Bicycles As Objects: Identity, Attachment, and Membership Categorization Devices

by

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Abstract

This study aligns the concepts of identity and attachment with the material object of the bicycle. Through analyzing interviews to consider how people speak about their bicycles, I locate the bicycle as a significant 'experiential object' that can be relevant over a person's life course. Although this study is located in the field of material culture studies, I draw on work from other fields to consider a range of issues concerning how people experience their bicycles

Twenty-eight self-identified frequent cyclists were interviewed for this project. The interviews were coded and analyzed through approaches associated with forms of discourse analysis, including membership categorization analysis. Underpinning this study are the concepts of autonomy, competence, and relatedness and culturally constituted meaning, in terms of how these concepts relate to peoples' experiences of their bicycles. As well, this study illuminates how, since a bicycle is one of the few things from childhood that is still potentially used in much the same way in adulthood, the experiential aspect may be a powerful generator of memory, emotion, and attachment.

Key words: age-grading, bicycle, culturally constituted meaning, embodiment, frequent cyclists, autonomy, competence, and relatedness

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Karly A. Coleman. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "The Bicycle: Material Culture, Attachment, and Identity" No. Pro00044296, Date May 14, 2014.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my grandmother, Freda Savoie, without whom I would never have started this journey.

I also thank my beloved, Andreas Hengst, for helping me to continue the journey and my advisor, Arlene Oak, for her guidance throughout.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures

1 Chapter One – Introduction

How people and bicycles interrelate forms the basis of my research. In particular, this research considers how people express their individual attachment to their bicycles, and to the experiences that bicycles provide. It also considers how aspects of these attachments contribute to people's sense of personal and social identity. Identity, attachment, and the bicycle form the focus of my research.

This Masters research on bicycles and identity is significant for several reasons. First while the field of material culture pays close attention to a range of objects, little has been written about bicycles as objects. Second, in material culture studies, while the psycho-emotional issues of attachment of people to objects have been well studied, the attachment of people to their bicycles has yet to be considered. Finally, although within material culture studies there is a plethora of research on identity, again, there has been no sustained scholarship that explores aspects of identity creation by way of personal attachment to the 'bicycle as object' (a term I use throughout this research to draw attention to the bicycle's status as a particular form of material culture).

This thesis first outlines the general topics and parameters of my study (in this Introduction chapter). Following this, I undertake a literature review that explores aspects of scholarship in a range of areas that relate to my interests in how people become attached to their bicycles in ways that enable them to experience and/or express aspects of personal and social identities. Following the literature review, in Chapter 3 I outline the methods used to collect and analyze the data on which this thesis is based. After the methodology chapter I discuss the

concepts of identity and attachment that underpin the analysis of the data (Chapter 4). This is followed by two data analysis chapters: Chapter 5, in which I discuss how people associate the bicycle with the concepts of autonomy, competence, and relatedness; and Chapter 6, that analyzes how people talk about the bicycle as an object that has particular associations with age categories (e.g. childhood and adulthood). Finally, in Chapter 7, Conclusions, I summarize significant findings from this research.

When I discuss with people (research participants or others) the topic of my thesis, I encounter many personal narratives concerning bicycles: stories of first bikes, favourite bikes, current bikes. Most people reminisce fondly of a bicycle in their past. The project participants and others have all likened their use of the bicycle to freedom, independence and a myriad of other emotions and experiences. Their comments bear out the findings of David Herlihy (2004) whose book *Bicycle: The History* is a study of how evocative the bicycle has been from the late 1800s to present day. Herlihy is not writing from the perspective of material culture studies, and does not refer to bicycles as a specific type of object; however, Herlihy does demonstrate that the bicycle, as an object, is a powerful instigator of both memory and emotion. Despite works such as Herlihy's, the gap in scholarship concerning the bicycle is revealed when one looks not at where the bicycle can take you physically, but rather looks at the bicycle, itself.

Whilst the popularity of ridership is an excellent measure of the bicycle's acceptance, knowledge of why people care to ride simply does not exist in the scholarship to date. That is to say, the gap I have identified goes beyond an examination of external elements that influence the cyclist's decision to ride (e.g.: weather, road condition, duration of the ride, etc.) to expose a lack of attention in the literature to what it is that fuels peoples' decisions to ride bicycles in the first

place. My research contributes new knowledge concerning why people ride bicycles and as such, this work is an innovative addition to the scholarship of the bicycle. I postulate that the bicycle is unique in its ability to enable the rider to almost simultaneously experience the temporal conditions of past, present and future because using a bicycle is reminiscent of previous uses, experiential in immediate use, and offers opportunities to anticipate future uses. Additionally, the bicycle is particularly able to encapsulate temporal conditions because many of the experiences generated through its use can be easily repeated.

Note that although the manner in which a person consumes the bicycle may change over time, the activities of cycle ownership and riding always involve aspects of attachment, identity, autonomy, competence, relatedness, and embodiment. All these elements work together to affect how riders experience the bicycle as a meaningful object, and how they understand themselves as being a cyclist.

Usually, a bicycle is purchased to provide mobility. A person's body powers the machine that provides that mobility – and the skills required to learn to ride engage both conscious and unconscious learning. The activity of cycling therefore may be considered to be embodied knowledge. Anthropologist Thomas Csordas (1995) explains embodiment as activities that involve the "perception, practice, parts, processes or products" of humans' experience of their bodies (p 4-5). Csordas considers Mauss's concept of "techniques of the body" crucial. "Techniques of the body" is a concept that Mauss developed to describe the "physio-psycho-sociological assemblages of series of actions [which are] more or less habitual and more or less ancient in the life of the individual and the history of the society" (Mauss, 1935, p 85). Csordas emphasizes the notion of "practice [which] includes everything that falls under Mauss's (1950)

notion of techniques of the body – swimming, dancing, washing, ritual breathing in meditation, posture, the variations in batting stance among baseball players – in which the body is at once tool, agent and object" (Csordas, 1995, p 5). Whilst not directly referencing bicycle riding, both Csordas and Mauss refer to activities that could easily be compared to bicycle riding: as a tool, the body is used to ride a bicycle; as an agent, the body is a requirement of riding; and as an object, the body is acted upon to use the bicycle. These particular techniques of the body are relevant to my study as they inform how both embodiment and experiential objects function.

The ways that identity and attachment relate in the bicycle makes this object an important piece of material culture, so over the next few pages, I will discuss aspects of the field of material culture, to position my research appropriately.

1.1 Material Culture

Material Culture is the study of objects: how objects affect people and how people affect objects. The diversity and reach of material culture studies is vast and intriguing, reflecting the diversity and reach of human culture itself. It is a multi-disciplinary field where "objects have the ability to signify things – or establish social meanings – on behalf of people…[and may] … signify sub-cultural affinity, occupation, participation in a leisure activity, or social status" (Woodward, 2007 p. 4). Drawing on approaches associated with art history, social history, sociology, archaeology and anthropology, material culture studies illuminates how people's beliefs about themselves and others are contained within the boundaries of an object. Art historian, Jules David Prown defines material culture studies as "the study through artifacts of the beliefs–values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions–of a particular community or society at a

given time" (Prown, 1982, p 1). Material culture studies necessitates a multi-disciplinary focus on human-made objects, and the relationship of humans to those objects.

1.1.1 Objects.

Sociologist Tim Dant (1999) finds that objects "*extend human action* and *mediate meanings* between humans" (p 13; italics in original). He notes their significance to culture as he asserts: "interactions with things – touching, making, looking at, talking and reading about, using, storing, maintain, remaking and so on – are social in that they are learnt and shared within the culture" (Dant, 1999, p 14). Dant highlights that objects provide a way for humans to understand each other, learned within the confines of their family or cultural group. Dant discusses human interaction with things in some detail, explaining: "the meaning of objects is understood by consumers through 'reading' them as a set of signs that have meaning within the culture" (Dant, 2008a, p 13). But objects are not 'read' as inert texts, as Dant also notes, the "relation is pragmatic in that the meaningfulness of the objects unfolds through interaction" (Dant, 2008a, p 13). For Dant, objects have culturally specific connotations, which are translatable without language, but which require a culture to provide comprehension. This communication process evolves between the person and the object as "meaning is contingent on the current situation that continually unfolds in the course of the interaction with the object" (Dant, 2008a, p 15). Here, Dant is talking about flat-pack furniture and car timing belts; however, the observations are transferable to bicycles because, as I will show, the meaning of a bicycle is contingent on the interactions that a person has with it.

Archaeology is another field within the broader umbrella of material culture studies that explores how objects affect people and vice versa. Ian Hodder's (2012) book *Entangled: An*

Archaeology of the Relationships Between Humans and Things examines these relationships from various perspectives, noting that "because we take things for granted, often not focusing on them … we fail to notice the characteristics of things" (p 6). Here Hodder argues people must reconsider the "spatial and temporal connectedness of things" (Hodder, 2012, p 7) by which he means, we tend to take for granted those things which have been both close to us physically and in existence for a long time (the bicycle is one such example of a taken-for-granted thing). Hodder suggests that if we reconsider our connections to objects and what they mean for people, we gain a better understanding the identity of someone from the objects they own. Consequently we can make connections based on those objects and the identity perceived through their possession.

The various disciplinary lenses of material culture studies show how humans interpret objects in particular ways. These interpretations are based on a person's history, culture, experience, and economic status, to name a few of the myriad factors that inform individual perspectives on objects. To quote Prown again, "the term *material culture* thus refers quite directly and efficiently, if not elegantly, both to the subject matter of the study, *material*, and to its purpose, the understanding of *culture*" (1982, p 2, emphasis in original). Here, specifically, we are looking at objects within a cultural milieu. Material culture is therefore a relevant interpretive approach for my research because human/object interaction provides a basis for understanding how humans use objects to create personal and social identities. I will next briefly outline a history of the bicycle as a material object. This history is significant for providing an understanding of how the bicycle is a special kind of object, one that both communicates

symbolic information to others while also enabling its user to have particular embodied experiences.

1.1.2 Bicycles.

While my research does not extensively explore bicycle history, I outline its history here to give a sense of the evolution of this often taken-for-granted object. Bicycle use has increased and decreased periodically since the creation of the safety bicycle in the later half of the 19th Century and into the early 20th Century (Herlihy, 2004). A number of sources bear witness to this pattern of boom and bust in the bicycles' popularity (Arnold, 2001;Aronson, 1952; Epperson, 2000, 2012; Gaboriau, 2003; Harmond, 1972; Kinsey, 2011, 2011b; Mees, & Groenhart, 2014; Norcliffe, 2001, 2006; Scott, 1991; Taylor, 2008; Vivanco, 2013, etc.). These sources are primarily histories of the bicycle that describe how it has moved through the sociocultural elements of space, place, and time. I have chosen a select few references to discuss further, specifically those that contribute to an interdisciplinary material culture approach to understanding the bicycle, in that, although they do not concentrate on the bicycle as a material object, they do discuss various issues that are of relevance to my study. The sources I particularly focus on include: anthropologist Luis Vivanco's (2013) view of the bicycle; bicycle biographer David Herlihy's (2004) historical account; and philosopher-scientist Wiebe Bijker's (1997) examination of socially constructed technologies. These

Figure 1: Penny-Farthing (www. spsangelab.blogspot.ca). Man riding penny-farthing bicycle.

resources are adept at defining the bicycle's longevity, ambiguity, and uptake. Both Bijker (1997) and Vivanco (2013) write of how long it took the inventors of early bicycles to achieve an ideal form, which eventually led to the bicycle we know today (See Figure 4, p 11).

Bijker notes that, by defining the bicycle through reference to its qualities as a machine (front or back-wheel drive, number of wheels (two)), or through reference to its commercial success, we can trace the development of the bicycle down a particular path, resulting in a description that relates to today's familiar structural form. Vivanco also addresses the ambiguous early definition of what actually constituted a bicycle in his chapter: "What (and When) is a Bicycle?" (Vivanco, 2013, pp 23-56). Both Bijker and Vivanco answer the question: "What is a Bicycle?" by examining the "*when* of a bicycle, that is, [the] historical period and the diverse technical and social factors that influenced the shape and qualities of the object" (Vivanco, 2013, p 25, italics in original). Both authors trace modifications made to the bicycle from the 1800s to present day, including the development of pneumatic tires and metal frames or similarly sized wheels. Each of these changes substantially modified the way the bicycle was used, its user base, and the level of societal acceptance of the bicycle.

Figure 2 Rover "Safety" bicycle (www.midlandsbusinessreview.co.uk). "Safety" bicycle becomes template for modern bicycles

As well as technical and structural factors, social factors were also important in the growing popularity and significance of the bicycle. For example, women's rights advocate

Elizabeth Cady Stanton stated that cycling was linked to "dress reform, the collapse of the distinction between the public and private spheres, and religious liberation…[and was] an invention with revolutionary social implications" (Strange, 2002, p 615). Biographer Strange writes that Stanton notes the popularity of the bicycle gradually cultivated major changes in health and social reform, designating the bicycle as an object with a rich history of change.

Figure 3 Woman in bloomers (www.modacitylife.com). Woman, wearing bifurcated pants, standing by bicycle.

1.1.2.1 The Long-Lived Bicycle.

To return to Hodder's argument for reconsidering things taken-for-granted, bicycles have been around a long time; long enough for us to fail to recognize the "temporalities different from ours" (Hodder, 2012, p 6). That is, given the current stability of the form of the bicycle, we tend not to recall how different it once was from what it looks like now. Consider that by 1871 the penny-farthing (with a higher diameter front wheel, solid rubber tires, thin spokes with uniform tension, a lighter frame, and direct drive) had become a popular machine for men (Herlihy, 2004, see Figure 1 p 7). Riding on such a vehicle was difficult and only for the staunch of heart and daring of character. Few women rode penny-farthings. Vivanco explains that in the early years of their development, bicycles "were dangerous, and awkward… hard to mount, difficult to stop even with the brakes, and [a rider] could end up in what became known as 'headers,' as the rider pitched over the front wheel, sometimes to his death" (Vivanco, 2013, p 31). Over time,

increased demand for a safer way to ride prevailed. As a result, the bicycle was modified to resemble the contemporary form of the bicycle we recognize today (See Figure 2, p 7). Safer use meant that the "bicycle laid the foundation for a new concept of personal mobility … as a notion that emphasizes the freedom of individual movement and speed with minimal effort" (Vivanco, 2013, p. 34). As mentioned previously, these technical and physical changes to the bicycle drove social changes. Together, the changes in form, function, and social acceptance led to increased demand, which in turn drove further innovations in standardized manufacture and repair, thereby creating an iterative cycle of design development and consumer use.

1.1.2.2 The Uptake of the Bicycle.

The factors that combined to increase bicycle use included, but were not limited to: standardization in manufacturing; the introduction of many conveniently located repair shops; the development of advocacy for road reform; and, a system of advances and legal enforcements for use (licenses, lighting, rules of the road, etc.) (Aronson, 1952, pp 310-311). Standardization of materials and form meant that parts were easy to access, a plethora of repair shops meant faster turn around for parts, road reform created better riding conditions, whilst enforcement of rules for transportation provided guidance around use. Herlihy corroborates Aronson's study, when Herlihy considers the ways in which the bicycle soon became a workhorse vehicle in a market "largely devoid of the glamour that had permeated the boom [in bicycles]" (Herlihy, 2004, p 309). Accessibility, reparability, consistency, and affordability meant that more people rode, which also heightened demand. The bicycle moved away from being a symbol of higher-class status to being a vehicle for the masses.

1.1.3 The Bicycle as Object

The bicycle as object underwent considerable changes in its early years of development. It has now settled into a recognizable shape and form, achieving what Bijker and Vivanco call "socio-technical stability and closure" (Bijker, Hughes, & Pincher 2012; Vivanco, 2013, p 40). By this statement, the authors mean that the bicycle has reached an ideal form and that current modifications to its shape are predominately stylistic rather than function-altering. What does this stable machine look like? Regardless of the type of cycling being done (mountain biking, touring or racing, etc.) as an object, the bicycle is a fairly simple machine with remarkably few parts (see Figure 4, below).

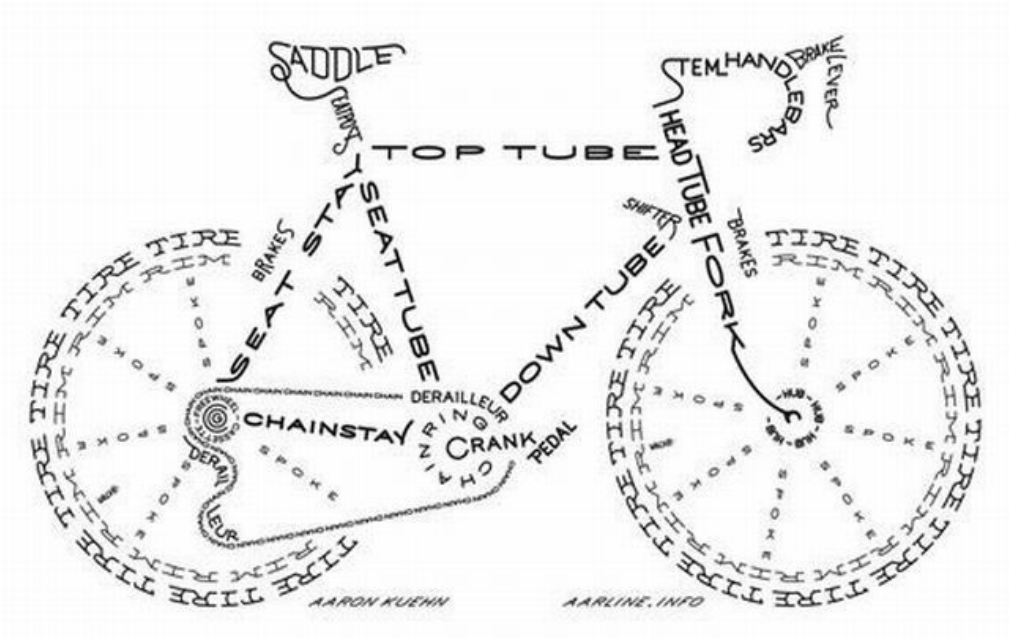

Figure 4 Bicycle parts and frame (meuncheinrung.blogspot.com). Drawing of bicycle outlining names of various bicycle parts.

