be a part of brotherhood. Practising brotherhood also demands the little effort from all motorcycling riders who ensure safety for the fellow riders while on ride. This basic criterion is fulfilled by normative practises that are followed on a ride while riding in highways or turns or on off roads. Few gestures are always used for safety of the fellow riders or for appreciation too. Gestures like thumbs up (appreciation), waving in a particular direction (hurdle), stretching out the right leg in a particular manner (warning for a pot hole) are few common gestures practised by the motorcyclist while riding.

According to Himadri, (29, Teacher) *“whenever I used to travel to Ladakh or somewhere popular, I would see from the other side ride always greets me with thumbs up, and you get those goosebumps as you don't get to see other people doing that on road usually.”*.

Sourav (19, Student) *“while riding in group we always follow this basic gesture for our own safety. As for example if there are pot holes on the road leg signals are given, hand gestures for right and left passing signals are always given, signals for bumpers, sudden arrival of animals or people.*

Motorcycle events are the breeding grounds where they generate the ideologies of biking brotherhood. Participation in such events is apparently important because this is the only place where distant riders meet and talk about their motorcycle trips and expeditions. The next sub-head would discuss about the motorcycling events are its whereabouts.

3.7.4 Motorcycling events

Motorcycle events are primarily about the riders. All genres of riders like *cruiser, adventure tourer, track racer, stunter* are found in these events. Motorcycle events can be overnighter or a single day or three day event. Motorcycle events generally feature rock concerts, various motorcycle games, liquor games etc. Games may also include motorcyclists completing some difficult hurdles or obstacle course, slow races where the slowest rider wins, carrying the same genre of motorcycle from point A to point B or finishing the beer mug in one go etc. Attending motorcycle events are a kind of pilgrimage to the motorcycle riders. For motorcyclists, motorcycle events are the place where they meet like-minded people.

Arony (33, Cab owner & driver), a avid motorcycle rider, rides with his differently abled child to places and events, states *“Motorcycle events to me is kind of a Holy Grail, events at*

the time when you actually get to meet other people who are also a motorcyclists. It is kind of a therapy you get to meet all your friends where I get to chill and chit chat with them, it's a good feeling it's our brotherhood. Even my son enjoys it".

According to Austin (2009) "attending motorcycle rallies is an important component of social life for many motorcyclists and serves to bond members of the group, reinforce their identity, and distinguish members of this subculture from this larger social world". These events also helps the rider to connect reinforce the solidarity among them.

Sayantana states (24, Business) *"Only because my friends are there participating or they invite me thus I visit"*.

Meeting people and friends at such events really matters a lot to the motorcyclists. This is mainly because people from all over India only meet once or twice in person otherwise they are only connected through social networking sites. There are numerous motorcycle events that are conducted all the year round in India. Events like IBW, RERM, RM, NERM, etc. are quite common to all the motorcyclists who take their time off from their busy schedule to attend these events. IBW, RERM happens in Goa every year while NERM happens in different states in north east, depending on the motorcycle club that are the responsible for organizing. Similarly RM, every year a motorcycle club is given the responsibility for organizing the event. The host club conducts the event in their own home state. The selection of host happens through a lottery followed by a voting system. It is a matter of immense prestige to organise such events says Abhijeet, a motor-mechanic who participates in such events every year.

There are certain motorcycling events where hierarchy is strictly maintained. As for example, in IBW that happens in Goa where every genre of motorcycles are allowed, but the hierarchy is still maintained through the bike parking. The parking space is segregated beforehand by higher CC motorcycles (Superbikes) to lower CC motorcycles.

Suvanjan (22, HR) also comments *"I planned to go to IBW but it didn't happen I will definitely go there soon. The distance is too much, so if I need to ride from kolkata it demands a huge cost. So maybe next year....I find no point in visiting such events without riding my motorcycle"*. Hierarchy exists between those who ride to these events and those who ship their motorcycle.

Wheels United (WU) and World motorcycle Day (WMD) are two prominent motorcycle events are usually happens in Kolkata. WU is most famous motorcyclists get together in Eastern India. Collins (2004: 53) states “Ritual is a body process starting by the movement of bodies into the same place”. The gathering of individuals in a common location with a common focus helps to start the ritualization process of a motorcycle rally. WU is a pilgrimage for many motorcyclists as it is considered to be a journey to the sacred place. Rituals are important before they attend this this rally or the sacred place. In is rally conducted where almost fifteen hundred from all over eastern zone come down to a meeting point in the early morning at Satraghachi Bus Stand and rides in a proper formation to the event place. The ride would be 40-60 kms depending on the selected place that changes every year. The long formation of fifteen hundred people are been guarded by the group of marshals, formed with at least one member from each clubs that are participating in WU.

According Anbee (32, Teacher), a superbike owner comments *“I love to see that craziness for the event. I love the way they prepare themselves and come from all the corners of the country. he way we ride there in a rally what really attracts and motivates me”*.

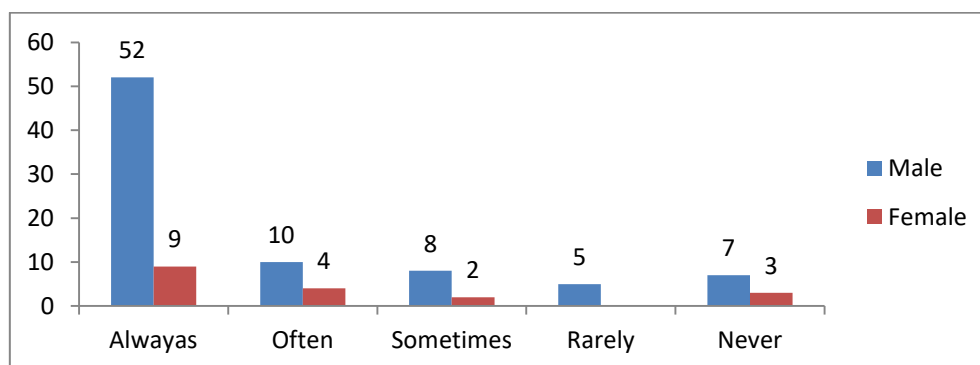


Figure 3.10: Rate of participation in motorcycle events

Almost more than half of the interviewed motorcyclist attends motorcycle events. Few of the respondents were also interviewed in these events. Out of 82 male respondents slightly more than the half of the interviewed male respondents that is 63% always attend the events and out of 18 female respondents, 50% always attend these motorcycle events. 12% of male and 22% of female often attend such events. Only 9% of male motorcyclists and 17% of female respondent do not attend such events.

Puskar (31, Tour operator) **rarely** visits these motorcycle events. He states *“see if it is feasible enough I definitely visit to explore new people to find new friends. I have been to Wheels United because it local”*.

Abhishek (29, Business) falls under 9.7% **never** category who does not visit at all the motorcycle events comments “*see I simply don’t get time*”.

3.8 Advertisement

The corporate packaging of inducement of motorcycles among youth and old operates largely at many different levels. As for example, the daily bombardment of motorcycling as both for commercial and leisure products of multimillion global advertisement industries are most frequent. This sophistication has achieved its ends very easily because people are now more into television and other social networking sites than other activities. Advertisement agency employs professional, who works on the ad campaigns which help them to target the particular age groups. According to MacGabhann (2005) “companies enter into product placement details the maker of soaps and other programmes aimed at teens”. After a lot of market research, the product is branded carefully by understanding the psychology which will appeal mostly to young people. Officials and other employees in advertisement industries are quite clear about what they are trying to impose on the consumers. The consumers knowingly or unknowingly accept this practice of advertising agency, which in turn helps in promoting the products. Here I would like to show how this motorcycling culture is instigated by the help of media and advertisement in particular. I would also show how they created consumers in both western and Indian market. I would also show the ill-effects of such advertisement that generally are faced by the consumers.

3.8.1 Creating consumers:

In December 1962 Honda was selling more than 40000 motorcycles annually³⁰. When people got scared of the *outlaw motorcycle riders*³¹, Honda came up with a unique notion of motorcycling where men women children all started riding Honda. The market strategy that was taken up by Honda was successfully implemented by ad campaigns as *you meet the nicest people on a Honda*. It was generally created in the contrast of the negative stereotypical motorcyclists images that was prevailing then. People riding motorcycles are always considered to be an outlaw and are antisocial and rebellious. These add campaign in 1980s by Honda, used to manufacture annually almost 3 million motorcycles. The advertisement depicted parents and children, housewives, young couple and even old aged people. They are referred to as ‘*the nicest people*’ who ride motorcycles and are law abiding

citizens. Consumer would buy Honda for variety of different purposes. Citizens who are scared of motorcycles because of outlaws, who have never thought of riding a motorcycle, soon saw interest in Honda motorcycles. People brought Honda is not for leisure or passion but for daily convenient transportation. Parents who were worried about their adolescent child pleading for a motorcycle started buying them a Honda. This followed with a distinctive shift from riding for pleasure or to riding for daily convenience. Media was/is a dominate feature for bringing the change in the perception of motorcycling.



Figure 3.11: Outlaw riders (1%)



Figure 3.12: Advertisement campaign by Honda

MacGabhann (2005) states that “the latest idea among the corporate designers of youth is peer to peer marketing, that is getting things to advertise to each other (also known as viral advertising)”. Young people who are commonly known as ‘**trend spotter**’ (MacGabhann 2005) are hired by the motorcycle companies or sponsor their ride. It helps in promoting the band very easily. As for instance in September 2016 a teamed named North Calcutta Disha from Kolkata were sponsored by TVS motorcycles for their motorcycle expedition which will create a Guinness book of World records if completed successfully. The ride was till Chamser Kangri in Ladakh situated at 21,524ft. Completion of this ride successfully, will result in creating a new World Record to the highest altitude reached by a motorcycle. TVS sponsored six Apache 200cc motorcycles and full protective gears³² and spare parts for the entire team members. Even the video of the ride was made by ‘powerdrift’³³. TVS brand is quite a famous band of motorcycle all over India. It is the third largest two wheeler manufacturer in India. The company has an annual production capacity of 4 million two

wheelers and 120,000 three wheelers³⁴. Another milestone of TVS is that association it has of 35 years racing in MMRT³⁵ (Madras Motor Race Track).

Another very recent example is a group of women motorcyclists who set out on a 17000 km across India and parts of Southeast Asia within two-three months. They covered 15 States and 6 countries that include Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. This woman motorcycle expedition was called 'Road to Mekong' comprised of four women Riders from Telangana. The main cause of the ride was to promote tourism of Telangana and this ride was sponsored by Bajaj Dominar 400cc motorcycle. Bajaj sponsored the ride and also all the safety gears. The Bajaj group is amongst the top 10 business houses in India. It has wide range of industries spanning automobiles two wheelers as well as three wheelers manufacturers³⁶. Such teams are always sponsored by these motorcycle companies in order to achieve the growth and promote their motorcycles and other products. This is a easier way of advertising methods are being followed by the motorcycle companies. It seems better to advertise through 'true motorcyclists', which eventually will influence the other motorcyclists in consuming the similar products.

Another method that has been identified by MacGabhann (2005) called *seeding*, where cool and popular kids are given free clothing or beauty products to wear and promote them to their friends. Similarly in motorcycling culture, it is seen that motorcycle companies conduct motorcycle shows or promotional rides. In this promotional ride prominent riders are invited to ride the particular motorcycle for few days to different parts of Kolkata.

As of example: Aaheli (30, Teacher) a prominent rider, states "*I was called for the promotional ride of RE Café Racer, when it was just launched in Kolkata. They even gave me the motorcycle for almost a week to ride*".

In motorcycle show, they invite renowned motorcyclists and others newbies for a test ride of new motorcycles that are newly launched. Initially they start with inviting prominent motorcyclists to launch events, which are held at five or seven star restaurants or party halls, for example ITC Sonar, JW Marriott etc. Such practice will eventually lead into a conversation among the other motorcyclist and might influence them to buy a product. This is a tactic used to attract more consumers as much as humanly possible. Gradually the motorcyclists will emulate their more popular peers. All of these different strategies and mechanisms of the campaigns have basically a single notion that is, to encourage today's motorcyclist or the newbies to consume new costly motorcycles.

The ill-effects of these advertisements are also quite prominent. Today's youngsters or the motorcyclist are forced into spend money for the ownership of fancy products, which is beyond their reach. Motorcyclists tend to find themselves by their possessions too. For motorcyclists they try and identify them with the motorcycle they ride.

Srikant (40, Business) *"you see I am out and out an Enfield guy, I am not a Bajaj or Honda person"*.

Sayak (32, Motor-mechanic) *"any RE bike, is the product that defines me"*

Therefore, when such dominance of a brand is so prominent in a person, it sends a message to all other newbies after MacGabhann states "possess, consume, spend, own". He also states "Youth has been re-branded to make it profitable, and society has adopted a value system that relates individual self-worth directly to material possessions" (2005). Society teaches the construction of themselves by their possessions which is indeed threatening, that one must question the effects of value system that one has on young people. Riders with less economic stability cannot consume such costly motorcycles seemingly encourages them to judge their self-worth. The newbie is generally not matured enough to control the judgement, results in diminishing himself or herself which eventually leads to depression, anxiety and other stress related problems.

3.9 Conclusion

The motorcycle revolves in the front and center of this culture. Motorcycle is the only means an individual would be a member of this culture. Motorcycle is both the reality and the prime symbol of this culture and without a motorcycle this culture would not exist. The particular notion of material culture in motorcycling collectivity emerges through the motorcycle itself. It begins with individual's passionate engagement with the object (motorcycle) which has some specific significance in the larger society. Motorcycle establishments or clubs provide a microcosm for the larger society. They also provide an approach toward the notion of in-group and out-group boundary specifications and largely a community. The motorcycle of their choice, the apparels and the normative behavioural norms helps them become a distinctive culture. The rituals that they follow reinforce the identity among them and help them distinguish between us and them. The cohesiveness and identity formation are also built

through events and rallies. Slightly more than half of my interviewed respondents attend regularly the motorcycle events. Exactly half of female respondent also attend these events.

The respondents I have interviewed they relate to the happiness of riding, the feeling of freedom and thrill which is common to all bikers. Freedom is the main feeling that drives my respondents to ride their motorcycles. Being deprived or restricted from certain activities especially for the female respondents have led them choose motorcycle quite late hence they relate to freedom mainly. As for example 13% of female and 49% of male relate to freedom other than thrill or excitement or relaxation. Restrictions for women are mainly from their families or peer groups who have constantly doubted their capability to ride a motorcycle and also were concerned about their safety. Women are always questioned about their ability to control such heavy machines but the same were not faced by the male respondents.

46% or 38 of male motorcyclists started learning from very early age, which is below 20years. Only 22% or 4 of female motorcyclist learnt in this age group. So it is clearly noted that women did not have any access to such activity before the age of fourteen or fifteen. Hence for women, exposure to these kind of activity is largely dissimilar compared to men. The late exposure of women in this field is mainly because of the social construct they are into since childhood because women bodies are considered to be vulnerable than men. Motorcycling is largely a male dominated culture as I have interviewed only 18 females and 82 males.

It is not that all motorcyclists are a happy big family. Being associated with a motorcycling group what Thompson states as “symbolically it’s a casual and nonchalant gesture befitting the *coolness* associated with riding a motorcycle” (1950). To maintain this dominance Royal Enfield rides tend to differentiate the *other* non-RE riders. The othering of motorcycle is also encouraged in only RE motorcycling events. But with this practice and tolerance of bike secularism, this divide might erode in few years. Few events are being organized where all genre of motorcycles are encouraged and also helping in creating a strong brotherhood without discriminating others.

CHAPTER IV

GENDER AND MOTORCYCLE

4.1 Introduction

Gender¹ is linked with riding a motorcycle that produces hegemony for some individuals and over less masculine others. As motorcycle is the representation of heavy technology it is largely masculine in nature. Men motorcyclists perform gender in motorcycling and produce and reproduce the notion of doing gender². Men riding these machines are then portraying the notions of being hegemonic, what Connell calls ‘hegemonic masculinities’³. For young men, who increasingly got involved in this motorcycling culture, and the practices associated with these activities eventually allow them to socially construct a masculine identity, with a prominent sense of dignity and self-worth. Usage of motorcycles generally offers young men or any age group, to be engaged in particular construction of masculinities⁴ with several thrilling experiences they look forward to. For riding a motorcycle, an individual needs to master the technicalities which are largely a symbol of masculine culture and a forum of common peer recognition as well as friendship. As a result, riding a motorcycle becomes an area of domination over the other less hegemonic masculinities and of course over women. A major problem with stereotyping is that women are not or cannot be men in riding a motorcycle. This prominent notion leads to a “categorical” distinctive approach towards gender (Connell 1987) which usually leads to predict a group to be distinct and homogenous. I would situate Connell’s theory of doing gender to explain this notion of masculinities in this culture. I would then also show how men are competing via the process of doing gender to achieve the hegemonic status of masculinity.

Women motorcyclists generally viewed embodying certain traits that generally challenge the traditional definition of women as docile, weak, or passive. Men's ritualized display of physical strength, aggressiveness, manliness, and sexual potency often limit or restrict women in this field. In this chapter, we will find out how women are often restricted from joining a Motorcycling Club (further ‘MC’ is used) and practicing motorcycling. Social acceptance for women is highly challenging in MC. Men motorcyclists generally feel women are not that capable or riding neither handling the motorcycle after a fall. They are been criticized for being naïve in matters such as understanding a direction, solving a problem with ease. Here, with the narratives, I would show how women into motorcycling are comforting

the hegemonic masculinities. I would also show how the objectifications of women from popular media and advertisement leads to such traditional stereotypical notions which in turn are making the gendered divide more significant. In this chapter, I would also come up with a new concept known as 'rider-hood' which would include all the genders unlike 'brotherhood' that would only include men. Since there is a lack of terminology, 'rider-hood' would be regarded as a neutral notion. Finally, I would also talk about a paradox of 'man and machine' relation that is historically embodied. Through this, I would show how notions of producing and reproducing masculinities through motorcycling largely contradict. I have divided the chapter into two halves mainly. The first half of this chapter would talk about the men and masculinities and the next half would show how women are challenging the masculinities. Finally, it would end with the gender paradox or contradiction on 'technology is predominantly masculine'; that is prevalent in Kolkata motorcycling culture.

4.2 Men Motorcyclists: Doing Gender

To understand 'doing gender' it is important to know what exactly the difference between sex and gender is. According to West and Zimmerman (1987), the notion of "gender is not a trait, a social role or as societal representation, but rather as an accomplishment". Or in other words, gender is always performed, it is mainly accomplished but not considered as a role and this trait doesn't represent society. 'Doing gender' theorists conceive of gender as "an active, behaviourally based, and demonstrate accomplishment, a situational accountable feature of a sexually categorized human being" (Fenstermaker, 1985, p.190). The 'doing gender' largely legitimizes the social structure hence eventually validate the men and women's dichotomy as natural. The notion of gender role is constructed largely by complex form social guided perpetual, micro-political, and interactional activities. These activities are structured and well processed since birth and are embedded in any individual. In their article 'Doing Gender' (1987), West and Zimmerman focused on the process of how individuals "do gender" as a "routine, methodical, and recurring accomplishment" (p. 126). Hence doing gender is a routine accomplishment that is largely embedded in mundane interaction.

Doing or performing gender is a routine accomplishment that is rooted in mundane interaction within individuals, hence masculinity is also performed by riding a motorcycle since to riders riding a motorcycle is simply another daily job that they do regularly. Individuals riding a motorcycle both professionally and passionately (riding to places other

than daily conveyance) tend to portray the masculinity sometimes hegemonic too, that is being explained below with the help of the components of *doing gender*. Individuals are silently competing among themselves in order to achieve the hegemonic status of their masculinity. Nevertheless, it is also important to perceive that the repetitive process of ‘*doing gender*’ itself makes a pattern of lifestyle and behavioural changes that allow or lead an individual into the structure of being hegemonic or what Connell calls ‘*hegemonic masculinity*’. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that only one or two motorcyclists achieve the status of hegemonic masculinity, which is placed at the top of the hierarchy of masculinities. There are four components of doing gender, they are ***accomplishment, accountability, situational, and agency***.

I. Accomplishment: Doing gender is an activity which is accomplished instead of just a role and status. Respondents generally like every other individual report that they do gender without giving much of a thought or without even realizing it. They hardly show any resistance while performing gender or accomplishing them. Gender was something constantly performed in a variety of ways. This mainly supports the notion of doing gender theory according to West and Zimmerman (1987) as we do gender because of the structural gendered order that generally prevails in society. Eckert opines that “Boys come to dominate certain areas of recognized accomplishment – most notably sports and overt competition of many kinds”, in this case, motorcycling. Eckert also states that “they begin to accomplish masculinity – to expand themselves physically, developing sports moves and postures that maximize the appearance of contained volume and strength, and engaging in aggressive, competitive talk about ‘masculine’ subjects” (2014: 532). Hence girls become marginalized in such activities. However, there are mainly four primary ways of doing gender in motorcycling communities. These four primary ways are already explained in the previous chapter *culture and motorcycling*. They are discussed here very briefly:

a. Choosing a heavy motorcycle: choosing the right motorcycle is very important to the respondents as they tend to trust these machines with their lives. As discussed in the previous chapter there is a social divide between people choosing a metal motorcycle which is heavier than the non-metal motorcycle which is less heavy. This distinction is mainly based on the physical appearance of the motorcycle and its durability. It is mainly considered that metal motorcycles are more durable when met with an accident. A major conflict revolves around this pre-conceived notion of the genres of motorcycles one Royal Enfield⁵ (referred to as RE)

(metal, heavier) versus the other brands of the motorcycle (non-metal, less heavy). It holds a constructed notion that individual riding heavy motorcycles are much more masculine than the other riding less heavy ones. Hegemonic relations are derived from less masculine or less powerful subjects, which is a relatively established view (Wacjman 1991). Here motorcycling is also not barred from such hegemonic/ dominant relation, which is relatively a new concept. Subjects here would be any form of technology as well as individuals. These 'strong able-bodied' men maintain 'heterosexual patriarchy' more structurally in society. They produce and reproduce such heterosexual patriarchal activities by performing gender through their mundane lifestyle such as riding a heavy motorcycle even for daily activities. Hierarchy is well-maintained through this particular genre of motorcycles which is heavier. It is largely found in this empirical study that riding a heavy motorcycle an individual emasculates or ridicules the non-metal riders in terms of strength and capability.

According to Sudeep (48, Business) *“general hierarchy is maintained in this fraternity and obviously, that depends on the motorcycle a person owns”*.

Puskar (31, Tour operator) *“there is somewhere a little bit of macho feeling. Because there comes a feeling since I am riding a heavy bike and managing it quite well, compared to the other bike which is not that heavy so my bike is superior”*.

Suvanjan (22, HR) *“people are stupid but not all though (laughs). You see riders with short height have a tendency to buy those heavy motorcycles for them, which would be very difficult to control. If one doesn't have that required height, still they would be stupid enough to buy one, just to rule the fraternity. But later on, involves in numerous accidents”*.

For, Sudeep and Puskar heavy motorcyclists are more masculine which is similar to the other riders. While Suvanjan is talking for the realistic point of view stating the disadvantages of the Indian standard of height where people feel less masculine or try to push themselves to control the heavy machine and thus proving masculine. This social notion leads to the notion what Wajcman (2009) states (heavy) machines are masculine.

Holter (2005: 18) also states “masculine power is largely exercised through self-regulation and self-discipline - a process of 'identity work’“. These 'identity work' are the mundane activities that generate the process of being masculine as well as more powerful from the less masculine individuals. Micro political aspects of gender power relations such as men giving up their seats for women, dominating their wives, exploitation of less-able bodied men- this belief system always maintains the hegemonic relations between both. Riding a heavy

motorcycle portrays masculinity which creates hegemony over the less abled motorcyclists riding less-heavy motorcycles. It is largely a process where the individuals are conditioned from their very first ride with the seniors or in the community. Thus this notion is also embedded among the newcomers or the junior riders.

As, for example, a senior woman Romi (42, HR) who rides a Royal Enfield (heavy motorcycle) states *“I bought RE years back in 2016 when there was not much of an option. Now I feel there are a lot of difficulties and reliability issues in it. Whenever I am asked to give a review, I gave a genuine one but to my utmost surprise younger men still buy and ride them, only out of the craze despite telling them not to”*.

Hence the concept of heavy machines are masculine are so deeply rooted that despite repeated adverse reports individual still chooses the heavy motorcycles. Undergoing through this process of performing gender they are compelled to ride metal motorcycles hence creating hegemony over the lesser-abled bodies. This process of 'doing gender' is inevitable in every young individual to stand out and prove his worth.

b. Deportment or behaviour: Here, deportment is the expression of an individual's attitude and how they behave or carry themselves while mixing with this community. Individuals are socialized in various distinctive ways as per the norms of the respective society an individual is brought up. As, for example, a girl child is always asked to sit with closed legs while a boy is exempted from anything like that (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Eventually, this forms a pattern, and women continue to perform that life-long. Many respondents report that they 'do gender' without giving much of a thought or even realizing it. After noticing certain activities or distinctive attitudes even just in posing, following the networking sites that they have uploaded (pictures wearing riding jackets, pants, and helmet while standing with legs wide apart or what is known as manspreading), I asked showing them, why they engage in such performance that is standing with legs wide apart. Many of the respondents causally say they do it because every other motorcyclist does the same.

Rupam (29, Doctor) *“I post pictures standing legs wide apart because everyone does the same”*.

Biplob (43, Senior Manager) *“That is how it needs to be done”*.

Rahul (30, Musician) *“Don't you think it looks cool and that is how it's supposed to be. It just happens, I never really thought about it”*.

To the respondents these specific features like standing legs wide apart are not intentionally practiced but are somehow conditioned in their body language. Many gender theorists would condemn such practices as it is a representative of misogynistic patriarchy that is, a man takes up as much space as possible especially in public places to assert his authority which largely undermines a women's or any less abled individual's right to space. Phadke used the term 'gendered space' (2012:53) to refer social construction of geographical and architectural arrangements around space, which limit women using these spaces. Space refers "to a complex construction and production of an environment- both real and imagined" (ibid.:53). Hence the explanation of this specific situation is making one portray being masculine or performing masculinity. This is one of the ways how they do gender in motorcycling. This practice is not only limited in motorcycling but in also other fields too. This practice largely is legitimized as 'inherently gendered'.

It is also largely found that a person riding a Superbike⁶ has an immense attitude problem towards people riding a less costly motorcycle or only commuters. Similarly, like choosing a motorcycle, it creates a hegemony, power over the lesser abled motorcycles. Senior riders often create hegemony over the other newcomers because either of the experiences of the rides they already have under their belt and/or the motorcycle they rode with.

Neerajan (25, Musician) states "it's completely baseless, though maximum motorcyclists consider super bikers to be superman as if they are the GOD".

Juben (52, Career counselor) states "it's kind of more CC (superbike) one person owns, more is his attitudes and tantrums with people who don't".

Raima (25, Homemaker) "it is like one's bike CC (superbike) defines an individual's capacity to rule or be the head of biking fraternity".

Moumita (29, Service) "It is that once you ride a superbike then you be a macho, young, powerful man.

These specific practices are so embedded since the first day with the riding fraternity; it becomes difficult for them to reject the same. This also portrays their authoritative behaviours that generally a man does, which is also a part of doing gender for a man. It is important for a rider to portray his masculine traits than the less abled motorcyclists just to be 'The One' in the biking fraternity. If an individual takes up certain measures such as manspreading while clicking a photograph with a superbike then he would be considered macho and masculine in the fraternity even if he is less masculine in real life.

c. By using specific dialect/ abusive jargon: Jargon is the special vocabulary of the unparliamentary or non-standard language that helps to maintain and also create a distinctive identity of the motorcycling community. It also creates a differentiation between ‘us’ and ‘them’. It is largely found that men motorcyclists have greater access to a certain kind of vocabulary than female motorcyclists. Using such specific vocabulary while they are on a ride or with the fraternity members accomplishes the distinctiveness of their identity helps in creating hegemony over the others. Unlike the above two, this particular kind does hurt the newbies' sentiment, at least whom they are using on. Arriving or participating in motorcycling events and activities marks the official beginning of achieving the desired manhood. Thrown together in such a close environment with a diverse individual (gender, class, ethnic), they seek attention while engaging in identity politics by doing or performing gender. Hence language is an important aspect of every individual's formation of their identity. Identity here is largely being masculine and definitely not like a woman.

The first monograph study of language and masculinity in the book *Men Talk* by Coates (2003) focuses on the storytelling narrative. She states men engage themselves in constructing as well as maintaining masculinity in their storytelling (2003:37). Coates identified features of men's narratives by which they perform masculinity, which is quite common to men riding a motorcycle too- for example focusing on male protagonists, avoidance of personal, a portrayal of the narrator as a hero, using unparliamentary or taboo languages, and also the stance of emotional restraint. Men motorcyclists also tell stories in a sequence which Coates calls “authentic men's talk” and also argues that by this men display “mutual understanding” and interacting without appearing “feminine or gay”(2003: 104). Men, in motorcycling, engage in conflict/agreement in style with one and another switch to ‘the bro’ language which is largely known as ‘bro code’ or ‘men talk’ which also distinguishes from ‘us’ and ‘them’ (non-motorcyclists).

Reynolds 2007 observed that boys while performing masculinity tend to insert pejorative nicknames categorizing or listing broader cultural stereotypes of gender while interacting with their friends. The girl's collaborative talk is compared with the guy's competitive talk. Similarly, motorcyclists tend to use such pejorative nicknames as *CKGM (Chud Khanki Ghudwo Mukho)*, *BC (bok chod)*, *boro bichi*, *PM (pacha mukho)*, *homo*, *gay partner*, *kele chagol*, *kele kartik*, *sada haati*, *kalia*, *kelte*, *lombu*, *mangsho*, *hulo* etc. These are some ritualized insults, assessment adjectives, negative categorization of the practice of that

individual generally almost every motorcyclist undergoes and in turn does the same with the effeminate others. An individual while interacting makes observations, judgments about fellow motorcyclists, describing absent people, pointing out others, etc., all endow meaning and hence labelling with the nicknames. This also goes with the use of *fag*, *gay*, or *stud* and also includes a wider range of categories of names which largely establishes a vocabulary among the riders. Riders are commonly known or identified by those nicknames. By assigning these contemptuous nicknames maybe those motorcyclists try to shed their effeminate, weak, and possibly homosexual identities and proving to be more masculine.

II. Accountability: The second component of this framework is that a motorcyclist is accountable for their gender accomplishments in every aspect of motorcycling that is both at the structural level and through social practice or agency. This structural level is largely present because of the structural gendered order that prevails in society. They are accountable to the brotherhood or to the motorcycle fraternity for performing masculinity. Motorcyclists are very much answerable or accountable to their respective motorcycling club's members. These expectations are presented in this motorcycling culture through the agencies of re-socialization which demands men motorcyclists to be 'real' men. This re-socialization is leaned from the motorcycle fraternity or popularised as the brotherhood. According to West and Zimmerman (1987), individuals here motorcyclists, become accountable for involving for engaging in the expectations through social activities/ practices in which they usually learn through series of interactions and consequences of doing gender inappropriate or appropriate ways. These series of expectations are built up through the process of re-socialization. These agencies of re-socialization are brotherhood or motorcycle fraternity, motorcycle clubs, and also media as explained in the *culture and motorcycling* chapter.

Motorcyclists demonstrate or lay claim to social spaces, resist the effeminate subjectivities while producing and reproducing dominant social discourses. This generally emasculates or marginalizes the weaker ones. Hence they tend to construct a distinctive but pejorative vocabulary for both men and women. This situation also manifests how the motorcyclist's peer group holds other riders accountable to these discourses through series of activities for example language practices explained in the above section (negative categorization of certain activities, ritualized insults, assessment adjectives, and pejorative descriptions of individuals). Apart from their speaking activities, motorcyclists are also accountable for what they do with motorcycle (customization of the motorcycles), where they go for trips (motorcycling trips),

what they wear (apparels and gears for safety purpose), with whom they would accompany while on a ride and even what beer they drink.

Jonathan (28, Service Manager) “it is important and we all wait for each other approval. This is how the riding fraternity runs”.

Juben (52, Career Counselor) “I started riding when around the late 20s. Then things were different we always use to look up to our forefathers (founders of MC) for even the decision of riding a specific motorcycle. Without their approval, we would even cancel already planned ride”.

To, Jonathan and Juben fraternity's approval is quite significant as to the other motorcyclists. Riders have to answer and are accountable to their fellow riders. For example, if a rider accompanies an effeminate rider (termed by nicknames) for a trip, the individual would usually come and narrate how feminine the rider was on the trip. He would narrate with great pleasure how he emasculated the effeminate one. He, 'the masculine one' would talk about places where the effeminate rider wouldn't ride because he was scared of the road/off-road conditions where the effeminate rider instead took his motorcycle in a pick-up van and have transported to the destination. Male femininity in this instance is coded to be humorous while if a woman has successfully ridden that same road, then is masculine and is celebrated. Hence the male femininity is always discouraged while female masculinity is appreciated.

Masculinity is also enhanced by the places a motorcyclist rides to. They are accountable to the fraternity and are repeatedly asked about the places they had visited. Pieces of evidence are found through narratives where the riders were repeatedly asked about the whereabouts of the trips. A couple of men motorcyclists with their significant other as a pillion went to Tawang, Bomdila situated at Arunachal Pradesh, a famous destination for motorcyclists. Since those are mountain passes, the road conditions were worse with many off-road stretches. Riders though have completed the trip successfully, but due to rain, they were unable to take photographs. Hence they were unable to post the pictures in the social networking sites which led the other motorcyclists to question the validity of the motorcycling trip. One of the riders reported that he faced several encounters and even had to show pictures (whatever pictures they have clicked) as proof. Motorcyclists are accountable for doing gender, the way they do, and the process they maintain it.

For the customization of motorcycles, riders are also accountable to their motorcycling group. Customization involves painting the motorcycle, fitting of extra after-market gadgets, etc. The colour they choose also proves their masculinity in them. Colours are largely segregated into masculine and feminine where shades of pink are sissy while shades of black, green, or blue (dark shades) are macho. While interviewing few riders at the same location through keen observations such conversations are over-heard:

Rider 1: *Dude check out that bike (custom colour)?!!!! so sissy (high pitch laughter).*

Rider 2: *must be suggested by his wife, I am sure he carries her wife as a pillion (laughs).*

Another instance, I would like to cite where a motorcycle is painted with skull prints and a big graffiti of God Shiva smoking a pot⁷.

Rider 1: *wow man look at that it looks so cool.*

Rider 2: *must be a serious rider with an amazing choice of colour and design.*

Rider 3: *and also must be a serious marijuana smoker.*

The first conversation is between motorcyclists expressing their views that the motorcyclist wife's choice is feminine and the rider must be effeminate enough to take up his wife's suggestion. While in the second case since the motorcycle has a design of a skull and God Shiva, a character which is an epitome of masculinity, therefore the rider by default is masculine and performs gender appropriately.

Superbike owners tend to buy the trendiest motorcycle apparel that matches the superbikes they ride are mostly dreamt by the non-superbike owners. Its mandate for any motorcycle rider to buy the safety gear. Motorcyclists are appreciated when they bought safety gears, but are mainly appreciated when they bought the costly ones. The superbike/motocross⁸ riders tend to create a yardstick for the others through using the best available apparel in the market. Motorcyclists not wearing one are repeatedly questioned and restricted for participating in specific events too. The attire that motorcyclists prefer are generally bold in colour and are mainly black. People wearing lighter 'feminine' shades are usually laughed at.

III. Situational Or Contextual: this framework deals with the notion that the way an individual 'do gender' largely varies both from one context to another and one situation to another. Performing masculinity is important in motorcycling to achieve the status of an 'ideal man'. It would also be noted that some of these arenas overlap with the way men do masculinity as discussed previously. Every motorcyclist constantly rating himself and is

obsessed with the restless competition of manhood. Respondents tend to maintain a 'macho' front cover of everything that they do, where they go for rides, with whom they tend to accompany, what they would wear, even what they would drink; everything contains a gender coded language. These performances vary from place to place. They will never follow the same routine nor won't perform the same while they are on a family holiday.

Uday (39, Chattered accountant) "I will definitely not take my family or kids to such places that I visit with my rider friends"

Manmeet (35, Business) "I would not be this crazy when going out with my wife or kids or parents"

Subhojeet (25, Service) "I will never drink like fish or use these words (ritualized insults) with my parents".

For Uday, Manmeet family trip should be placed with comfort but with motorcycling friends, it would be harsh of a place with full-on off-roading areas and for Subhojeet drinking, since he is with his parents has to behave well but with a friend, he can easily be drunk and won't mind if behaving ill-mannered way.

III. Agency: this framework of agency is the last component of doing gender where individuals are guided and socialized by the agency to order to perform gender in appropriate ways constructed in respect to the respective society. It involves both structure and social practice. As children grow up they learn what exactly is expected from them (boys don't cry, girls are gentle). They are often rewarded and punished accordingly. Similar in motorcycling, the agencies of socialization are media and peer group. Already socialized motorcyclists re-socialize themselves soon after they join the motorcycling group. Both media and peer group (motorcycling fraternity) influences the riders. In this section, with the help of narratives, I would also portray how both fraternity and media or advertisement contributes to such notions.

It is also noted earlier how fraternity influences the young generation. The newbies idolize the fraternity and the ideology of manhood is instigated by the advertisement daily. It is like a loophole, once an individual is into it there is no chance of turning back from such ideology of becoming a 'macho' or 'masculine' man. Younger boys are easily attracted to advertisements and eventually buy such powerful motorcycles without thinking of their capability just to emasculate the others and /or save themselves of emasculation. Performing

masculinities thus becomes important for the individuals especially the young generation, to become a 'man' maintain the hierarchy in the men's world. This notion is further escalated by certain advertisements (as shown below) and media portrayal. The essential notions of these advertisements are already there in the culture. These advertisements reflect the constructed culture of masculinities that are already present in society. The advertisements portrayals are easily picked up by young men such as clues of the dressing style, riding style even end up buying those machines that would make them much more 'macho' and masculine and be a 'man' not a 'kid' or a 'boy'.

Soma (30, Yoga Instructor) states “media portrays motorcyclists in a very wrong way. Let me tell you when it is a 100-110 CC bike, then it is a man going on that bike with his wife and son. As if only a family person can ride 110cc bike. Similarly, the moment it is a sports bike then the rider is a young handsome hunk. As if the handsome guy cannot have a wife and child. It is just to tempt younger boys basically, who will be buying the bike in excitement. Who normally does not have the guts to ride 110cc bike”.

Deepak (28, Service) “motorcyclist in any advertisement always show, that one needs to be huge and macho to ride Bullet”.

Unfortunately like Soma and Deepak it is difficult for the majority 'others' to understand the undercurrent of these advertisements and get lured by that. Walker (2000) found that advertisements by the motor car industry convey messages less about the car and car use and more about masculinities and femininity, which is similar to the motorcycling industry.



Figure 4.1: Advertisements featuring ideals of dominant masculinities

By riding a heavy motorcycle one can be a man and not a boy. To many riding a metal motorcycle is a feeling, Royal Enfield for years has enmeshed this feeling with such advertisement 'boys ride toys and men ride Enfield'. In other words, men would be men

when he rides a heavier motorcycle otherwise they are boys and will be easily emasculated by the metal riders. Even before the launching of the JAWA⁹ motorcycle, they have come up with the above-shown advertisement as they were well aware of this notion. This agency (here media or advertising brands) patronizes dominant/hegemonic masculinities to target consumers and portray buying a metal or heavy motorcycles will help transformation from a boy to a man and the consumers often give in to this ideas. Purchasing heavier motorcycles would help boy to become 'a man' and not effeminate ones.

The basic stride is buying a heavy motorcycle or a RE. As we have already seen that 38% of male motorcyclists ride RE. The majority of my interviewed respondents ride RE with the notion *'Heavier it gets more masculine the man is'*. Men are competing to achieve hegemonic status by consuming certain kinds of products that might be out of one's reach. For example, a four-feet eleven inch man buying a RE motorcycle would face a series of problems for maintaining or simply riding it.

Avik, 28 who works as a 'ride instructor' as well as a ride coordinator at RE *states "recently Joy da, a customer with very short height man who bought a thunderbird¹⁰ 350 and went with us for a ride crashes many times. This is simply because of un-even road and he is unable to balance his bike"*.

Buying a Royal Enfield was definitely not suitable for any individual with that height, but in order to achieve the status of being an RE rider, they eventually get one. Being an employee in RE it was difficult for Avik to deny his customer the motorcycle. Thunderbird is the only model with the lowest height if compared with the other motorcycles.

Avik also points out *"every day I encounter many customers with short height, we suggest Thunderbird (RE model) in that case. Even after taking a test ride if the customer still decides to buy it, we are no one to stop them. For Joy da, and many other short height customers any model of RE is not suitable"*.

Consumers as Joy da and others who are not capable of balancing such heavy machine would still buy these motorcycles. Consumers with short height are often emasculated by the dominant consumers with a standard height and well built, who are often capable of riding RE motorcycles and also serves the purpose of being hegemonic among their group of friends especially short height friends.

Therefore motorcyclists produce and re-produce doing gender by series of interaction (fraternity and advertisement) that makes a pattern in their life and thus leading them to compete for the dominant form of masculinity or what Connell calls hegemonic masculinity. Here in motorcycling individuals are so embodied with these masculinities, they would even risk their lives in order to be the dominant ones. However few could achieve the status of being hegemonic, *the one* and others follow them.

To conclude, it is largely seen that though these processes of doing gender a rider is an embodiment of patriarchal propositions. These propositions, when exercised, are converted to cultural dispositions thereby creating a pattern in behavioural activities of the motorcyclists. This process is continued through generations of motorcyclist leading them into the structure of hegemonic masculinity, the status which they wish to achieve. Hegemonic masculinity is placed on the topmost position in the hierarchy (Posco 2007) of masculinities. Only a few motorcyclists could achieve the position which makes them the leaders of today's motorcycling fraternity. It should also be noted that this position is not permanent rather changes in due course of time. The next section would cite an example of such a notion.

4.2.1 Masculinity Crisis

Thus machines and performing masculinity go hand in hand, it also creates isolation for few less able-bodied motorcyclists. Men are always expected to show a certain degree of masculine strength in times of despair. Motorcyclists not being able to perform such masculinities in the biking fraternity are often ridiculed or emasculated. This subhead would discuss how male femininity is ridiculed.

Researchers Michael Kimmel (1990), R.W. Connell (1993), Eva Baron (2006), Roger Horrocks (1994), Brenton J Malin (2005) regarded the masculinities crisis as a historical issue. Through observing the motorcycle events, I would like to show stating an incident that happened in a motorcycling event which portrays the notion of masculinity crisis. While in contrast men are always regarded as an “unchanging” (Kimmel 1990) role in society. That is, in other words men strictly adhered to the socially constructive notion of being firm, rational and strong. Now, the attention towards the crisis specifies how the discovery of the “masculinity crisis” distorts the notion of masculinities that was embedded earlier. On the one hand ‘masculinity crisis’ historicize masculinities by viewing the ideologies of manliness to social, economic, and political setting and on the other hand, the word 'crisis' itself shows

masculinities to be dynamic rather unchangeable. Therefore we can draw the ways how bodies mattered, how the shapes and sizes are most important. Therefore formulating the embodied history of masculinities is quite an important research.

According to Connell in the book, 'Theorizing masculinities' public masculinities means private femininity, where Jung states "No man is so entirely masculine that he has nothing feminine in him. The fact is rather, that masculine men have- carefully guarded and hidden- very soft emotional life, often incorrectly described as 'feminine'. A man counts it a virtue to repress his feminine traits as much as possible, just as a woman, at least until recently, considered it unbecoming to be 'mannish'. The repression of feminine traits and inclinations naturally causes these contra-sexual demands accumulate in the unconscious" (1994: 20). That is, men generally repress him and carefully hide his emotions and the softer side to be a 'real man' or to maintain the hegemony.

As for example, I would like to narrate an incident that happened in eastern India's biggest gathering, *Wheels United*¹¹. A renowned superbike owner Niladri Basu¹² of 27 years of age was also present. Niladri who stays at Burdwan is into bodybuilding and also a heartthrob to quite a few women. Aaheli (29, Teacher) an official of the above stated event narrates "*I was distributing food and a Red Bull can (energy drink), after collecting the food coupons from the participants. Since there was a big line for collecting food and Niladri had to leave the spot early and he found me sitting at the counter (we know each other well through motorcycling), hence came running towards me and asked me in a shrilled tone 'aeee amay ekta red bull deye nah' (Give me a can of red bull please) with a hand gesture (often enact to portray men with feminine traits) and the participants in the line started giggling. Soon they started laughing their heart out after he left embarrassed*".

This act is highly unlike for a muscular man as Niladri. The participants in line are not accustomed to seeing a muscular guy wearing tight apparel flaunting his biceps running in an 'unmanly' fashion towards a woman. Though they couldn't ridicule or bully him on the spot because of the status that he holds (a superbike owner) but started giggling. Had this situation been replaced with any other motorcyclists, he would have been bullied or emasculated. It seems that Niladri is building up muscles to compensate for the "masculinities crisis" (Michael Kimmel 1990, R.W. Connell 1993, Eva Baron 2006) he usually faces in any social setting. Men motorcyclists distance themselves from women and less masculine male motorcyclists to engage in a style of interaction that predominates hegemonic masculinities.

However, the inclusion of men and their participation in many sports or motorcycling activities has historically been consistent with preconceptions of heavy masculinities and/or hegemonic masculinities and also heterosexuality. This prominent notion of heterosexuality and masculinities is being questioned by the participation of women and their femininity in this motorcycling and sports activities. This example of Niladri is a very prominent example of the “masculinity crisis” that the Kolkata motorcycling undergoes. Like Niladri, riders are silently competing with each other to be the dominant one by accepting the socially constructed notion of being hegemonic. This process stimulates riding heavy/metal/higher CC motorcycles, which is been explained clearly in the previous subheads. This process largely helps in the formation of dominant or hegemonic masculinities in time which carries forward through generations forming a pattern of dominating the 'others'.

Slowly but steadily women are overthrowing the male-dominated 'gendered space' in motorcycling. They are now coming forward and confronting the hegemonic masculinities and trying to establish their identity, which is explained in the next sub-head. The feminine 'sexual character' (Connell 1987) that is been identified as an expressive and masculine 'sexual character' as instrumental is being rejected as well as challenged by women motorcyclists on a daily basis. The next subhead explains in detail the contradictions and limitations women faces in motorcycling.

4.3 Women Motorcyclist: Confronting Hegemonic Masculinity

A misconception that is dominant in the social construction of gender that both men and women have different traits, which largely includes different outlooks, different abilities, opinion even the whole structure of personality differs. As there is no accepted terminology for such a concept, Connell (1987) in the book *Gender and Power* calls it a 'sexual character'. Thus it is often assumed that one set of traits of men defines masculinity and other femininity. Connell states “this unitary model of sexual character is a familiar part of the sexual ideology. It can be quite explicit: *Just like a woman, just like a man*. More often it is implicit” (1987:167). For example, jokes around advertisements 'women are worst drivers' or men holding his breath pulling his belly fat in a lift where a sexually attractive woman enters, states ‘men will be men’ are quite common reproducing the concept of ‘sexual character’. In this section I would like to come up with narratives of the women motorcyclists and show how they challenge the patriarchal ideologies of men in motorcycling. They also come up

with certain strategies that reject the socially constructed taboo of 'women are not at par with men' (physical). They tend to find the sense of belongings within the group.

A woman in motorcycling often criticizes that notion of socialization, which renders girls and women to be weak, passive, and feminine. Cockburn (1981) states "the appropriation of muscle, capacities, tools, and machinery by men is an important source of women's subordination, indeed it is a part of the process by which females are constituted as women". In other words, men's technical skills are taken for granted while women are subjugated in this field. Women have to cope-up with such patriarchal notions by acting or behaving like the men or what Kavande calls 'one of the boys'(Kavande 1999). In this section, I would show how women are comforting the hegemonic masculinity and structuring a distinctive process of motorcycling devoid of such embodied 'sexual character'(Connell 1987). I would put light on whether women are becoming 'one of the boys' and masculinizing this sport or trying to confront it by feminizing it in their way. I would also show what sort of restrictions women motorcyclists are constantly facing from their family and peer group. Lastly, I would also talk about women objectification in such activities.

Despite long term connection to the world of motorcycling women generally are not associated with the two-wheeled subculture except in the most stereotypical roles. Iiyasova (2006: 3-4) noted "although times have changed with more and more people taking up riding-including women – one thing that has remained implicit in motorcycling is the association in has with masculinities". Motorcycles advertisements often exploit women as sex objects and use 'biker babes' and other forms of blatant sexuality to recruit men in motorcycling culture. Their lies a simple question whether women in such male-dominated activity as motorcycling, had become as Kvande (1999) calls 'one of the boys' or 'social men' to be accepted in this filed. Though there are very limited ways of constructing femininities in this male-dominated activity. They are constantly negotiating the meaning of gender in motorcycling activities. Social identities are repeatedly negotiated and re-negotiated through historically specific situations. The same notion also applies to the women in motorcycling negotiates a variety of ways to 'do gender' (West and Zimmerman 1987). They have to negotiate whether the meaning of their gender identities should be the same or different from the male motorcyclists. This leads them to construct different strategies concerning the masculinities in motorcycling. We see a lot of variations in the strategies. Women riders tend to refuse many gender-typical demands. Women motorcyclists in this study exhibit resistance to the ideas of gendered norms, in varying degrees. They never comply with the 'sexual

character' traits as prescribed to them. They believe in challenging the gendered space as well as gendered norms in their ways.

Aaheli (29, Teacher) "I am obese and have a tattoo and ride a motorcycle, I feel absolutely comfortable in doing so".

Twinkle (31, Tour operator) reported sportingly "I was told to have a proper figure and height before I could handle a heavy motorcycle, but eventually I could easily ride my motorcycle without any problem".

Here women motorcyclists are resisting the thinness norm. Women motorcyclists also interestingly portray masculine 'sexual character' traits for example aggressiveness and fighting. Lifting their heavy motorcycle after a fall, even if there are other men around is one more example of displaying masculine traits among the other motorcyclists.

Aaheli (29, Teacher) states "I try not to take any help from any other motorcyclists after a fall or for carrying a pair of saddlebags, tents, and baggage two floors while checking in hotels. This is mainly because I don't want them to feel that I am weak in any muscular strength. Rather I am often appreciated for helping them, both men and women rider while on road after a fall".

Moumita (29, Service) "I always make sure that no belongings are left out after the packing is done and if it is I tend to carry it for my brothers. I never let them do it mainly because I don't want them to consider me slender".

Riding solo is also encouraged as it portrays, what Connell (1987) calls masculine 'sexual character' traits. It is mainly because while riding solo one has to be prudent enough to tackle adverse situations easily.

Himadri (29, service) "initially MC was important to me. I looked and applied in many but almost all respondents in a negative way. To them, women are feeble and are not capable of rides as they always seek help. Now that I ride mostly solo, they respect me. They now very well understand the worth they have denied just because of the stupid notion 'women can't ride'.