The basic components of a bicycle include the saddle, two wheels with inflated rubber tires, a narrow and rigid triangular frame, a steering mechanism or handlebar, and a drive train, including pedals. The machine moves forward by way of the pedals, which propel the drive train.

The drive train may or may not have gears. All of these components have variables that increase their quality and performance, and are based on price, type or style of cycling, and sometimes brand names.

As already noted, the bicycle's basic design (a triangular frame with two similarly-sized wheels) is stable (i.e. no longer undergoing significant changes of form); however, changes and modifications to bicycle components are commonplace and can occur at nearly any stage of a bicycle's existence. Once the choice of frame is decided upon, practically all other elements can be modified either prior to production, just off the production floor, upon purchase or well after market. All other components, or whatever else the owner deems necessary or desirable are based on functionality, comfort and type of cycling. This ability to be easily customized enables the consumer to extend his or her self-identity in relation to the cycle and contributes to the individual developing an emotional attachment to the bicycle: qualities of cycle ownership that encourages and reinforces aspects of identity creation and further attachment.

Why is the bicycle not more thoroughly researched as an object? Perhaps it is because, as previously mentioned, the bicycle has become both ubiquitous and seemingly mundane. Like Hodder and Vivanco, I re-examine the bicycle with an eye to considering how "knowing the existence of an entity is linked to the use of the entity as thing… [and from this] it follows that consideration of thingness is as relevant to epistemological debate as it is to understanding social process" (Hodder, 2012, p 13). As I delve into the stories that my correspondents told me about their bicycles, I examine the socio-psychological meanings of bicycles that are used, developed, and maintained over the passage of time.

As a result of their ubiquity, bicycles have been taken-for-granted for a long time. Although, as I will show, much research has been done on aspects of bicycling, the mundane nature of the bicycle results in its being overlooked as a noteworthy object. This chapter provided an overview of why objects are considered in material culture studies and described the bicycle in some detail. The need to study bicycles as objects was also addressed. Next, and in order to ground my research within current scholarly discourse around the bicycle, I begin with my Literature Review of the current state of material culture scholarship and other bicycle-related scholarship, positioning my research at the intersection of several disciplines.

2 Chapter Two–Literature Review

As discussed in the brief outline of the bicycle's history in Chapter 1, the bicycle as object has existed from the mid-1800s, undergoing various modifications to eventually achieve the form we recognize today. An argument was also made for considering the bicycle as an object. But, what else do we know about bicycles? How are they perceived in the Academy? In particular, how do they become an object of attachment that connects to aspects of personal and social identity? These issues form the central focus of this literature review.

To reiterate, this work on bicycles is significant because little has been written about bicycles as objects in material culture scholarship to date. Further the attachment of people to their bicycles has yet to be carefully examined, and I have found no scholarly research on identity creation or expression by way of personal attachment to the bicycle as object. As referenced earlier, people form and maintain attachments to objects in order to represent themselves to other people; therefore how do people use and maintain attachments to the bicycle as object?

This chapter examines and analyzes pertinent areas of research to respond to this question. First, bicycle-related scholarship in selected disciplines is examined with the intent of determining where my research fits within a wide field of scholarly work. Most current bicycle-centred scholarship is found in the following categories: sports-oriented research; transportation design and engineering studies; and medical or fitness approaches. I do not explore these literatures in depth since they do not take a material culture perspective. Second, selected theories regarding objects are investigated to extrapolate how the bicycle as object can be described via material culture scholarship. Third, literature is considered that outlines theories of

identity creation that results from object use and personal attachment. Fourth, research in the area of material possession attachment is examined to explain how people form attachments to their bicycles.

2.1 Bicycle Scholarship

With respect to bicycle-related literature, as already noted the main categories with the most writing include: sport-oriented research; transportation design and engineering studies (for instance, who is on the roadway at any particular time or of what the roadway consists); and medical or fitness approaches that outline the health aspects of cycling (Heinen, van Wee, & Maat, 2012; Horton, Rosen & Cox, 2007). Sports-oriented research investigates topics like ergonomics, performance, and muscle fatigue (Ayachi, Dorey, & Guastavino, 2015; Balasubramanian, Jagannath, & Adalarasu, 2014; Chowdhury & Alam, 2014; Herrick, Flohr, Wenos, & Saunders, 2011; Hugh-Jones, 1947). Transportation design and engineering studies research deals primarily with examinations of roadway user interfaces (Boarnet, 2011; Caulfield, Brick & McCarthy, 2012; Forsyth, & Krizek 2011; Winters, Brauer, Setton, & Teschke, 2010); profiles of cyclists (Damant-Sirois, Grimsrud, & El-Geneidy 2014; Hunt, & Abraham 2007; Koglin, 2014; Zander, Passmore, Mason & Rissel 2013); why specific groups ride more or less than others (Akar, Fischer, & Namgun 2010; Beecham, & Wood 2014a, 2014b; Chevalier, 2013; Lugo, 2013); and comparisons of riding habits in and between countries (Cardoza, 2010; Pucher & Buehler, 2006; Suzuki & Yai, 2012). Medical or fitness approaches study physiological changes that manifest in the body as a result of riding a bicycle or by way of accidents. These changes include items like injury, lung capacity, and health impact of mandatory helmet laws (de

Jong, 2012; Egberts, Connaughton, & Spengler, 2013; Parthiban, Hotaling, Ohlander, Baftiri, Freels, & Niederberger, 2014).

As referenced in the Introduction to this thesis, there exists a wealth of information on the history of bicycles, ranging from general histories like that of Herlihy's (2004), to detailed examinations of historic bicycle use and its effect on culture, society, and populations (Burr, 2005; Epperson, 2000, 2013; Gaboriau, 2010; Nelson, 2010; Norcliffe, 1997, 2001, 2006; Petty, 1995; Scott, 1991; Zhang, Howell, & Caprariello 2013). Herlihy touches on other types of cycling like touring, racing, or mountain biking, but makes no mention of individuated object-oriented experiences. This lack of mention may be indicative of a phenomenon Hodder (2012) identifies, that is: a "spatial and temporal forgetting of the unstable connections of things" (p 6). Here, Hodder means that things often have a larger footprint in both time and space than people realize. This issue is particularly germane to bicycles, because they can be found in garages and yards across North America, they have been around for a significant amount of recent human history, and they are part of a much larger, even global, distribution. Therefore, as a result of the bicycle's relative stability in design since the 1890s and its contemporary ubiquity, it is made invisible by Hodder's phenomenon of forgetfulness. Although some elements of the bicycle as object (such as how design changes impact performance) are discussed in contemporary literature, and there is a plethora of information on bicycle use, none of this research addresses the material cultural aspects of bicycles. It is this aspect that is under discussion here.

Over the last few years, a new area of bicycle research has emerged, as epitomized by Lugo (2013), Turpin (2013, 2014) and Vivanco (2013), all of whom provide a growing anthropological and historical slant to research into bicycles as complex objects. In her

anthropology dissertation, *Body-City-Machines: Human Infrastructure for Bicycling in Los Angeles (2013),* Lugo discusses cultural categories such as class and ethnicity in relation to bicycle use. Despite Lugo's concerns with the social aspects of cycling, her work fails to address material culture because of its concentration on *who* is riding, rather than on the rider's attachment to *what* they are riding. Turpin's (2013) history dissertation *Our Best Bet is the Boy: A Cultural History of Bicycle Marketing and Consumption in the United States, 1880-1960* discusses how the bicycle industry in the United States changed its marketing strategy to categorize bicycles as children's toys. Both Turpin's dissertation and his 2014 article "Designing Transformation: The Bicycle as a Child's Toy, 1925-1940" have been especially useful to explain prevailing North American social norms around bicycles. Turpin's work provides a strong rationale for my interpretations in the data analysis chapters, where I consider how participants talk about age in relation to their bicycles. Regardless, although Turpin's work clearly outlines the long-term impact of branding an object, it still fails to address the person-object connection.

Vivanco's (2013) book *Reconsidering the Bicycle: An Anthropological Perspective on a New (Old) Thing* discusses the bicycle by way of examining its potential as "a solution to a number of contemporary problems," particularly what the bicycle "might mean for everyday practices and politics of urban mobility" (p xix). Vivanco's work on the anthropology of the bicycle references material culture (and is, therefore, closer in alignment to my own research), but he focuses on mobility and does not address attachment to objects or aspects of identity.

Whilst all the aforementioned scholarship discloses a great deal about who is riding, where, when, and under what road conditions, or provides consideration of the rider's health, such work does not consider issues of attachment and meaning (as is the focus of my research).

2.2 Material Culture Scholarship

Given that material culture scholarship does not tend to give much consideration to the bicycle, I have turned to other material culture research on objects other than the bicycle, and extrapolated how such work can inform my study of bicycles. Given their attention to the relationship between people and objects, I will especially consider the sociological approach of Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton (1981) and the social psychological perspective of Dant, (1998, 2004, 2008b) in terms of their associations with material culture studies.

The introduction to this thesis stated that material culture studies deals with the cultural aspects of material goods. Thus far, material culture scholarship that investigates human-object interactions with objects that enable specific experiences has been largely focused around objects similar to those that industrial designers Schifferstein and Hekkert (2008) refer (for example: fashionable clothes (McCracken, 1990), how shoes and garments connote status (Bellezza, Gino, & Keinan 2014), items brought by immigrants from their homelands (Mehta & Belk, 1991) and brand-name kitchen appliances (Chang Coupland, 2005)). The bicycle only comes up occasionally and tangentially as has been seen in the work of Dant (1998). However, the scarcity of bicycle references in material culture positions it as an excellent object on which to conduct research.

2.2.1 A Dearth of Bicycles

A seminal sociological work in material culture, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* by Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton (1981) outlines how people discuss their relationships to objects and investigates both gendered and age-related differences. Their work builds initial understandings of human-object connections including transportation-based objects. A cornerstone for a remarkable number of articles in material culture, identity, and material possession attachment, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's research discusses how:

> Objects reflect, or create, a sense of power in those who use them. In our own culture the enormous symbolic significance of vehicles is so obvious that it is too easily taken for granted. From a child's first tricycle to a ten-speed bike, later to a motorcycle or a car, the physical energy of the owner is enhanced by more and more powerful machinery (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p 27).

The authors mention tricycles and bicycles but only insofar as these objects are part of a progression to increasingly mechanized machines. Moreover, although the authors discuss automobiles, they do not elaborate beyond discussing cars as totemic symbols of "prowess, dominance, or power" for men (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p 142). No consideration is given to how women use vehicles, nor are other types of vehicles discussed. Whilst the authors recognize that enormous symbolic significance of vehicles is taken for granted, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton are guilty of the same action, as they skip to the symbolism of more powerful machinery and do not discuss earlier models, including that of tricycles and bicycles. *The Meaning of Things* is important because it includes significant

insights into the enormous symbolic significance of vehicles, but lacking because of the issues mentioned above. While the methods and approaches of Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton have informed aspects of my work (e.g. conducting interviews), rather than dismissing bicycles as a preliminary stage to automobile ownership, my study focuses attention on the bicycle as a unique object that fosters particular relationships with people.

Taking a more social psychological perspective, Dant (1998, 2004, 2008a, 2008b) focuses on aspects of objects such as flat-pack furniture, the iPod, the automobile, and the windsurfer and considers how they are used. Although all of these objects are very different from bicycles, in most cases they are sufficiently experiential in nature as to be compared to bicycles. Dant reasons that when people interact with items like flat-pack furniture, "the 'consumer' engages in material interaction with objects that have been designed to be interacted with in a particular way. The designer… has anticipated [the] sort of interaction [necessary] and the objects are made to respond in predictable ways" (Dant, 2008a, p 13). For each object he considers, Dant discusses how the anticipated interaction and response affects use. The flat-pack furniture becomes three-dimensional; the iPod emits sound; the car transports people; the windsurfer provides exercise and play. To extrapolate from Dant's work on products to my work on the bicycle, it is necessary to recognize that whilst the designer interaction spans over a hundred years, the response to the object remains fairly predictable (which has perhaps contributed to the ignoring of the bicycle-as-object by the field of material culture studies).

Dant also considers how people experience embodiment in relation to objects, which is another very important aspect of the way people use the bicycle. For instance, Dant describes the embodied nature of iPods, as he recognizes that these objects have a "designed-in intimacy of its

owner's relationship with it [which] is part of the pleasure of interacting with the device" (Dant, 2008b, p 5). This notion of an object having an embodied nature with a designed-in intimacy is applicable to the bicycle also. For example, a person uses his or her body to propel the bicycle forward; his or her hands, body, and brain are all incorporated in the experience, and he or she also experiences the environment and elements first hand. All of this activity forms an inescapable embodiment, which can be described as "techniques of the body" previously mentioned by Csordas and Mauss, where the body is a tool, agent and requirement for riding, (See Chapter 1, p 3). Similarly, while the bicycle has not *absorbed* "complex body, arm and hand movements… inside the machine," it *requires* complex body, arm and hand movements to manipulate it (Dant, 2008b, p 5). This complexity becomes apparent when describing how bicycles turn (for detailed information on bicycle physics including steering, see David Gordon Wilson's (2004) *Bicycling Science*, Section 2, Chapters 4-10). Admittedly, there is a learning curve when beginning to ride a bicycle; however, once the skill is learned – meaning the motor learning transfers the activity from the frontal lobe (conscious) to cerebellum (unconscious) learning – it becomes automatic (for a description of cycling skills remembered see Snijders & Bloem, 2010, *Cycling for Freezing of Gait*). Moreover, just as Dant notes that iPods hold valuable iconic status and "it is difficult not to know what one is or to recognize that it has cultural value – if only to other people" (Dant, 2008b, p 12), it can be argued that this is also the case with the bicycle; that is, nearly every adult would recognize what a bicycle is and realize that it has some cultural value (if only to its user). Further, beyond the use value of a bicycle it may also have cultural value as a symbol, as is indicated by several books dedicated to styles of bicycles in relation to social status and group use (See, for examples: Babin, 2014; Fincham,

2007; Hurst, 2007, 2009; Illundain-Agurruza & Austin, 2010; Kidder, 2006a; 2006b; Klanten & Ehmann, 2010; Peterson, 2012; Velominati, 2013; Walker, 2011; Weiss, 2010, 2012).

Like Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, Dant also studies the automobile. His (2004) article, "The Driver Car", pays homage to the "new forms of social action in late modernity" that the car provides as well as recognition of the " distinctive nature" of the automobile (p 61). As is suggested by the title, Dant draws on Actor Network Theory in his interpretation, as he states: "The driver-car serves as both an extension of the human body and an extension of technology and society into the human" (Dant, 2004, p 75). The result is neither human nor automobile but a synthesis of the two entities which function in a unique manner and requires that other to function appropriately. Dant's writing emphasizes "taken-for-granted" activities that develop as people become habituated, even institutionalized to driving, recognizing "The driver-car is socially embedded as a system of affordances, actor networks, and embodiment that is not going to be forgone or forgotten easily" (Dant, 2004, p 75). Here Dant refers to how the automobile functions generally in society, but his writing about the driver-car could easily be likened point for point to a driver-bicycle, an object that serves similarly as an "extension of the human body and an extension of technology and society into the human" (Dant, 2004, p 75). However, Dant makes the comparison between horses and automobiles instead, bypassing the bicycle completely.

So while there is no direct reference to bicycles in Dant's work, his concepts actually are effective in categorizing them and explaining aspects of their use. It is the invisibility of the bicycle, both in Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's work and Dant's work specifically and in material culture more generally, that my research explicitly avoids. The ubiquity of the bicycle

cloaks it in peculiar obscurity not only in its field of bicycle-related scholarship, which has yet to contemplate attachment to the bicycle as an object but also in material culture more broadly. However, Dant provides a useful resource that has contributed to my discussion of the bicycle as an experiential object. This text is his 1998 work on windsurfers, *Playing with Things: Objects and Subjects in Windsurfing*.

Dant calls a windsurfer an object categorized as a plaything. I would argue that, like windsurfers, bicycles are often considered playthings, particularly in North America (Pucher & Buehler, 2008; Turpin, 2013, 2014; Vivanco, 2013) (and particularly if used by children). Like windsurfers, bicycles are experiential objects, in that they enable the user to encounter experiences that they would not be able to experience otherwise, and so I examine experiential objects in the following section.

2.2.2 Experiential Objects.

The American pragmatist philosopher George Herbert Mead argues our experience of objects is informed by "our perceptions [which] include the imagery of the contacts which vision or some other distance sense promises" (Mead, 1934, p 363). Mead connects objects to the senses we use to experience them, and his work can be used to augment that of Csordas (1995) and Mauss (1935) who both discuss embodiment as it relates to objects. More recently, Schifferstein and Hekkert state that people:

> Always use their senses to perceive [a product or object], they use their motor system and their knowledge to operate or communicate with it and during the interaction, [as] they process the information they perceive they may experience

> one or more emotions, and they are likely to form an affective evaluation of the product (Schifferstein and Hekkert, 2008, p 1).

For Schifferstein and Hekkert, objects are understood and used through interaction and the evaluations made as a result of that interaction; however they are writing about any object that humans create. Dant is more specific, and addresses windsurfing equipment, stating that the interactions of experiential objects are dependent on an:

> Exchange of information [because] the objects of the windsurfer are meaningful in the limited sense of giving out a symbolic meaning…[windsurfer] kit is a medium for messages between human actors including the design, production and marketing values invested in the kit that are responded to by the purchase and use of the kit… [and] the kit of the board plus boom/mast/sail provides continuous information that makes sailing possible (Dant, 1998, p 91).