Individual, capable enough to portray such social capabilities thus then becomes what Lyng (1990) calls edgeworker¹³. Men are always expected to show a certain degree of masculine strength in times of despair. If they fail to display such muscle strength, they are often laughed at, while women, on the other hand, are hardly expected to show such masculine traits. Women motorcyclists who tend to display the above masculine 'sexual character' traits are often appreciated and are considered to be an apt woman to ride a motorcycle. Women riders keep on experimenting with what motorcyclists interpret as masculine roles. Eventually, some display resistance to the 'feminine sexual character' (Connell, 1987) by becoming what (Kavande 1999) calls 'one of the boys'.

4.3.1 Social Acceptance of Female Riders in Motorcycling Clubs

Nowadays a small but growing number of female riders are moving "up from the back seat" to ride their motorcycles. Though women are coming forward to ride their motorcycle but joining MCs is quite a difficult process. MC members often tend to avoid women members until they prove their worth. The same notion does not exist with men members. Acceptance of women to some is problematic and to some is empowerment. Here I wish to show the problems that are faced by women into motorcycling in this culture and the ideology of hegemonic masculinities is the main reason.

Even if women are accepted in most of the MC still they face discrimination and taunting at times. Interaction through joking also formulates of identity construction of a motorcycle group. Jokes often regard women's status as feminine which is inferior to masculinities as well as sexual objects so demonstrate to support hegemonic masculinities.

Raima (25, Homemaker) a short height woman states "initially when I started riding I fell most of the time due to lack of proper balance, which can happen with anyone with my height riding the bike. They always use crack jokes behind even at times in front of me calling me a sissy and incapable".

Soma (30, Yoga Instructor) "it's true that they respect me as a woman but never misses a chance of mocking me something which is quite humiliating; but all doesn't do the same".

Himadri (29, Teacher) "When I was riding with a Delhi motorcycling group though they never have given me different facilities because of my gender, that's true but they use to joke, saying I should put Lakme stickers in my bike instead of other different stickers of my ride".

Himadri, Raima are vivid motorcycle tourer and are respected for several motorcycling trips in the fraternity. However, all of them face such humiliation. It shows that even women are at par with the male folks still it's a paradox that women are always related to makeup and tidiness. As Lyman (1998) explains “emotional structure of the male bond is built upon joking relationship that 'negotiates' the tension men feel about their relationship with each other and with women”. Through this, the gendered motorcycling discourse maintains ‘the order of gender domination’.

88% of male respondents are always ready to accept female members in their groups while 12% of male respondents won't be accepting female members in their MC. This notion was much more problematic 5-7 years ago. This notion led to the emergence of only women MCs in all over India. For example, *Urvashi Patole*¹⁴ of Bangalore created *Bikerni*, only women MC. Similarly in Kolkata Raima has initiated a motorcycling club know as *Bengal Lady Biker* as she faced several rejections from the other motorcycling clubs or establishments.

Raima (24, Housewife) states “Initially I really didn't even think about forming a group with only female riders. It was about a few years back when women are not easily accepted in motorcycling groups, rather hardly accepted. I went to many but was not encouraged. There was only one lady rider group at Pune which was hardly accessible. Thus I finally formed Bengal Lady Biker, my own group. We are a few members and are very compatible”.

Mouha (29, Business) “initially I was never accepted in any motorcycling groups that is, 5-6yrs ago. I requested them, once they have allowed me for a very short ride, but they limited my movement even after reaching the spot. Finally, Bengal Lady Biker group of Raima came to my rescue”.



Figure 4.2: Acceptance of female members in MC

The reason for not accepting female members might be many but they hardly disclosed me while interviewing. This constrains was due to my gender, it was quite difficult to bring out

that information from them. I hardly believe the above percentage is true, otherwise almost all women interviewed stated they had problems of acceptance in MCs. Out of 12%, few won't accept any members because either their MC is a closed group or they feel the group's sustainability may be at risk if an outsider enters the MC. Out of the other problems that women faced one serious problem was with the primary and secondary groups. Most of my respondents apart from a few faced severe limitations and restrictions. The next sub-head portrays the struggles they faced.

4.3.2 Constrains from family and peers:

Women motorcyclist has to face restrictions and rejection before and after they are into motorcycling. Breaking the patriarchal norms is not easily accepted by their family or peer groups. William Thompson (1950:112) states in Sturgis, a well-known motorcycle event in Texas, where motorcyclists from different places come to attend with their wives or girlfriend. Many women rider join too, riding their motorcycle. When did a woman passenger ask her husband why can't she ride, as so many women are riding their motorbikes? Instead of encouraging her wife; her husband straight ways says 'those women you see riding motorbikes are homosexuals'. This is how women are portrayed who takes up such activities culturally coded as masculine, instead of conforming stereotypical women 'sexual character' (Connell, 1987) norms. Limitations and restrictions are pre-dominant but the women riders always stood out and left no stone unturned to fulfil their desire of riding a motorbike.

Moumita (29, Service) “I was not be allowed to ride a cycle but my younger brother was gifted with that. That very day I decided to ride a motorcycle when I earn”

Nilofer (28, Service) states “my dad is always overprotective, initially till 25 my dad never let me drive but my brother easily got to ride when he was a lot younger”.

Monami (18, Student) “I use to fight with my boyfriend over riding his motorcycle. He never wanted me to learn. I kept to telling him finally he taught me”.

Instead of these limitations many women like Moumita, Nilofer and Monami have experienced sports or motorcycling as sites of power, where they can accept physical power and independence, as well they repeatedly rejected the traditional conception of femininity and the predominant notion of 'sexual character' traits. Many women who choose motorcycling as a sport are often benefiting from being physically fit, powerful. According to

Dworkin (2001) “being physically dependent is an important feminist theme if one considers the historical relationship between femininity and dependency”. In other words, women were always dependent on their male counterparts for both physically and mentally which is often challenged by women in sports and here in motorcycling.

4.3.3 Feminizing/Masculinizing the Appearance:

In this section, I would show with the help of narratives how women are either feminizing or masculinizing this male-dominated activity. Either they are downplaying the femininity, becoming the 'social men' thus portraying the masculine traits, or are challenging the stereotypical notion of it.

Masculinizing the appearance is highly a social phenomenon where it questions the social acceptance of the women riders among the men. The social recognition is important to any human beings, by which they would ‘do gender’ and eventually and unwillingly reproduces the muscular motorcycling culture by choosing the apparels made for men specifically. Motorcyclists talk about their apparel and styles they confirm to, and also their limitations in choosing them. In Kolkata, there are fewer female motorcyclists and with a handful of apparels shop which hardly has any women gears. So women usually try to fit into the same as men. Apparels shops are situated mainly as *Gear Up* at Bhawanipoor, *B. P. Roadies* at Shayambazar, *Pheniox Trails* at Birati, and *Highway Cart* at Barasat. But these shops hardly have women apparel. Others available in the biggest motorcycling market in Kolkata that is at Wellington mostly sells duplicate products and are used by the commuters only. Kavande states “A female graduate engineer cannot dress in lace and frills because she won’t be taken seriously” (1999). Similar notions of downplaying femininity are portrayed by few women motorcyclists too.

Mou (29, Business) states “In case of a jacket, I never like to wear a designer jacket with ladies cut. I think a simple, normal, and a good jacket can do. Even if there is an option of girly kind of jacket I would never take that. That would be an easy recognition of being a woman which might endanger my safety”.

Moumita (29, Service) “I never wear jackets available for women. I prefer to buy jackets from Pheniox Trails which suits me well. Moreover, they do not keep females jackets.”.

Monami (18, Student) "I like skull pictures on anything that I wear. They portray macho I guess (laughs). All men wear it so I too prefer them, then I am easily accepted within the group".

Thus here women like Mou (though she rides as a pillion with her husband), Monami, and Moumita try to be what Kavande (1999) calls 'one of the boys' or 'social men' while riding. Not only Mou but few others have also pointed out the similar notion of being *one of them* (male motorcyclists) otherwise it's difficult for them to be accepted as men are. Some women unwillingly sometimes masculinize the attire too like for example:

Soma (30, Yoga Instructor) states "I wear black jackets and helmets. I never thought of wearing pink. Whatever available in the market and if it fits me I go for those products".

According to a woman pillion, Satabdi (34, housewife) who rides with his husband to places states *"I usually have no option, there are hardly any riding jackets specially designed for women. Only you have to order online which I feel I won't fit in. I would like to try and then buy. Unfortunately I end up buying those jackets available for men"*.

Women like Soma, Satabdi thus unwillingly masculinize the appearances. Women also reported of being fed-up with the same old 'male design' and finally have accepted their fate. While buying products they definitely look for certain products if available they purchase them. The sexism and association with performing masculinities pervade motorcycling culture and discourages women from being full participants.

According to Thompson (1950) many women rider seemed to go out the way to accessorize and **feminize their appearances** to communicate unambiguous femininity and heterosexuality. Even the motorcycles the women ride hint at femininity. Although women ride large and powerful motorcycles of all makes and models, the majority of women seem to ride a smaller motorcycle and less concerned about the macho image of the motorcycle than their male counterparts. Pragmatic reasons for the smaller motorcycle are because women believe in 'fits' them better, weigh less, and are a lot easy to control. Symbolically the smaller motorcycle seems better for women motorcyclists.

Moumita (29, Service) faces a lot of difficulty in choosing a motorcycle as she is 4ft 10inches states "I would love to ride a less heavy motorcycle. I am just waiting for some proper motorcycle which will be introduced in the market keeping in mind the standard height of the

Indian women. We cannot deny the fact that maximum motorcycles are introduced in the market based on men's standards”.

27% of female motorcyclists ride an RE. Unlike the men, the majority of women do not ride RE. Though they wish to buy RE but couldn't because of their height issue. Thus 50% of women willingly or unwillingly ride Bajaj Avenger, which is low in height than any other model or brand of motorcycle available in the market.

Scooty is generally considered to be feminine and are ridden by most of the women. The term ‘scooty’ derives from a neutral word scooter¹⁵ but the scooter is now considered to be masculine whereas ‘scooty’ to be feminine. Women riding a non-metal or light motorcycle are considered to be masculine than women riding scooty.

As Raima (24, homemaker) states “when I use to ride a scooty and went with other motorcyclists to a trip I was never taken seriously but once I bought an Avenger 220cc, I got better attention”.

Similarly, women riding metal motorcycle portraying masculine traits are acknowledged then women riding non-metal.

Himadri (29, Teacher) an avid motorcycle rider riders solo/ in the group to challenging terrains since 2009 states “previously I use to ride an Apache 180cc but I upgraded to RE Himalayan 411cc after almost six years. Trust me I was taken with a serious note to motorcyclists who ride RE. Previous to that, while riding Apache, people without knowing my experience would not come forward to talk. After buying an RE, I now clearly see the difference as unknown motorcyclists randomly came and inquired as well showed much more respect”.

Here, for Himadri and few others, women masculinity is appreciated as they are downplaying their femininity. This notion is guided by what Wacjman (1991) states heavy technologies and machines are guided by muscular touch and individual using that would be considered portraying, what Connell (1987) calls hegemonic masculinities. The feminine body is usually constructed to be weak slender and fragile, which my respondents did not seem to confirm. The woman who rides a motorcycle is less feminine and is less fragile than the woman who does not.

Even the *bikerni* word became so generic, like Colgate for toothpaste. A woman riding a motorcycle is addressed as *bikerni*. 'Biker' is a neutral term, stating a person who rides a bike. But women riders are considered as 'bikerni' even when there is no such term in the dictionary. The construction process of gender even overpowers the terminology as 'scooty' for scooter (stated earlier) which is similar for 'bikerni' for 'biker'. This notion of calling a women rider as 'bikerni' derived from Urvashi Patole's club called *The Bikerni*, only women's MC. Few women motorcyclists also reject the idea of addressing as *bikerni*.

*Aaheli (29, Teacher) states "I really have immense respect for the bikerni, but I feel very awkward when people keep on asking me that 'are you bikerni?'. It's like a woman riding a motorcycle has to be a **bikerni**. I don't understand all women's motorcycling clubs. It's a paradox, wherein one hand you are asking for equality with men, and on the other hand, you are opening up a community specifically only for women".*

Twinkle (31 Tour operator) "I wish to join them when I was at Bangalore working for few years, so initially they added me in a group, and when there was a party and they always would fix a dress code, which would be pink or you have to wear black dresses, high heels, hair should be open while riding. Now while I talk about breaking the stereotypical notion I would follow the same. Thus I decide not to join them".

Kavande (1999) talks about how women in the technological field would challenge hegemonic masculinity. Though few exhibit the symbol of machismo however **apparels are feminized** often and are softened with the addition of pastel colours, floral motifs, and other feminizing touches. Some wore pink leather jackets instead of old school traditional blue or black and some even wore pink caps. Others wore leather jackets in white, blue, or black adorned with floral patterns, butterflies, and other decorations such as rhinestones or fringes that determine them as women attire. Even the helmets they wore are not a solid colour but with different floral prints (Thompson 1950).



Figure 4.3: Feminizing their appearances

Most of them have graphics that are quite colourful; some are obviously chosen to match their motorcycles.

Aaheli (29, Teacher) “after I bought a black jacket I even bought two-three packets of stones we used in school chart papers. I did stick all the different stones in my jacket with the glue”.

Pipli (29, Service) “I have a white helmet, with golden graphics in it and red pinch on that.”

Raima (24, Housewife) “Yes, I do try and feminize. I want to buy colours which I love. I love the colour purple and I try the same colour boots, jackets as well as helmets. I love wearing this colour so I do wear it. I don't believe in the fact that, because men are dominating in this sport I have to accept all that they love. Men prefer wearing skulls but I dislike those symbols”.

Motorcyclists like Aaheli, Raima, and Pipli they do feminize their appearances. To identify the riders as women, often ponytails, long hair, or various types of visible jewellery are also portrayed (Thompson 1950). Women motorcyclists have a clear notion that how they can express their femininity. Motorcycle attire tends to be masculine in appearances, but most women motorcyclists “feminized” their appearance in prominent ways.

Mou (29, Business) who rides as a passenger with her husband states “I like to do makeup. I like to apply Kajal and Lipstick. Yes when I ride, I do apply Kajal and lipstick. I do tie my hair completely and put inside the helmet, otherwise, my hair will get damaged”.

Tithi (35, Interior Designer) rides with her husband “I like to wear colourful and bold helmets – like green and yellow. After buying it I painted the helmet with different shapes of stars”.

Significantly, after riding motorcycles, women felt more empowered and reported that they are more confident than before and the feeling of vulnerability is less. This changes the power relation between the socially constructed gendered norms. Progressive gender roles in magazines and advertisement with women riding motorcycles limits objectifying and essentializing women that encourages women to take up such sports.

Buli who owns a RE showroom at Silchar and even takes part in professional motocross rallies stays here at Kolkata with her husband who also is a professional motorist. (35, *Business*) states “A woman on a motorbike is the best thing to happen for women's empowerment because even one woman on the road can inspire many others- and the chain reaction will lead to liberation”.

Motorcyclists like *Buli* are very less who professionally participate in such motocross rally. Despite the growth in the number of female bikers, men still dominate the roads in India. The male-female ratio at India Bike Week 2015 was 17:29, while in Kolkata it would be 9:2¹⁶. However, women do not or cannot take on a predetermined set of behaviour rules in motorcycling; rather they construct and reconstruct their notions of gender role. They are the participants of a construction process. In the next section, I would show how the objectification of women harms motorcycling and potential customers.

4.3.4 Objectification of Women in Motorcycling:

Objectification of women is quite common in many field of advertisements even at motorcycle events. Women in motorcycling are largely objectified in advertisement as well as in track races and motorcycling events. Here in this section, I would portray the ways they are being objectified which are harmful towards society as well as creating the gender divide more prominent. According to Dworkin (2001) “Research on media, women, and sport and fitness has shown that women are not presented solely as resistant and powerful athletes but rather are framed ambivalently through sexualizing trivializing their athletic performance”. In other words, women are framed for their sexuality in sports since time unknown. Motorcycling is also a part of such a framework and the agencies also look forward to objectifying women to sell their products. 54% and 67% of male and female motorcyclists confirmed the objectification of women in motorcycle advertisements and events.

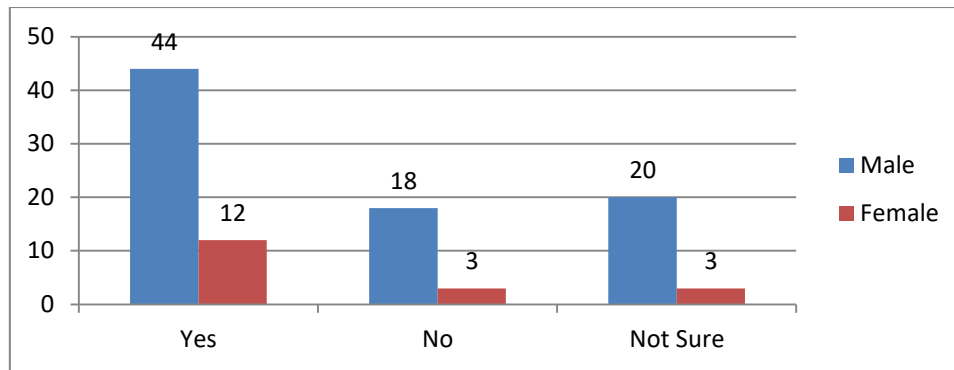


Figure 4.4: Objectification of women in motorcycling

Monami (18, Student) comments “I have seen only guys are riding bikes and girls are fantasizing about it. Girls are portrayed to be taking the back seat and never riding. Only in the gearless scooter advertisement girls are portrayed to be riding, which is pure discrimination”.

Sadh (27, Business) also states “Biking doesn’t mean riding at high speed all the time and only for impressing girls. They only highlight the power of a motorcycle and that if you buy this bike you will impress girls and can lure them easily. It seems that biking is only for speed and to impress girls”.

Sensible individuals are not lured by these advertisements much but we cannot forget that potential customers are not only these passionate motorcyclists but also the huge number of unaware commuters. Discrimination as well as objectification starts from the simple advertisement by segregating the machines for men and women. Scooter or ‘scooty’ is for women, advertisements are shown stating ‘*why should boys have all the fun*’ whereas the heavier machine which is a motorcycle is always portrayed riding by men.

Milton (35, Teacher) states “for ads of Scooty, women are doing ads. But is the case of bikes its men”.

Moumita a butch¹⁷ (29, Service) puts up “In case of advertisements, women are always objectified in ads of fairness cream. Now when people talk about bikes, they always tend to say ‘It’s a man thing, be a man enough to ride a bike, why man’. Is it written on a bike that is only for men? Why can not a woman ride a bike?”.

Motorcyclists like Milton, Moumita and many others reject the idea of objectification. 22% and 17% of male and female motorcyclists do not feel the same.

Puskar (31, Tour Operator) "It's not about women, it's about the commodification of sex basically, and sex is commodified everywhere commercial movies everywhere".

Debdutta (25, Sale Manager) who works in the Bajaj Motorcycle showroom states "honestly speaking I don't blame them, even guys are objectified there is a current adds too. Women do look beautiful with a bike, if boys are presented with so small dresses it would look naked it would be a mess, this is my perspective".

It should be also noted that many motorcyclists though reject this notion of objectification, but still reproduces this ideology by objectifying women in their conversation.

Aaheli (29, Teacher) rides a metal motorcycle stated "at times I feel demotivated, friends who always supported me and appreciated me for my strenuous motorcycle rides to offbeat places, often crack jokes and laugh at me because I am obese. Again they even at times crack jokes on the varying degree of (masculine) traits that I portray at times".

Moumita (29, Service) a homosexual narrates "initially I was not accepted in motorcycling group, I think, because of my orientation, I had a girlfriend. Motorcyclists often used to giggle behind me. They often thought I was not capable enough any such responsibility of riding a motorcycle maybe".

For Moumita a homosexual, is twice marginalized for being a woman and then a lesbian to be included in such a male-dominated activity. Ideals of femininity usually dictate many women, not to choose who ride a motorcycle. This notion holds them back and emphasizes on the preconceived notion of 'doing' gender (West and Zimmerman). Men are free to choose to ride with any motorcycle available in the market as well as any MC available to them, while for women a lot of constraints are found in choosing a motorcycle to ride as well as a motorcycling club to ride with. As women are increasingly flocking to ride a motorcycle crossing into the previous male-only territory results in creating 'new' womanhood which eventually recreates 'true' womanhood. Respondents also reported that women objectify themselves at some events too.

For example, *Twinkle (31, Tour Operator) points out "Talking about objectification, there was a Royal Enfield launch of new thunderbird, where 'bikernis' was about to come. They massaged me that I have to wear a black t-shirt and black jeans high heels and hair should be open. This is a form of objectification, and we girls have only objectified ourselves and talk about equality too. I left the group that day itself".*

Aaheli (29, Teacher) points out “They are objectified if you go to some motorcycle events some bike launch events you would find out. They usually show the beautiful machines with beautiful babes with the motorcycle. The ladies will stand in front of the motorcycle into two pieces or in a bikini and the boys are going and clicking pictures with these hot girls and hot motorcycles. Women are potential customers too. These are basically nonsense”.

Whereas 24% males and 17% of females are not aware of such commodification of women into motorcycling advertisements.

4.4 Coming up with the Concept of Rider-hood:

I would try to situate, likely a new concept or terminology as 'rider-hood' than sisterhood in comparison to the brotherhood. The term 'sisterhood' would have been sufficed to explain the feminine fraternity of motorcycling but it would leave out '*the others*'¹⁸. Therefore an immediate need for terminology was required which will not only include women but also men and all the other genders who actively participate in motorcycling culture making it a distinctive one. In this section, I would show how women confront or adjust being '*brothers*' in this male-dominated culture and why there is an urgent need for a new terminology to denote brotherhood.

Being bro-zoned is a very common attitude that women motorcyclists encounter in group ride as well as in events they participate in. As it is already noted that female masculinity in motorcycling is acknowledged and appreciated, hence women who ride to places, even more than men or are very adventurous, and take up risk by riding solo to complete unknown/very rough terrain, which proves their competence at par men, is quite unlikely of women, are often bro-zoned. Women motorcyclists are addressed as 'bro' or 'brother' when they appear to be at par men.

For example Aaheli (29, Teacher) “I strongly reject the idea of people calling me a brother. There are a lot many male riders who know me well and they call me or address me as bro out of respect and honor. I strongly reject the idea of changing my gender in terms of that. What I feel, that I am a woman and people always should address me the same way”.

Raima (24, Housewife) “I don't like people calling me a bro, texting me 'bro, are you coming?' They feel when women ride well maybe more than men or equivalent to them, then

if someone calls her 'bro' and she will be honoured. If a woman does the same job as men, she will do it in a better way that does not mean I am bro".

Calling a woman 'bro' comes from the concept of brotherhood; and eventually from the patriarchal point of view of men riding big machines. One must continue to challenge construction space, gender preserve the integrity of nature and enjoyment of these spaces.

Nilofer (28, Service) "The good part of motorcyclists is they won't judge you on your clothes or your face. If they judge you, it will be your riding skill. Being with Rider is like being naked. Don't have to dress up and show. You cannot be called as bro if you have conventional girl tantrums. It's like if don't show girly features as portrayed by a conventional woman then you are a bro".

Twinkle (31, tour operator) "I really wonder why they still call brotherhood because a lot of sisters also present nowadays. A different word for brotherhood is needed because we see a lot of women these days. This strong bond that I have even with a female rider is also brotherhood. We are all products of the patriarchal system and that's the major problem".

Himadri (29, Teacher) "when u earn respect riders calls you 'bro' which is quite irritating".

Since brotherhood is not basically only between brothers but it is a strong bonding between riders all around the world. Here brother signifies gender-neutral camaraderie because there is a lack of gender-neutral term. But a better word or expression is highly needed to summon the riding community's integration and strong cohesiveness which should be gender-neutral. As there is no such term in the dictionary therefore I would like to call it a 'rider-hood' instead of what Thompson (1950) comments that sisterhood with brotherhood should be used simultaneously. In 'rider-hood', a rider is a gender-neutral term that includes everyone who rides a motorcycle passionately. Thus if motorcyclists address the other motorcyclists as a rider instead of brother it would serve both the purpose and will include all genders not only men and women. If then this equality between all the genders are achieved, objectification of women in motorcycling would come down to my best belief.

4.5 Gendered Machine: A Paradox

The motorcycle is generally considered as a historical symbol of masculine power and dominance (Wacjman 1991); it is masculine because the machine is something not feminine which ultimately excludes the women to enter into the field of motorcycling. In this section I

would show the paradox that heavy technology and machine are the products of masculinity yet these machines, here in this research motorcycle, are regarded as feminine. Respondents tend to assign names and specific gender to their motorcycles, which is quite a paradox. This is because it has a bodily connection or sensation, a strong intimate connection between the body and their machines which Mellstrom (2004) calls *anthropomorphization*¹⁹ or Jderu (2013) calls *axis mundi*²⁰. As Harper (1987) claims “Gaining the kinaesthetic sense, however, reduces the gap between the subject and the object” Here the subject is motorcyclists or riders and the object is the motorcycle. As John Law (1998) points out this feeling to be “a machine pleasure”. It is found out that respondents generally tend to assign ‘gender’ and also name their motorcycles.

Yet 18% of men respondents prefer naming their motorcycles by assigning male names while none women respondents preferred identifying their motorcycles as a male entity. Names such as *Rock Star*, *Beta*, *Optimus*, *Hercules*, *Beast*, *Nandi*, *Rudra* are given to those motorcycles. Motorcyclists would also regard motorcycles as an extension of their body or ‘axis mundi’ (Jderu 2013).

Srikant (40, Business) “I call my motorcycle beast but there is nothing feminine about a Thunderbird 500. When I took the delivery I felt like I am taking a Rottweiler Dog. When the first day I took it out from the showroom and came to the petrol pump, I realized how heavy it was when I tried to put in on the main stand”.

Puskar (31, tour operator) “Rock star is the name. I felt it is a dude and this guy is tough. I see my motorcycle as an extension of me thus male”.

Hutchins (1995) puts it “such a connection is not simply as an extension of bodily capacities but rather as a vital element in the distributed ecology of thought, in which thinking is done by both human and nonhuman actors”. In other words, motorcyclists consider machines can think and act as needed.

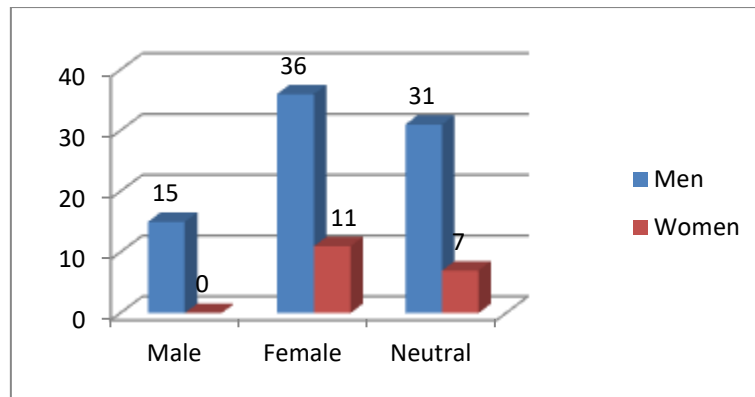


Figure 4.5: Assigning gender to their motorcycles

But the paradox that the majority of the respondents somewhat contradict the views of above-stated *machines is masculine*. In many cases “the machine is given a feminine persona, thereby (re)producing both normative heterosexuality and gendered differences” (Mellstrom 2004). 44% of men respondents assigned female manes for their motorcycles while 61% of women respondents assigned feminine names for their motorcycles. The majority of male respondents smartly confirmed their motorcycles to be a feminine entity. Some even claimed it to be either their girlfriend or wife. Names such as *Kali, Gina, Natasha, Darko, Zena, Gia, Benzi, Pearl, Falcon, Optimus, etc.* are assigned to their motorcycles.

Sudeep’s (48, Business) opinion is “My Royal Enfield is called Kali because she was black in colour when I bought her; and my next bike is called Gia after my daughter. I think they are part of family and feminine because I spend more time with my motorcycle than with my wife and I am straight. As I am supposed to be masculine and my bike feminine right?”.

Avik states (28, Ride Manager at RE) “See all my bikes are of the same name the day I get my own engine and the day I customize it the way I want it at that point of time all my babies have the same name Darko. They all have feminine touches in them”

Milton (35, teacher) states “Owl’s Eye, I consider it as feminine, as it is sexy. People recognize me by seeing my bike. That’s my identity. I love that. It is feminine. My wife feels jealous about my bike”.

Twinkle a female motorcyclists (31, tour operator) comments “I never intentionally considered my bike to be a ‘she’. But it just happened, maybe because the name benzi it is always considered as she. But now that I am using it, riding it long I get a feminine form of

feeling, a very strong feminine energy she has a temperament, a major temperament, and tantrums too”.

38% of men respondents never assigned any gender for the machines. They might assign a name but never would associate a gender with the same. 39% of women prefer not to assign any particular gender to their motorcycles. Names such as *Spirit, Red bird, Panda, Himkanya, Ahirman* are assigned to the motorcycle but never considered then as a masculine or feminine entity.

Juben (52, Career councilor) “It is not a living object or something, it’s just a machine. You don’t assign a gender to a grinder or a refrigerator or a washing machine at your home”.

Adi (27, Business) “Spirit, it was named after a horse, but I haven’t classified as male or female”.

Monami (18, Student) “Panda, it’s the name of an animal and it’s very cute just like my motorcycle. I love it and find it very cute. It’s neither a girl nor a boy”.

Neerajan (25, Musician) “Red bird a friend, philosopher, and guide where I have spent the best moments of life. Many life-threatening situations I wouldn’t have overcome if the vehicle was not there. I haven’t considered gender and will never”.

In such a masculine social setting that is the motorcycling culture where technologies can be understood with what Mellstrom (2004) states “embodied communication for forming homosocial bonds”. These exercises are generally masculine in nature and largely reject women from such a gendered sphere where men form micro societies on the basis of passion for machines that is motorcycling. Such passion includes what Mellstrom states “anthropomorphization of the man-machine relationship in which the machines are transformed into subjects in what might be termed as heterosexual, masculine, technical sociability and subjectivity” (ibid).

It is been largely understood that with the help of riding these machines, men produce the notion of hegemonic masculinities. Machines are masculine in nature yet the paradox is they are assigned with feminine names. This paradox might result from the gendered notions of patriarchy where women are dominated by hegemonic masculine men. So when men ride the motorcycle they feel they are dominating the machine thus assigning them as female gender. Therefore the motorcycles in the advertisement are always portrayed with a woman wearing bare-minimum dresses. Then the potential consumers after purchasing the motorcycle

consider it as a woman and assign name just because the machine needs to be dominated while on a ride. Popular movies and series on a motorcycle as *Sons of Anarchy*, *Easy Rider*, *The Wild Angels* all portray such a notion of dominating their woman as well as their motorcycle. Wired captions as ‘don’t touch my bike and my wife’ are often used in their motorcycling events produce the fact that women and motorcycles are treated the same and these ‘things’ are to be dominated.

4.6 Conclusion:

As we know motorcycling values inherited a technological and cultural legacy from bicycling which is historically and socially embedded in the design of it. As a material creation of a masculine discourse, the symbolic qualifications that later marked the motorcycle as a hegemonic masculine subject, was established during the late nineteenth century. Men who work with machines mainly with motor vehicles confirm that they are closely connected with their machines and definitely feel passionate about them. Thus men and machines are not essentially part of a masculine nature; rather machines are culturally defined through men’s passion which is embedded in men’s daily rituals.

Women are being marginalized as a commodity in the advertisement of these motorcycles all over the world, in television and every other print media, maybe I criticize too harshly but we will never find women in the pages of the history of the invention of the motorcycle. Here people are to say that the machine produces masculinities reiterates the masculine culture. Finally, it can be aptly remarked that motorcycle as an entity has always been associated with the male folks, and whenever a woman has tried to break this gender construct this has been regarded as a deviant behaviour on the part of the woman and has been judged by the society as an intrusion into the strict sphere of the patriarch. In order to stop this questioning of gender construction by the female folk, the patriarchal society has always resorted to mocking, demoralizing even going to the verge of humiliation. The inclusion of women into motorcycling changes the gender order and now affects how motorcycling is formulated and re-constructed.

Finally, to conclude, men's relations with machines are embodied historically producing gendered space where women are excluded. Moreover practicing such embodied practical knowledge about machines through motorcycling results in further creation of masculinities which is enacted as well as maintained. These “homosocial masculine practices” (Mellstrom

2004) largely prohibit women from participating in such areas. Masculinization of power with pleasure in the technical field excludes women to enter into such fields creating a great divide within the sexes. The excluded sex also nowadays takes part in such male-dominated activities feminizing the artifacts resulting in feminizing this male-dominated technical knowhow. These differences of masculinizing and feminizing between the sexes often reproduce man, woman –machine relationship here motorcycle to be precise. Thus the motorcycles are transformed into subjects producing technical subjectivity.

Women are largely objectified in motorcycling which increases the gender divide. This objectification would end with equal participation of men and women in this field. For this, the first step would be the acceptance of women in MCs. The next step would be the notion of 'rider-hood' which doesn't address women as brothers. Finally, women should be encouraged to take up such moto-sports as a hobby or profession. But we can't deny the existence of the paradox that has been mentioned above which largely creates the gender divide. This starts with the socialization process which does not end rather continues through generations. The overthrowing of patriarchy is the only solution.

Nowadays the link between motorcycling, embodiment, and masculinities is losing its significance by encouraging women into this field. It is quite clear that encouraging women into motorcycling have provided a variety of conflicting opinion. In modern society roles of women in male-dominated areas such as sports, even the military are subjected to constant scrutiny. The inclusion of women in such a field hardly is defined as weakening or polluting, unlike the 19th century. But their participation in such a field is always questioned, whether their feminine skills would be able to cope up with such hardships as men are used to. Another major concern, especially in the military is whether men will obey women officers and whether men will endanger themselves by protecting women in combat situations (Connell 1994). The same notion follows in motorcycling too.

CHAPTER V

RISK AND MOTORCYCE

5.1 Introduction

Motorcyclists would argue that any kinds of activities are equally dangerous as riding or driving a car, even crossing a road. The professional motorcycle riders or rally riders as well as the experienced and skilled riders, all have almost similar notion. They bank on their riding skill mainly and argue any other mundane activities have similar notions of risk¹. According to Ohlsen (2009) “physically, a motorcycle rewards fearlessness: You lean into a turn and not away from it, the faster you are going, the scarier it is and the harder you have to lean”. Risk of riding a motorcycle cannot be ignored possibly, but one would not be paralyzed by it. The trick is to rationally understand the value of risk. The sole point of riding a motorcycle is not to ignore, or avoid fear, or be paralysed by it, rather to learn to control it. In this chapter I would like to show that ‘risk’ is highly a gendered as well as situational. But this never signifies or demotes women’s risk and fear of being murdered or raped. The intentions for such a remark would not to downgrade them rather it’s completely opposite. By drawing few examples in the following chapter I would show that the threat towards risk and crime are mainly permeated by the various form of masculinity practised by men in their lives.

Women who participate in outdoor recreational activities draw many emotional and physical benefits from their experiences. But participation of women is limited by gender related feeling of risk, objectification and fear in this space. Feminist scholars have pointed out that the construction of a city space is male dominated and dangerous for women. These predominant notions keep on excluding women, especially from the public space (Phadke 2012, Srivastava 2012, Sur 2012, Walklate 1997). Women experience greater level of fear of crime than men which is largely different as it is fundamentally on fear of rape and abduction and murder. Women motorcyclist identifies sources of risk, plays a major part in construction of images of danger which also includes personal victimization and socialization. Also mass media plays a major role in such gendered construction. The phenomenon of gendering of space with the identification that women are for private realm of home and men with the public sphere is observed mainly in male dominated societies.

Women subjugation over public space indicates the expression of unequal gender relations that women encounter in everyday life. Public space is highly gendered; women can only use this space for a purpose. It is socially constructed that women riding motorcycles embraces masculine activities. These masculine activities often contradict the notions of 'women-like' activities; which in return increases the risk of getting molested, raped or murder. This process results in social construction of risk and fear. Indeed, according to Warr (1985) "fear of rape is pervasive evidently interferes substantially with women's routine activities". It was never an inborn quality of women to be fearful; and the culture of fear is highly contagious. Thus women riders have to balance their choices which relates to their outdoor activities and the aspects of control and surveillance.

In this chapter I would like to highlight the specific risk and bodily practices which usually occur while riding a motorcycle both for the beginners as well as for the experienced. Here the 'riding' body is subjected to a series of voluntary risk taking activities which is a structural factor that has been identified in the Kolkata motorcycling culture. Riding a motorcycle is also similar to bungee jumping, scuba diving, rock climbing or Skydiving, as the notion of risk persists in these activities. Therefore with the notion of edgework I would explain the risk that persists in motorcycling. I would also like to argue that the perception of risk holds the major position in a motorcyclist which is largely embodied into motorcycling. The next section of this chapter would talk about the major risk and common fears that the motorcyclists encounter or struggle with. Lastly, this chapter would talk about the risk avoidance, the strategies and negotiation that every motorcyclists take up in order to be safe.

5.2 Self at risk: voluntary risk taking behaviour

There is a dominant tendency to categorise risk as negative, the notion of fear is associated with the interpretation of risk which is danger and unknown. Insecurity, loss of control over the future or uncertainty is associated with risk taking activities. There is also positivity associated with risk such as adventure results in excitement, enjoyment and also self-improvement. In this section I would like to show, the voluntary risk taking activities though are largely masculine, women on the other hand are also entering this space and extracts pleasure from their voluntary 'risky activities'. These activities in time also help them to grow more competently in both private and public spaces. Just as Green and Singleton (2006: 854) states "Our knowledge and awareness of risk, and how we perceive and manage risk, is

informative of how we live our everyday lives, our relationships with others, our relationships to our own bodies, and where we choose to live, work and engage in leisure”. To people risk is something uncertain and, generally are avoided. But to my respondents, they indulge themselves in risk taking activities because risk, to them is basically taking a chance. To some of my respondents, with excitement and thrill, it might bring pleasure or gain. Walkate “It is important to recognize that thrill and excitement frequently go alongside risk, fear and danger; and that all of these are frequently talked about in male terms”. (1997:41) It is basically the amount that a person can gamble. There is also a subjective nature associated with risk (Lupton 1999). The knowledge that is related to risk is the product of ways, of seeing; there is no fixed meaning of it. How much risk would be a threat to an individual depends on the perception he or she holds. Risk lies outside the comfort zone or the unfamiliar territory which is beyond known. Although risk has highly negative aspect there are positive sides of risk taking behaviour too. As said earlier that motorcyclist would often love to take risk which is a voluntary risk for the sake of pleasure.

It is a social construction that risk taking behaviour is largely masculine in nature (Walklate 1997). As Lyng (1990: 872-3) suggest that “males are more likely to have an illusory sense of control over fateful endeavours because of the socialization pressures on males to develop a skill orientation towards their environment. In so far as means are encouraged to use their skills to affect the outcome of all situations, even those that are almost entirely chance determined, likely to develop a disoriented sense of their ability to control fateful circumstances”. According to Lyng though this process men are more into 'edgework', which is discussed later in this chapter. Such a process is been defined by Lyng (1990) where he finds behaviour on the edge: between living and dying; unconsciousness and consciousness; order and chaos. Walklate (1997) also states “.....unquestionably the notion that men, by virtue of being male, do not experience fear”. Therefore risks are largely masculine in nature. Scientific knowledge is also predominately masculine in nature (Walklate 1997). The instrumental image of man guided the image of science eventually. This knowledge of science became deeply embedded in production of further scientific knowledge and also development of modern societies. Best (2008) termed ‘reckless teenage driver’ who are mostly male and have all intentions to disturb the ‘others’ with loud roaring sound of engine, screeching tyres and thus taking risk to them is fun filled. The best example of risk taken behaviour as masculine would be easily proven by the participation of mainly male in

motorcycling activities. Within hundred respondents only eighteen were female and others are male. This proves risk taking activities are largely masculine in nature.

The risky behaviour, to some can be a source of enjoyment, pleasure and excitement (Lupton 1999, Green and Singleton 2006, Lyng 1990). The pleasure of voluntary risk taking behaviour is appreciated by the motorcyclists.

As Shad (27, business) suggests “well personally I think life would be pretty much boring without risk. Friends call me as risk taking junky. I love wandering to unknown places with my bull². I definitely enjoy those opportunities of the voluntary risk taking activities as riding motorcycles to places which I am not sure off. I even go for bungee jumping. I even wish to try skydiving if I had that cash”.

Rupam (29, Doctor) states “risk to be is everywhere, even while I am in an OT doing a surgery. I love to take corners and keep on checking my motorcycle’s speed limit. People call me a speed junky. I love riding in high speed and I do confess I do sometime take unnecessary risk but that is absolutely worth it. Till date I haven’t failed while taking risk”.

Abhishek (29 business) who owns a Superbike³ and has already undergone the course on racing technique from California Superbike School⁴, explicitly rejects the expert system of the speed limit in and out of the city says *“when I take my motorcycle out for a spin in national highways it's quite evident that I breach the speed limit on a regular basis. I am quite aware about the risk of over-speeding but due to my knowledge I feel confident with my superbike if I do so. And also you cannot ride a superbike within the stupid speed limit that is mentioned in our national highways”.*

Raima (25, Homemaker) states “there is no risk without gain. I have travelled in snow with my husband, though it was quite risky but I totally loved it”.

Sayandeep (30, Service) comments “I was at Dubai for 3month for work; you see I always wanted to go because I wanted to do skydiving. The thrill was just amazing. Even the first time when I crossed a very bad stretch with my bike I felt exactly the same thrill. I would always take such thrill as it brings me immense pleasure”.

Usually an individual crosses her or his boundaries by taking risk moving from one space to another. This risk taking behaviour implies movement and progression in an individual's life. Luhman states “By taking risks we gain opportunities we would otherwise forego” (1993:71). Through this behaviour many respondents have reported that they could know their limits.

And this helps them in taking decisions in their field of job or business. Risk taking activities for women is a protest against the stereotypical ideologies that are socially constructed to restrict girls and women in mundane activities. Such restrictions are imposed on them by the societal norms and regulation. Green and Singleton comments “Women ‘moderated’ their behaviour in public to avoid being ‘gossiped about’ and labelled as ‘unrespectable’” (2006:863). To some of my respondents it is important to take risk that will help them overcome the taboos that is deliberately forced on them.

According to *Mousumi (32, Business) who travels with her husband states “my mum never allowed me ride a motorcycle, not just motorcycle there were other restrictions imposed on me in a daily basis. But after I got married I supported my husband nature of adventures, his motorcycle and went out with him for rides”.*

Aaheli (29, Teacher) “I was not even allowed to spend time with my friends if it is dark, there was no question of night out. But now that I am into jobs and moved out from my place, I brought a motorcycle inspired by my friends and started to go for one day ride initially now I love to go for long ones. My family was very much orthodox and never allowed me to even make friends with boys”.

Nilofer (28, service) also states “my dad never wanted me to ride a motorcycle. I with the help of Raima, as she is also a rider started riding. Initially I even bought a motorcycle and kept that with Raima but never took that into my home. It took a long time to make them understand that I and my father who commutes do not have much difference apart from the gender”.

Himadri (29, Teacher) “my brother always got the preference for any adventure related activities. Whenever my elder brother wanted or spoke out of any games he got it easily whereas my mom always believed I would never be worth the expenditure of letting me join swimming or karate. I had to take admission in a dancing class where people use to laugh at me as I never liked dancing. Now that I earn and have a motorcycle I go for rides, now that I participate in those motorcycling expedition they are proud of me and does not restrict me from doing these”.

Therefore in Kolkata, women unlike the earlier days are now coming forward to protest this form of male patriarchy. It also helps in breaking and challenging the stereotypical image of women are only meant for private spaces. Women also make space for other women and encourage them for participating in this male dominated field. Risk, which is heavily

gendered and constructed are now challenged by these women who ride a motorcycle and never consider them to be inferior to their male counterparts. The previously held view of damaging their reputation if seen in wrong place and wrong time (Green and Singleton 2006:859) are now being repeatedly challenged by them. Though the restrictions are worse for women (61% or 11 out of 18 female respondents), few of men (4.87% or 4 out of 82 male respondents) reported that initially they faced restrictions for buying a motorcycle. Voluntary risk taking activities will be later analysed with the help of narratives in the subhead of edgework.

5.3 Edgework: Living Life On The Edge and Voluntary Risk Taking

I would like to use the concept of edgework in sociological account of voluntary risk taking analysis. This analysis is based on the primary data that I have collected. The newly concept of edgework helps in highlighting the sociologically relevant features of voluntary risk taking activities. Edgework is quite relevant here as there are many individuals who actively seek experiences which demands a high potential of risk and which is sometimes fatal. While societal constructs are looking for ways to reduce risk but high risk sports such as rock climbing, snorkeling, bungee jumping and hand gliding are common and have witnessed an unprecedented growth in recent years. What makes voluntary risk taking activities necessary for the well-being of some individuals, edgework perspective will be useful theoretically for understanding risk taking behaviour in general.

The concept of edgework is mainly borrowed from the journalist Hunter S Thompson. He mainly used this concept to explain his experimentation with drugs. The central theme in Thompson's work is mainly negotiating the boundaries between life and death, insanity and sanity, and consciousness and unconsciousness (1971). Lyng (1990) first analysed the framework of edgework within a social scientific framework by analysing the culture of skydiving. Lyng(1990) has organised three separate categories:

1. Kinds of activities that is eligible as edgework
2. The specific individual characteristics and capacities that is relevant to the edgework experience
3. Subjective sensation associated with participation of edgework.

“Discussing edgework in terms of the first dimension demonstrate the broad scope of the concept while directing attention to the features common to all forms of edgework. Focusing on the second dimension helps to identify the individual level factors that reflect most clearly the microstructural determinants of the edgework pattern. And finally the third dimension is concerned with the empirical patterns belonging to perhaps the most private level of individual experience” (Lyng 1990).

1. Edgework Activities

Activities which are qualified under the edgework concept have one major similar feature, that is, a significant threat to an individual's mental or physical well-being is quite observable. The quintessential experience of edgework activity will result in death or injury if the individual is not capable enough to meet the challenge. The best example of such as edgework activities are rock climbing, mountaineering, bungee jumping, skydiving, motorcycling or car racing, motorcycle stunting or extreme off roading. The threat of any kind of injury or death is omnipresent in such activities. Although few respondents have claimed ‘only those who are not serious about it are at risk’.

Jonathan (28, service manager) participates in TSD⁵ rally states *“one needs to love the sport all from his heart. You need to be serious about it”*

Anish (26, Service) frequently participates in motocross⁶ states *“one need to be very serious about it and also must be consistent about it. Participants come from all over India and if I to compete with them, I need to be very much serious about it”*.

Buli (35, Business) states *“whenever you are not serious about motorcycling and you take it for granted, things change sometime results in accidents which are fatal too”*.

Uday (39, Chattered Accountant) frequently participates in motorcross events and holds 5th-6th position in *Raid the Himalayas*⁷ each year states *“practise is the main trick to get success in such events. We easily come to know who is really serious about it. If someone is serious he will definitely come down to practise”*.

The boundary line or the ‘edge’ what Lyng (1990) states “is confronted by the *edgeworker* can be defined in many different ways: *Life versus death, consciousness versus unconsciousness, sanity versus Insanity, an ordered sense of self and environment versus disordered self and environment*”. Thompson (1971) incorporated edgework into certain

kinds of drug use. Individual who consume excessively amount of alcohol usually negotiate between consciousness and unconsciousness. While hallucinogenic drug user negotiate over ordered and disordered sense of self and environment (Lyng 1990). Similarly a track rider when tries to take a curve while doing 200-250 kilometre per hour, or a motorcyclists does the same in 100 kilometre per hour while the foot pegs hit the street and metals starts to spark, then the motorcyclist is negotiating with the shear line of ordered and disordered sense of self and environment.

Here I am trying to establish an explicit link between the form of edgework and the 'life and death variety' in the above stated example. Natalier states (2001: 73) "When individual measures risk they reference their own expertise, implicitly, at times explicitly rejecting some expert system as a valid means of identifying risk". Now if the motorcyclist fails to pull it out, then the individual ends up in the hospital. Another form of edgework can be associated with enormous use of drugs which involves negotiation between sanity and insanity. According to Lyng "edgework is best understood as an approach to the boundary between order and disorder, form and formlessness" (1990). Lyng also suggests (1990) one more category of edgework is pushing the performance limits of certain types of technology as when the 'test pilot' take their aeroplanes out of aerodynamic limits. Similarly, motorcyclists tend to push its limit 'to go outside the envelope'.

Rupam (29, Doctor) states "I always test my limit and to some extent push myself and my motorcycle".

Aaheli (29, Teacher) states "its important to push myself, honestly it is fun. I still remember of riding almost 800 kms to Allahabad in a day. I and my friend were riding all the way from Kolkata and our bums were toasted (laughs)".

Sayantana (24, Business) states "everyday it is a competition with the yesterday's me and me only. Until I test my limit how can I succeed".

Therefore riding a motorcycle in top speed tends to push there motorcycle to their mechanical limits. Another category also consists of testing of one's body or mind, as for example marathon runners attempting to break through their physical limits. Similarly a motorcyclist also tends to push one's limit both mentally or physically. In many instances, participants of edgework tend to discover the performance limits both in material form as well as for themselves. Therefore a motorcyclist is involved in both the categories of edgework that is

pushing their motorcycle to the mechanical limits as well as testing them both mentally or physically.

2. Skilled Edgeworkers

To perform such activities, it is important to be skilled enough to master one's will. It is quite important to exercise those specific skills in order to explore the performance limits. Edgeworkers definitely confirms that the developments of skills are quite valuable aspect of the experience. As for example skydivers are engrossed and preoccupied to develop their own skills in the art of flying and free fall. Likewise drug uses are also involved in such skilled performance, according to Thompson (1971) "you have to be good when you have taken nasty risk, or you will lose it, and then you are in serious trouble". Similarly track racer or 'passionate' motorcyclists also are involved in skilled performance; they tend to work beyond the limit to test their capabilities and eventually to excel or to create a prominent identity in the respective field. In creating an identity by stressing one's limit which includes a set of risk which are sometime fatal. As for example *Subhamoy Paul of Kolkata* aged 47 died on Oct 2016 after his two-wheeler fell 70 feet down in the third leg (day) of *Raid the Himalaya* (India's toughest Motocross event). Some can overcome the fear of death or risk and thus they excel. Edgeworkers possesses a special ability which transcends activity with specific skills such as riding a motorcycle, driving a car, flying an aeroplane. These are a unique skill which is the central characteristics of all types of edgework that is the capacity to manipulate situation in their own terms where most of other non-edgeworker would regard that as entirely uncomfortable or at complete chaos. The more specific attitude that demands from such an edgeworker is control over the nerves where non-edgeworker would freeze or paralysed by fear. The ability to act for mere survival in such situation makes an individual an edgeworker. Though specific skill is often regard as 'mental toughness' but the capacity to focus on survival and not paralyzed by fear is essentially cognitive in nature. The cognitive nature of the skill is quite prominent in any athletic form of edgework.

To few of my respondents the 'survival capacity' and having nerves of steel is an innate ability. They support the notion of edgework actions are basic instinct, which people are born with and that edgeworker respond immediately to such situation without even thinking as if they know 'the right stuff' to implement at 'the right place'. Adverse situation for the edgeworkers also helps them in being more practical. Edgeworkers know where to limit and what to be avoided (Lyng 1990, Green and Singleton 2006).