Dant argues that the complexity and continuity of the interaction form "co-ordinated responses to information that partly comes from touch" but work in tandem with vision and proprioception, senses which he deems crucial to "receiving information about what is happening and monitoring instructions to the object" (Dant, 1998, p 92). The unity of these senses and objects create a hybrid "experiential object," a category into which bicycles can also be put. Further, this complexity and continuity of interaction is the definition used for experiential objects in the remainder of this thesis.

Discussing the bicycle as an experiential object connects and extends the rationale for using selected perspectives from the field of material culture studies for this project, as Dant's

analysis of windsurfers, "suggest[s] that the boundary between the 'thing' and the human is not as simple as it might at first seem," (Dant, 1998, p 92). He finds that windsurfer use is indicative of social status, skill acquisition, and interactive, experiential object use. In his description of how a user interacts with a windsurfer, Dant compares the user's experience to riding a bicycle, for instance with respect to how both items require a person to balance their body as they move, and to have embodied interactions with their environments. Dant relies on the readers' knowledge of bicycle riding to describe how windsurfing works. This reliance speaks to the ubiquity of the bicycle as object, that is, everyone knows how a bicycle works, and so Dant can use it confidently as a comparison to the windsurfer. By indicating how a windsurfer can be used like a bicycle, Dant reminds readers of embodied memories of bicycle riding. His inclusion of bicycles as proof for the acquisition of skills by windsurfers warrants studying the bicycle in more detail, as Dant's presumed understanding of the bicycle as object is not the same as *actual* understanding of the bicycle as object. Nor does this inclusion address my research questions about how people express their individual attachment to their bicycles and to the experiences bicycles provide.

2.2.3 The Bicycle as a Experiential Object

As well as bringing the bicycle as experiential object to more general awareness, another reason for considering bicycles as experiential objects is to contemplate the intersections between bicycles, attachment to them, and forms of personal and social identity experienced by the bicycle rider. To examine these connections, I used Guevarra and Howell's (2014) article, "To Have in Order to Do: Exploring the Effects of Consuming Experiential Products on Well-Being", which studies how objects that provide hedonic, experiential moments generate greater

well-being than other non-experiential, objects. Their research examines objects that straddle the categories of "material items (i.e., purchases made in order "to have") [and] life experiences (i.e., purchases made in order "to do") with the intent of discovering if these liminal objects provide greater autonomy, competence and relatedness for the user" (Guevarra & Howell, 2014, p 2). Essentially this statement translates as: are the purchasers happier for having bought jewelry for themselves or tickets to see their favourite band? Their research is foundational to this research as it offers a framework for examining how bicycles as objects offer a meaningful body-object nexus that can be regenerated *each* time a person rides a bicycle. Since a bicycle is one of the few things from childhood that is still potentially used in much the same way in adulthood, the experiential aspect of the user's attachment to their bicycle over time may be a powerful generator of memory and emotion. This amalgam of memory, emotion, and continued embodied use can factor in attachment and identity creation.

Guevarra and Howell's work focuses on experiential goods including video games, musical instruments, and a generalized category of 'sporting goods'. Regardless of whether the liminal objects they examine include or exclude the bicycle (it seems possible that it could be included in sporting goods), Guevarra and Howell's construct of 'autonomy, competence, and relatedness' is fundamental to my work. They describe these terms in this way:

> *Autonomy* is satisfied through engaging in behaviors that express one's true identity and facilitate a feeling of being in charge of one's own actions. *Competence* is satisfied through engaging in activities that utilize one's skills and abilities. *Relatedness* is satisfied by engaging in activities that lead to a sense of belonging with others (Guevarra, & Howell, 2014, p 2, emphasis added).

Riding a bicycle provides access to all three of these categories. Additionally, the bicycle is the ideal object to do so. This construct of autonomy, competence, and relatedness is examined in my work with respect to "differences in well-being and psychological need satisfaction [that result from] three purchase types (Guevarra and Howell, 2014, p 4). The three purchase types comprise buying material items that are "tangible objects that are possessions" such as jewelry, or experiential products which are "neither terminal material items or ephemeral life experiences" such as sporting equipment and musical instruments, or life experiences which they argue are "events that one lives through" such as concerts (Guevarra and Howell, 2014, p 1-4). Interestingly and usefully for my research, they find that with respect to well-being, objects purchased to provide life experiences and experiential products rate higher than material objects alone. Using their example, bicycles become unique material objects that provide access to particular life experiences (such as riding with friends and travelling by bicycle across country), but are experiential objects as well. Therefore, bicycles are objects that encompass all three categories – material objects, life experience providers, and experiential objects – and thus have a greater potential impact on human well-being than other objects that reside in only one of these three categories.

Guevarra & Howell's article and analysis may explain some of the basis for how strongly attached some people become to their bicycles, and how they use them as important generators for, and symbols of, self-identity. However, their article is more useful to my work in its introduction of the concepts autonomy, competence, and relatedness with respect to experiential objects. Unfortunately, their work provides only an introduction of the concepts of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, not a detailed examination of what these concepts entail. As a

result, I analyze both the concepts and the relationship of these concepts to bicycles more fully in the data analysis chapters through also using the work of some scholars who do consider these concepts more thoroughly.

To this point, this chapter has examined bicycle-related research and material culture scholarship (including experiential objects), to show that these areas have not adequately considered the bicycle as object. It is pertinent now to briefly examine selected literature on the concepts of Identity, Attachment, Culturally Constituted Meaning, and Material Possession Attachment to see how these approaches and issues also provide a foundation for my research into peoples' attachment to bicycles and the relationship of these attachments to personal and social identities.

2.3 Identity

Although bicycle-related research and material culture scholarship provide concepts to examine the bicycle as object, they do not do so directly. Scholarship that explores the concept of identity also bypasses direct discussions of bicycles as objects. In the multifaceted social-science fields of research that considers the topic of identity (including sociology, social psychology, discourse analysis, marketing, material culture and life course research) there is potential for work that explores the many connections that may exist between identity creation and bicycle use.

Human beings define themselves in myriad ways; it follows, then, that there are myriad ways to study identity. The intent here is to briefly examine a few specific works from sociology and social psychology that especially pertain to a consideration of the bicycle and that have been

particularly useful in my research. Scholarship that investigates identity comes up in other fields (e.g. discourse analysis and marketing), in ways that are relevant for this research, as will be seen in forthcoming chapter on methodology and the chapters on data analysis.

In context of my research I will be using Dittmar's (1992) concept of identity, which is that identity consists of how people perceive themselves and others through objects. Also, I will only be examining aspects of identity as they relate to the personal thoughts and perceptions of my correspondents around expressions of autonomy, competence, relatedness, and age that I discerned from our interviews. That is, with a focus on autonomy and competence I examine peoples' recollections and experiences of personal identity. With a focus on relatedness, their narratives reveal their perceptions of social connections, whereas a focus on aspects of age reveals their perceptions of both their personal and their social identities. These aspects of personal and social identities are accessed through peoples' narratives about their experiences in contact with their bicycles. While my correspondents' talk referenced aspects of identity connected to family relationships and friendship groups, they did not talk about cultural identifiers such as ethnicity or religion, therefore such categories are not considered within my later data analyses.

2.3.1 The Same and Different.

In *Identity: Sociological Perspectives,* Steph Lawler (2008), describes identity as "an apparently paradoxical combination of sameness and difference" (p 2) by which she means that humans endeavor to both fit in with *and* stand out from others by recognizing their connections with, and differences from, other people. In this manner, by negotiating a balance of fitting in and standing out, people craft a personal perception of identity. They also are aware of the social

aspects of that constructed personal identity as a result of the negotiated balance between the self and others. Whilst Lawler's work aligns with Guevarra and Howell's (2014) concepts of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, her research does not address objects. The lack of attention to objects is found in much identity-related scholarship (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, & McDermott 2009; Benwell & Stoke 2006; Burke & Stets 2009; Goffman 1959; Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, & Cain 1998; Mead 1934). To balance such non-object approaches it is useful to consider the work of Helga Dittmar (1992) concerning identity creation, since she specifically examines object-person identity creation. Although recent scholars use Dittmar's social psychological work on identity, the issues and objects upon which they concentrate are different than mine (for example, Carr and Vignoles (2011), explore status projection; Sassanelli (2007) examines consumer culture; and Steg (2005) examines car use). Dittmar's contribution to this research is the focus on the object, with the imperative to investigate *how* people create identity by way of objects. By examining the experiential object, the bicycle, as an object that is replete with meaning (particularly autonomy, competence, and relatedness which will be discussed later), this research also examines the social-psychological identities created by way of the bicycle.

2.3.2 Identity and Objects.

Dittmar's 1992 work *The Social Psychology of Material Possessions: To Have is to Be* explores possessions as material symbols and symbolic expressions of identity. Her text provides a working definition of identity, and a discussion of how Western concepts of identity came to be. Dittmar notes that:

> Material possessions convey first of all *social* categories, *types* of person, or *stereotypes*, of different social groups [using] material objects to *locate* others in a social-material hierarchy, before the more subtle and varied meanings of their possessions tell us about more individual, personal aspects of their owners' identities (Dittmar, 1992, p 185, emphasis in original).

Where Lawler and other scholars' concepts of identity acknowledge that people strive to define themselves as, paradoxically, the same as, and also different from, other people, Dittmar provides an object-oriented theorized basis which supports my research into peoples' relationships with their bicycles. In fact, the bicycle, with its ability to be completely altered from the frame up, is an ideal object for an exploration of identity because, apart from the base frame of the bicycle, practically every component can be changed by its owner. Moreover, with sufficient resources, the frame of the bicycle can be constructed such that it is a perfect fit for the purchaser. Therefore a person would have a seemingly identical object (a bicycle) that has been modified for his or her use, making it stand out for him or her as an individual and even potentially, recognized as customized by other people.

Dittmar's discussion of how identity is defined by objects can be applied directly to my research. Writing from a social-psychological perspective, Dittmar examines human/object connections and directly ties these connections to identity. Dittmar's research links objects to "the shifting multiple identities we attempt to create, negotiate and maintain in an increasingly fragmented society, not least through the socially shared meanings of materials objects and consumption" (Dittmar, 1992, p 8). Like Lawler's work on identity creation, Dittmar argues that people attempt to both fit in and stand out but use socially shared understandings of objects to do

so, rather than only through relationships to other people. Interestingly she continues, "the relationship between a person and his or her possessions always has reference to other people" (Dittmar, 1992, p 8). Because objects can be symbolic representatives of identity, they require a common understanding amongst the object-owner and those who regard and judge the object-owner.

Dittmar's work is a significant contribution to the literature on identity and possession, with its emphasis on "the complex link between material possessions and identity," attesting "socially shared beliefs about material objects [are] symbolic manifestations of identity" (Dittmar, 1992, p 10). Identity is understood by what a person owns or does not own. As a social constructionist, Dittmar views "material possessions as socially shared symbols for identity" (Dittmar, 1992, p 66) make Dittmar's work with identity and possessions extremely useful. However, instead of using her generalized approach that considers all categories of possessions, the focus of my research is narrowed to bicycles. Dittmar's perspectives on identity provide an opportunity to examine how identification with an object occurs simultaneously with attachment to that object. Attachment to objects is witnessed at very early stages of childhood. Because bicycles are given to children and, as mentioned previous, are one of the few objects that are used similarly in adulthood, I will next briefly examine relevant research on the nature of human attachment to objects.

2.4 Attachment

The topic of how people create and maintain an identity by way of attachments to objects is fundamental to my research. This topic underpins my data used for evidence – interviews where people talked about their first and other bicycles and how they express their perceptions of

their identity because of riding a bicycle. Using Dittmar's research on identity, I interpreted the interviews with attention to how participants categorize themselves and others, in relation to their attachments to bicycles, as well as how the participants discuss values, beliefs, and meanings.

Attachment theory and material possession attachment theory describe a complex fabric of connections: person-to-person; people to 'transitional' objects (objects that are significant when people change from one stage of life to another); and, people to objects more generally. The range of work on attachment is extensive, and encompasses important works such as that by psychologist John Bowlby (1969a) who studied the person-to-person parent/child bond and how it might be related to objects. Bowlby argued that aspects of the parent/child bond could be transferred to a significant object (such as a blanket or toy) with that object then becoming particularly important in the child's life. Other perspectives on attachment have been taken by, for example, the market researcher Russell Belk (1985, 1988, 1989, 1991, 2010) whose work explores how people invest possessions with meaning. In this thesis I will focus on three particular works that explore how people become attached to material objects, because these approaches are especially resonant when considered in relation to the bicycle. Two of these three works are by market researchers Schultz Kleine, Kleine III and Allen (1995), and Schultz Kleine and Menzel Baker (2004). These scholars examine how objects are used as representations of self or of previous representations of self. They also provide an overall understanding of material possession attachment. The third is the work of anthropologist and market researcher Grant McCracken (1990). His research outlines how cultural meaning is created and understood by members of that same culture.

2.4.1 "Me" and "Not Me" Objects.

This literature review has considered how people form identity using objects, however people also have the ability to form attachment to objects they feel represent them the best. In their article, 'How is a Possession 'Me' or 'Not Me': Characterizing Types and an Antecedent of Material Possession Attachment' (1995), Schultz Kleine, Kleine III, and Allen discuss how people associate aspects of their personal selves with particular objects, a perspective that can pertain to bicycles. Schultz Kleine et al. suggest that certain objects provide autonomy or affiliation seeking, simultaneously providing independence from, and also connections to, people. "Me" objects also provide past, present and future temporal orientations, permitting the owner to understand his or her life as a continuum and to "reflect different facets of the life narrative." (Schultz Kleine, et al., 1995, p 329). In this manner, people construct a story of their life, which can be told to others, based in part on objects they own. The authors also note that "not me" possessions work similarly, since "Possessions that mark who I am not, or who I was but am no longer, also signify identity" (Schultz Kleine, et al., 1995, p 341). Schultz Kleine et al. argue that possessions form part of the narrative that physically and simultaneously reminds and describes people to both themselves and others. In this manner, if their approach is extended to consider bicycles, bicycles (as an object that can be used throughout a person's life) can provide a connection to all the aspects of self across the life-course. The bicycle remains a constant in its use and function. It is interesting to note that, during the interviews I conducted for this research, people spoke of their bicycles as objects that were present in their childhood but that maintained importance to them as adults. The duration of attachment adds to the magnitude of meaning as the bicycle both was and is an object that reliably, and continually, identified and represented them. In fact, the "not me" aspect of the bicycle was restricted to parts of the bicycle, not the

entire object. For example, a person may have once liked streamers or plastic "spokey-dokes" on his or her bicycle, but no longer likes them (as can be seen by the lack of those objects on their handlebars and /or spokes presently) but the person still sees the bicycle itself, in both its past and present forms, as representative of self. The only changes made are to the superficial decoration of the object.

2.4.2 Material Possession Attachment

Schultz Kleine and Menzel Baker's paper, 'An Integrative Review of Material Possession Attachment' (2004) is especially useful to my work, as in it the authors survey various social and developmental elements that affect material possession attachment (e.g.: age, life stage, gender) and they relate elements of attachment to place, brands, and experiences. Sentiment for geographic locations, specific branded goods, and activities that are enjoyed in relation to an object (rather than the object itself) are the foci of this integrative review as Schultz Kleine and Menzel Baker clarify how these concepts are interconnected and overlaid onto material possession attachment. Specifically they investigate how people form and identify meaningful connections to specific objects. Their writing is most useful to my research through their discussion of the exact qualities of material possession attachment and how these qualities work for individuals. "Attachment," Schultz Kleine and Menzel Baker observe, is "a multi-faceted property of the relationship between a specific individual or group of individuals and a specific, material object that an individual has psychologically appropriated, decommodified, and singularized through person-object interaction (Schultz Kleine & Menzel Baker, 2004, p 1). For example, a person loves the bicycle he or she *bought*; he or she has modified it to suit *his or her* body and requirements; therefore it is *his or her* bicycle as opposed one of the many similar

bikes in a line of brand name bikes. Reminiscent of the identity creation methods described by Lawler (2008) and Dittmar (1992), attachment creates connections to objects that give the person the opportunity to both stand out and fit in, based on how he or she modifies the object. The perspectives offered in Schultz Kleine & Menzel Baker's article were particularly useful in providing a framework through which I analyzed some aspects of my interviews. Their perspectives allowed me to craft questions slated to elicit early object-oriented experiences; early connections to people; early habits of riding; other object-oriented and riding experiences; and the current status of these experiences, connections and habits. The integrative review synthesized material possession attachment concepts succinctly and made reference to how cultural meaning is important to the attachment process.

2.4.3 Culturally constituted meaning

The final work on attachment that has particularly influenced my research is Grant McCracken's book *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (1990). Here McCracken theorizes that objects are representative of culturally constituted meanings to which humans ascribe. Therefore, goods are not purchased only for their utility but for a meld of their utility and their ability to represent the person's social or cultural capital. McCracken's concept posits how within a culture (i.e.: North America), everyone who lives in that culture has the potential to understand the meaning of various objects by way of specific mechanisms like advertising and fashion (McCracken, 1990, pp 77-83). McCracken's theory is corroborated by both Vivanco (2013) and Turpin (2013, 2014) who write that in North America, because of effective advertising strategies started early in the 1900s,

bicycles have been seen, and sold, as objects used solely by children. This culturally constituted meaning is a powerful force to which the population adheres either knowingly or unknowingly.

For McCracken, people become attached to certain objects that represent an ideal state. In effect, as people both draw on and create meaning about their current existence in relation to objects they hope to access in this future, ideal world or one that they had in the past (a past that they perceive as more 'ideal' than their current circumstances). Objects are purveyors of that ideal cultural state both before and after they have been purchased; and also, objects from the past may conjure up perceptions now of the potential to return to a better past. Essentially, McCracken's idea of culturally constituted meaning is derived particularly from objects that are 'special' (i.e. a bit more expensive, recollected with special fondness, or otherwise distinct from mundane objects). People imagine themselves using these special objects in a future idealized version of their life, or they recollect such special objects from their past.

McCracken's work on culturally constituted meaning offers a basis to understand how the meaning of the bicycle as object becomes entangled with aspects of people's lives, particularly their pasts (given the bicycle's association with childhood). This meaning of the bicycle as object gives rise to remembered autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The meaning of a bicycle also gives rise to beliefs about age-graded use (as discussed in Chapter Six). Each of these personal meanings occurs through a socially shared understanding of objects and their value to people. These meanings are transmitted from the world to the person and back again, creating a network of interpretation that can be examined when we consider in detail the bicycle as object and peoples' relationships to it.

Over the course of this Literature Review, it has been demonstrated that, for all its ubiquity as an item within everyday life, the bicycle as object remains largely unexplored in the academy. I have discussed a range of works that pertain to identity and bicycle-related research, with particular attention to specific works in the field of material culture (including experiential objects), and especially selected theories that relate to material possession attachment. While a few researchers like Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) and Dant (1998) use the bicycle as an example in their work, nevertheless, they do not sufficiently elaborate on the bicycle as object, preferring instead to skim over its significance. In fact, none of the works studied for, or included in this literature review, discuss the intimate connection between identity and attachment to the bicycle as object. Herein is the locus of my research, to extend the body of knowledge about bicycle use and contribute to understanding the bicycle beyond those categories outlined above. The next chapter, on Methodology, lays out how the task was performed.

3 Chapter Three - Methodology

While the previous chapter examined existing literature pertaining to my research, this chapter presents an overview of the research method, research design and an examination of the research population. My research centres on how people talk about their first and other bicycles, to discern how they express aspects of how they become attached to their bicycles and also how aspects of their personal and social identities become related to the bicycle. The purpose of my exploration was to gain a richer understanding of the connections between aspects of identity and attachment, in relation to a specific object – the bicycle. While the approach was to use interviews as my main mode of data collection, the study was inductive in nature with topics for analysis emerging from the data. For example, issues such as how participants categorize social groups in relation to cycling arose as issues to consider through reading transcripts of interviews, rather than from being hypothesized in advance.

3.1 Interviews

As a study that considers the relationship between aspects of personal identity and peoples' attachment to bicycles, this research used specific interview methods and approaches to document people's narratives on these topics. My interview style was informed by Brinkman and Kvale (2015) and Oak (2013), and the interviews were designed to explore how people talked about their first bicycle and other bicycles. I used semi-structured, open-ended interviews, making the design of this study qualitative, explorative, descriptive, inductive and contextual in nature (Ezzy, 2010; Leech, 1992; ten Have, 2002; Turner, 2003). I used these semi-structured, semi-formal interviews to probe participants about their attachment to the bicycles they have owned or currently own, and about experiences they have had in relation to these bicycles.

3.1.1 Co-Authored Interviews

Over the course of each interview, the participant and I had the opportunity to explore the topics they raised, in response to my interview questions. The participant also had the freedom to talk at length in their responses, emphasizing aspects important to him or her. This relative freedom of response was important to my study as I relied on Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) new work in *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*, which discusses interviews and co-authorship. They state:

> The interviewer does not merely collect statements like gathering small stones on a beach. His or her questions lead up to what aspects of a topic the subject will address, and the interviewer's active listening and follow-up on the answers codetermines the course of the conversation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p 218).

With interviews constructed collaboratively with the participant, as described above, slight variations occur both in the interview questions and the responses across my correspondents, exposing the negotiation between the interviewer and each interviewee. This co-construction is also recognized by Oak where she deliberates on 'small' and 'big' stories, as outlined in her chapter 'Narratives in Practice: The Small and Big Stories of Design' (2013). Here, discourse is described as either 'big' (i.e. self-conscious reflection on the past as is undertaken in an oral-history interview), or 'small' (i.e. those 'brief narratives that occur during the conversational interactions of practice-based settings, such as professional meetings)" (Oak, 2013, p 181; Georgakopoulou, 2007). Through this delineation Oak acknowledges the importance of 'big' stories, and the information that is revealed through interviews in which people talk about the past. She states the big story "may also be decidedly idiosyncratic with highly personal,

emotional and embodied experiences" (Oak, 2013, p 181). 'Idiosyncratic, with highly emotional and embodied experiences' exactly describe my interviews with my correspondents. In contrast, in day-to-day interactions or discussions of bicycles (outside of the research-based interview setting) there may be no conscious reflection of the past.

In effect, the social phenomenon of an interview creates time for reflection on topics that are not part of everyday discourse. For example, the act of participating in an interview can generate nostalgia, since reminiscence provides an opportunity for emotional reflection upon the past. Based on my research questions, reflection and nostalgia are present in my interviews but both these aspects perhaps would not occur outside of the context of the interviews I conducted. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) and Oak (2013) show that interviews do not allow you to perceive reality, per se, but allow you to access reflections of reality.

The narrative interviews about people's experience of bicycles were recorded using an iPhone 4s and transcribed using NCH transcription software. Each interview was recorded in situ, at the location of the participant's choosing. The interviews were between 40 to 240 minutes in duration, and were performed at the convenience of the participant and in a location in which they were comfortable. The interviews incorporated questions that elicited stories and remembrances of people's relationships with their bicycles. The individual interviews allowed for transcription, repeated reading, formatting for coding, analysis, and confirmation of understanding. The process of contemplating the interview structure assisted in my design of the interview questions, which I discuss next.

3.1.2 Interview Question Design

In conducting my interviews, my initial intent was to explore how people talk about their first bicycle and other bicycles to discern how they express aspects of personal and social identity, how these identities are associated to attachment to the bicycle, and also how these identities relate to the activities that the bicycle provides. My interview questions included requests for information on:

- Early object-oriented experiences (such as first bicycles, learning to ride, and other things owned during childhood);
- Early people-oriented experiences (such as who else had bicycles, cycling with friends and family, and attitudes towards cycling at the time);
- Early habits of riding, other object-oriented and riding experiences (such as other bicycles of theirs or other people, but still focused on the past);
- Current object-oriented and riding experiences (present bicycles and riding habits of themselves and others, as well as questions about parts, repairs, disposal, theft, customization, tracking mechanisms, conversations with non-cyclists, and other cycling related gear);
- Current people-oriented experiences (such as mentors, non-riding partners, famous cyclists or events, attitudes about cycling).

In order to answer my research questions concerning people's personal and social identities and their attachments to their bicycles, I used Schultz Kleine and Menzel Baker's

'Integrative Review of Material Possession Attachment' (2004) where the authors describe nine characteristics of material possession attachment (see below for details), but grouped the categories according to the above-mentioned interview format for easy transition between questions (Schultz Kleine & Menzel Baker, 2004). Throughout the interviews, I asked questions (see Appendix B) that were constructed to explore bicycles as meaningful objects; to consider how people talk about themselves and others in relation to bicycles, cycling and forms of personal and social identity; and in relation to their particular attachments to this object.

Schultz Kleine and Menzel Baker (2004) nine characteristics are: 1) Attachment forms with specific material objects, not product categories or brands. 2) Attachment possessions are psychologically appropriated. 3) Attachments are self-extensions. 4) Attachments are decommodified and singularized. 5) Attachments develop a personal history between person and possession. 6) Attachments have the property of strength. 7) Attachment is multi-faceted. 8) Attachment is emotionally complex. 9) Attachments evolve over time as the meaning of the self changes (Schultz Kleine & Menzel Baker, 2004, pp 1-5). Over the next few pages I elaborate on the characteristics pertinent to my interviews as well as how I combined and used them, with a brief explanation after each of how Schultz Kleine and Menzel Baker's categories underpinned my interview questions. (Note: In the following text I do not consider these characteristics in the same order that they are discussed in the work of Schultz Kleine and Menzel Baker, instead I organize them here according to their relation to my work).

Overall, the entire interview schedule was constructed with Characteristics 7*) Attachment is multi-faceted* and 8) *Attachment is emotionally complex* in mind. These particular characteristics enabled me to devise questions that explore the symbolic purpose of the bicycle,

since the connection between the public and the private self, affiliation, autonomy, and temporal orientations weave a bond between the person and the object that is challenging to dissolve. The object positions the person in time, space and society, which imbue the object with almost magical powers. As well, when an attachment becomes autobiographical and emotionally complex, possessions are "extraordinary, mysterious, and emotion evoking rather than merely functional" (Schultz Kleine & Menzel Baker, 2004, p 5). Whilst the person uses the object (e.g. a bicycle) as a placeholder in a life-course narrative, they often cannot articulate the object's importance because of the complexity previously mentioned. Questions that touched on this complexity included those that concerned significant relationships with themselves, other people, or places as a result of riding bicycles.

Other aspects of the interviews were influenced by Characteristic 1) *Attachment forms with specific material objects, not product categories or brands*. This Characteristic means material possession attachment exists with specific material possessions acquired as a result of "exchange, received as gifts, self produced or found" (Schultz Kleine & Menzel Baker, 2004, p 1). Therefore, there is no connection to a particular brand: a person merely acquires, in some manner, an object. I used this Characteristic to underpin the questions I asked my participants about their first bicycle and how it came into their lives. The Characteristic also framed questions determining how they acquired their bicycles and how they learned to ride.

Characteristic 2) *Attachment possessions are psychologically appropriated* was used when constructing questions that would allow me to analyze how a person comes to think the object is 'theirs', whether it is or not. That is, while psychological appropriation of an owned object is clear, a person can also claim lost property, cultural icons and public space as belonging

to him or her, with equal probity. Questions based on this Characteristic were combined with Characteristic 4) (below) and designed to elicit information about emotions around their first and subsequent bicycles, including whether they personalized their bicycles in any way. Additional questions addressed who else in their lives had bicycles, what those bicycles were like and what people said about bicycles at that time. I also asked questions about where they went on their bicycle with the intention to elicit information about whether my correspondents claimed cultural icons (i.e.: the Eiffel Tower) or public spaces (i.e.: parks or city squares) as their own.

Characteristic 3) *Attachments are self-extensions* was particularly useful when analyzing the interviews with consideration to how each person's bicycle helped them extend themselves into the wider environment. Consumption theorist Russell Belk defines the extended self as:

> Not… limited to external objects and personal possessions, but also includes persons, places, and group possessions as well as such possessions as body parts and vital organs. The notion of extended self is a superficially masculine and Western metaphor comprising not only that which is seen as "me" (the self), but also that which is seen as "mine" (Belk, 1988, p 140).

Therefore anything considered a possession (i.e. houses, automobiles, clothes, bicycles) extends the person into the environment. As observed in the above quote, attachments can also be associated with place attachment, including attachment to public spaces, which then involves aspects of social attachment. Interview questions associated with this Characteristic investigated how my participants perceived their bicycle as an extension of their personal identity and included questions that elicited information of, for example, items purchased to monitor bicycle riding (such as smartphone applications or cycling computers), discussions of clothing choices,

and whether or not the correspondents identified themselves as a cyclist. The questions were also designed to include aspects of having a sense of place or a geographic understanding and attachment.

Characteristic 4) *Attachments are decommodified and singularized*. In conjunction with Characteristic 2, discussed above, this Characteristic enabled me to explore how it is that, the longer a person owns a particular object such as a bicycle, the more that object becomes decommodified, singularized and personalized (Schulz Kleine & Menzel Baker, 2004). For example, a person may understand that bicycle manufacturers make several of the same types of bicycles, but once purchased and owned for some time, his or her bicycle is not the same as the others in the same line. Through these processes, an object can potentially attain heirloom status and becomes precious. If the object is forcibly removed from the person, its loss is keenly felt. One of the questions I devised that links to these Characteristics (i.e. 4 and 2 together) inquired if the person had lost a bicycle or bicycle parts.

Schultz Kleine & Menzel Baker's Characteristic 5) *Attachments develop a personal history between person and possession* was drawn on when asking my correspondents if, over time, they had developed a sense of 'personal history' between themself and their bicycle. This personal history encompassed use, display, and comparison of the item to other bicycles or objects. Together such issues extend the self further into a place of attachment to the material possession. The aspect of personal history may include rituals that renew the attachment to the possession repeatedly. Under this characteristic, the interview questions I asked addressed issues such as daily routes for cycling and what the correspondent did with his or her bicycle on those routes.

Characteristic 6) *Attachments have the property of strength* was evident in my interviews through questions I asked about when, or if, correspondents had stopped bicycle riding for a time and, if they had, what brought them back to cycling after their break from it. Characteristic 6's main property is a spectrum between weak and strong attachment, whilst identifying the object as "me" or "not me" (Schultz Kleine & Menzel Baker, 2004). The strength of attachment intertwines with the object's longevity and uniqueness in the person's life. The more an object represents "me" the stronger the attachment and vice versa, therefore, questions about consistency of riding experience and consequent attachment to one or more bicycles were relevant here.

Characteristics 7) and 8) were addressed previously, and acted as a foundational understanding of the nature of attachment in terms of both structuring my questions and guiding the analysis of my data.

Finally, Characteristic 9) *Attachments evolve over time as the meaning of the self changes* was a significant issue within the interview questions. This characteristic encompasses how a person charts his or her growth based on the objects he or she possesses: for example, the blanket that gave succor as a child may not have pride of place in an adult's life, but it may well be kept somewhere within a person's home. Interview questions associated with this characteristic addressed other bicycles, beyond a person's first bicycle and how the correspondents felt about them, including current bicycle riding experiences (Schultz Kleine & Baker, 2004).

These nine characteristics enabled me to construct a series of questions that would help me discover how my correspondents' expressed aspects of attachment to their bicycles. I was interested in, for example, how it is that when a person acquires a bicycle, that bicycle becomes

deeply associated with his or her 'self'. Also I wanted to explore how the bicycle enables individuals to have embodied experiences that create attachments to place and public space. Additionally I was curious as to how decommodification functioned with respect to bicycles and if owning more bicycles changed that first attachment. Another interesting aspect included how the person's attachment to a bicycle strengthens over the duration of time that it is owned, which in turn makes the attachment emotionally complex and multifaceted. Yet another aspect is how, if the person has a period where they did not ride as frequently, did that situation create a "not-me" scenario in relation to the bicycle because they were not riding; however, once the person returned to cycling how was the bicycle reinstated as an identifier of "me"? This latter point was of particular interest since my correspondents were self-described frequent cyclists. It was interesting to examine how each person's attachment to his or her bicycles evolved over time, and if aspects of his or her identity changed as a result.

As Schultz Kleine and Menzel Baker note, objects can provide self-definitional, autobiographical and narrative or story-telling value (Schultz Kleine & Menzel Baker, 2004, pp 7-9). Objects also provide the opportunity for contemplation, action, affiliation, cultivation, and development, as well as boundary regulation (Schultz Kleine & Menzel Baker, 2004, pp 7-9). Therefore, I structured my interview questions along an autobiographical timeline, beginning with questions that asked about each person's first bicycle and moving through to later bicycles, then on to current bicycles. My 52 interview questions also included questions designed to elicit other autobiographical information including: early object-oriented experiences; people with whom my correspondents interacted when they were young; early habits of riding; current object-oriented and riding experiences; people with whom they interact currently; how the

correspondent would feel if they were told they would never ride again; and, any other memorable experiences concerning their bicycles that they wished to express.

All my questions followed the nine characteristics of Schultz Kleine and Menzel Baker's (2004) iterative review, as detailed above. After transcribing the interviews, I concentrated on categories derived from the data loosely based on these Characteristics, then further concentrated on stories of first bicycles for all of the participants. This choice was made because each person spoke at some length about his or her first bicycles, and so this topic became a consistent theme for analysis.

3.2 Participants

Access to participants for interviews was through purposive and snowball sampling (Barbour, 2001; Noy, 2008). The resultant data sources for this research included members of the cycling community of Edmonton to which I have access because of my expertise as an active cyclist. Each participant I interviewed cycles at a minimum three times a week and has done so for a number of years. My goal was a sample that was large enough to provide an array of views and narratives, but small enough to be achievable in terms of data collection, transcription, and analysis. For a diverse set of viewpoints and narratives, I interviewed 28 people, with an even gender split, ranging in age from 16 to 62 years old with an average age of 42 and a median age of 40. This number and range of participants were sufficient to explore issues of how self-confessed, frequent cyclists experience and express aspects of identity in relation to their bicycles and how attachments were formed that strengthened identity creation.

A small sample size is relevant in the context of explorative, inductive qualitative analysis because common characteristics exist amongst a community or cultural group who have a shared view of the world. This shared view of the world may result in "cultural consensus… [where] the level of consensus of different topics does vary but there are considered to be a finite set of characteristics or views... [which can] produce a rigorous model of the cultural views on that topic" (Mason, 2010, p 4). Since approximately fifteen percent of Edmonton's population cycle at all, my criterion of frequent cyclist is a limiting factor on an already limited population (City of Edmonton, 2011). However, the cultural views of that population focus attention on identity and attachment to bicycles. This specificity means that my conclusions may not be generalizable to those outside the subculture but enable me to cover a range of issues that are relevant to my subjects.

In order to undertake this research I applied for Ethics approval in February 2014 and received it in May 2014. My Ethics application addressed confidentiality, informed consent, reflexivity, and participation criteria. I emphasized reflexivity as I am a frequent cyclist myself and therefore attempted to be as neutral as possible during interviews with people who I encounter regularly in my community. My original list of participants changed over the course of the study, based on the availability of initial participants. After invitations to participate had been issued, confirmation emails were sent regarding time and location of each interview. Prior to undertaking the main phase of data collection I performed a test interview on April 11, 2014, the results of which were also included in the overall study (Please see Appendix B – Ethics & Reflexivity for complete details). After I reviewed the results of the test interview, I revised the questions slightly both for clarification and to remove duplicates.

3.3 Data Collection

This section outlines data collection methods and data coding. The main data type used when undertaking analysis was a verbatim transcript of each participant's interview. Other data collected included the recorded interviews as discussed previously, my field notes (including any reflexive work), the coding I created when reading over the interview transcripts, and minutes from the interview meetings with correspondents.