Aaheli (29, Teacher) was experiencing an adverse situation where her motorcycle broke down and she was stranded alone at interiors of Arunachal while it was getting dark states “*I knew exactly what to be done, motorcycles are machine and sometimes it gives up on you. The place was not safe and I was standing in middle of nowhere while it was dark. I stood there for almost two hours and found a car crossing me. I left my motorcycle with all my belongings except my purse and valuable documents. At that point of time when I reached a locality, had only a mechanic but it was closed too. So I requested to stay back at the car owner's place after they advised not to head back to the motorcycle. Though I was quite tensed but at that moment it was the right thing to do*”.

The above presumption has contradictions too. As for example in a track race when an individual crashes or heavily injured in accidents, it does not merely indicates that some risk in the respective sport are beyond edgeworker ability to manage, rather it denotes that everyone does not have the same ‘survival capacity’. It is also seen that skilled performance of edgeworker varies from time to time. An individual, if fails to succeed once in any respective sport, he or she might not repeat the same mistake on the next track day. To some of my respondents the above stated notion that this edgework capacities are in born capabilities or are possessed by few.

According to Santanu (32, Motorcycle Mechanic) “my father was also a motorcyclists, we had 3-4 bullets⁸ in our home. Motorcycling is in blood”.

Supritim (26, Business) “in my family I have RD 350, RX 100, old model CI bullet, they all are ridden by my family members. Motorcycle, not blood is in running in my veins”.

Sadh (27, Business) “My father always took my mom on his motorcycle for short/long trips. When I saw young I still remember riding as a pillion for short trips when my mom and sister accompanied us in the car. So I was always ready to ride. I was a born rider.”

People who have similar belief share a powerful solidarity with one another perceived on such elite status. Lyng (1990) states “A logical consequences of this belief is the notion that a demonstrable capacity for ‘crowding the edge’ in one domain is evidence of one's ability to handle other forms of edgework”. With this perception an individual who has accomplished enough skilled performance in one type of edgework also try other types as well.

3. Edgework Emotions

Participating in different kind of edgeworks doesn't mean that all of the edgeworkers can relate to the same sensation or emotions. Although the respondents portrayed similar emotions such as self-satisfaction, self-realisation or what Lyng (1990) says "self-actualization or self-determination". "In pure form of edgework, individual experience themselves as instinctively acting entities, which leaves them with a purified and magnified sense of self".

Juben (52, Career Counsellor) states "i have being riding motorcycle for long, its' really helps be in being calm. Ask my wife, she would tell you how. Riding a motorcycle would sometime let you in very tight situation where you need to very calm. This is basically a self-realization process where you learn to behave, where you unlearn to take things for granted".

Ranabir (36, RE Ride Coordinator) "the satisfaction that I get after completing a ride makes me fell on top of the world. I fell if I can so this I can easily the overcome all other difficulties".

Sudeep (48, Business) "riding to interior places or taking bad roads is life-enhancing to me. See you cannot take things for granted as my daughter does (laughs). In himalayas kids does not have any resources to learn and read but still they excel and are getting into Govt. jobs".

A series of sensation can be easily counted from such scenario. These kinds of edgeworks which involves series of threat, it's definite that the individual counters series of significant degree of fear initially but anticipate well through such previous experiences. If such conclusions persist across the different forms of edgework, should easily eliminate the popular notions of stereotypical fearless individuals and voluntary risk takers. Even before a track race, experienced motorcyclists often report to feel nervous before the race.

As Rajib (26, a track racer) states "every time before the starting line I make it a' point to take a pee, I feel so damn nervous....".

Uday (39, Chatterer Accountant) who ranks in almost every motocross event all over India reports "being nervous is a good sign (laughs), but can't afford to have nervous breakdown during the ride. I am participating in motocross event since mid-80s, I still get nervous before the race".

But surviving such challenges one move to the final phase of experience where fear overcomes the feeling of excitement. In such situation an individual feels capable of negotiating with any threatening situations. Therefore edgework experiences can also alter perceptions of an individual. Experienced edgeworker according to Lyng repeatedly reports of being highly confident once they ‘approach towards the edge’ (Lyng 1990). As for example while taking a curve at 130kmph in a race track. It might be a matter of second for the onlookers but for edgeworkers is usually a lot slower. Thompson (1971) says “focussed perception also correlates with a sense of cognitive control the essential objects in the environment or a feeling of identity with these objects”. Likewise respondents report to have a feeling of a unique connection or ‘oneness’ with the object. They strongly maintain the view that ‘no one knows better’ the machine or the ‘object’.

Deepak (28 service) he participates in racing since he was a kid, states *“to excel in track race one needs to overcome two situations: one the fear of crashing at the same place and another, motorcyclist have to be the one with their machines. I and my machine become a single entity”*.

They also state *feeling* the motorcycle are very important. Sometimes my respondents consider their motorcycles to be a living entity⁹. It is largely seen that they even talk to their machines and sometimes kiss them. In difficult times¹⁰ with their motorcycle it is even more noticeable. Respondents also discussed about the edgework experience as living in another dimension.

A rally rider Jonathan (28, service Manager) comments “I used to indulge myself into PlayStation for hours. While in a rally I strongly feel that I have reached a different dimension while riding my motorcycle in different terrain during a rally championship. To me it seems so real”.

Sadh (27, Business) “I loves playing games, online games. Similar kind of sensation I have while I ride even”.

Rahul (30, Musician) “states it’s not the same thrill like riding a motorcycle but obviously I feel immense joy and pleasure for the play stations”. Edgeworkers reports that language cannot explain the vision or the feeling they are engrossed into.

Voluntary risk taking definitely includes the notions of edgework. As Lyng (1990) states “Goffman actualize is risk taking behaviour as ‘action’, which he defines as behaviour that is

consequential for the individual, that has problematic outcomes, and that is undertaken for its own sake". His empirical narration of the concept of action will also include some of the activities that I have characterized as edgeworks such as high risk occupation and leisure activities. Edgeworkers are typically never interested in believing in 'fate' or gambling with their lives in hands of fate.

Ayan (31, Tour Guide) states "I never ever feel that accidents are fate, they are simple created either by the rider's casualness or the opponent ones".

Neerjan (25, Musician) states "I got to work hard for my happiness, if somebody helps me that I will appreciate. But will never call it a fate".

Mousumi (32, Business) "I love travelling with my husband. We have definitely faced a lot of worse situations but have never blamed it on destiny".

They tend to avoid circumstances or threatening situations which they cannot control. As for example Lyng shows an example of rides at an amusement park. "Similar activities involved place in one's fate in the hands of a rider operator of unknown competence, these activities are usually avoided. Moreover they feel equally uncomfortable when their well-being is left to the whims of fate" (1990). Usually an edgeworker will never vouch on pure gamble, no matter how bad it is. Riders try not travel as a passenger/pillion with their fellow rider unless of an emergency. More than majority (78.9%) of my respondent would not ride as a pillion unless a real emergency. For few in worst condition they would ride their friend's motorcycle and take them as pillion but never be a pillion.

According to Aaheli (29, Teacher) "my friend Joy would never let me ride my bike if does not have his own bike, he would ride and I have to sit as a pillion. Not only me, he does that with everyone".

Deep (36, Business) "I would never ride as a pillion for long ride. I can't let someone take my life in their hands (laughs). Seriously speaking I get scared once I do that".

Avik (26, RE Ride manager) "I prefer riding and not sitting behind until I am drunk. I am really scared to do so. Once I even faced an minor accident while as a pillion. Therefore I am now very serious about it".

So to conclude its' is quite important to emphasize that Lyng's skydivers or the male motorcyclists need to be "understood as being not only a part of, but also fundamentally connected with, a more general understanding of masculinity" (Walklate 1997: 41). This is

the culturally coded norm which values power and control, a major practise of what men do. Men tend to assert control over the uncontrollable situations; which has a definite positive side and it is also an ego-enhancing process. This masculinity which we can easily relate to what Connell calls 'hegemonic masculinity' (1987).

5.4 Primary Concern of Risk While Riding A Motorcycle

In this section I would discuss the common fears and risk faced by men and women motorcyclists. Unlike women, men have a strong constructed notion that they can't be sexually violated. Male Respondents are not barred from the harassment if not rape or molestation. Various narratives would exemplify the above stated notion.

Ranabir (36, RE Ride Coordinator) states "at Jammu Kashmir, I was going to Ladakh with couple of my friends. They were caring a short Indian Flag tied to their motorcycle. I was ahead and was waiting, when they the last ride came he was trembling and told me somebody slapped him and thrown away the Indian flag. This incident happened long back".

Sayantan (24, Business) states "When we went to Sikkim in the middle of the road it got dark, I had an accident my bike tumbled couple of times in those hilly places. Then my bike won't start. Basically my bike batteries got damaged and we were so puzzled that it did not strike to any of us that if we change the batteries things will be ok. That was the worst experience that I can share. My team members were so scared. We stood there for long, feeling helpless".

Motorcyclists have been attacked and on occasion even attempted to murder. Such incidents were mainly for the apparels they were wearing and the gadgets they were carrying; and most importantly the costly motorcycle.

Anbee (32, Teacher) who was riding a superbike (Suzuki Hayabusa) of 1200cc that cost 8.5lac approximately to Puri, Orissa states *"it was already dusk, I and my group was riding a little fast in order to reach the destination before its get dark. I suddenly saw a group of motorcycle following us. Since we all were riding superbikes¹¹ it was impossible for them to ride along with us so we lost them easily. After 20mnts we thought of taking a tea break. As soon as I took a sip of the tea suddenly I heard a loud unfamiliar sound (gunshot) and my knee was hurting and bleeding ferociously. Out of pain I screamed at top of my voice and fainted. Next I woke up in a hospital lying on the bed. I was informed by my friends that they*

took my bike and left. My friends were so worried about me that they hardly noticed what they were up to”.

With the help of in-depth interview narratives I have narrowed down the primary and the major concerns of risk of my respondents. Though risk is subjective as stated earlier, however I tried to quantify the major factors. Male motorcyclists are mainly concerned for **cattle or dogs**, 35% are literary scared of such animals that wonder around.

According to Neerajan (25, Service) “Not running over stray animals, this is the first and foremost priority”.

8% male respondents worry about the **Jay walker**. 15% male are frightened about the **road kill** specially while riding at night it becomes very difficult to identity a road kill.

Abhijeet (42, Doctor) “It’s just the other factors like stupid people on the road and the innocent animals who don’t have any clue what they are doing and another thing is oil split on the road which is very dangerous you cannot intercept them you cannot survive them but your mind is calculating everything”.

12% of men are worried about the **oil spill**. It is quite difficult to lift up the motorcycle even if once an individual fall because of oil spill, as it becomes slippery and the tarmac road loses its grip. 10% of male motorcyclists are scared of **dense jungle** while 5% try and avoid **shady places**.

Deep (36, Business) states “this is one of the worst experiences I had. It was before 8-9 years back when there was acute problem of insurgencies in interior of Manipur, I was travelling solo crossing a dense jungle, and had a fat tyre therefore could not cross that place in day light. The roads were also terrible so it took me hours. I was held captive on gun point and stayed there for almost three days. I don’t know why they left me next morning, may be because they were sure that I was just a traveller nothing more than that”.

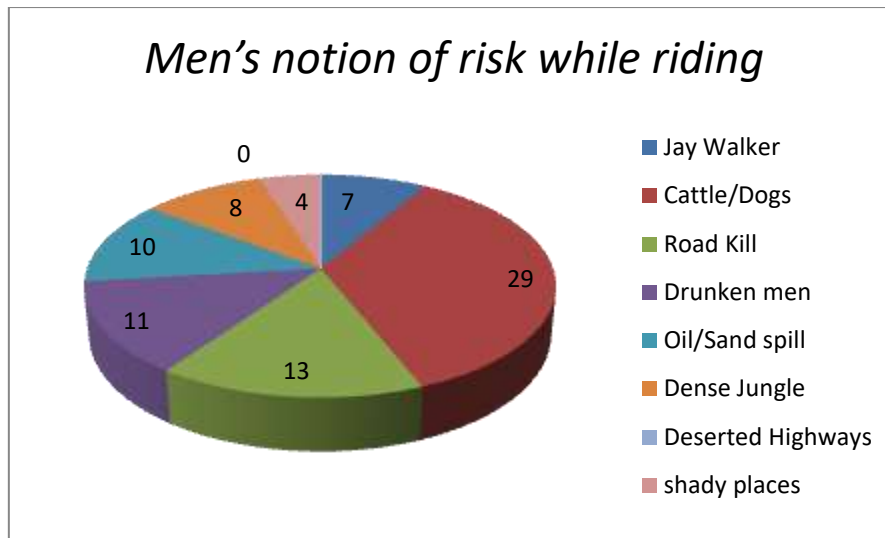


Figure 5.1: Men's notion of risk while riding

Sudipto (34, service) states "while travelling I try and avoid jungle. I mainly travel with my wife, her safety is the prime importance to me. Even if I travel alone I would not prefer areas in between a dense jungle. But still if there is no other option I would not cross at least at night".

Only 13% are scared of **drunken men** on the way. So they mainly prefer not riding at night. Strikingly men respondents have not reported about risk related to deserted highways either on night or day.

Risk for the unknown is also similar for the male respondents but the parameters are definitely not same. They are mainly worried about theft, buglers and dacoits on the way but not sexual violence. They have a preconceived notion that they can never be sexually violated unlike women. This is mainly because the firm ideals of masculinities, constructs that they cannot be sexually violated. While for women, risk is mainly sexual than theft or burglary but for men it is just the opposite. It has to do it with heteronormativity or masculinities.

The majority of female respondents slightly less than the half, that is 44% respondents are frightened by **shady areas** and **drunken men**. The primary concern of these women is drunken men not because all have encountered or witnessed but mainly seen or heard on social media and/or they are also repeatedly instructed not to be around those kinds of shady places where drunken men are more.

Himadri (29, Teacher) reported about an encounter with a drunken man at night but many have seen men drunk and wondering around. *She comments "I was tenting in Manipur with a friend, the worst place I visited till date. It was 25th December around midnight we were just*

about to fall sleep suddenly heard some noise. I opened the tent zip, found two men drunk, one completely drunk and couldn't even stand other was standing upright but was drunk. Problem is I couldn't interpret what they were saying as at Manipur, language is a big barrier. After long heated conversation to our relief they left. But after a while I again found out one of them (who couldn't stand) were still around. Now I was really scared and I just pushed the man as he wanted to get into our tent. It was a horrible night that we have faced. Manipur is a worse place not because of this situation but because lot other situations that I faced".

According to Udit (28, Service) states "before I went to Nagaland and Manipur I knew that it was a dry state (alcohol is not legal). But to my utmost surprise when I went to Manipur I found in evening every dark lane or alley is with people drinking or already drunk. Nagaland was far better."

Aaheli (29, Teacher) "I overtook a bike on the way to kolkghat, I don't know what happened, he suddenly hurriedly came and again over took me which was completely okay with me as I never speed up with such people on the road. He suddenly stopped his motorcycle in front of me a started shouting at me stating I tried to smash him whereas I never did so, I was even quite slow otherwise he couldn't have over took me. I tried to make him understand but I failed. I guess he was drunk. To my surprise I saw people walking by but no one bothered to ask 'what's the problem'. Finally I had no choice other than flee. I guess I was riding at least 120 kmph for next 25kms then I stopped in a petrol pump".

28% of female respondent are primarily scared of **dense jungle** they do not prefer to ride through a jungle at least not alone or late at night. 17% are also scared of **deserted highways** if not in day time but definitely at night they hardly ride on those places. Experiences of my respondents of sexual objectification are largely related to what Valentines (1989) discussion of the 'geography of fear' and Phadke (2012) discussion of 'gendered space'. Their comfort level in public and outdoor space reduces because women keep on associating these spaces with male violence and violation. This situation gets doubled when they experience unpredictable encroachment like catcalls or inappropriate glances. According to Valentine (1989) "this inability of women to choose whom to interact and communicate profoundly affects the sense of security in public". As for example Aaheli (29, Teacher) reported that a man made her so uncomfortable at a particular roadside Inn, she decided not to visit that again alone. There are several instances where the respondents felt that they might be a victim of harassment and left those places. Respondents reported adverse situations where

they encountered few young men at road side *dhabas* constantly taunting and whistling or catcalling them and/or looking at the respondents almost right through their clothes.

Mouha (30 Web designer) states “while on the way to Pune, I and Raima were resting on a road side dhaba and having some coffee or tea, we got so irritated that finally we just left. It seems some muscular locals’ looks like goons kept whistling after few minutes we removed our helmet”.

Biyas (31, Service) “i was waiting in a road side dhaba for my friends as I reached a little early, people out there kept on talking and catcalling in their own language which I hardly could understand but they were talking about me that’s I am sure of because once my friends reached the spot they stopped whatever they were doing and started ignoring us. May be because of the numerical strength of my group was more than them”.

Lamb (1981) indicates that men often use ‘*gaze*’¹² to maintain their masculine status and power over were women. Public space mainly in Western society has always been dominated by heterosexual, white men who have controlled, dominated and also even excluded others by the process of either use of violence or/and exerting aggressive ‘*gaze*’ (Green et al. 2006; Lupton, 1999; Pain, 2001). Here I would like to argue this ‘*gaze*’ is not only predominant in western societies and almost in every patriarchal society where women constantly have to negotiate with their gender roles. After the above stated kind of experiences, my respondents felt very much unsafe and concerned whenever they are riding a motorcycling to unknown places.

Himadri (29, Teacher) often travels alone states gazing is one of the main problem that she faced than whistling. She states “as I sometime travel solo to places and at times I feel so irritated when men starts gazing at me whenever I take off the helmet. Initially they look at me as they are amazed to see a woman travelling alone and then once I light a cigarette then they are just more amazed”.

Aaheli (29, Teacher) also states something similar “whenever the helmet is off people find some amusement in me I guess and keeps on starring. At times I even stood up went to the concerned person and inquired if he has a problem in me staying in that place”.

Irani (39, Nutritionist) “ten years ago people use to find me some woman with godly powers (I think, laughs) and use to give glances to find out what exactly I will do or I am trying to do”.

Buli (35, Business) “when I started riding people don’t just stare, they groak. It’s like damn that’s a bomb. Whatever may I wear was not appropriate for the onlookers they will anyway stare”.

Therefore worries for vulnerability which includes fear of rape and harassment, significantly related to characteristics of the particular place where women motorcyclists are in, as for example sign of graffiti, litter, strange people hanging around (catcalling and whistling) are ‘signs of decay’ (Valentines 1989). Violence inflicted on a woman by one particular man usually becomes fear of violence from any other man. Therefore after Pain (1991) this fear in the streets or highways turns space into highly masculine field constructing *gendered space* (Phadke 2012).

Mousumi (29, Business) travels with her husband reports “I have seen a situation while crossing Malda late night, people are totally drunk and roaming in the streets. My partner asked me to keep quite so to keep my identity hidden otherwise chances of harassment are more. Also in daytime, on a lonely place I remain silent, I don’t open my hair. Like in a tea shop, I probably take off the helmet but I do not take out the scarf, so that people will not recognize me as a girl easily. Sometimes I need to hide myself to keep myself safe, because I am a girl. In India, today’s situation, girls are not safe in any place. When you are a good looking, people will get bad intension especially when travelling alone. I ride with my partner as a co-rider, still people continuously ask me are you a rider or a pillion. As a girl we have to face lot of challenges”.

Nilofer (28, Service) “While going to Imphal from Senapati I had to pee but no places for nature’s call. Bushes came to my help. Soon after I was back, I opened up my helmet for a smoke, my friend told me to sit on the bike and leave then and there. Rowdy, my friend was very scared while he was on the bike, somebody came and spanked him hard on his butt, and left telling ‘get your ass out of this place asshole’, and that man’s face was completely painted white and was carrying a AK 47 with him”.

However in the light of this research women motorcyclist's experiences of violence and harassment specially sexual offences terrified women in many ways affected their lives for a long time afterwards. Few women motorcyclists after such adverse experiences hugely affected their freedom of mobility; as a result they became excluded from such activities. Burden of such experiences or memories are so strong that one needs more than an entirely new environment in order to recover.

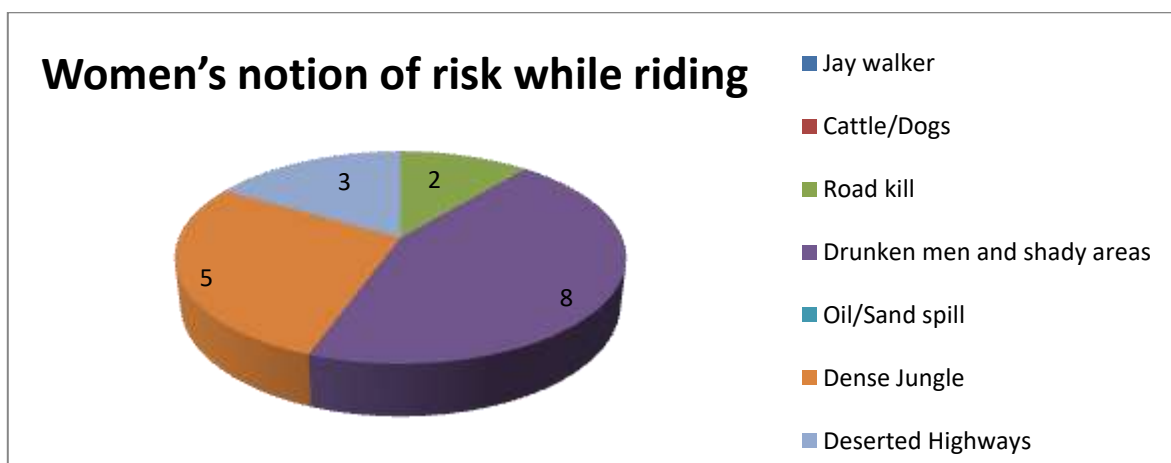


Figure 5.2: Women's notion of risk while riding

Negligible percentage that is only 11% are worried about **road kill**.

Nilofer (28, Service) states "I still remember that night when I was returning from silliguri, that stretch had no light. I was not in much speed but suddenly found myself hitting the divider and fell. When I got up I found I found blood all around but couldn't feel any pain. Then I found I ran over a road kill, which happened may be couple of hours back so there was blood all around".

Jay walker, cattle or dog, oil or sand spill is never a chief or prime concern for women. They are more worried about drunken men and shady places.

Raima (25, Homemaker) states "I usually do not talk to people much. Previously I always did that but now things are different. While crossing Bihar, people tried to lured me into some shaddy places to rest, as I was looking for a road side hotel. I got so scared and I rode my bike straightway for 50kms at a stretch so that they don't follow me then I stood".

5.4.1 'Safe' while riding solo

Risk is a neutral concept (Lupton 1999: 9) as well as situational. Individual travelling all alone for a trip might feel at risk, which they might see not as risky while travelling with the group. As risk is also subjective, this section mainly deals with those narratives and the statistical data which proves its subjective nature. 33% of male motorcyclists reported that they are scared to travel alone. They fear to ride solo, in a motorcycle trip. Travelling solo is difficult according to

Sayantan (24, Business) "my parents won't allow firstly and secondly in an unknown place it better to be with friends. In case of bike breakdown or maybe at places that passes through

dense jungle I feel scared. I prefer travelling with a group. Its better travelling with brothers, brother look out for each other in need”.

41% of male respondents are concerned mainly about their motorcycle and wellbeing but not scared. They are basically worried if there is an accident no one will be there for them.

As Faizal (43, Entrepreneur) states “I am not scared but in a breakdown I have to depend on unknown people which is not advisable. People tend to charge you more in times when they find out I am alone and desperately need help”.

11% of respondents are quite comfortable in riding solo.

As Deb Dutta (25, Sales Manager) usually travel solo states “It’s completely okay for me to travel alone, I go for many solo trips. I mix with people well”.

Kaustab (42, Doctor) states “I generally travel alone with my Harley (Harley Davidson), mixing with the locals is the priority. I tent and I stay at night alone or with the locals or at their home. I love travelling alone. I never faced any security issue. Well I might be lucky”.

14% of men reported that safety depends on how much u can control the outcome an action. They are quite aware of the consequences of their actions which are definitely important to keep a person safe in solo trips.

Anupam (26, Service) states “you need to control the situation. If I feel the situation can go out of my calculation I prefer to stay put. There were places where I travel solo as well as with groups. Problems can be anywhere the only important aspect is to control the situation and that all”.

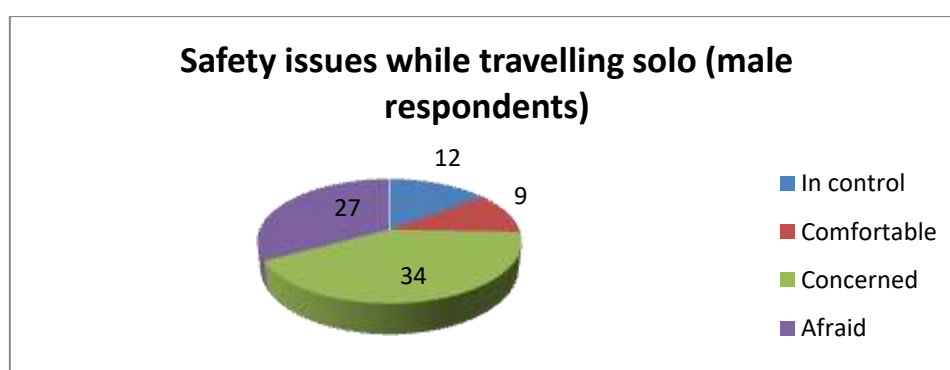


Figure 5.3: Safety issues while travelling solo (male respondents)

44% of female respondents reported that they are scared by the notion of travelling alone. Women feel more at risk at particular places and in some particular times. To women fear is

not spatial; risk is situational. Few of my female respondents as well as few male respondents felt significantly less in control, unsafe, comfortable from others when riding a motorcycle alone. They even reported that they were more concerned as well as afraid of the 'gendered spaces' (Phadke 2012), that they felt more unsafe on the less travelled trails and fear of being murdered or raped and one would ever find them.