3.3.1 Field notes

I made field notes regarding aspects of the interviews prior to and immediately after each interview, then throughout the transcription process. I completed further categorization of data after rationalizing both the number of categories and people included. These field notes assisted me with reflexivity as they were an amalgam of thoughts and ideas that could help me to analyze the breadth and depth of concepts and ideas that emerged as the interviews progressed. This type of field note is discussed in part by the work of Bogdan and Biklen (2003) who write:

> After returning from each observation, interview or other research session, the researcher… renders a description of people, objects, places, events, activities and conversations. In addition, as part of such notes, the researcher will record ideas, strategies, reflections, and hunches, as well as note patterns that may emerge (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p 110).

These notes were helpful to position and understand my interpretations in relation to each of the interviews performed. The notes were also useful for analysis since they assisted me in more easily recollecting each interview and information that arose from it.

3.3.2 Data Coding

Although each participant was asked some variation of the same 52 questions, to manage the analysis of the large amount of information gathered I decided to concentrate my investigation on the participants' reminiscences of their first bicycles. I made notes during transcription, then I read the interviews over to re-acquaint myself with the various topics that had been discussed and how these related to the concepts of identity and attachment based on Schultz Kleine and Menzel Baker's (2004) nine Characteristics as previously examined. The various topics discussed were collected and amalgamated.

From this amalgamation, I noted the participants' references to topics that relate to the concepts of identity and attachment, but I also noticed the themes related to age-grading. By age-grading, I mean the ways in which participants referenced behaviours deemed 'appropriate' for particular ages (i.e., when they were young, it was appropriate to ride a bicycle, while when they were in their teens, it was appropriate to drive an automobile). This theme of age-grading became a significant opportunity for using the form of discourse analysis called Membership Categorization Analysis, which explores how people use social categories (e.g. age, gender, etc.) in their talk (as I discuss further below). I concentrated the data coding further by focusing on a few categories, using all 28 of the interviews I recorded, rather than numerous categories but using only a few of the 28 narratives.

I transcribed the narratives verbatim and then analyzed them individually and comparatively. The interviews were analyzed inductively by attending to each participant's comments, and then reading the transcripts for recurring themes or isolated phenomena of significance. I derived preliminary codes from an initial scan of the texts whilst transcribing.

Then, as mentioned in my Literature Review, I used Guevarra and Howell's, "To have in Order to Do: Exploring the Effects of Consuming Experiential Products on Well-Being" (2014) to provide guidance and direction to my coding. This text helped me to find instances within the transcriptions in which my correspondents referenced autonomy, competence and relatedness (see Chapter 2, page 27 of this thesis for a definition of these terms). Autonomy, competence, and relatedness are prevalent concepts in the narratives of all of my correspondents and so became significant to consider in analysis. After acquainting myself with what my correspondents said in relation to the aforementioned Characteristics and concepts, my next step was to focus my argument around a consideration of how identity and attachment are created and maintained in relation to bicycles.

3.3.3 Membership Categorization Analysis

The age-grading I found in the narratives provided the basis for one of the central aspects of analysis in my research; that is analysis that considers some of the ways in which participants categorize themselves and others. A form of discourse analysis that explores participants' forms of self and other categorization, Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA) (Fitzgerald, 2012; Gardner, 2012; Sacks, 1979; Schegloff, 2006; Stokoe, 2012a, 2012b), focuses "on 'members' methodical practices in describing *the world*, and displaying their understanding of *the world* and of the *commonsense* routine workings of *society*" (Stokoe, 2012b, p 278, emphasis in original). Sociologist and discourse analyst, Elizabeth Stokoe, emphasizes that MCA uses the analysis of peoples' talk to determine how people categorize themselves or resist being categorized as members of particular groups. As people speak, they identify themselves in relation to objects and experiences, as well as other people. Some of these categories are permeable: a person may

belong to more than one category at any one time. For example, a person may be a married, heterosexual, cisgendered female, cyclist, where all these categories intersect at 'Karly'. While MCA was a useful lens through which I read the interviews, I focused my analysis on issues concerning the category of 'age' through considering how my correspondents used age-related 'Membership Categorization Devices' (MCD).

3.3.3.1 Membership Categorization Devices

While MCA generally considers how social groupings are used in talk, the associated concept of MCD considers the specific identifiers through which people group other people. Additionally MCD considers how these groupings have value judgments attached to them in relation to a generalized understanding of all the members in the category. As Harvey Sacks (1979), the originator of both MCA and the concept of MCD, writes:

> Most of the categories (women, old people, Negroes, Jews, teenagers etc., etc.) are not groups in any sense that you normally talk about groups, and yet what we have is a mass of knowledge known about every category; any member is seen as a representative of each of those categories… what's known about the category is known about them and the fate of each is bound up in the fate of the other (p 13).

Sacks's comment suggests that, in addition to categorization, value judgments are made based on which categories are emphasized, rejected, or accepted by the people, themselves, as they reference the categories in their talk. To continue my previous example, (i.e. the married, heterosexual, cisgendered female, frequent cyclist, where all the categories intersect at 'Karly'),

other people may associate any of these categories with further categories and value judgments of, for example, elitism, middle-class status and/or left-wing politics.

3.3.3.2 Relational Pairs

In terms of categories to which a person belongs, there are also categories to which a person does not belong, but with which they form a relational pair, for instance: mother/child or teacher/student. Relational pairs form an important aspect of Membership Categorization Devices. Sociologists Housley, & Fitzgerald (2009) discusses Sack's development of relational pairs as:

> Certain membership categories seemed to 'go together' in 'standardized relational pairs', for example 'father–son', 'husband–wife', 'shopkeeper–customer' and… involve a level of routine 'relationship' predicates that serve to render accountable interaction between the category pair and the actions observed of the category pair (p 348).

A significant aspect of relational pairs is that activities appropriate to one side of the pair may be considered inappropriate for the other and vice versa. The age-grading I encountered in my interviews pointed to an adult/child relational pair where the adult did not ride a bicycle, but the child did. Because adult/child relational pairs were a consistent aspect of my interview data, part of my analysis involved examining assumptions about the category of 'child' as opposed to the category of 'adult' with respect to how these different categories of people used bicycles.

To summarize, since my research centres on how people talk about their first and other bicycles to discern expressions of identity and attachment in relation to these objects, I used

open-ended interviews, with questions based on the work of Schultz Kleine and Menzel Baker (2004). My study was inductive in nature and explored the continuum of people's identity and attachment to the bicycle within the field of material culture studies. My project was framed specifically to determine the responses that arose from the data rather than impose pre-determined categories for analysis. Structuring my interviews in this manner allowed me to gain a richer understanding of the connections between attachment and aspects of identity, in relation to a specific object – the bicycle. Further, I used the concepts of autonomy, competence, and relatedness used by Guevarra and Howell (2014) to assist me with analyzing themes arising from the data. Recognition of an additional theme of age-grading made Membership Categorization Devices an effective tool for analysis. Over the next three chapters, I outline identity and attachment as they connect to the bicycle as object and I use autonomy, competence, and relatedness as well as MCD to discern aspects of the culturally constituted meaning of bicycles as objects that are significant to my correspondents.

4 Chapter Four – Identity and Attachment

After interviewing 28 people who self-identified as frequent cyclists, I found that the stories they told of the activity of cycling consistently included clear references to ways in which they were attached to their bicycle that related to aspects of their personal and social identities. To foreground my analyses within Guevarra and Howell's (2014) concepts of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, I will examine identity and attachment to objects through social psychological perspectives (using the work of Dittmar, 1992) that will help me analyze how my correspondents' talk expresses aspects of these issues.

Helga Dittmar's 1992 book *The Social Psychology of Material Possessions: To Have is to Be*, underpins both my analyses of identity and my analyses of how people talk about their attachment to their bicycles. Dittmar addresses some of the complexity concerning the concept 'identity' by outlining how identity starts from a perception of self, expands to a understanding of personal relationships, and then further expands to a perception of community and place (as outlined earlier). Writing after McCracken (1990), and influenced by his work on culture and consumption, she explores how identity is created by a person in relation to objects and his or her wider social environment. Dittmar begins her theorized exploration of identity by first considering how people perceive identity as individuated and 'personal'. She then considers how identity becomes more complex when associated with other people, so that identity encompasses a person in social situations. Dittmar examines how objects are representative of individuals, "and regulate and reflect social relations between people… contributing to the perceived attributes of the owner, such as prestige" (Dittmar, 1992, p 30). In this manner, people use material goods to symbolically tell other people what the possessor's values are. These values

make possessions a part of the self, represented by "intra-organismic processes, body parts, objects in the physical environment, abstract ideas and other people, as well as [other] possessions" (Dittmar, 1992, p 44). Ditmar's work in this area is reminiscent of Belk's (1991) "extended self' concept. To reiterate, Belk conceptualizes an extended self whereby objects allow people to consider objects outside their physical body as representations of themselves (Belk, 1991). A bicycle can be considered an extension of the self as it offers, as my interviewee, Claude, indicates so succinctly, the ability to have:

> A relationship to an object, [but] it's an object that doesn't do anything until you inhabit the object. People talk about riding the bike, and I, I'm trying to find a better term, cause you *ride* a horse - horse is doing the work and you're just sitting along for the RIDE, like in a car, but the bike is riding you.
>
> (Interview #21052014TM)

Although Claude does not directly call his bicycle 'an extension of himself', his comment that 'the bike is riding you' clearly alludes to an intimate, extended connection of bicycle to person.

Dittmar's social constructivist work on the self, personal relationships and the wider world also align with, and connect to, Guevarra and Howell's (2014) work on autonomy, competence, and relatedness (as I will outline below). Dittmar carefully traces how people use objects to symbolically represent their identity, examining in turn biological "acquisitive" instincts; treasured possessions; socially shared meanings; symbolic expressions of identity; group status based on possessions; perceived identity; and Western perceptions of identity as they pertain to materialism (Dittmar, 1992). While Dittmar's work underlines the fact that for

many people, objects are representative of them, she emphasizes that much of her work is oriented to Western culture and thought and so this may not be the case in all cultures. Over the span of her book, Dittmar articulates a process by which scholars have discussed identity in connection to objects. She uses five interdependent, presupposing propositions on the social construction of identity, which I connect to my interview data.

4.1.1 Propositions of Identity.

Although Dittmar gives more space to her propositions, I will merely outline and discuss them in relation to my work. Dittmar's propositions state:

> 1. The meanings of possessions as symbols of identity are socially shared and individuals gradually internalize them in interaction with other people and from social institutions, such as the mass media.
>
> 2. Other people respond to an individual in terms of the material possessions that surround her or him. Thus an individual's evaluation of meaning is assigned by others to self is influenced by the possessions owned.
>
> 3. The implication of the first two propositions taken together is that a person comes to take the *perspective* of the objects they own to gain a view of *who they are* through the symbolic meanings of their possessions.
>
> 4. The identity of others is visible in objectified form as well as their own.
>
> 5. Meanings of material objects are established through social processes. The socially constituted and socially shared meanings of possessions as symbols of

> identity reflect social power relationships. (Dittmar, 1992, p 90-92, emphasis in original).

Overall, these five points mean that people come to understand their world and share it with others by way of large bastions of cultural meaning. As well, people know other people and themselves through a mutual understanding of what objects represent. Here, McCracken's (1990) concept of a culturally constituted material world that involves awareness of fashion and advertising is apparent as an influence on Dittmar's work. For example, "material objects can symbolically communicate the personal qualities of individuals; that they are for instance, artistic, extroverted, conventional adventurous or open-minded" (Dittmar, 1992, p 79). This type of knowing is apparent in the comments of another of my interviewees, Boris', who talks of purchasing his first bicycle in a 'real' bike shop, indicating that:

> The fellow who sold it to my mom and dad and me was a, was a Czechoslovakian fellow who ran the bike shop there, it was on Bloor Street and he was a… whether he really was or not, I don't know, but he acted like he was someone who had sort of done the touring in his life and he always wore one of those yellow shirts and that sort of thing. He looked like he was giving the impression of being a cyclist. And he had the foreign accent so it worked well.
>
> (Interview #19052014CM)

In this case the yellow shirt to which Boris refers is symbolic of the "maillot jaune" the stage winners for the Tour de France receive when they stand on the podium at the end of the day's race segment. Boris recognized this symbol as culturally meaningful in the context of cycling

and this, along with other symbols (e.g. foreign accent) enabled him to value what may (or may not) have been the actual expertise of the salesman.

Dittmar believes that her propositions do not work independently - they presuppose and support each other (Dittmar 1992, p 92). As with my use of Schultz Kleine and Menzel Baker's nine Characteristics (2004), I combine the propositions here, beginning with an examination of the self, with reference to interview segments wherein my correspondents discuss learning about themselves as a result of their bicycle use.

4.1.1.1 The Self.

In my Literature Review, I discussed in basic terms, some theories of how attachment (first to people and then to objects) works. Dittmar's propositions above reinforce and directly address how individuals construct their identity and the identity of others in relation to attachment to objects. Specifically, her second and third propositions (where Proposition 2. states a person responds to others based on material possessions, and Proposition 3 states people take on the symbolic meaning of their objects (Dittmar, 1992, p 91)) explain how objects form a shorthand language for interpreting the political beliefs, ideals and values each person has. In this way, shared cultural meanings allow individuals to recognize and judge similarities to and differences from others, in part through the objects they own and use. These differences enable the creation of autonomy between individuals in a group. Alternatively, shared cultural meanings also enable us to recognize when similarities between people occur. These similarities create relatedness within a group. Recognizing autonomy via differences and relatedness via similarities are mutually evident, both to the person judging and the person being judged.

My data shows these aspects of autonomy and relatedness in relation to people's experiences of bicycles. For example, one of my correspondents, Paul, races bicycles professionally and also does administrative work with bicycle-race production. During Paul's interview, I asked with whom he rode when he was young. He said his family rode with him until "I got a certain age. I think once, I think when I got faster than them, and I wanted to go further, they just sort of stopped" (Interview #21052014WM). Paul's comment indicates that his bicycle-racing career started around the same time as his rides with his family ended, thereby indicating the way he was using his bicycle was different from how other family members were using theirs. His differentiated use of the bicycle can be seen as creating separation of himself from his parents. Both Paul and his family recognized, in a very tangible way, that his racing separated Paul from their more leisurely use of their bicycles, since they could no longer keep up with him, nor go as far. This type of identity creation becomes inherent to the person because Paul's life then became embedded in Paul's racing career. As already noted, Paul's identity as a racer differentiated him from his parents, but it also simultaneously connected him to his cohort of racer friends. This type of identity creation has implications for broader social connections as well, as I show next.

4.1.1.2 Personal Relationships.

In terms of considering how bicycle use is associated with a broader social context, Dittmar's fourth and fifth propositions provide a clear understanding of how people use possessions to represent themselves in the world. The fourth and fifth propositions assert that the identity of each person is visible in object form and that the meaning of the object is pre-

established through culturally constituted meanings (Dittmar, 1992, p 91-92). She writes that possessions are:

> Direct and symbolic interpersonal regulators of relationships – direct in the sense that control and power over others can be exerted through decisions about who can and cannot use one's possessions, and symbolic in the sense that possessions can increase the owner's social significance (Dittmar, 1992, p. 62).

In this manner, possessions signify to one's self and the world the social status held through ownership. New houses and new vehicles provide status markers, as per Dittmar's propositions. Although this use of possessions appears more focused on the individual, it is the basis of Dittmar's avowal that possessions show "material objects can symbolically communicate the personal qualities of individuals… They can also serve as signs of political values, group membership or broad social categories, such as class or gender" (Dittmar, 1992, p 79). The words of my correspondent, Boris, (below) exemplify how his social identity is associated with the bicycle as object, as he talks of the association between components on his bicycle and social status, in relation to his group of friends:

> There was huge prestige that could be attached to what type of brake system you had, you didn't have - was it cantilever or you know, calipers, "ah, if was calipers, ah, well… look at mine, oh, man side pull…ooooah"… so a lot of our allowance was spent on trying to, without even thinking about the quality of the actual, the performance of the stuff, a lot of it was driven by the prestige of having this or that thing.

(Interview #19052014CM)

Personal perceptions of identity provided a way for Boris to comprehend himself and how he related to his friends. Boris clearly attempts to position himself as someone who could afford to purchase higher end bicycle parts, not because of their value, but because of their caché. His use of the plural pronoun shows his awareness that all his friends were doing the same thing. So, for Boris, likewise his friends and the rest of my correspondents, the bicycle as an object performed the function of helping to position them socially and culturally in a way that was evident to their peers. This mix of autonomy and relatedness in how people talk about their bicycles indicates how people use their bicycles, and the experiences associated with them, to build their identities - both their personal identities and their social, group-based identities as well. Additionally it provides an understanding of the attachment to the object derived from the personal identification with it. In Boris's words we can also see how objects can form an intrinsic part of how people rank each other, as the objects can be as identifiers of not only “me” and “not me,” but also “me” and “not you” as well as “mine” and “yours.” Those connections and disconnections are how groups of individuals become, or do not become, part of a community.

4.1.1.3 Community.

While we have seen that culturally constituted meaning is attributed to objects in relation to individuals, these attributions may also extend beyond the individual to encompass perceptions by, and of, communities. Dittmar references McCracken’s (1990) concept of culturally constituted meaning and, while she does not directly use the word “community” she introduces the term “generalized other” which she attributes to philosopher George Herbert Mead (Dittmar, 1992, p 80). For Dittmar, the term ‘generalized other’ refers to both the

"symbolic environment [that] pre-dates individuals and thus provides the context within which their subjective reality is constructed" (Dittmar, 1992, p 79), and "the perspective of several specific others simultaneously" (1992, p. 82). It is from the combined perspectives of the pre-existing symbolic environment and the specific group of others that an individual comes to see herself or himself from the wider and more generalized viewpoint of, for example a 'family or group of playmates all at once" (Dittmar, 1992, p 82). The concept of the "generalized other" creates the potential for understanding the notion of stereotypes created by culturally constituted meanings. These meanings have the potential of becoming "role models [which can] be 'objectified' as much as 'personified' (Dittmar, 1992, p 85). Role models then become "a representation of the community that becomes internalized as the generalized other" (Dittmar, 1992, p 85). This process is apparent in the words of my correspondent Zoe, who refers to stereotypes in relation to various cycling communities and the attributes of those communities when she says:

> I just notice that my friend's bikes really seem to suit their personalities and life styles, so I had some that were very jock-ish and liked to do mountain bike riding and they tended to have those kinds of bikes. I had friends that were sort of more sorta cooool and they kinda rode the low riders and the BMX style trick bikes and you know, I was never really into that kind of riding, [but] I had an old bike I used to ride visiting my brother who now lives in Amsterdam… and, suddenly, my association with riding was completely different, cause it made me feel like I was always on vacation.
>
> (Interview #11042014TF)

Zoe's commentary on her own and her friends' bicycle choices in relation to wider groupings of people ('jock-ish', 'cool') supports Dittmar's theory, showing that objects help people learn of their connections to a broader group of people: a community. Connections to objects can effectively serve "as a basis for organizing thought and action independently of the physical presence of others" (Dittmar, 1992, p 82). No longer do other people need to be on hand to remind people what their own, and others', belongings mean. The meanings have been internalized and their belongings act as "embodiments of the cultural meanings" and come to "objectify aspects of self definition" (Dittmar, 1992, p 85). As a result, in the case of Zoe, she is able to perceive and categorize both herself and her friends through the types of bicycles they all chose. Zoe's quote also exemplifies how communities discern attachment to objects, to which the communities then attribute behaviours and actions.

Dittmar writes that this type of internalized objectification of cultural meanings is ongoing (Dittmar, 1992, p 87), and her first, third and fifth propositions[1] also show how mass media, in particular, frames a person's culturally constituted perception of their own identity and that of their community and wider world, and also how it changes over time. Her theory and propositions are in alignment with McCracken's theory of how meaning moves between the world of goods and an individual's experience: indeed, Dittmar uses McCracken as rationale for her propositions. When discussing how individuals use their built-up-over-time perceptions of objects as identity markers for stereotypes role models, Dittmar elaborates saying "for people from radically different socio-economic strata, both gender and social-material position act as

[1] Paraphrased, these propositions are:
Proposition 1: The meaning of possessions are socially shared and internalized through interactions with people and social institutions.
Proposition 3: A person takes the perspective of the objects they own to gain a view of who they are through symbolic meanings of their objects.
Proposition 5: Meanings of material objects are established through social processes, which reflect social power relationships.

organizing principles of identity, which is reflected in the different meanings attached to personal possessions" (Dittmar, 1992, p 142). To indicate how this plays out for my correspondents, I turn to Jerry, who, near the end of the interview that concerned the ownership and use of first bikes, elaborates on the types of people that cyclists are, contrasting them to automobile drivers. Prior to the extract below we were talking about attitudes to bicycles, and then he said:

> As a matter of fact I always sort of leaned towards cyclists [as friends] cause they're like-minded, I like to think, right? Just logical, smart people. I don't, I'm generalizing here, I like to think cyclists are just naturally, intuitively clever and logical and, I mean I think you have to, I think anyone that drives around in a car, in traffic, the amount of money they spend and how ridiculous is sitting in traffic, I mean, none of it's logical, like you just, there's gotta be a better way… Oh yeah, here's a better way: *biking*, so much better.
>
> (Interview #31072014CM)

Acknowledging his generalization, Jerry defines one category of people (those who ride bicycles) by contrasting them to another category of people (those who drive cars). Identity delineation of this kind can perform two tasks. First, it provides humans with the ability to make "personal identity inferences from material possessions… [and] frequently make use of objects as a *particularly informative source* for impressions (Dittmar, 1992, p 159, emphasis in original). In the extract above, Jerry's comments deftly frame Dittmar's claims that the socially constituted world and socially shared meanings of objects create important markers of identity. Second, Jerry's words are consistent with out-group denigration tactics that support Dittmar's theory of object-based identity and social cohesion, tactics noted by social psychologists Tajfel, Billig, and

Bundy in their article, “Social Categorization and Intergroup Behaviour” (1971). In the case of my correspondent, Jerry, his comments above are evidence that he has constructed an identity that positions the autonomy, competence, and relatedness of his companions in relation to people who drive automobiles.

The structure and propositions of Dittmar’s theory concerning identity are consistently borne out by my interview data. In each instance, at each level, I find a correspondence between how Dittmar states identity is created and how my participants reference identity in their talk about their bicycles. Therefore, I conclude that bicycle use by frequent cyclists can provide strong connections to status, as well as be indicative of certain political values and group memberships; all examples that may be theorized through Dittmar’s perspectives on identity creation.

From Dittmar’s propositions for identity that are associated with objects, I explored how my data reflects how my correspondents formed identity and attachment to bicycles as objects. Dittmar’s work provided a theoretical basis for this analysis, and was useful in comprehending how my respondents created identity and attachment at the various levels of the self, including personal relationships and their place in a community. Through attachment to objects, aspects of people’s identity are securely reinforced or connected to themselves and others. An understanding of the strong connections between identity and attachment to objects will assist with analyzing how the bicycle as object impacts autonomy, competence, and relatedness, discussed in the next chapter.

5 CHAPTER FIVE - AUTONOMY, COMPETENCE, AND RELATEDNESS

The previous chapter provided an understanding of identity creation and material possession attachment as these concepts relate to objects. In this chapter I will use Guevarra and Howell's (2014) concepts of autonomy, competence, and relatedness and associate them with Dittmar's (1992) identity framework. As noted earlier, Guevarra and Howell use autonomy, competence, and relatedness to examine how experiential products create well-being. These experiential objects have a "hybrid nature… possessing both tangible and intangible qualities" (Guevarra & Howell, 2014, p 3). By tangible qualities, Guevarra and Howell mean a physical object (such as a bicycle) provides a person with embodied, sensorial moments that, with repetition, reminds the rider of previous experiences of riding.

I investigate whether my correspondents speak of owning and riding a bicycle as activities that fosters both initial and continued connections to increased autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby reinforcing identity and attachment to the bicycle. I argue that, when a child acquires a bicycle (which is an experiential, complex, sensual object) that child creates an attachment to that object that helps to form aspects of their identity. Use of the bicycle becomes a continuous reinforcement of their sense of self, including both personal relations with others and also their wider place in a community.

After a child learns to ride a bicycle, subsequent experiences of riding reinforces this interaction between levels of identity and gives rise to further expressions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These experiences enhance identity and attachment. Once on a bicycle, the rider can be instantly transported to the same types of decisions about destination, choice of companionship, and embodied freedoms as they experienced on previous bicycle rides.

Each use of the bicycle becomes an opportunity for the rider to immediately replicate the feelings, sentiments and embodied sensations experienced as a child, thereby cementing connections between past experiences of autonomy, competence and relatedness and present experiences of the same. Then, the autonomy, competence, and relatedness provided by the bicycle (replete with the potential of living through events as per Guevarra and Howells' definition of experiential objects (Guevarra and Howell, 2014, p 8)) increases and reinvigorates the individual's attachment to the bicycle as an object. This process of experience and attachment subsequently further informs and defines aspects of personal and social identity with each use, creating a positive feedback loop in which the relationship between a person and a bicycle is firmly established. Additionally, the nature of experiential objects, like bicycles, provides a person with a souvenir of experiences created through past and present use. The souvenir then creates a feedback loop to ensure future use.

5.1 Learning to Ride

For each of my participants, the act of learning to ride a bicycle created a skill to which he or she still has access and which, as per my criteria for correspondents to participate as research subjects (i.e. 'frequent cyclist'), he or she is still using now. This skill is accessible whether my interviewees had difficulties learning to ride or not, and the satisfaction of learning to ride is unparalleled in their narratives.

Boris and Jerry remember their trials in learning to ride, each admitting to taking longer than expected or desired. Jerry attributes his current love of riding directly to his inability to figure it out initially, stating:

> You're bleeding everywhere… you're never going to bike again… for a child it's, the concept is quite, it's quite difficult to grasp. It's like, I'm on these two wheels and I'm standing here, and I fall over, but if I start moving I'll stay up, like the concept is really, for a small child it almost seems magical and I think that's why I like cycling because I had such a hard time figuring it out.
>
> (Interview #31072014CM)

Learning to ride is an embodied, experiential ability that encompasses autonomy, competence, and relatedness, all accumulated over time, but that also continue in the present. The difficulties in acquiring the skill are indicated also by Boris, who was not an early adopter of the bicycle. He remembers

> When I first… rode a bicycle it wasn't mine it was somebody else's and I fell off it and I couldn't make it work and I thought "what crap this is, it is a stupid thing" and I, I hate it.
>
> (Interview #19052014CM)

While the words of Boris and Jerry indicate they had a hard time learning to ride, not everyone did. For example, Charlotte believes she learned to ride, in part through watching her brother but more with the assistance of her friend. She says:

> My neighbour down the street, Stella, she was great, she taught me how to ride a bike, my brother already knew how and I, uh, my parents were very busy so I had a very steep driveway and she used to double me all the time to go to school cause she had a banana seat, and it was the 80s and you could do that, and then we just

> decided that I would try it one day so we started at the top of my driveway and just…went.
>
> (Interview #16072014CF)

Likewise, Ephraim says, "It's funny I don't recall ever being taught how to ride. I just remember knowing how to ride, somehow" (Interview #22052014MM). Both Boris and Jerry contrast sharply to Charlotte and Ephraim, but regardless, Jerry pronounces riding "felt magical, it felt like this is, like the bumblebee, how, how does the bumblebee fly, they are physically impossible to fly, but here I am" (Interview #31072014CM). The joy he ascribes to his discovery is palpable and reinvigorated each time he rides.

As mentioned, learning to ride is a skill that embodies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as defined by Guevarra and Howell (2014). Briefly, (and discussed in greater detail below), in relation to the bicycle, autonomy or the ability to act independently is when a person can leave his or her home and interact freely with the world. Competence, both physical and mental, is where a person is physically able to ride, and also mentally able to determine routes and risks. Such competence is developed through learning and continuing to ride a bicycle. Relatedness is bound up in forging connections to self, to others, and to places, a relatedness that the bicycle fosters through its affordance of movement between locations and ease of making social groupings. For example, each correspondent talks of learning to ride with parents, riding with friends, and exploring his or her neighbourhood by him- or herself. Each of these elements – autonomy, competence, and relatedness – entwines with one another and has strong linkages to Dittmar's theory on identity construction.

According to Guevarra and Howell, experiential objects provide one or more experiences to the user. When a person learned to ride a bicycle as a child and remains a frequent cyclist as an adult, he or she has a fundamental skill that he or she continues to use, thereby reaffirming his or her experiences continually. The person has created a physical and mental competency still accessed on a regular basis. As a result, he or she has forged links between current riding experiences and past riding experiences. Guevarra and Howell (2014) also describe experiential objects as hedonic, providing "different levels of well-being depending on whether the purchases are material items (i.e., tangible objects that are possessions, like jewelry) or life experiences (i.e., events that one lives through, like concerts) (p 1). The bicycle is an example of a hedonic object as it is simultaneously a material item but also an object that provides events, through which one experiences one's life (whilst riding). Over the course of their article, Guevarra and Howell examine how individuals gain autonomy, competence, and relatedness from various possessions that provide the individuals with life experiences, and, further, whether these aspects impact well-being, which I connect to bicycles.

In my data, I studied how my participants' experiences of autonomy, competence, and relatedness were associated with their attachment to their bicycles and how such attachments in turn strengthen aspects of their personal and social identities. These concepts are considered in more details below and connected to both my data and to Dittmar's work.

5.2 Autonomy.

Guevarra and Howell (2014) posit that autonomy "is satisfied through engaging in behaviors that express one's true identity and facilitate a feeling of being in charge of one's own actions" (p 2). In this manner, Guevarra and Howell's autonomy can be aligned with Dittmar's

theory that people use objects to create connections to fit in or stand out using socially shared understandings of objects to do so (Dittmar, 1992). Psychologists, Frank, Butler Avery, and Laman (1988) whose research on 'Self Determination Theory', explores five aspects of autonomy (independence, decision-making, personal control, self-assertion, and self-other responsibility) (Frank, Butler Avery, and Laman 1988, p 731)). In my data, independence, personal control, and self-assertion were the most frequently mentioned concepts, so I have focused the following analysis on them.

As well, in my interviews, my correspondents reference aspects of autonomy that could be understood as linking to Dittmar's second proposition of identity, whereby other people respond to an individual in terms of the material possessions that surround him or her (Dittmar, 1992, p 91). Their talk also supports Dittmar's third proposition of identity, whereby a person comes to take the perspective of the objects they own to gain a view of who they are (Dittmar, 1992, p 91). Because of their bicycle and what it allows them to do, my correspondents perceive themselves as independent, capable of decision-making, and furthermore they perceive others with similar objects as similarly independent. Simultaneously, others perceive them likewise.

5.2.1 Independence

During the interviews, my correspondents consistently talked of the past in relation to their bicycle use, explaining away their lack of wearing helmets; their doubling each other when riding; and their ability to roam with other children around their neighbourhoods or further afield. They also consistently mentioned how little their parents knew of their activities or whereabouts. For example, the narrative provided by Paul indicates that his independence was a staged activity, in relation to his bicycle. He remembers he could go: "Literally just up and down

the sidewalk. I couldn't leave my parents' view. But we had a nice *straight* street, so I could go for awhile " (Interview #21052014WM). He also remembers "there was the point, like, my friends lived in different blocks around the neighbourhood so when I was allowed to go see them, like, that was the sweet part" (Interview #21052014WM).

Similar references to gaining gradual independence through bicycle riding are noted by Frances, who says she went:

> One *million* times around the crescent! My home was in a, yeah, like a cul-de-sac and sooo I would just go up around and around… but, but that was enough and then once I got a little bit older and I was allowed to venture a little bit farther, I uh, I went into the neighbouring cul-de-sac, and went around and around and then eventually made it into the river valley, cause my, my house, like my parent's house isn't that far from the river valley, and so with a friend, we'd go after school and go down to the river, hang out, go, we'd cruise up and down the bike path. (Interview #18062014CF)

In the case of Jerry, his independence was far less staged. He talked of riding around his neighbourhood fetterless, saying:

> And yeah, that was, that was awesome. That was always our thing, going to Rundle Park. You know how so, fucked up things were then, so we're like 9-10 years old whole bunch of us, my sister and neighbourhood kids, no cell phones, no nothing, and, no walkie-talkies, no tube, no, no, no pump, NOTHING and we'd just be like gone like all day. My parents would have no idea where we were, no idea, just like,

> 10 year old daughter, 9 year old son, on bikes, somewhere, we could be dead!
>
> (Interview #31072014CM)

If my correspondents' independence was achieved gradually then, once it had been achieved, there were few limitations. For example, Iris talks of touring by bicycle throughout the East Coast of Canada at a very young age, unaccompanied by adults. She called her cousin and convinced her to "go cycling for eight weeks in the Maritimes." She continues, "You know, she was only 15 … she'd put up, she'd slept in a tent, I don't know, we got a tent and we went, our parents let us go cycling in the Maritimes for eight weeks" (Interview #27052014TF). Similarly, Thora talks of her adventures on bicycles saying she would:

> Go to my friend's house and just tell them that we were going to ride our bikes to Whyte Ave and it's pretty exciting when you're like 10, that's a far, that's a far ways away. Their parents weren't so on board with that, but that's ok, we went anyway, to the bike trails around our house, Mill Creek Ravine, Whyte Ave - that was in the rebellious phase. When I was younger, probably Whyte Ave that was like the border, you didn't go past there without telling your parents.
>
> (Interview #24052014CF)

In another reference to independence, Boris also talks about a cycling tour with some friends, and acknowledges the freedom from parental constraints that he experienced, exclaiming: "by the time I was fifteen I was ready to try this trip where you were actually *leaving your par*ents going for miles and miles on the road it was just, it was so exciting to be able to do that" (Interview #19052014CM). Each correspondent in this category address the fact that, in

relation to their bicycles, their parents were releasing the filial bonds and allowing their children to travel, sometimes at great distances, apart from them. Such expressions of independence as autonomy connect solidly to Dittmar's perspectives on identity in relation to material objects. Each correspondent recognized that not only were they part of a society they also had the ability to be apart from that same society, due to the way they used their bicycles. Not only were my correspondents independent, but they also had great personal control, which I examine next.

5.2.2 Personal Control

Another aspect of autonomy is connected to being in charge of one's own actions, including deciding to ride with or without companions, and to places unknown. My correspondent Frances alludes to:

> Just being able to go wherever I wanted to go, uh, without mom or dad around, and, just having complete choice of … what, what I wanted to do, or where I wanted to visit and if I wanted to do that by myself or with friends.
>
> (Interview #18062014CF)

Mary had the run of the neighbourhood and mentions that "It was freeing, I mean I got to go everywhere. I loved that bike. I think one of the first things when I had it was ride my bike over to neighbour friends of ours to show them" (Interview #22052014WF). Despite her fond recollections, she believes she would be less permissive with her daughter now, as is indicated when she says: "When I think about it, would I let *my* 5 year old explore and take off the way that I just **went?** (Interview, #22052014WF). Here, Mary acknowledges her greater personal freedom when she was young than what her daughter experiences now. This difference may

speak to the general changes in autonomy based on culturally constituted meanings of personal safety in society. This aspect of autonomy as expressed by my correspondents most clearly associates with Dittmar's first proposition, whereby a person's interpretation of autonomy may be heavily influenced by external factors (Dittmar, 1992, p 90). Regardless, throughout the interviews, my correspondents talk of their parents consistently allowing them to ride their bicycles in a way that gave the children the run of the neighbourhood or town, and thereby encouraged their child's autonomy.