Mouha (30, Web designer) "I hardly go for solo rides honestly I am not so comfortable in that. I only feel that I won't be safe if I face some serious trouble".

Biyas (31, Serivce) "I never went solo for any trips may be later I would. Since I started few years earlier I feel I will not be capable enough to take up decisions while riding solo.

Raima (25, Homemaker) states "it's not that I don't travel solo but rarely. But I don't travel solo to place where there is chance of being mugged or murdered or raped. My in-laws as well as my husband always warn me before stepping out as today's news scare them to hell at times".

Here respondents like Raima, Mouha, Biyas and many others are all victims of 'production of spaces' through which gender arbitrates eventually results in production and structuring of spaces. Space, according to Green and Singleton "is gendered, sexualized, classed and racialized; and ease of access and movement through space for different groups is subject to constant negotiation and contestation, and is embedded in relations of power" (2006:859). So women have to 'fight' for constructing their own spatial positioning and negotiate.

Their significant ones¹³ strictly instructed not to ride solo. They always look out for their respective MC (motorcycle community) members who are trustworthy and they can rely on them. Out of 18 female respondents 12 reported that they even don't prefer travelling with any other motorcycling groups. They will travel with their own MC members.

Monami (22, Student) states "I never travel alone, my mom will kill me if I do so. Moreover in the city we hear so much violence against women and when I go for rides it is usually through highways and after dark it becomes deserted. I will never ride alone to those places. Better we ride in packs, with brothers mainly whom I can trust and bank on".

22% are concerned about their safety and security but are not scared. They travel solo rarely but mostly in packs.

Soma (30 Yoga Instructor) “When I ride alone I feel concerned about bad roads or sudden rain. If I am not carrying a rain coat then it’s a real concern if there is a downpour. When I was returning from Purulia, I got detached from my riding group in Bardhaman. I couldn’t decide which way to go as I have never driven alone. I was going round and round in the same place. I did this for an hour. I was feeling very uneasy as I don’t know anyone. It was an unknown place and people were unknown to me, I was scared specially being a woman”.

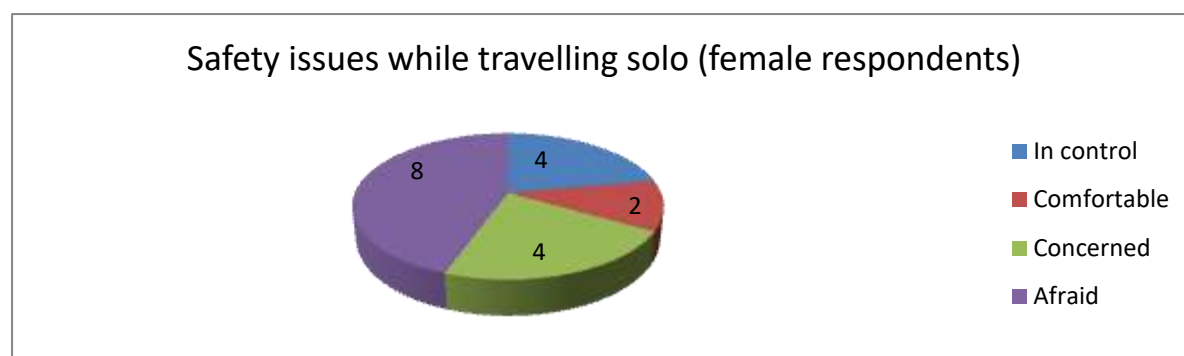


Figure 5.4: Safety issues while travelling solo (female respondents)

According to Moumita (29, Service) states “my botheration is more about the motorcycle than safety. Nothing really happens but women are scared mostly without any reason. What I am concerned about the breakdown and accidents. If I travel in a group I don’t have to worry about that”.

11% are quite comfortable in riding solo. Despite of repeated request by their family and peer groups they still prefer to travel alone. Few family members of this 11% respondent even encourage and support them.

Even according to Himadri (29, Teacher) “when I went solo at arunachal with my RE, two questions were common: are u alone? and don’t you feel scared? Even the locals were so very surprized and repeatedly warned as well as requested me not to travel alone further”.

Raima (25, Homemaker) “I usually do not get company as most of my friends are into some business or office. So when there is a plan of riding somewhere I do don’t wait for others. Till today I had no such significant problems by which I won’t be travelling solo again”.

22% of other female motorcyclists feel the consequences can be controlled. They rarely travel alone but are not scared, if they have to travel alone they prefer not taking any kind of risk. *As Aaheli (29, Teacher) states “Regarding the security and safety, I take up necessary steps not to fall into such problems. I hardly talk to local people if I don’t need any help. They keep*

on staring at me as if I have done something terrible or as if I am an alien. But I try to handle situations with much care; I don't take up decision in haste".

5.5 Risk Management & Control: Strategies, Negotiations

Perfect control can be achieved only when the interaction between the motorcyclists and motorcycle are perfectly balanced and the environment is flawless. Natalier (2001:71) states "control is the ability to foresee and navigate potential hazards, thus erasing risk in a material way". However it is also important to learn the normative behaviour to control the outcome of their actions. Edgeworkers cite examples of control, while encouraging the young or aspiring motorcyclists to take up such activities. The key to control a situation is fundamentally the right technique, with measures of self-protection. An individuals will only extract pleasure and gain for such risk seeking activities when they could control and negotiate situations. All my respondents accept the notions of wearing compulsory helmets¹⁴. The majority of them wear proper gloves, jackets and riding boots for safety. Safety according to Phadke (2012:55) is a "sense of physical, intellectual and emotional lack of threat at the individual level". Protection of oneself and survival is always valued because it helps the interviewed respondents to concentrate solely on motorcycling. But it can be duly noted in spite of such control, it also leads to accident. Natalie (2001) comments "regardless of perceived risk of an accident, the marginalization of risk is pursued through claims that motorcyclist can, and must, take responsibility for their own safety". This is section I would like to show how my respondents manage risk and control them. Risk, here is highly gendered (Lupton 1999, Walkate 1997, Pain 1991, et. al.) and situational (Phadke2012, Sur 2012) hence it varies greatly from male to female respondents. I would now show the various strategies and negotiations of both genders, they exert to control the outcomes.

a. The 'rider code': A basic strategy for motorcyclists

It is a basic strategy taken up by both the genders to be safe in some unknown environment. A distinctive strategy for the safeguard of the motorcyclist is the *rider code*. Every motorcyclist looks out for each other while on or off the road. It is very important to understand each other well to be safe. A code is always maintained within the group of motorcyclists to ensure their safety and wellbeing. The notion of *rider code* enriches the concept of brotherhood. Brotherhood as stated in earlier chapter is a herd of motorcycle riders

which mainly includes brothers from different mothers and also sisters who ride motorcycles. Brotherhood is a strong notion where motorcyclist look for each other, known or unknown and help them in need. It is believed that if a motorcyclist helps the other known or unknown motorcyclist in need, help will definitely come back when required. This concept of brotherhood among the riders can be also found in the *rider code*. It applies to motorcycle riders of all types as *learner*, *cruiser*, *adventure tourer*, *stunter* as well as *rally riders*¹⁵. This *rider code* is basically an informal and unwritten understanding among the motorcyclist who looks out for each other and will never keep other stranded. For example if a motorcyclist finds another motorcyclist standing on the way to Leh or on any trip, they will immediately stop to check on them and ask them if they need any assistance. At times people also hang around till help is arrived.

Ramneek (32 sales executive) states “I always count on the other motorcyclist in times of my bike breakdown; there will be definitely a brother who will stop for help”.

Mouha (30 web designer) states “it was pretty strange to see when I was driving my car and had a problem nobody on the way stopped or checked on me. But on the same way when I was riding my motorcycle and had a problem, I simply wait for another rider to pass by and within a short notice there was somebody who stood and offered me help”.

Sayandeep (30, service) states “on many occasions while riding, I have crossed the riders, who stopped alongside of the road. I approach them ask them, through a gesture shrugging my shoulders if they need any help. We always do the similar activity because we are brothers”.

Himadri (29 teacher) comments “while coming back from Spiti, I was leading the way and went straight ahead thinking my team mate where behind me. After riding long I found myself nowhere. I stood there for a while and called them, since they were not picking up the call I thought they were still riding so I waited and it was almost dark. Four or five motorcyclist crossed me, approached me and asked me if I need any help. One of the motorcyclist even waited till my friends arrived as it was getting dark, though I never asked for it”.

The normative behaviour that is discussed the earlier chapter *culture*, also helps in formation of the *rider code*. Behaviour such as thumbs up or thumbs down is also a part of this *rider code*. There are no uniform or standardized gestures for these nonverbal communications but it works quite well. On occasions of vague gestures or miscommunication the motorcyclist

will pull over to ask if everything is alright. This is how brotherhood is reinforced in motorcycling. While riding in a group if a rider has to stop the others will also do the same. Though sometime it is frustrating to find the lost rider and circle the same way for numerous times but they will still do for the sake of brotherhood. If a rider peels off from the group the others will wait or find him or her out, no matter what it takes.

b. Strategies maintained by Women Motorcyclist

Women produce safety in many different ways. Some carry weapons as pepper spray, chilli powder, asking male escorts, keeping some special number dialled etc. (Phadke 2012). Similarly women motorcyclists also perform safety measures of various types. Previously I have already discussed the primary concerns of risk; here I would show with narratives how they cope up with those risks. In this context I would like to portray the negotiations they engage in situations; where others would freeze. According to Valentine (1991) “fearful women are constantly alert to what happens around them”. They keep on scanning their environment and negotiate with their motorcycle routes in relation to other people which are mostly men. The dominant strategy is to distance themselves from potential dangers (ibid.: 1992). If by any chance they interpret the slightest chance of any danger they prefer running away from those problems even if they have to compromise their trip. Phadke comments “women particularly negotiate temporality in the production of safety” (2012: 57). Women from their childhood days are socialized to be careful with the strangers therefore it becomes their basic instinct to respond to it. Safekeeping strategies finally becomes self-surveillance activities by positioning themselves to authenticate their vulnerable natures.

Women usually negotiate and re-negotiate gender meanings challenging the traditionally and stereotypically roles assigned to them. But women fear objectification, harassment while attempting to ride a motorcycle. Women motorcyclists decision concerning which route to follow and which places to stay enroute are always and largely modified by the threat of violence and fear of crime. They look for places to sleep in motels which are usually referred to by another motorcyclist. Most of the female motorcyclist tends to book in advance hotels or roadside inns when they travel solo. They mostly **pre-book the hotels or homestays** in order to be safe and secure.

According to Raima (25, Homemaker) states “I always pre-book the hotels before I travel. I never ride at dark. I do not usually talk much of the locals around. Sometimes how they look at me it is quite scary”.

Udita (28, Service) *“its’ always better to pre-book the hotels where I go for rides. I hardly travel solo but I always prefer to book rooms”.*

They also, even have to **change their location** if needed. These different strategies function as social control mechanisms that keep women safe and quite literally in place.

Twinkle (31, Tour Operator) *“I keep changing my places of visit if I heard something not right either from my friend or for the locals”.*

Mousumi (32, Business) travels with her husband states *“I always pre-book the stays but also cancel if needed. Many times I did so because the other couple told me not to go there”.*

Irani (39, Nutritionist) states *“I had to cancel few of my scheduled places for a trip to north east when I heard that women are not accepted quite well as men. I faced several problems specially 9-10 years ago when women were hardly into motorcycling”.*

According to Pain (1991) female victimization is of special interest since gender is one of the most crucial factors affecting the fear of violence and geographical mobility in private areas. Just because of fear, women therefore limit their access within public space. Even it is seen that few women motorcyclists tend to trust more male motorcyclist over women in terms of their safety.

There are many motorcycle events where women motorcyclists are expected to seek acquaintance. They have to be careful in dealing with the unknown riders, even though they are much better than the other non-motorcycle riders. But still they have to be careful in maintaining a balance in appearing too available or accessible. Existence of a boyfriend or a husband can easily manipulate to their advantage. According to Gardner (1988) *“it must be one that man cannot appreciate, list the game up; in other words she must deliver the misleading access information with sufficient conviction and authenticity for the man to believe her”.* Women motorcyclists tend to come up with **misleading and fake information** even when they are asked repeatedly; to limit the further conversation.

Raima (25, Housewife) states *“I would always tell them, my husband is on the way, even if he is mile apart..... if I find something fishy”.*

Udita (28, Service) *“in situations as it was raining, I had to wait in a shady place till the rain stops. Few people were quite inquisitive about my details. I told them indirectly that my friend are stuck few kilometres behind for rain, they will reach here anytime soon. Once the*

rain stopped I pretended of getting calls for my friends, waiting for me behind. I told those guys they have asked me to ride forward in order not to waste time and I left and reached my destination safely”.

Buli (35, Business) “this incident was long back when I was not married or didn’t have a boyfriend. I was having dinner in a road side Inn and was quite late and alone. An individual was extra friendly with me which bothered me a lot. Somehow I pretended that I was calling my finance and reporting about that day’s ride. That curious fellow kept on asking me who was it? After I answered he suddenly taken a back and stopped being over friendly”.

Tora (28, teacher) travels with her husband states “it was the trip to all the beaches in West Bengal couple of years back. There was a group of local people as well as police who stopped us at night for checking papers. Found out that they were harassing my boyfriend. After long I opened my helmet and asked the senior police officer about the problem. They were surprized to realise that I am a woman and I am not yet married to my boyfriend. They started asking me weather I ran away from my home or not. Therefore I decided to be a little witty. I just told them that my parents and local police station are informed with an application that we are out for a ride which was false I never informed those police, only my parents knew. Soon after they easily let me and my boyfriend go with much respect”.

Such conversation might protect the women motorcyclist for the time being but ironically she is again dependent on a man for her own safety. However, it recast the category of being feminine which is weak and vulnerable. (Campbell 2005). Acts such as staying away from dangerous public arena and seeking for protection from all men by one male maintains the men's dominance of public space over women. (Valentine 1989). Thus it can be stated with violence or threat of violence; public spaces are always kept male dominated where women are almost excluded from this arena. Koskela also states (1999) “By restricting their mobility because of fear, women unwittingly reproduce male domination over space”.

According to Pain (1997) “daytime is not considered to be frightening as night time: Temporarily as well as spatially, is an important factor in women's fear”. Women feel their freedom to ride motorcycles is over the day. Therefore as stated above 44% the majority of women are scared of riding in deserted highways especially when dark. Though it can also be noted, however, that night is a product of social construction of fear. In daily life this happens through parental warnings, discussions among friends, history of violence that they faced with anybody furthers the cultural and social transmission and reproduction of these socially

constructed ideologies continues (Valentine 1992). This ideology is largely supported by the crime news and also the print media and the focus is mainly on sensational issues which generally exaggerate violence and tend to blame female victims for their destiny. Thus fear is deeply embedded in the sense of vulnerability both in social as well as physical and powerlessness. Another dominant strategy of majority women is ***not riding at night***.

Most frequently women motorcyclists engage themselves with very simple strategies which are companionship choices. Majority of 44% ***tend not to go alone or on solo rides***. Only a minority of women felt comfortable in riding solo to places. Few of them tend not to stand, take a break in secluded or isolated places while travelling. Generally respondent do not ride at dusk or at night. They prefer checking into a motel before it gets dark and try to stay indoors. Therefore, among other restrictions women motorcyclists riding solo is less, they prefer to ride in groups.

The other strategies are women prefer ***carrying weapons*** a sharp object, a knife or some spray like peppermint. Apart from that they need to judge the situation before they speak or act. The most common item that they carry for their safety and self-defence is a mobile phone; which they keep few phone numbers dialled and few of them carry a knife too. Helmet and gloves acts as a weapon too. Gloves have knuckle guards which are very stiff and hard which helps in protecting the knuckle in an accident. If a person is punched wearing those gloves, the respective individual would be badly hurt. The same goes for helmet too.

Himadri (29, Teacher) "I always carry two knives, a pocket knife and a bigger one. Pocket knife I always keep it handy, and other in my bag. I have a bad feeling when I forget that to carry it. I feel so powerful honestly (laughs), when I carry that".

Raima (25, Homemaker) "I keep a sharp object mainly knife".

Udita (28, Service) "I carry a spray mainly and apart from that I keep few phone numbers in speed dial list".

Aaheli (29, Teacher) "hitting someone would be the last option; but I am sure if it is that way the best thing would be my gloves, because the guard it has".

It is a very common trick to avoid a conversation as stated by few women motorcyclists by ***not understanding their languages***. South Indians hardly understands any language other than English or their natives. North East Indian understands any languages like Hindi or

English and their natives. Same with the other parts of India too. Therefore in time of distress, women motorcyclists prefer not to speak in Hindi or any other languages and they strictly stick to *bengali* only. While been asked repeatedly, they keep on showing through sign languages that they don't understand South Indian, North Indian or respective native's languages.

Biyas (31, Service) "if I see people are not right, I keep shut. If them also they come up to talk I show them in sign language I don't understand anything what they speak."

Soma (30, Yoga Instructor) "I tend not to answer their questions when I don't want to. I keep on telling them- 'no Bengali or no hindi' depends which language they are taking".

To ensure safety women need to adopt some measure even **hiding their identity on the ride** especially when they travel alone. They usually tend to wear balaclavas, a kind of mask which are normally used to protect one from cold, covering almost all of the head and face and leaving the only eyes open. Women generally wear balaclavas inside the helmet, if not for cold but mainly for hiding the length of the hair. The apparels motorcyclists wear happens to be fully covered. Ideally apparels are for safety purpose for both the genders but it helps women to hide their identity too.

Udita (28, Service) "I never open my hair and ride without my riding jacket, without those people will easily find out my identity which is very risky at many places in highways. To be safe I have adopted this from one of my friend"

Buli (35, Business) "I never had short hair therefore when I am riding I always wear the riding jacket, putting my hair inside it. The helmet usually serves the rest."

Aaheli (29, Teacher) "At places I preferred to keep shut not opening my helmet; and let my friend talk".

According to Himadri (29, Teacher) states "I usually try not open the riding jacket not even my helmet or balaclava, even if it is very hot, when I need to urinate in side of roads because of my safety. I don't want any attention from passers-by. It's inviting danger".



Figure 5.5: Wearing balaclava, riding jacket and gloves to hide one's identity

Soma (30, Yoga Instructor) comments “Yes I do that. I try to make sure I don’t look like a woman because sometimes when people recognizes me as a female rider they try to come in front of me to which is dangerous for them as well as for me. It is difficult to take a butt break anywhere and everywhere as people around me can easily identity that I am a woman. Thus the matter of safety comes into place. Even for a stop I hardly open my helmet in order to be safe. I never open my hair and ride or without my riding jacket, without it, people will easily find out my identity which is very risky at many places in highways”.

Mira (32, Business) rides as a passenger with her husband states “I take light dinner the previous day and try to drink less water while on ride so that I don’t have to frequently use washrooms because it is difficult to urinate everywhere. I do not open up the helmet, I wear gloves, and we avoid riding after dawn. I protested sometime against my husband's advices but those are very much needed”.

Women motorcyclists strongly feel disclosing their identity and information to complete strangers and sometimes even to unknown motorcycle riders at times are risky. As for example, when women motorcyclist are asked about their contact number and name they tend to fake their identity as stated above, if riders get a single hint of something is wrong.

c. Strategies maintained by male motorcyclists

Men barely feel the threat of sexual violence as women. Hence they don’t have to negotiate as women do. Riding at night is generally the main concern for the riders which is similar for both men and women. Apart from that cow, cattle, cattle children are primary concern also as stated earlier¹⁶. Pedestrians of some places are really scary as stated my most of the respondents, they are simply crazy.

Subhodeep (23, service) states “strategies depend upon place to place of riding. If I am crossing a Terrorist belt, and if I’m alone I would cross it during day. And if I am going to a mountain area with a group I stay alert and stay cautious for the other riders too. In a group ride one needs to be very careful for the safety. I also try to keep my phone charged, it helps in need provided I have network. Lastly no matter how much skills you have while riding the bike it depends on destiny.”

Subho (29, Stunter) a professional stunter states “The primary concern is the audience, while cheering they just cross the safety line. While performing we might hit them. For professional stunter it is important to take care of his audience as they cheer for us”.

Rajib (26, Service) a professional track racer “the primary concern is safety that I look after for medi-claim. We have to wear proper one piece leathers¹⁷ that save us from crash. I take it slow with confidence and ride. It should be always like you should be controlling the machine but not vice versa”.

Uday (39, Chattered Accountant) who participates in motocross events “we have to wear highly protective gear; that includes chest and spine guard too, among the other basic apparels. That takes care of our safety”.

To conclude even after the strategies and negotiations they make, it is difficult to limit the violence and fear of crime. As a result women tend to limit their opportunities and create a confined world around them by self-policing. In order to be safe from the outside world female motorcyclist are struggling with their bodies and their gender identity. In a sense according to Wesely and Gaarder (2004) they seek to escape from social control (assault, rape and harassment) exchanging it for another (surveillance and limited mobility). Fear of violence and harassment motivates many women to follow the societal gendered norms of surveillance. If these societal norms are neglected women may be blamed for their own victimization because it is taken for granted that they know better. Women motorcyclists in all over India, especially in Kolkata continue to fight with the limited possibilities and resources of protection. They challenge the nature of women's outdoor experience while increasingly depending on others. Eventually they uphold the notions of gendered construction of fear of vulnerability and violence. According to many feminists, because of women's fear they marginalise themselves in terms of participation in the public life while increasing their dependency on a 'strong protector' for their physical integrity (Campbell 2005, Chan & Rigakos 2003, Walklate 1997, War 1993).

5.6 Conclusion

To conclude, motorcyclists I interviewed did not conform to the stereotypical interpretation of risk. Fears related to violence and abuses are often grounded in construction of gender. This gender meaning is constructed and reconstructed through generations after generation with the help of socialization. Hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987) are been idealized during re-socialization in the motorcycling field. Gender construction and its association with male participation in sports are quite common and women are traditionally discouraged from the field. In motorcycling one major limitation for women revolves around gendered construction of space or what is discussed in *geography of fear* (Valentine 1989). This is compounded with the risk of molestation and harassment and the social belief that the outdoors are definitely not for women, at least not without the protection of men. 11% of both male and female are comfortable in riding solo, which definitely shows that most individual are scared to travel alone. The fear of risk is prevalent in both the sexes but definitely subjective. Therefore risk is manufactured through the mental map of being scared that is created by the primary and secondary groups in every individual. It can be therefore claimed that women's fear of violence is a manifestation of social control. Despite these barriers and warnings women motorcyclist still continue to challenge both physically and mentally through riding motorcycles. The feelings leading to vulnerability and objectification that they have encountered with combination of enjoyment of motorcycling led to many coping mechanisms. Women motorcyclist willingly negotiates with the conservative behaviours but they are not willing to sacrifice motorcycling. But to some women motorcyclist, sometimes motorcycling becomes less enjoyable, because of the anxiety related to the fear of crime and violence. Gender meaning is constantly in the state of flux and transformation and is a woman's decision to change and enact them. They are basically the part of the construction process.

Generally it is a much perceived thought, that when motorcycle and its environment are flawless, perfect control over it can be cognitively achieved. Control for the *edgeworkers* (Lyng 1990) can be thus described from the above research that is foreseen and navigate potential hazards which can be easily overcome if alert. Fundamentally, it is a unique technique to control but it also incorporates practical ways of survival. Only the proper knowledge of control to according the edgeworkers neutralizes risk of an accident. This knowledge can be available through experiences which can undermine the hazardous nature

of motorcycling. The respondent in my study are well aware of the statistics related to accidents that cause injury and even death of motorcyclists. But does this really affect them and their motorcycling? No. Motorcyclists do not reply on terms of the statistical measures for any kind of expert system for motorcycling. They never deny the risk but also don't claim motorcycling to be a high-risk activity, for those who ride, doesn't abide the impositions of external and non-contextual definitions of risk or hazard.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

There has been a longstanding fascination with motorcycling in the mainstream media as newspaper articles; television films and several series have created a popularized image of motorcyclists. Yet motorcycling has only recently become the focus of rigorous, contextualized academic research. While smaller research (Joans, 2001; McDonald-Walker, 2000; Thompson, 2012) with highly detailed ethnographies have studied specific lifestyles, movements, and subcultures of motorcycling but they are mainly based on western motorcyclists. Almost none have done regarding the Indian motorcycling culture. This research attempts to show methodologically the rising distinctive culture of motorcycling in Kolkata, India. It should be noted that this study mainly deals with those individuals who ride a motorcycle either professionally or passionately. The subjective notion of ‘riding passionately’ here means motorcyclists who ride a motorcycle apart from mundane activities.

This study has empirically investigated the rituals, the lifestyle as a whole, the culture that is associated with motorcycling. Nevertheless to study motorcycling culture one cannot overlook the gender issues and risks associated with it. Motorcycling includes men and excludes women because of the socially constructed gender differences that men and women are ‘different wired’. That is, the private realm is essentially for women while the public realm predominantly for men. Women in motorcycling are breaking the stereotypes challenging men masculinities which are often hegemonic. By riding a motorcycle men often tend to portray masculinities which otherwise may have overlooked.