5.2.3 Self Assertion

Self-assertion, or the declaration of one's self, is strongly related to identity. When describing themselves, each of my correspondents asserted he or she was a cyclist. This sense of being a cyclist is evident in Iris's interviews when she is discussing her riding habits as she states, "but, no one rode it like *me*, like everywhere" (Interview #27052014TF). Here Iris clearly sets herself apart from her peers, identifying herself as a cyclist and moreover, one who chooses to ride everywhere she could. Her quote showcases my correspondents' love of riding, as well as how they express aspects of their identity and independence. The quote also indicates a related high level of competence in riding, presumed through Iris' comment that she rode 'everywhere'. Iris's quotes also link to Dittmar's concept of object-based identity creation as related to the self and others. That is, the comments of Iris and those of Paul (previously mentioned on page 64) identify both of them as people who are particularly adept at bicycling, better in fact than their family and peers. This identification also separates Iris and Paul from their peers who make other choices about their mobility. So too, Beatrice was aware of her family's reputation in the neighbourhood, saying that, although having a bicycle:

> Felt like total freedom…I was raised within a single family, uh, single parent household and uh, my mom always really parented us with like a 10 foot pole, so we had complete freedom, we'd be able to stay out till like 10 p.m. in the summer nights, um, and it meant that I could explore our neighbourhood.
>
> (Interview #15072014EF)

But Beatrice knew, based on her ability to roam freer than her compatriots that she "was really known as sort of like the feral child of the neighbourhood…" (Interview #15072014EF). Again, here we see that Beatrice is aware of her difference from her friends, and perceives her personal identity based on the self-assertion aspect of autonomy her bicycle gave her. Dittmar's second proposition may be referenced here, whereby evaluations of an individual's social status and their interpretations of the meaning of place are based on the surrounding material possessions of that person.

The aspects of autonomy referenced above (independence, personal control, and self-assertion) are enhanced by the bicycle as an experiential object. As well, these aspects of autonomy in and through the bicycle become obvious to both the possessor of the bicycle and to others. Dittmar's discussions of how objects function as identity markers (of socially shared meanings), and how possessions may influence interaction, provide a perspective through which the words of my correspondents link to wider theoretical concerns.

5.3 Competence.

In terms of competence, Guevarra and Howell (2014) claim "activities that utilize one's skills and abilities" provide a measure of satisfaction, which corresponds to well-being (p 2).

This is a rather limited definition and so I draw on the work of psychologists Obradovic, van Dulmen, Yates, Carlson, and Egeland who discuss competence as having three subsections, which include social, cognitive and emotional dimensions (Obradovic, van Dulmen, Yates, Carlson, & Egeland, 2006, p 859). Social competence may be perceived in connection to Attachment Theory (explored in Chapter 2), as it is connected to how people interact. Cognitive competence is "to selectively attend and independently and persistently explore new stimuli, as well as… more formalized developmental tasks" (Obradovic, et al., p 859). This competence relates most closely to the issue of developing the skill of riding a bicycle (however since I discussed learning to ride in a previous section, I shall not address it again). Emotional competencies are "related to representations of the self as deserving of care and support and as having agency and efficacy" (Obradovic, et al., 2006, p 859). The social and emotional competencies of Obradovic et al. may be understood as connected to Dittmar's work through her discussion of the interactions that occur between people and their own self perceptions.

In keeping with my use of Guevarra and Howell's (2014) theory, I examine how competence develops over time by way of first learning to ride, then gaining related skills, which then become transferred to or overlapped with other aspects of my correspondents' lives. I also examine the three types of competences as outlined by Obradovic, et al. (2006); i.e.: that people gain competencies because they ride a bicycle. In addition to those already-outlined competencies, I also include geographic competency (Aldred, 2010; Spinney, 2006), since the issue of distance and the ability to travel comes up frequently in my interviews. Likewise these aspects of competence will be discussed with relation to Dittmar's social constructionist view of identity created in relation to and, in part through, objects.

5.3.1 Social Competence

Social competence could also be defined as one's ability to navigate interactions with others. The bicycle's relation to social competence is indicated in the words of my correspondent Ephraim, who remembers moving to Edmonton from a smaller town and nearly losing his bicycle to theft. He says:

> When I moved into Edmonton, my apartment was too small to put the bike inside and I was leaving it parked outside in the yard without a lock. I woke up early one morning and heard footsteps just outside the window. I thought it was the landlord so I got up and looked just as somebody was walking out of the yard with my bicycle. I said, "What do you think you are doing?" and he said, "Stealing your bike." And then I walked over and I kinda grabbed it, and he walked away. As he looked back, he said, "You know, you really should lock your bike."
>
> (Interview #22052014MM)

Underlying this interaction is a dynamic that speaks to the fact that in a smaller community Ephraim felt secure leaving his bicycle unlocked outside, then naïve for having done so in a larger urban area. Further to this point, Hector remembers an instance where he felt cheated by the outcome of situation. He had bent his bicycle forks, rendering the bicycle unusable, and remembers:

> A neighbour kid across the street said "I'll fix them fer ya for a dollar, Hector" I was "oh, well, he'll fix them, ok" and he comes across the street, takes the wheel off and just beats out the shit out of the fork with a, with a hammer until they bend

> back and I was standing like "I could do that…" I thought he had something fancy. (Interview #01062014TM)

The bicycle worked afterwards but Hector was chagrined to realize that he too could have used a hammer and saved his money. While Ephraim's performance of social competence in relation to the different mores in rural and urban communities were challenging for him to manage, Stephen talked of:

> Hang[ing] out and do[ing] whatever kids would do together. Or you could ride around town and visit the different businesses. At that time there was a feed mill operating and four grain elevators, and a café, and a curling rink, and you know, you'd just, as was acceptable at that time for kids to roam free, you'd just, you know, go and say "oh, they're loading a train at the grain elevator today let's go watch that," and you'd go "ooo ahhh", and think it was really cool to watch this big train and these people working and you'd learn how the world works.
>
> (Interview #16052014CM)

Stephen's example provides a glimpse of a more bucolic but equally intricate social competence gained through bicycle riding. The concept of social competence that can be interpreted through the words of my interviewees aligns with Dittmar's third proposition which states "The person comes to take the perspective of the objects they own to gain a view of who they are through the symbolic meaning of their possessions" (Dittmar, 1992, p 91). In each example, my correspondents learned that some aspects of how they were placed in the world (e.g. a new

urbanite, a potential mechanic, a child learning about the working world) functioned in relation to their bicycles and they positioned themselves and their peers accordingly.

5.3.2 Emotional Competence

As mentioned above, emotional competence is directly connected to representations of the self, replete with agency and efficacy. In my data there are several examples of talk that can be interpreted through the lenses of emotional competence. For example, Cyril talks of how in the past, he figured out that people were choosing one style of bicycle (a mountain bike) rather than another (a road bike), because:

> They don't realize the performance difference between more of a road or a hybrid style bike on the road versus large meaty mountain bikes… but, I feel it's almost like a cop out, they don't know how to compensate or use body English to move around obstacles so, they think suspension is the answer.
>
> (Interview #28052014CM)

Cyril's contemplations of why people may have chosen one style of bicycle over another is indicative of his understanding of his agency and his ability to compensate for the differences in frames and tires and to use "body English" to manoeuver his way around obstacles.

Ada remembers the pleasure she had riding as a child, stating "well I don't know if I was as much as a kinesthetic person then, but I love the, I'm a very kinesthetic person and I love the, I love physical sensory input and I love the sensory input from cycling, it's a great pleasure" (Interview #31072014TF). In this quote, Ada explicitly connects her physical pleasure of riding now to her memory of liking to ride in her past. She talks of understanding herself and her body

with greater intimacy as result of riding her bicycle, as a child and as and adult. Her continued use of an experiential object provides a cyclical meaning based on emotional competence that she retrieved from the past, experiences in the present, and has accessible in the future

Beatrice, who described herself above as a 'feral child', continued her commentary of how she knew she did not belong in the neighbourhood, recognizing "the bike was part of that, so as much as I did have this nice relationship with it, it was part of that, just it was a signifier that I was not part of this world" (Interview #15072014EF). These examples showcase Dittmar's Proposition 1 whereby symbols of identity are socially shared and internalized.

5.3.3 Geographic Competence

Geographic competence is a concept that I drew upon when analyzing my interviews to better understand the significance of traveling across distances by bicycles. In her article, "'On the Outside': Constructing Cycling Citizenship", Rachel Aldred discusses how, "transport… is fundamental to people's everyday lives and hence their identities" (Aldred, 2010, p 35). Aldred also argues, "different transport modes enable different types of public spaces and social interactions, which may encourage different articulations of citizenship" (Aldred, 2010, p 39). From these points, she posits a four dimensioned "cycling citizenship [consisting of] being responsive to environmental issues, taking care of one's self, being rooted in one's locality and responding with openness to the social environment" (Aldred, 2010, p 39). Her third and fourth points form the geographic competence to which I refer and through which I interpret my correspondents' words. For example, Caleb discusses how, through cycling, he learned his neighbourhood roads in England, however his comments also indicate how the cycling helped to build skills that enable him to feel comfortable wherever he lives. He states:

> I just remember riding by myself, exploring the little random alleyways that were in there, getting lost one time and working out how to get home again, it just, really … I was reading this thing, about well, like citizenship is all related to the geography that you understand so if you understand more than one location, then you feel like more of a citizen and I guess it was kind of that. It expanded my local geography to feel more of a part of where I lived. But I didn't, of course I didn't think of it in those terms when I was just exploring.
>
> (Interview #28062014CM)

With the competence and confidence learned through exploration by bicycle, Caleb believes he has developed a geographically-based citizenship and is more able to cope with situations that are foreign to him. Spinney contends "the experiences of movement and mobility can be seen as constitutive of the meaning and character of a place because of an ongoing dialectic between body and place" (Spinney, 2006, p 713). Caleb's experience coincides with Spinney's notion of understanding a place based on movement through it. As well, Thora attributes her geographical knowledge to her bicycle, claiming:

> You know what I find kind of funny now? I think I have a pretty good sense of direction. Like I know where everything is in the city and my friends that, like, grew up in the back of an SUV have no idea where anything is. It's hilarious. They just get so lost all the time.
>
> (Interview #24052014CF)

The words of my correspondent, Thora, may be interpreted with reference to Aldred, Spinney and Caleb's concept of geographically-based citizenship. The time that Caleb and Thora invested in learning their neighbourhoods via their bicycles has increased their general competence to move through their geographic worlds. By way of riding their bicycles, Caleb and Thora have built embodied memories of their routes, which have increased the ways in which they can engage in relationships with others, and has also extended the space they are able to inhabit. The words of Caleb and Thora also may be interpreted with reference to Dittmar's Third Proposition (Dittmar, 1992, p 91), whereby the perspectives of who they are come from the symbolic meanings of their objects as well as what those objects allow them to physically do.

In all aspects of competence (social, cognitive, and emotion), as my correspondents came to understand what Phillip called the "scary but fun, like fun scary" (Interview #07082104EM) process of riding a bicycle, they increased their competence with that object in a manner that they retain it to this day. Dittmar's model of identity creation and attachment to objects clearly aligns with the ways in which my correspondence use terms that suggest a range of Competencies, particularly those aspects examined here.

5.4 Relatedness.

With respect to relatedness, Guevarra and Howell (2014) refer to "engaging in activities that lead to a sense of belonging with others" (p 2). For my purposes, I add additional dimensions to Guevarra and Howell's concept of relatedness. These additional dimensions are first, how people relate to themselves as a result of bicycle riding (private relatedness) compared to how they relate to others when riding (public relatedness); and second, how using a bicycle in public enables people to recognize other people interested in similar activities and holding

similar values based on the material goods surrounding them (again, public relatedness). Aldred's notion of private and public transportation is useful here as it links the bicycle both to private and public relatedness as well as to Guevarra and Howell's concept of *engaging in activities* leading to a sense of belonging. Specifically, Aldred refers to the bicycle as "a private form of transport, [that] potentially allow[s] users to interact with others" (Aldred, 2010, p 39). Aldred's point is that the bicycle is a vehicle most often used by one person and frequently used in a public setting; however, since it is not generally enclosed, it allows the rider to communicate with pedestrians and, in some instances, other vehicle users. This quality creates a public aspect to a private vehicle not easily available to other private vehicles (i.e.: automobiles).

I also expand Guevarra and Howell's (2014) 'sense of belonging with others' to include a sense of belonging to a particular place. My justification for this change is found in the work of Schultz Kleine and Menzel Baker (2004) who refer to psychological appropriation and self extensions (as per Belk, 1991) in their 'Characteristics of Material Possession Attachment' (for full details please refer to the Methodology Chapter). My interpretation was also influenced by the words of my correspondent, Caleb, whose talk could be interpreted as expressing his awareness of his geographic citizenship.

5.4.1 Private Relatedness

Private relatedness consists of the interaction between the rider and the bicycle. My correspondent, Claude describes this private relatedness, saying, "the problem of bike riders is the solitariness of them. You're out there and it's you and the bike and the road and the conditions and, and what you, what your body is *sending* to you" (Interview #21052014TM). He describes relating to his body, and the roadway, and the bicycle, and acknowledges the lack of

other cyclists in that relationship. In this quote, Claude corroborates Spinney's declaration "the rider is both bike and person: a hybrid of both subject and object" (Spinney, 2006, p 715). The comments of my correspondent, Thora, put this embodiment into perspective, when she says "I think … when I am on a bike, like it's really easy to relax and kinda, like, forget about what's going on, I like to think of it like meditation" (Interview #24052014CF). She achieves a peace and calm by way of riding, and so gains access to particular aspects of herself that may not be otherwise accessible.

Claude and Thora's words described the personification of an embodied mobility and the private relatedness to which I refer. Dittmar's Third Proposition (where a person gains a view of who he or she is through the symbolic meanings of his or her possessions, (Dittmar, 1992, p 91)), meshes with this private relatedness since both Claude and Thora have learned to relate to themselves in different ways because of their bicycle use.

5.4.2 Public Relatedness

Public relatedness, on the other hand, has a twofold quality. The first of these qualities is addressed at a different point in Claude's interview, when he talks of how riding a bicycle gives him the opportunity to interact with people, saying:

> You can talk more to people when you're on a bike… It's good to meet someone when you're riding up a hill, if you come up behind them huffing and puffing and you go, "you know you get a better work out if you push an old guy on a bike up a hill!"
>
> (Interview #21052014TM)

In this quote, Claude emphasizes how he uses the lack of a physical barrier between himself and the people he encounters to engage them in public. Because of the physical structure of his bicycle, he increases his public relatedness to strangers by interacting with them in tangible ways.

The second quality of public relatedness is how people recognize other people similar to themselves based on objects (as I showed earlier, with my example of Jerry's talk about cyclists being like-minded people while car drivers were less so). This issue of recognizing others in relation to their material goods may be associated with Dittmar's Second Proposition, which states that people respond to one another based on their surrounding material possessions (Dittmar, 1992, p 91). In fact, Miranda's perception of relatedness as it pertains to bicycle use began with her father's experiences of bicycle use. Her immigrant Chinese father was an avid rider as a child, and she says:

> I think that was his main way to get around town when he was a kid. I don't know how he ever got his first bike, if his parents provided it for him … being the oldest of nine, I'm not even sure how they were able to afford it, but he always loved riding his bike and probably did it with his friends who were also, like, the good, you know, 60s white kids… the mayor's kid, and the doctor's kid, and the minister's kid are all the kids he hung out with. He hung out with very upper-middle-class folks, so my dad ended up doing a lot more Caucasian upper-middle-class type activities.
>
> (Interview #26062014MF)

Miranda's experience of cycling is informed by what she considers to be an anomaly in her father's youth where, although he was the child of immigrants, he socialized with "upper-middle-class folks." As a result, her family's activities more closely resembled the social norms of "upper-middle-class folks." Her family all rode, raced, and holidayed with bicycles. She claims:

> It was kind of a normal thing, it's sort of part of our, our… we skied and biked and did all those outdoorsy things. So it was just sort of how to be part of the family. We would go for family bike rides in the evening, so it was kind of a connection, I guess, to my family.
>
> (Interview #26062014MF)

Another correspondent, Bridget, exemplifies public relatedness when she talks of how she chose her bicycle. Bridget says, "the neighbour girls, who also had John Deere bikes and that's probably why I wanted… There's probably cheaper ones, but, I don't know; I wanted that bike" (Interview #20072014TF), revealing how much the neighbour girls' bikes influenced her own choice. Here public relatedness gave Miranda an understanding of how families function in society and Bridget social connections to her peers.

Associations between friendships and bicycles were also noted earlier in the words of Zoe who categorized her friends based on their bicycle frame style (Chapter 4, page 64). In a similar manner, Stephen stated that, as a result of getting a bike he was able to make friends, saying "It had a social aspect because we were in a new neighbourhood, and I saw all the other kids riding around but I didn't really get to know them because they were riding back and forth,

and I wasn't" (Interview #16052014CM). Therefore, learning to ride gave Stephen a sense of public relatedness he continues to hold to this day.

Consistently, my correspondents noted how the bicycle provided opportunities for relatedness, whether the relatedness was private (between a person and his or her bicycle, where the person experiences the world in a solitary manner), or public (where a person forges connections to other people by riding together). The bicycle also provides opportunities to relate to the physical environment in a very tangible way, which I will explore next.