With this backdrop of motorcycling in Kolkata, an empirical investigation was conducted in parts of Kolkata with the sample size of one hundred to investigate the whereabouts of the motorcyclists which constitutes this culture. The first chapter deals with a detailed picture of the review of the literature of the western motorcycling subculture. The overview of literature has also portrayed and helped this research to understand methodologically the whereabouts of this culture. Unlike recently, in the western motorcycling subculture women never really ride a motorcycle and are commonly known as biker babes or biker chicks. They were more considered as property to be used for sexual and servant posers, traded, and given or thrown away at the rider's discretion or (Thompson 1950). Waston's (1980) research found women to

be viewed with contempt by most outlaw bikers regarded as ‘necessary nuisances’. They objectified themselves wearing bare minimum clothes and hanging out as a pillion or passengers with 1% ers or outlaw bikers. In western motorcycling two distinctive groups can be found, one that is, the 1% er and ‘the others’. According to the American Motorcyclists Association (AMA), these 1% motorcyclists are deviants, non-law abiding citizens who usually ransacked the town, kidnapped women, when they went motorcycling to places accompanying motorcycling fraternity members. Even it is seen that these 1% er use to wear a patch of it just to prove their presence among ‘the others’. Recently they have lost all the deviant values since the rules and regulations are now strict than the old days. While the ‘the others’ or know as 99% er are law-abiding citizens and are nothing like the 1% er. ‘The others’ are working upper and middle-class individuals tend to be married, have full-time jobs, and also a family to maintain. The 99 % er also wears a patch of it, so that people might not confuse them with the deviants' ones. The western motorcycling subculture also includes specific rituals, norms, and ideologies that helped this research to look into the rituals and norms associated with Kolkata motorcycling culture.



Figure 6.1: Outlaw (99%) and Law-abiding (1%) motorcyclist's patch

In continuation of the previous chapter, the second chapter deals with the basic and major theoretical perspectives applicable in this research. Here sociological theories are been reviewed and also the applicability of those theories is effectively scrutinized which duly helped me in this research study to link or relate the theoretical framework with the empirical findings which also helped this study in drawing significant inferences and providing conclusion with ease.

Chapter three focuses on the interpretation of the results from the narratives of my respondents. In this section culture and motorcycling, I have defined this culture as the emergence of significant ‘micro-societies’ where people of both young and old groups share

their social experiences related to riding or maintaining motorcycles. These are expressed collectively and they accumulate under a network of people, commonly referred to as brotherhood or motorcycling fraternity. Motorcyclists share similar essence of particular ideologies along with the construction of a distinctive lifestyle in a more institutionalized way. This adaptation might be from part-time to full time depending on the magnitude of their personal and professional inclinations. Motorcyclists through this distinctive motorcycling culture tend to legitimize their control over the daily only commuter individuals. Motorcyclists are born in different classes therefore heterogeneous but never have segregated themselves in terms of upper, middle, or lower classes while mixing with the motorcycling fraternity or the groups they are associated with. That is the charm of motorcycling in Kolkata. But riders distinguish themselves based on the motorcycle they ride and the places they have visited. The motorcycle fraternity has many motorcycling groups. These are basically networks, informal associations, a support group where my 100 respondents belong to. It creates a strong sense of belongingness among members and also provides additional information, services, and mutual respect among the motorcyclists. It also has a very strict way of selecting its members.

There are several reasons to ride a motorcycle but the majority of male and female that is 50% relates to freedom. This shows the restriction that prevails in an individual's life. Restrictions are mainly societal then followed by economic and other familial problems. Next come thrill, with 17.5% of males and 25% of females. With this notion, I would situate the framework of 'edgework', and consider the motorcyclists to be edgeworkers in the later chapter. There is a distinctive style that is been associated with this motorcycling culture which includes basic safety apparel, specific behaviour, certain pre-ride rituals, and distinctive language that separate them from 'the others'. Pre-ride rituals are basically the series of pre-check of the motorcycle before they ignite their bike for any sort of motorcycling activities. These series of pre-check of the motorcycle, after Goffman I would call them pre-ride rituals. These pre-ride rituals are sacred to almost every motorcyclist because these rituals only confirm the smooth running of the machine they only trust. This culture is mainly learned or acquired and is reproduced by the juniors by simply imitating the senior motorcyclists. Choosing the right motorcycle is very important to the respondents as they tend to trust these machines with their lives. It is also largely seen that hierarchy is strictly maintained by owing or riding a heavy or metal motorcycles which creates hegemony over the less abled others. Riders riding a heavy motorcycle going for certain places marked

as dangerous or treacherous roads are acknowledged and respected than the other riders. Here seniority is basically based not on age but the number of adventurous rides motorcyclists have ventured.

I have also segregated motorcyclists into a different genre of riding styles as learner, cruiser, adventure tourer, track racer, 'stunter', rally rider, and finally moto-traveler. Though motorcyclists are differentiated through the different genres of motorcycles they own, different riding styles, and different motorcycle groups they are into but they are again united or strongly connected with each other riders from all over India by the concept of brotherhood. Brotherhood is a special bond that is not restricted to any specific gender, rather it's about camaraderie. This special bond is more than just being acquainted or talking part or meeting in the same motorcycling events. It is more of being loyal not only to the own motorcycling group members but to all riders who are into motorcycling. Unknown riders also receive help in different cities in difficult times while motorcycling to a destination through the notion of brotherhood.

Chapter four 'gender and motorcycling' study to interpret the empirical evidence (narratives) via the lenses of 'doing gender' and 'hegemonic masculinity'. West and Zimmerman (1987) focused on the fundamental ways of how individuals 'do gender' as a "routine, methodical, and recurring accomplishment" (p. 126). It should be duly noted that through the process of doing gender every men motorcyclist is competing to be the one and thus trying to move into the structure of being hegemonic or portraying features of what Connell (1995) calls hegemonic masculinity. Men usually dominate public spaces of recognized accomplishment for example sports and many other overt competitions. This is how they start to accomplish masculinity with ease by expanding physically, developing certain masculine postures or sports moves that exaggerate one's physical strength, volume, and appearances. By this, they essentially engage in competitive and aggressive 'men' talk about 'masculine' subjects. This section articulates broadly that masculinity is defined in terms of orientations largely through talk or cultural discourses which mainly signify the key dogmas of masculinity as gender differences, male dominance, heterosexism, and male solidarity. Masculinities are embodied ways of being male, which is largely a product of all kinds of social interactions since birth (Srivastava 2012). Social interaction renders the differences between masculine and feminine cultural propositions. Hence doing gender is also necessary for motorcycling, a form of interaction. From the components, motorcyclists need to portray being strong, aggressive, and risk-taking while in front of the fraternity or brotherhood. Masculinities provide a source of

gender identity. The ideal form of masculinities is generated through socialization and is culturally deposited in activities such as, in motorcycling later on.

Men always controlled the key to technology through industrialization and modernization in the west. Masculinization and technology are strongly connected. Connell (1995) argues “historically, there has been an important division between different forms of masculinities organized around direct domination (eg corporate management, military command) and forms organized around technical knowledge (eg: professors, science)”. Individuals attain gender by 'doing gender' which implies action and outcome of that action. Cockburn (2009) states this is because men and women have different childhood exposure to the technical domain, schooling, different role models, etc. Kaufman and Brod also state “it appears that we need a form of analysis that allows for the contradictory relationship between the individual and the power structure from which they benefit. It is a strange situation where men's real power and privilege in the world hinges not only on that power but also on an experience alienation and powerlessness- rooted in childhood experiences post in different ways as adolescence and then adults” (1994: 15). Cockburn states “Boys are conditioned from childhood in numberless ways to be more physically effective than girls” (1981: 44). Girls are socialized to revert or held back or to seize instead to yield or submit. While boys are programmed to use their bodies with authority and are encouraged to fight back, develop muscle, and to move freely. Social constructs such as '*boys don't cry or don't talk like a girl*' are quite common where boys are fed with such attitude since childhood through socialization. As we know the differentiation starts since birth itself by segregating spaces (public and private), materials (toys) even colours (blue and pink) reproduces the patriarchal notion of the link between masculinities and machines or technology. Researchers (Bateman 2010, Loyd 2012, Smith 2010) have discussed how gendered locations lead to this segregation for example the girl's toilet, a boys hut. It renders the way of doing gender categorization. Forms of gender segregation/categorization largely affect the motorcyclist's norms of interaction.

To the respondents, it is about having muscles, suitable occupation, income, and social position that support their family including dependent wife, children, and parents. It is more about masculinities and being 'macho'. These ideal forms of masculinities are then transformed into hegemonic masculinities in the future in an individual through activities such as motorcycling. Since birth boys are always gifted with toys which would develop their muscles easily (cars, aeroplane or any kind of vehicle or bat and ball, etc.) while girls are given dolls or utensils used in the kitchen, etc. Therefore the connection between the object

and the individual runs deep, they tend to practice the same activities while they group up. Also, it is not only about power and mastering but also about pleasure and joy in artifacts. Every man motorcyclist performs gender in their mundane activities and also while motorcycling in order to achieve the ideal manhood. Through undergoing the process of doing gender every individual silently competing among their rider buddies to achieve the status of being hegemonic and becoming 'the one'. Therefore it can be derived that masculinities are a mental realm that portrays the cultural norm that is been acquired by socialization since birth. For example, being 'manly' or 'macho' are some specific ideological signs of particular class of ideal man and being feminine for an ideal woman. These propositions when exercised are converted to cultural dispositions (Mellstrom 2004).

Masculinities are not fixed combinations or formulas of signs or actions but are performed concerning emotional demands which will easily signify them as an able-bodied man. Becoming an 'ideal' man involves strategies in which men motorcyclists tend to reproduce among themselves to achieve that. From the narratives, it is also derived that 'hegemonic relations' exists between riders. The way they specifically 'do gender' never goes noticed as they hardly understand. They perform or accomplish doing gender by such authoritative activities without even understanding or without even giving a thought. This study also shows how motorcyclists accomplish gender or lay claim to social spaces, discourses and resist the effeminate subjectivities while reproducing both dominant societal discourses that generally emasculate or marginalize the weaker ones. They also tend to construct a distinctive but derogatory vocabulary for both effeminate men and also women. This situation also manifests how the motorcyclist's peer group holds other riders accountable to these discourses through series of activities for example language practices (negative categorization of certain activities, ritualized insults, assessment adjectives, and pejorative descriptions of individuals). In this case, male femininity is always coded as humorous.

Evidence of bodily differences is found that is largely a social product (Oakley 1972, Cockburn 1981, Mellstrom 2004). For example, women who are into sports acquire a typical physique which is similar to men athletes. This is the case of female masculinity is appreciated. Differentiation of height and weight are correlated with standard of living, class, and also gender. Campbell (2005) refers to those images and text which features femininity that is vulnerable and often helpless images, and on the other hand masculinity which in turn is potent and dangerous. Such representations in the mainstream popular culture of gender and crime precisely create an environment for harassment and molestation. Eventually, this representation of violence always portrays the male perpetrator and the female as victims.

The role of women in any technical or masculine field was always considered problematic and therefore detailed scrutiny of regulation and investigation was very much in need. Men motorcyclists also produce certain stereotypical gender norms while women motorcyclists are breaking the stereotypes that are associated with them. Women's technical skills are rarely defined as technical because technology is predominantly a masculine culture expression (Wacjman 1991) In other words, the relationship between men and technology runs too deep, both historically as explained earlier and also in contemporary societies. This is because how young adolescent girls negotiate the gender roles resulting in transition and shaping them into womanhood. It is also found from the narratives that women motorcyclists are perceived by non-motorcyclist men as deviant exceptions to the male norm.

Women respondent's skills to ride a motorcycle are always been questioned. Women's skills are never considered to be technical or superior to men (Wacjman 2009, Cockburn 2009). But still, women are coming forward from the pillion seat and are into riding motorcycles. Though the number is still quite less that is 18 out of 100 respondents were women. In this section, I have also depicted that how women are either downplaying the feminine role or masculinizing this male-dominated activity. They are rejecting the traditional prescribed roles of being weak, expressive, emotional, and fragile. Motorcycling communities often tend to avoid women members until they prove their worth. However, even if women are at par with men riders but still they face humiliation and taunting related to makeup and tidiness and directions sense. Still, women do not take on a pre-determined set of behaviour rules in motorcycling rather they construct and reconstruct the notions of gender activities; they are basically a part of the construction process.

They either have to be 'one of the boys' or 'social men' Kavande (1999) to be accepted in such field like wearing complete black with skull prints, lifting heavy motorcycles after a fall, or carry own heavy saddle bags and other luggage while checking into a hotel. They portray what Connell (1995) calls masculine sexual character as being aggressive, risk-taking, fighting over tussles. They perform this willingly sometimes unwillingly too. Few tend to feminize this sport in various ways too. Apparels are often softened with additional pastels colours, floral motifs, and other feminizing touches. Some wore pink jackets. Others wore leather jackets in white, blue, or black adorned with floral patterns, butterflies, and other decorations such as rhinestones or fringes that determine them as women attire. Even the helmets they wore are not a solid colour but with different floral prints.

Here I have also tried to situate likely a new concept or terminology as 'rider-hood' than sisterhood in comparison to the brotherhood. Women are adjusting being brothers in the brotherhood. This mainly happens when a woman is at par with the men or better than them in terms of riding a heavy motorcycle as well as going for marked dangerous or treacherous road trips. They are usually addressed as 'bro'. It is also found out from the narratives that if any woman motorcyclists are addressed as 'bro' then she has ridden to places where other men motorcyclists dare to. The term sisterhood would be sufficed if used simultaneously with brotherhood but it would leave 'the others'. Therefore rider-hood would include not only men and women but also genders that are left out of the brotherhood.

This section also depicts a paradox of the gendered machines or motorcycles where heavy technology and machine are the products of masculinity yet these machines, here in this research, motorcycle, are regarded as feminine. By riding a heavier motorcycle, riders reinforce masculinities and assign feminine gender and names to their motorcycles. This is because it has a bodily connection or sensation, a strong intimate connection between the body and their machines which Mellstrom (2004) calls *anthropomorphization* or Jderu (2013) calls *axis mundi*. As Harper (1987) claims "Gaining the kinaesthetic sense, however, reduces the gap between the subject and the object". Here the subject is motorcyclists or riders and the object is the motorcycle.

My next empirical chapter is risk and motorcycling where I used the concept of 'voluntary risk-taking' and also 'edgework' to understand the perception of risks that are faced by the motorcyclists. There is a dominant tendency to categorize risk as negative but to motorcyclists, risks are positive too as adventure results in excitement or thrill, enjoyment as well as improvement. They also reported that this helped them to grow more competently. Risks to my respondents are subjective and heavily gendered. Motorcyclist constructs risk within socially and culturally embedded discourses. They are categorized under three subheads that are personal victimization, through family and peer groups, through mass media. I tried to incorporate the framework of edgework in understanding the notion of risk for motorcyclists. Edgework essentially means "skirting the edge between safety and danger". Lyng (1990) suggests "risk-taking experience can be understood as a radical form of escape from the institutional routines of contemporary life". The central theme in edgework is mainly negotiating the boundaries line between life versus death, insanity versus sanity, and consciousness versus unconsciousness, an ordered sense of self and environment versus the

disordered sense of self and environment. The components are edgework activities, skilled edgeworkers, and edgework emotions.

In edgework activities, the experience of edgework activity will result in death and injury if the individual is not capable enough to perform masculinity or to meet the challenge. Edgeworkers to perform such activities has to push off the limits both mechanical and physical which are similar to that of motorcyclists when they participate in professional in race tracks or go for off-roading narrow trails. Secondly skilled edgeworkers, here motorcyclists confirm that the developments of skills are quite a valuable aspect of the experiences. Similarly, professional motorcyclists and riders at par are also are involved in skilled performance; they tend to work beyond the limit to test their capabilities and eventually to excel or to create a prominent identity in the respective field. In creating an identity by stressing one's limit which includes a set of risk which are sometimes fatal. Finally, edgework emotions, participating in a different kind of edgeworks doesn't mean that all of the edgeworkers can relate to the same sensation or emotions. Although the respondents portrayed similar emotions such as self-satisfaction, self-realization, or what Lyng (1990) says "self-actualization or self-determination". By surviving life-threatening challenges one moves to the final phase of experience where fear overcomes the feeling of excitement. In such a situation, an individual feels capable of negotiating with any threatening situation. Few motorcyclists could only achieve this status and thus portraying features of hegemonic masculinities.

Perfect control can be achieved provided the link between the motorcyclists, the mechanisms (motorcycle) and the physical environment is flawless. But it is hardly the same which makes this activity more risky and life-threatening. There are various ways both the men and women motorcyclists negotiate the risk that is been associated with motorcycling. The basic way for all the motorcyclists is to wear proper gears and DOT certified helmets for protection. Next comes the maintenance of the motorcycle that is, to follow the rituals and normative rules before starting the motorcycle on a ride. There is a distinctive code or what I call as *rider-code* that is, while on a ride the motorcyclists riding in the formation should show hand signals and warn the motorcyclists riding behind, about the potholes or roadkill or any other dangers in the front.

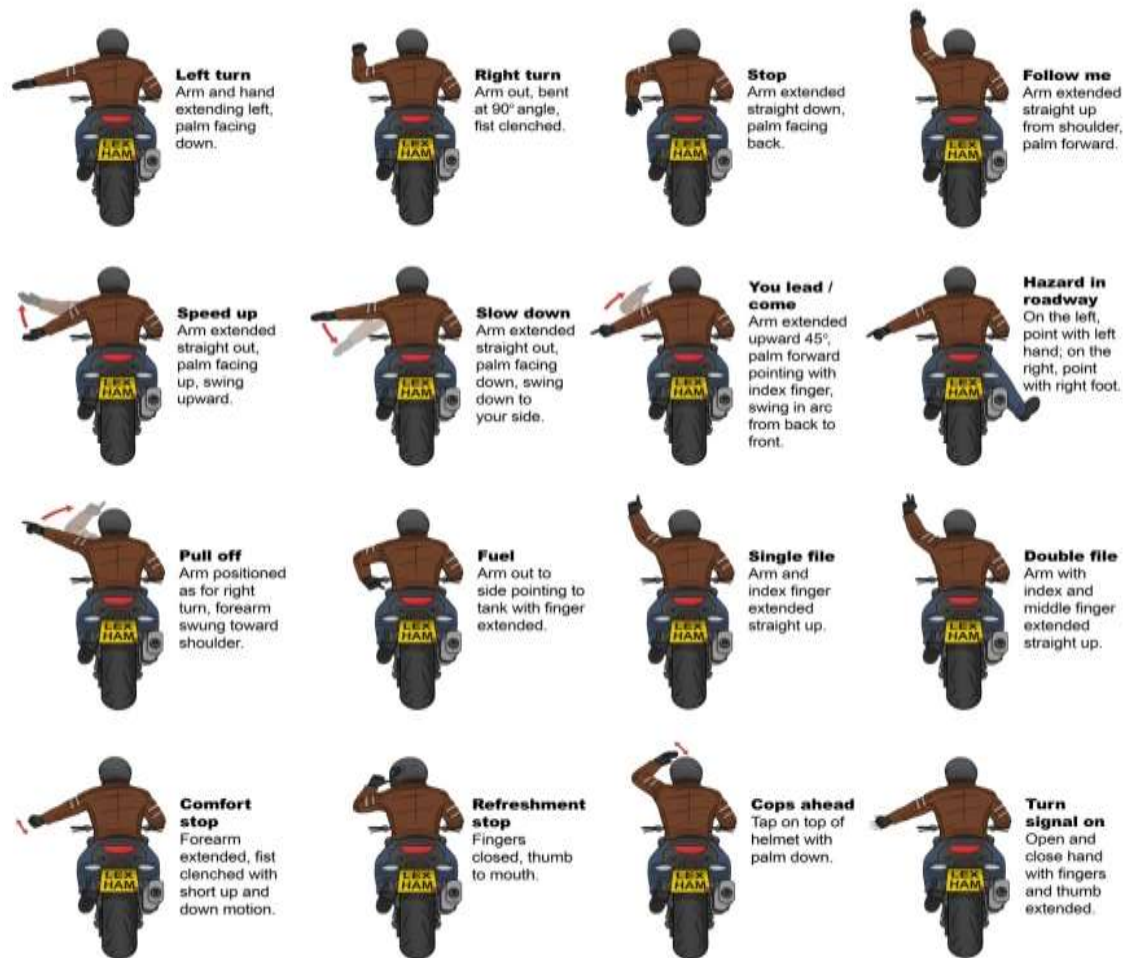


Figure 6.2: Hand signals followed by the motorcyclists while on a ride

There are several other factors like pre-booking of hotels if the destination the rider would reach is not safe. For women, they take up strategies that are much more than men motorcyclists do. As changing their location if needed; even giving misleading or fake information to inquisitive strangers on the road. Other strategies are common of both men and women though women tend to follow these more than men do, that is, not riding at night or not going for solo rides, carrying certain weapons, etc. One more interesting strategies taken up by woman are pretending not to understand the local's language and immediately leave the place in any adverse situation. Finally, another strategy followed by women is hiding ones' identity especially when they travel alone. They usually tend to wear balaclavas, a kind of mask which are normally used to protect one from cold, covering almost all of the head and face and leaving the only eyes open. Women generally wear balaclavas inside the helmet, if not for cold but mainly for hiding the length of the hair. Ideally, apparels are for safety purposes for both the genders but it helps women to hide their identity too.

6.2 The link: Gender, Risk & Culture in Motorcycling

In the backdrop of the previous chapters an individual to achieve the ideal manhood, a rider needs to take up risk portraying masculinities and be 'a man' by pushing one's threshold off their limits leading them to be edgeworkers. The empirical evidence I have found through this research shows that bodily differences are largely a social product. Bodily differences are being practiced or exercised on a daily basis since childhood. Individuals perform gender via mundane activities. Doing gender according to West and Zimmerman (1987) is a routine accomplishment that is largely embedded into daily interaction. To motorcyclists riding is again a mundane activity. The majority who ride motorcycle professionally or passionately (riding apart from daily conveyance) use motorcycles for daily conveyance too. Men motorcyclists are doing gender while riding motorcycles and also involve a series of risks and life threats. Risk is no risk to those individuals who are into edgework activities by practicing the same risk day in day out. For Lyng (2005) activities related to edgework are skydiving, motorcycling, bike/car racing, bungee jumping, and even drug users. For them, risk has normalized to such an extent that it overweighs the notion of risk if compared to the non-edgeworkers. Risks that are taken by edgeworkers are predominantly masculine in nature as men motorcyclists perform masculinity while riding a motorcycle. Now since doing gender is a process thus through this process of performing masculinities an individual tries to adapt being hegemonic to stand out from the crowd, performing certain traits of hegemonic masculinity. The structure of hegemonic masculinity includes those men who stand out from performing only masculinity in relation to motorcycling activities. Men motorcyclists are silently competing among themselves to prove to be the 'ideal rider'. Every motorcyclist is constantly rating himself and is obsessed with the restless competition of manhood. As Connell (1995) defines hegemonic masculinity legitimizes men's dominance on women's subordination, by hegemonic he meant risk-taking, rational, and independent attributes of men. Thus edgeworkers that are the risk-takers are largely hegemonic in nature and they are predominately male. Daily exercise of such hegemonic repetition leads to a series of bodily propositions that are eventually transformed in cultural disposition by ritualization of those activities, which is generic in motorcycling and are distinctively found in motorcycling culture. This notion is being carried forward through generation after generation in this culture by the junior following the seniors. Through this notion of (hegemonic) masculinity is being produced and reproduced which is highly gendered as women are hardly found in such

places. For example, women motorcyclists are rarely found or are less in Kolkata motorcycling culture. Out of 100 respondents, only 18 were female rest males, thus proving motorcycling as a highly gendered space. This construction of gendered space is also challenged by women through feminizing the male-dominated activity. Every woman in motorcycling negotiates and re-negotiates their gender identity.

6.3 Future scope of this research

The future possibilities of this research would include a better number of women as the sample size. Since the study was centered on Kolkata it was quite a difficult task to get hold of women motorcyclists, where only 18 of them were interviewed. If the whole of the West Bengal is considered the sample size of women would definitely be larger as women motorcyclists from Burdwan, Asansol, and others are also emerging.

The study is largely centered on Kolkata only and has excluded the other metro cities of India. There is an emerging trend of motorcycling culture all over India, hence there is a possibility of detailed research on this motorcycling culture in other parts of India too. To add, since the culture varies with the geographical territories a comparative analysis can also be conducted comparing the motorcycle cultures in metro cities as well as non-metro cities. To my belief just because there is a basic difference in lifestyle in metro and non-metro cities therefore the various motorcycling aspects would also be different from each other.

Since motorcycling related activities and culture are present in Western societies since ages a comparative study can also be conducted in relation to Indian society. In western motorcycling culture caters to various dimensions and various cultures with respect to a different genre of motorcycles. Similarly in Indian motorcycling culture, one can also look for the aspects of culture and risk and other various factors according to a different genre of motorcycles. The risk factors also change with the different genres of motorcycles which can also be studied separately.

Women are commonly treated as a commodity even in the race track, where they are portrayed with bare minimal clothing holding the umbrella for the participants before they start the race. Even the same is generated when kids participate in track races. The commodification outweighs the concept of child labour in it too. A research can be also centred about this notion of commodification too. Men are never objectified or commodified

in this activity like women. It is a serious and brimming issue and should be dealt with importance.

End Notes:

Chapter I

Introduction

1. *Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs*: is a motorcycle subculture comprises of mainly Harley Davidson riders. They are considered as an outlaw because they are not sanctioned by the American Motorcyclists Association (AMA).
2. *Harley Davidson*: it is a brand of high-end motorcycle, it is mainly a cruiser genre of bikes.
3. *The tribe*: tribe here, the author meant a group of motorcyclists. The tribe here means the motorcycling group that respective individual is into. He considers it to be his family. The members of this tribe to be his family members.
4. *Cultural Capital*: This term was mainly used by Bourdieu. It comprises of social assets of a person that helps an individual in his/her social mobility in this stratified society.
5. *Burnouts*: it is also known as peeling out. It is when a rider spins the wheels of the motorcycle while the frame of the motorcycle should be stable. Thus because of the much friction of tires and the surface lot of smokes usually comes out.
6. *BMW*: it is a brand of high-end motorcycle. It is owned by a German multinational company that produces automobiles and motorcycles.
7. *Newbies*: somebody who has owned and ridden a motorcycle for a short period may be less than a year.
8. *QUAL approach*: it is primarily a method of research to obtain “a more naturalistic, contextual and holistic understanding of human beings in society” (Todd, Nerlich, & McKeown, 2004 p. 4).
9. *QUAN approach*: is the numerical data analysis using techniques that include a. to describe any social phenomenon or interest and b. the significant difference between either variables or groups (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2008)
10. *Mixed methods*: Mixed methods research is defined as research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draw inferences using both QUAL and QUAN approaches and methods in a single study or program of inquiry (Punch 2009)
11. *Triangulation*: It mainly refers to more than one method while studying the same research question in order to “examine the same dimension of a research problem” (Jick, 1979, p. 602).
12. *Monomethod*: monomethod is specifically one end of the continuum which also involves the either use of QUAL or QUAN research approach in any particular study.
13. *Motor-mechanic*: Mechanics of motorcycles mainly. They also contribute towards this culture as they participate in distant motorcycle rides and are involved with motorcycling clubs/groups.
14. *Snow ball technique*: it is a specific type of sampling where a few subjects are found who have the relevant qualities required for the research. After interviewing them, they again are requested to recommend the names of other people whom they know have the same qualities. In this way, the interviewer accumulates more respondents by using each subject as a source of new subject fit for the sample.
15. *Shaving cream advertisements* usually objectifies women to a large extent. In a shaving cream advertisement, women had no role to play but still in those advertisements they are portrayed as sexual objects.
16. *Coding*: is all about the process of defining the data systematically.

Chapter II

Theoretical overview

1. *Ideal type*: the concept of Ideal type is generated by Max Weber. It is an abstract model created by him to be used as a standard of comparison, enables us to see the real world in clearer in a most systematic way. Hegemonic masculinity is an ideal type of masculinity.

2. Here I have pointed out the belief of doing gender according to four gender theorists. Gender theorists are West and Zimmerman, Messerchmidt, Connell, and Fenstermaker.
3. Beck (1992) states “smog is democratic”, because risk in this globalization affects both rich as well as poor. It does not discriminate between rich and poor. Only that they are affected differentially because of the access to the resources they have for protection against the harsh conditions of the environment.
4. Second modernity is a phrase pointed out by Ulrich Beck. While agricultural society is broken down to make way for the industrial society. Similarly, the second modernity would transform the industrial society into a whole brand new society of information technology.

Chapter III

Culture and Motorcycle

1. TVS is an Indian motorcycle brand. Apache is a model owned by TVS.
2. Thunderbird is a model owned by Royal Enfield (RE), an Indian brand of Eicher Motors. Any RE models are heavy than the other motorcycles as they use metal tanks instead of fiber.
3. Yamaha is a foreign brand (Japanese). Fazer is a model owned by Yamaha which is less costly and lightweight than RE.
4. Hero Honda is an Indian brand from Delhi. Glamour is a lightweight model of Hero Honda.
5. Splendor is a Hero Honda model, is a lightweight motorcycle. This motorcycle is mainly used for commuting.
6. Yezdi 350 is quite a legendary and old Indian motorcycle and was manufactured in the early 60s but now it is not in production anymore.
7. Kevlar plates are the best lightweight, bulletproof plates used for body armor. It is also used in backpacks and also in foreign-made riding jackets. It helps the rider from major crashes.
8. Clothing is riding gears are well-padded crash proof jackets, DOT certified helmets (department of transportation) a US brand, riding boots (shoes specific of riding), hand gloves, or gauntlets.
9. Accessories for a rider are saddlebags (each pair of bags attached behind the saddle on a horse or a motorcycle), tank bags (bags that can be fixed on top of the tank of the motorcycle), hydration pouch (a very small bag and pouch carrying water), tail bag (a particular shape of a bag that can be fixed on top of the back seat of a motorcycle), etc.
10. For Riding, gears see note 9
11. Others here are referred to motorcyclists (other than the rider) and motorcycle commuters or non-motorcyclists.
12. 'Us' refers to the members of his/her particular motorcycle club (MC) and 'them' refers to the members of other MCs.
13. Events here are referred to the motorcycling events. People gather in such events from all over India for a few days.
14. Brotherhood: it's camaraderie where it involves both brothers and sisters who ride a motorcycle. It is a special bond between the riders.
15. Hegemonic masculinity: explained in the gender and motorcycling chapter. This is a typical type of ideal masculinity in current societies that is not practiced by the majority of men.
16. CC: or cubic capacity, is basically the engine capacity of a motorcycle, generally denoted by 'cc'
17. Avenger is a model of the brand named Bajaj. The styling of this motorcycle is a cruiser and the height is quite low of 140mm compared to the other motorcycles available in the Indian market.
18. Royal Enfield motorcycle has a lot of issues both electrical as well as mechanical. Therefore it is not considered to be a hassle-free motorcycle.
19. KTM is an Austrian company founded in 1934. In 2008 January KTM collaborated with Bajaj in India and launched their motorcycles.
20. ZX-14R is a Kawasaki, Japanese brand that was the most powerful sportbike of 2007. It costs around 20lac.

21. Other bikes are any motorcycle available in the market apart from Royal Enfield and Superbikes.
22. As discussed in different types of 'motorcycle establishment' later in this chapter.
23. Many trusted and famous source of the u-tube channel of motorcycle and car videos.
24. Source: Information collected from the respondents.
25. Motocross is an extreme form of off-road racing held on enclosed off-road circuits.
26. Jderu calls 'axis mundi' when the motorcycle becomes a kind of an extended body entity or which becomes the central point for the motorcyclist.
27. The other parts are plugs, clutches, battery, lights, indicators, horns, engine oil, air filter, oil filter, shocker oil level, front oil level, electrical parts, etc.
28. Normative behaviours are practices also include warnings that are to be shown to the fellow riders riding behind the chain of formation. Warning that is to be shown is mainly hand or leg gestures.
29. A feeling of pride and mutual loyalty that is been shared by the group.
30. Information collected for the official site of Honda
31. Outlaw motorcycle riders are also known as 'one-percenter' (1%). They started riding after World War II in North America. They are known as an outlaw because they did not adhere to the rules of the American Motorcycle Association. They often broke traffic rules and regulations, ransacked the town or beer pub they cross by.
32. Safety gears are riding pants, riding jackets boots, helmets, etc.
33. PowerDrift: are automobile content-based videos with more than one million subscribers. They usually are one of the topmost trusted video u-tube channels all over the world.
34. Source: official TVS website
35. MMRT or Madras Motor Race Track is situated at Chennai in the year 1980 which is quite famous and the oldest in India, where riders participate in the race track.
36. Source: Bajaj official website

Chapter: IV

Gender and Motorcycle:

1. Gender: The term gender defined as "as the social product that changes through the use that society makes of it and the knowledge that it produces" (Kvande 1999:305)
2. Doing gender: The concept of doing gender is taken for West and Zimmerman theory of doing gender where he states how individual both male and female does gender in everyday lives.
3. Hegemonic masculinity: is defined as a practice that legitimizes men's dominant position in society and justifies the subordination of the less abled men and women and other marginalized sections of the society.
4. Masculine identity according to Srivastava refers to the "socially produced but embodied ways of being male. Its manifestations include manners of speech, behaviour, gestures, social interaction, a division of tasks 'proper' to men and women ('men work in offices, women do housework'), and an overall narrative that positions it as superior to its perceived antithesis, femininity" (2012)
5. Royal Enfield: First produced in 1990, RE is the oldest motorcycle brand in the world still in production. The parent company is Eicher Motors. All most all the parts of this motorcycle are made up of metal parts, unlike any other motorcycle companies, making it heavier than the other motorcycles. Though it has a lot of electrical and technical manufacturing faults but still it is the most bought bikes in India. Consumers simply buy RE because it holds a specific status and hype. It has many models available in all over the country as well as abroad.
6. Super bike: refers to the motorcycles with cubic capacity (CC) between 800 and 1200cc. Superbike racing motorcycles must have four-stroke engines, unlike the other motorcycles.
7. Smoking a pot: commonly referred to as chillum traditionally used in smoking marijuana or hash
8. Motocross: Motocross is a form of off-road motorcycle racing held on enclosed off-road circuits.
9. JAWA: an old motorcycle company since 1929. Jawa motorcycles were not in production for years.

10. *Thunderbird*: Thunderbird is a model under the brand name Royal Enfield. It is the lowest in height compared to the other RE motorcycles.
11. *Wheels United*: is a motorcycling event, it is the eastern India's biggest gathering where more than 1500 motorcyclists participate every year.
12. *Niladri Basu* (change changed to maintain the confidentiality): A famous body-builder and a superbike rider known to everyone with the motorcycling field.
13. *Edgeworker*: Edgeworkers are the participants of edgework activities such as mountaineering, sky diving, etc. (for more details refer to risk and motorcycling).
14. *Urvashi Patole*: created all India lady biker club called 'The Bikerni', it has its branches all over India and even it has ranked 5th among the Female Biker Clubs all over the world by Hotcars.com.
15. *Scooter*: is a light two-wheeled open motor vehicle, with an enclosed engine.
16. *Source*: information collected from India Bike Week (all India basis), Wheels United (only Bengal).
17. *Butch*: is a lesbian whose appearance and behaviour are been as traditionally masculine.
18. *The others*: may include any gender apart from men and females.
19. *Anthropomorphization*: is a process where machines are given human gender qualities which can be observed among the motor mechanic and in engineers too. (Mellstrom 2004)
20. *Axis Mundi*: Jderu calls 'axis mundi' when the motorcycle becomes a kind of an extended body entity or which becomes the central point for the motorcyclist.

Chapter V

Risk and Motorcycle

1. *Risk*: Sociologically speaking according to Deborah Lupton (1999) risks are generally constructed over time from pre-modernity to the later modern era. Risk can be voluntary as well as involuntary too.
2. *Bull* is a short form of Bullet that is Royal Enfield motorcycles. The word 'bull' is the camaraderie of all Royal Enfield motorcycles.
3. *Superbike*: Any motorcycle above the cubic capacity of 800 is considered to be a superbike. It is quite costly and is hardly affordable by the majority.
4. *California Superbike School*: is a renowned institution where they teach candidates to ride a motorcycle and also prepare them professionally for track racing.
5. *TSD*: Time Speed Distance is a special form of rally people participate professionally. TSD rally requires a different set of knowledge and also a modified motorcycle or a car. Every year there is an overall 3-4 TSD rally conducted in West Bengal.
6. *Motocross*: it is a form of extreme off-road motorcycle racing held on enclosed off-road circuits.
7. *Raid De Himalayas*: India's one of the biggest motocross event.
8. *Bull*: is also another name of Royal Enfield (RE). At the initial days, RE had a model called bullet but now not in production any longer. The bull is the short form of bullet and also any RE motorcycle is considered as a bull. It also signifies the power and characteristics of the animal bull. It is like Colgate for toothpaste.
9. *Machines* here motorcycles are considered as a living entity as explained by Jderu 2013 as 'axis mundi' or Mellstorm 2004 calls it as 'anthropomorphization'. It is explained in the previous chapter Gender and Motorcycling. They state that this is because the respondent has a strong bodily connection or a strong sensation that reduces the gap between the subject (respective respondent) with the object (respective motorcycle).
10. *Difficult times* here means while crossing a bad trail, or if the motorcycle broke down, etc.
11. *Super bike*: since any bike above 800cc (cubic capacity) is denoted as a super bike, hence it produces enough speed even in the 2nd or 3rd to overtake any non-superbike easily
12. *Gazes*: In the thesis discuss masculine gazes or patriarchal gaze with women generally fear, especially when they are alone or in shady places with drunker men around.
13. *Significant ones* are boyfriend or girlfriend or spouses etc.

14. *Helmets they prefer are always branded ones and are quite costly. The Indian standard mark is denoted by ISI but the respondents prefer the standard mark of DOT that is usually manufactured in foreign countries. They are definitely better than ISI marks.*
15. *As explained in the earlier chapter Culture and motorcycle under the sub of creating an identity by a particular genre of riding.*
16. *Refer to the primary concerns of risk while riding a motorcycle.*
17. *One-piece leathers are jackets completely made with leather that helps them in any kind of crash with riding that high speed. These leather jackets are very costly and are not manufactured here at Kolkata and are mainly imported. At least the riders use imported one-piece leather jackets for their safety purpose.*

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

(I did not always read the script, but it helped me as a guide to ensure that I convey this information to the respondents).

Interview schedule (semi-structured)

Script: I am a research scholar from the Sociology Department at the Jadavpur University. I am conducting research on *Gender and Motorcycles: A Study of Biking Cultures in Kolkata* and will explore the whereabouts of gender, culture as well as risk related to motorcycling. Your participation in this study will be extremely helpful and I hope that you will like to share your experiences with me. Everything that we discuss will be kept completely confidential. Let's focus on your experience with the machine and this specific culture.

Demographic info:

1. Age:
2. Qualification:
3. Monthly Income
 - 3.1. Family income
 - 3.2. Individual income
4. Are you married?
 - 4.1. Do you have children?
 - 4.2. If yes daughter or son?
5. Since when did u start riding? [I]
6. What model and make do u ride? [I & III]
7. Which motorcycle organization do u belong to?
8. Why do u ride? (number then in ascending order) [I]
 - a. Thrill
 - b. Freedom
 - c. Relaxation
 - d. Excitement
 - e. Others, please specify
- 8.1. What does thrill means to you?

- 8.2. Freedom from what?
- 8.3. How do you relax while u ride?
- 8.4. What excitement do you look for when u go out for riding?
9. What is your primary motivation for riding? [I]
10. Do you consider riding to be a potentially dangerous activity? [IV]
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 10.1. If yes, why?
- 10.2. If no, why?
11. How do you identify yourself? [I & III]
 - a. Learner
 - b. Cruiser
 - c. Adventure Tourer
 - d. Track racer
 - e. Stunts
 - f. Rally Rider
 - g. Moto-traveller
- 11.1. Why do identify yourself to that category?
12. What are the pre-ride rituals that you follow before you ignite your bike for short/long trips? [I]
 - a. Oil level
 - b. Tyre pressure
 - c. Clutch and breaks
 - d. Turn signals or indicators
 - e. Valuable documents
 - f. Hydration pouch
 - g. Others, specify
- 12.1. Why do you think those rituals are important before you go out for a ride?
- 12.2. How did you come to learn about those rituals?
13. What technology gadgets do u carry while on rides? [II]
 - 13.1. Why do u carry those gadgets with you while on a ride?
14. How well do u mix with people not belonging from your riding community but are motorcyclists? [I]

15. Indicate three motorcycling movies that you consider to be the most popular depictions of motorcycle riders. [I, II, III]
16. What do u feel about motorcycle advertisements?
17. Do u feel women are commodified in such advertisements? [III]
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 17.1. If yes, why do u feel so?
- 17.2. If no, why do u feel so?
18. How do you think media portrays motorcyclists? [III]
19. Do you feel there is a need to change 'bikers image' as portrayed by mass media?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 19.1. If yes, why?
- 19.2. If no, why?
20. How comfortable you are with your clan?
 - 20.1. Why? [III, I]
21. Someone who is not a part of your group but wants to become a part of your riding group, what are ways he or she is accepted in the group? [I]
 - 21.1. Are u willing to u accept a female rider as a member in your group?[IV]
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - 21.2. If No, why?
22. Which is the leading brand of motorcycle in Kolkata?
 - 22.1. Why do you think so?
23. How do u, or have chosen which 'model' and 'make' to buy? [I,II,III]
 - a. Through adds
 - b. Through people's views
 - c. Through going through reviews
 - d. Others, please specify
- 23.1. Why?
24. Do you ever ride with people who ride different brands of motorcycles different from yours? [II,III]
25. Do you think motorcyclists usually differentiate between plastic and metal bikes?
 - 25.1. Why there is a war between two?

- 25.2. What are your views regarding it? [II,III]
26. Have you named your motorcycle?
 - 26.1. If yes why?
 - 26.2. If no why?
27. Do you have a tattoo?
 - 27.1. If yes, how well related is that with your motorcycle?
28. What does biking brotherhood means to u? [II,III]
- 28.1. As a motorcycle rider do u feel that you are a part of that brotherhood? [II,III]
29. What is the best motorcycle experience you would like to share? [I,II,III,IV]
30. What is the worst motorcycle experience you would like to share?
31. What are the normative practice u follow while riding to communicate with fellow riders? [I]
 - a. Thumps up/ waving
 - b. Warning
 - c. Others, please specify
- 31.1. Why do you follow these practices?
- 31.2. How did you learn these practices?
32. What is your primary concern while u ride in terms of risk and danger? [IV]
33. What brand of helmet and other protective gears do u prefer wearing? [IV]
34. How 'safe from outsiders' do you feel while riding a motorcycle in a solo trip? [IV]
 - a. In control
 - b. Comfortable
 - c. Concerned
 - d. Afraid
35. How much are u willing to pay for the safety gears? [IV]
36. Did u ever ride on alcohol or any other drugs? [IV]
37. Do your spouse/significant other ride?
 - a. Yes
 - b. no
- 37.1. If so does she/he rides her/his own bike? [III, IV]
38. If you have kids: Do your children ride?
 - 38.1. If so do they own a two wheeler?
 - 38.2. If not will you ever encourage them to be a part of riding? [III,IV]
39. Do you participate in motorcycling events?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- 39.1. If yes, Why do you participate in such events? [I]
- 39.2. If no, why don't you bother to participate?
- 40. Have u ever been to Rider Mania or BOBMC or India Bike Week or Wheels United?
- 40.1. If so, how frequently?
- 40.2. If yes, why do u visit such events? [I]
- 41. Do u attend motorcycle rallies, bike shows, etc?
- 41.1. If so, which one?
- 41.2. How often? [I]
- 42. How society reacts about you, riding a motorcycle for long trips?
- 43. How society reacts about a women riding a motorcycle?
- 44. How the society react when a women rides a motorcycle for long tours?
- 45. If you would like to change something, what would be the three things that you want to change for the betterment of the growth of motorcycling culture .

WOMEN ONLY

- 46. How much comfortable you feel as a passenger /pillion?
- 46.1. What exactly brings your faith in him/her? (only for women pillions) [III,IV]
- 47. Do you feel fully accepted as a female rider in such kind of a male dominated activity? [III]
- a. yes
- b. no
- 47.1. if yes, how? Please narrate
- 47.2. if no why?
- 48. Do u feminize your appearance and attire while riding a motorcycle or as a passenger?
- 48.1. If yes, why do you do so? [III]
- 48.2. If no, why?
- 49. Do you masculinize your appearance and attire while riding a motorcycle or as a passenger?
- 49.1. If yes, why do u think that is necessary?
- 49.2. If no, why not?
- 50. How comfortable are you in such kind of a male dominated sport especially in motorcycle events and rallies or stunts? [III]

50.1. Please narrate your views regarding that.

51. Do you at all try feminizing this male dominated activity? [III]

a. yes

b. no

51.1. if yes, How do you do so?

51.2. If no, why?

52. What are your strategies to be safe while on the road going for long trips? [III,IV]

Appendix B

Demographic Info:

- Sex:

Category	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	82	82
Female	18	18
Total (N)	100	100

I have interviewed 100 respondents out of which 82% are male motorcyclists whereas only 18% were female who ride motorcycles.

- Age:

Category	Male	Male (percentage %)	Female	Female (percentage %)
Below 20	4	4.8		
21-30	31	37.8	12	66.6
31-40	22	26.8	2	11.1
41-50	19	23.1	4	22.2
51 and above	6	7.3		
Total (N)	82	99.8=100	18	99.9=100

The majority of my male and female respondents belong from the age group of 21-30 that is 37.8% and 66.6% respectively and least are below 20 that is 4.8% of male respondents belong from that group. It is also evident because driving licence is only available after 18. 31-40 age group constitute 26.8% of male while 11.1% of female riders and 23.1% of male respondents and 22.2% female respondents belongs from the age group 41-50.

- Educational Qualification:

Category	Male	Male (percentage %)	Female	Female (percentage %)
Below Secondary	3	3.6		
Higher Secondary	2	2.4	2	11.1
Diploma	28	34.1		
Graduation	41	50	9	50
Post-Graduation (PG)	6	7.3	7	38.8
PG and above	2	2.4		
Total (N)	82	99.8=100	18	99.9=100

The above table portrays the educational qualification of my respondents. Strikingly 50% of both male and female are graduate. While 34.1% have completed diploma and has joined some firm or business. Only 7.3% of male respondents and 38.3% of female respondents belongs in the post-graduation category. 3.6% and 2.4% are from secondary or higher secondary category. Respondents in this category are mainly drop outs.

- Profession:

Category	Male	Male (percentage %)	Female	Female (percentage %)
Student	7	8.5	2	11.1
Teacher	5	6	4	22.2
Business	27	32.9	2	11.1
Service	24	29.2	3	16.6
Self- Employment	19	23	5	27.7
Homemaker			2	11.1
Total (N)	82	99.6=100	18	99.8=100

*I have also interviewed 4 women who ride as a pillion/passenger with their partners (boyfriend/husband/fiancée/fiancé) on the motorcycle. Though they are not much knowledgeable about the technical parts of the motorcycle but duly contribute in the motorcycling culture.

The Service sector includes respondents working in hotel Industry, Engineer, Doctor working in Government Hospitals, Government Employee, Sales Manager, Executive Manager, RE Ride coordinator, service manager that constitute 29.2% of male respondents whereas only 16.6% are female respondents.

Self-Employment sector constitute Motor Mechanic, Musician, Artists, Graffiti Painter, Tour operator, Web Designer, Stunter, Yoga Instructor. 23% that is 19 male respondents are self-employed. While 27.7% that is the majority of women respondents are self-employed.

Business sector includes trading of motorcycle gear, automobile, Import & Export, Manufacturer, Motorcycle Showroom owner, Entrepreneur which constitute of the majority male respondents with 32.9% while 11.1% of female respondent's occupation is business.

Similar to that of business, 11.1% of my female respondents are students while 8.5% of male respondents are students. They do not contribute to the family income.

Only 6% of male respondents are teacher while 22.2% of female respondents are teacher.

2 or 11.1% of my respondents are homemaker.

- Income

Monthly Family Income

Income Categories	Male	Male (percentage %)	Female	Female (percentage %)
Up to 50,000	2	2.4	1	5.5
50,001- 75,000	4	4.8	4	22.2
75,001- 1,00,000	21	25.6	4	22.2
1,00,001-1,25,000	32	39	3	16.6
1,25,000- 1,75,000	10	12.1	4	22.2
1,75,000- 2,00,000				
2,00,001 and above	13	15.8	2	11.1
Total (N)	82	99.7=100	18	99.8=100

In the table above, the monthly family income of the respondents has been presented. It is being inferred from the table that most of the male respondents i.e. 32 (39%) belongs to the income category 1,00,001-1,25,000 which represents higher-income group and more specifically 1,00,000 onwards represents the higher-income or upper-income group. While for female respondents the dominant income group are 50,000-75,000, which represents middle-income group as well as 75,001-1,00,00 and 1,25,001- 1,75,000 slab respondents share the same percentage of 22.2 which is considered as higher-income group.

Monthly Individual Income

Income Categories	Male	Male (percentage %)	Female	Female (percentage %)
Up to 25,000	3	4	2	14.2
25,001-50,000	6	8	4	28.5
50,001-75,000	12	16	3	21.4
75,001-1,00,000	21	28	3	21.4
1,00,001- 1,25,000	16	21.3	2	14.2
1,25,001-1,75,000	8	10.6		
1,75,001-2,00,000				
2,00,001 and above	9	12		
Total (N)	75	99.9=100	14	99.7=100

*Total no. of male respondents is (N= 75) because 7 of them are students and does not earn a living, whereas total no. of female respondents is (N=14) because 2 of female respondents are still a student and other 2 are homemaker and they does not earn.

- Genre of motorcycle the respondents ride:

Motorcycle Make	Male	Male (percentage %)	Female	Female (percentage %)
Royal Enfield	31	37.8	5	27.7
Bajaj	18	21.9	9	50
KTM	5	6		

Honda	4	4.8	2	11.1
Hero	3	3.6	1	5.5
Kawasaki	6	7.3		
Yamaha	12	14.6	1	5.5
Others	3	3.6		
Total (N)	82	99.6 =100	18	99.8 =100

The above table represents the genre of motorcycle my respondents ride. Out of 82 male respondents 37.8% that is the majority ride Royal Enfield, 21.9% rides Bajaj while among 18 female respondents majority of my respondents ride Bajaj that is, 50% while 27.7% only rides Royal Enfield.

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Abstract Title of the dissertation: Gender and Motorcycles: A Study of Biking Cultures in Kolkata This research has been a venture to investigate the hitherto uncharted domain of the relationship between gender, risk, and motorcycling from a sociological perspective in Kolkata, India. This attempts to methodologically explore the rising distinctive culture of motorcycling in Kolkata. It should be noted that this study deals with those individuals who ride a motorcycle either professionally or passionately. The subjective notion of 'riding passionately' here means motorcyclists who ride motorcycles apart from mundane activities. This study has three main objectives. Firstly, to explore the rituals and significant styles associated with motorcycling only, forming a separate community of its own, resulting in a prominent culture. Secondly, to enquire whether motorcyclists are doing gender while riding a motorcycle and it is expressive of a particular kind of masculinity. Thirdly, it would explore what kind of risk men and