5.4.3 Place Relatedness

I included this category to address the unique ability the bicycle as object has to align with Schultz Kleine and Menzel Baker's (2004) two Characteristics, first, of psychological appropriation (Characteristic 2) and, second, of extended self (Characteristic 3) (with association to geographic locales). In this instance, relatedness more closely corresponds to interacting with particular places and creating a bond with them through those interactions. Spinney, in his article "A Place of Sense: A Kinaesthetic Ethnography of Cyclists on Mont Ventoux" (2006) discusses place and connections, elaborating, "A phenomenology of place, then, is one in which all its material substance, colours, shapes, sounds, textures, and smells are experienced" (Spinney, 2006, p 714). His article discusses the phenomenological experience of his bicycle ride up Mont Ventoux, a particularly challenging ascent often included as part of the course for the Tour de France. He argues that, as he is labouring up the hill by bicycle, he is particularly well placed to experience the sensual nature of bicycle riding. His ride prompts him to speculate how people experience and relate to place. Like Schultz Kleine and Menzel Baker claim concerning how attachment leads to the sense of 'my' object, Spinney writes of how he appropriated Mont

Ventoux as *his* place. This appropriation is logically absurd, since Mont Ventoux is a geographic form that conventionally is not owned by individuals. Regardless, Spinney recognizes, as is discussed in other literature concerning material possession attachment that, in some manner, that place is 'his'. There are examples of this type of place relatedness in my data. For an example I turn to my correspondent Carmen, who notes her connection to place as a result of riding with her father and brother. She talks of how these connections were forged on their weekly Sunday rides in Edmonton's river valley as she says:

> Every Sunday my dad, my brother and I would go for bicycle rides, but I was too small to ride my own bike and keep up. And we lived in Mill Woods, and we'd always ride to Mill Creek Ravine to the trails there and so… every Sunday I would sit on the, the top bar of my dad's bike, in between his arms and we'd ride to Mill Creek.
>
> (Interview #12062014WF)

Carmen's memories of riding with her father and her brother shaped her childhood but as well, her memories include riding in a particular place to which she also developed an affinity. Like Spinney to Mont Ventoux, so Carmen to Mill Woods Creek. The connections to place, of which she talks, represent connections that other correspondents also made with geographic locations. Through these associations, and because of the experience of riding a bicycle, each of them creates a geographical citizenship and place relatedness that remains to this day.

Another instance of relatedness to place is recollected by my correspondent, Hector, who remembers traveling to his grandmother's on his bicycle. He has a clear memory of riding:

> Our bikes around town and doing things, I remember one time... Rochester's built in the Twawantinaw River valley and the community hall is kinda dug into the side… of this hill and there was a bit of a path coming down there, and then it, there was a break and the dirt… sand *actually* so you could actually take your bike, go flying down this hill and then just nose dive into this sand, right? It seemed like it was a good idea…
>
> (Interview #01062014TM)

Hector's detailed memories of this place speak to a sense of place relatedness similar to that noted by Spinney in his work, and by Carmen in her interview.

Overall, this chapter has made linkages between personal and social identities in relation to the concepts of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Throughout this chapter, in connection to Dittmar's five propositions, I have argued that, as a result of using the bicycle as an experiential object, people acquire and experience aspects of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Therefore, as a person rides a bicycle, they engage memories of autonomy, competence, and relatedness that immediately feedback into feelings of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the present. The person may be unconscious of this feedback. However, such experiences have the potential to reoccur every time he or she rides a bicycle. This feedback loop generates strong attachment bonds, cyclically confirming the triad of identity, attachment, and object. Guevarra and Howell's (2014) work on experiential objects, supported by Dittmar's perspectives on identity creation, provides an approach from which I have analysed how my correspondents speak of autonomy, competence, and relatedness by way of the *use* of a bicycle.

My correspondents experienced increased autonomy, competence, and relatedness in connection to themselves (self), personal relationships (others) and communities (places).

In summary, through ongoing attachment to the bicycle as a special kind of experiential object, the person builds aspects of their personal and social identities. In the case of my correspondents, they have grown up using bicycles, and so have increased their embodied experiences of autonomy, competence, and relatedness over time. This embodied knowledge fosters further attachment and identification with the object and so the relationship between the person and the bicycle-as-experience becomes iterative in nature. In my next chapter I will analyze how my correspondents used age-graded social categories to discern other aspects of personal and social identity in relation to their attachment to bicycles as objects.

6 Chapter Six - Age-Graded Membership Categorization

The previous two chapters examined first, identity and attachment to understand how these two concepts related to bicycles as objects (Chapter 4). Second, and as a result of themes arising from my interviews, the concepts of autonomy, competence, and relatedness were discussed in terms of how they informed aspects of identity and attachment (Chapter 5). This chapter examines the specific cultural meaning of bicycles in a North American context that pertains to how my participants understood cycling as children in comparison to how they understand cycling now, as adults.

An exploration of widely held beliefs about who rides bicycles, and at what age, forms the basis of this chapter. As noted earlier in this thesis, social categories, including age, can be discerned from analyzing people's talk through the discourse analysis method of Membership Categorization Analysis (Sacks, 1979). Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA) pays close attention to how participants, during conversation, assign themselves and others to groups that are based on perceptions and interpretations of connection and contrast, known as relational pairs (e.g. mother/child; student/teacher, etc.).

Sacks uses the term 'Membership Categorization Device' (MCD) to explore how people interpret categories through the relational pairs to which they refer (e.g. mother as associated with the group 'family'). Sacks especially considers how, when a MCD is mentioned in talk it is spoken of and heard as somehow 'relevant' (Schegloff, 1997) or especially meaningful to the talk that is occurring. Sacks also argued that through interpreting MCDS we understand and attach meaning to people and their actions.

During the coding and analysis of my data, of all the categories that arose in my correspondents' talk, and that seemed particularly relevant, was the relational pair of adult/child. This adult/child relational pair found within my interview data reinforces Vivanco's assertion that "Americans are accustomed to thinking of the bicycle as a child's toy (Vivanco, 2013, p 3). The meanings ascribed to this relational pair by my correspondents were, consistently, that, when they themselves were children, the adults in their lives rarely rode bicycles and, when adults did ride, it was unusual enough to cause comment.

6.1 Adult/Child Relational Pairs

Across my interviews, the correspondents create an adult/child relational pair of non-bicycle-riding adults and bicycle-riding children, to which value judgments are ascribed (generally positive for bicycle-riding children but less so for adults (as will be discussed in further detail later)). However, a particularly interesting aspect of age categorization in my data is that, although my correspondents recalled that the category 'adult' was not usually associated with riding a bicycle, each person I interviewed rides presently, creating an anomalous situation where they do not fit inside the categories they have constructed in their talk. Additionally, although my interviewees overwhelmingly initially said that cycling was for children, some of them had stories of adults cycling that, as they recollected these narratives, seemed to have significance for them in the present.

As noted above, MCDs focus on peoples' understandings of the categories of people of which groups are made. Harvey Sacks writes that value judgments include a generalized understanding of all the members in the category as he notes, "… what's known about the category is known about them [the member] and the fate of each is bound up in the fate of the

other (1979, p 13). To clarify, what is known about one person tends to be attributed to the entire population of the category to which that person belongs. Sacks' point is telling: by categorizing others, people unconsciously categorize themselves, as either existing inside or outside of these groups.

The judgment accepted by many of my correspondents was that, when they were children, adults did not ride bicycles. As adults recollecting their childhood, they remembered riding and located themselves as fitting in the category of "children ride bicycles." In recollecting the adults they knew when they were children, my correspondents indicated that many of the adults they knew fit in the category of "adults do not ride bicycles". The majority of my correspondents' recollections of their childhood memories often comprised reminiscences of the condemnation offered by other people towards those adults who did ride bicycles; a condemnation my correspondents recall their childhood selves as accepting regarding bicycle-riding adults. In contrast, presently, my correspondents fit in a different category of "adults do ride bicycles." Categorization of this nature creates in-groups and out groups which bracket the behaviours of the individual into the behaviours of the group, thereby making value judgments towards the members of a group easier to unconsciously perform.

6.2 Defining Categories

In my research, my correspondents make frequent references about the type of person that rides a bicycle, both in the past and, in the present. For example, Françoise comments that bicycling for children was:

> Support[ed] in the sense that it was, you know, it was expected that you had one and expected that you knew how to ride one but that was the limit of it, like it would be if you said "Well, you could ride your bike to work". People would look at you, like "Why you could ride your bike to the moon too!" Even by the time I was in high school, certainly the attitude was that it was almost more of a small kids thing.
>
> (Interview #24052014EF)

Equating the potential of riding to work to riding to the moon indicates that Françoise had learned that the act of cycling was done under very specific, almost miraculous circumstances if one were an adult.

6.2.1 Categorically, Only Children Rode.

In my interviews, my correspondents talked about their childhood and their first bicycles. Also, we spoke about what people said about bicycles during or around the time that they acquired their first bicycle. In their narratives, as they talked of their first bicycles (as opposed to bicycles they may currently own), my correspondents categorized themselves as both bicycle users and children. Bicycles were ubiquitous, Carmen notes: "we literally had like a roving gang of kids in our neighbourhoods riding bicycles" (Interview #12062014WF). Further, Mary states: "I seem to remember there being like masses of children. All on bikes, all jacking around, going here, going there, to the store" (Interview #22052014WF). Claude affirms their statements when he recalls that bicycles were "part of the water table" (Interview #21052014TM). Every correspondent mentioned how ubiquitous bicycles were for children.

Each of my correspondents described using their bicycles when they were children in various ways. For example: Bridget rode her bicycle on gravel and "did this thing where you, like if you'd see a rock lying on sort of a smooth bit, and if you hit it just the right way, it would like fly" (Interview #20072014TF); Ada rode hers through puddles and cruised along alleys searching for berries; Rita fell on gravel whilst riding her bicycle, after getting cut off by her brother "who was really close behind me and he swerved a little bit, hit my back wheel and then I tumbled off because I also didn't really have my balance and got a nice big rock stuck in my forehead" (Interview #28072014CF); Henry built jumps for his bicycle, then jumped off those jumps and other things; Samuel constructed half-pipes and talked of the "first time I went over a dirt jump and I just cased it with my front wheel, I… flew over the landing hit flat, no helmet, bent my cranks, bent my handlebars, slurred my words for the day, biked home" (Interview #24062014WM); Miranda fell off her bike into mud and gravel; Mary used her bicycle to buy candy and go to the library; Stephen's bicycle allowed him to fit in with the other children in his neighbourhood. Hector played man-hunt, using his bicycle to chase down other children; Beatrice used her bicycle to ride to school with her friends, creating a collection of children riding together – a sort of biking school-bus; Charlotte doubled her friends and siblings and was doubled in turn.

Henry spoke of how versatile a tool his bicycle was:

> It's just like total complete freedom, cause your bicycle could be anything. You know, on Monday it was a motorcycle. On Tuesday it was your horse cause you were playing cowboys and Indians. On Wednesday it was your spaceship and it would be taking you on all kinds of adventures, cause that was back in the days of

> Star Trek. So we were kinda in that transitional phase where we liked to play cowboys and Indians; we liked to play cops and robbers; we liked to pretend we were like motorcycle gangsters; and then they became spaceships. You know, it was always whatever your imagination…the bike would transform into a tool, a tool to explore your imagination.
>
> (Interview #20062014TM)

Similarly, Carmen "pretended… we were bicycle, well, motorbike police men and police women" (Interview #12062014WF). Clearly, when my correspondents were children, bicycles were vehicles of imagination; vehicles for experiencing the world; and vehicles for learning and testing boundaries.

Of my twenty-eight correspondents, seventeen directly referenced the category of children as specific to bicycle riding. For instance, Stephen emphasized it was "kind of taken for granted at a certain age, kids would get a bike, that's just what you did" (Interview #16052014CM). You were a 'poor specimen of childhood if you did not have a bicycle', he added.

In the course of my interviews, I asked my correspondents if, as children, they knew of any adults who cycled. I also asked if they remembered what people said about bicycling at that point. These questions were intended to provide a frame of reference for considering attitudinal changes in or towards cycling. Responses did not vary much. Each correspondent was aware of the cultural norms of who rode, and at what ages it was considered appropriate to ride.

My data provides ample evidence of how my correspondents directly associate the MCD of 'child' with the activity of bicycle riding. However, while my correspondents recall and describe how they used their bikes when they were children, they either do not mention how adults used bicycles or, more frequently, they state that when they were children, adults did not ride bicycles. Indeed, in their narratives, the two categories of 'children as bicycle-riders', and 'adults as not-bicycle riders', are often starkly contrasted. For example, when asked if he could remember any adults who rode, and what he recalled people saying about bicycles when he was a child, Henry replied emphatically, "When I was a kid? They were just for kids" (Interview #20062014TM). Undoubtedly children rode bicycles. Yet, if eventually they stopped riding, why did they stop?

In the narratives of many of my correspondents, they mention a time when, as they grew up, they progressed to using other objects, particularly other transportation-based objects. For example, Freda says "I remember this transition into like roller blades and skateboards, which kind of like overtook, took over for a little while, and definitely, like, remember riding roller, having roller blades" (Interview #07072014CF). She and others all had a hiatus from cycling for other methods of getting around that were judged to be more 'cool'. So while bicycles were "part of the water table," at a certain point in a child's life, they also were understood to have an expiry date. Jerry mentioned he knew it was time to move on to automobiles, because:

> When you hit your teens you, you just either stick with it or you sort of walk away from it…then you get your driver's license realizing biking is for kids, I wanna drive, pick up girls, you know, that kind of stuff. I can get THREE girls in my car now instead of one... and the number just made sense Karly.

(Interview #31072014CM)

Jerry's statements allude to how previously on his bicycle only one girl would fit on the back of his banana seat. Therefore, the choice to move to an automobile traces not only his awareness of social time and his flagging interest in bicycles but also his increased interest in the social connections and behaviours associated with adulthood.

6.2.2 Categorically, Few Adults Rode.

When recalling their childhoods, my correspondents recognized that their interpretation of adult behaviours were associated with wider cultural meanings concerning age-appropriate behaviours. These cultural meanings marked boundaries between one age category and another. For example, Hector references this cultural delineation of age categorization as he says that he does not "remember any adults riding bikes, you know? And maybe that's a reflection of the attitude towards bikes, that it's, that it's a toy…." (Interview #01062014TM). Such culturally-determined associations with age and behaviour has been termed by scholars such as psychologist Freya Dittmann-Kohli as 'social time'. Social time is the "socially organized time-patterns [that] are internalized from early on in life through the acquisition of certain patterns of social organization and daily routines" (Dittmann-Kohli, 2007, p 83). In this manner, people manage aspects of their identity both through events that occurred in the past and events expected to occur in the future. Subjectively, the person understands that aging is a process that will occur in his or her life. But when they reach the phase that they recognize as 'adulthood' is often a mystery.

Sociologist, Andrew King's (2012) article "Recognising Adulthood?: Young Adults Accomplishment of Their Age Identities", investigates the social recognition of adulthood. King provides a succinct understanding of the concept of adulthood as, "associated with a variety of rites, entitlements, obligations and competencies; the outcome of a developmental maturation process" (King, 2012, p 111). Some of the rites King describes include first jobs, first sexual relationships and first homes. King's description of adulthood is in keeping with McCracken (1990), Hockey and James (2003), Warner Schaie (2007) and Dittmann-Kohli's (2007) related concepts of age-graded rites of passage, but adds the element of recognizing when adulthood is supposed to occur for oneself. I discuss King's work in more depth in the section on Social time (p 106) and use it to explain the disparity between my correspondents' understandings of who rides bicycles, and at what age.

Interestingly, very few of my correspondents remember adults riding bicycles when the correspondents themselves were children. Indeed, few of the adults in their lives owned bikes – which is consistent with the findings of Turpin's research (2013, 2014). However, some adults *did* ride. Iris recalls:

> My dad had a beautiful old bike, like he rode, you know he rode a couple of times from Montreal to Ottawa on this beautiful old spring seat. You know it was the only bike he ever had and my brother still has it somewhere in Ottawa, but my dad would ride, I don't think every year, but uh, several times he rode with a friend from Montreal to Ottawa and they would sleep out rough and come back the next day.
>
> (Interview #27052014TF)

Another correspondent, Pierre, talks of a teacher who rode: "our English teacher … He cycled to his teaching job at our school in downtown Montreal. He was one of the few, I mean this was on tail end of hippie days" (Interview #19062014TM). Pierre's comment about it being the 'tail end of the hippie days' indicates his association of bicycle riding with a particular, anomalous type of adult (a hippie). I will address the category of anomalous adult riders later. While these aforementioned examples stand out, many of my correspondents also talk of a parent, teacher, mentor or older relative who they recall as riding a bicycle; so it is clear that, despite my correspondents' apparently rigid categorizations of adults as people who did not ride bicycles, in fact, several of them did.

The number of bicycle-riding adults in my correspondents' lives when they were children are small but relevant. Across all my interviews, there were twenty-seven adult riders mentioned when my correspondents recollected their childhoods. The list of twenty-seven adult riders includes family members: ten parents (an even split between mothers and fathers) and six extended family members. The list also includes three family friends, three older neighbourhood youths and five references to other townspeople. The exception to this list is the plethora of adult neighbours that Mary remembers from her childhood in Germany. Mary only referred to these people in multiples, making it difficult for me to discern numbers. Specifically, Mary stated:

> But the adults that I did see, especially in Germany, were Germans. I didn't really see many other, like Canadians, like, adults riding bikes, but you saw, like, the Germans all the time, you know, biking out to the fields, you know, with their rake and what have you, all their stuff and they were just like buam, buam bma, you know, I just, yea we saw them all the time, the older people.

(Interview #22052014WF)

Mary goes on to say: "yeah, I remember that, it was a very big part of Germans…I'd sorta see them bopping around, until of course they turn 14 then they got a moped" (Interview #22052014WF). Mary's comments indicate that, even in Germany, where bicycling is more accepted than it is in North America, a transportation hierarchy exists. Regardless, in the childhood of my twenty-eight correspondents (a childhood that, for most, was experienced in North America), very few adults rode bicycles. As a result, the value-laden relational pair MCD of non-bicycle-riding adults and bicycle-riding children is explicitly stated but is implicitly contradicted by the numbers of adult cyclists I counted in their narratives.

Interestingly, it was often only after further probing that many of my correspondents could recall any adults riding. Of my correspondents, Beatrice was the most startled by her recollections of adults riding. In the midst of talking about how she learned bicycle safety, after a long pause, Beatrice exclaimed "My mom! My mom! My mom actually, sorry, cycled to work, which is crazy, now that I'm thinking about it, yeah, that's actually pretty extreme, I'm thinking about that now" (Interview #15072014EF). Beatrice went on to say that her mother rode her bicycle because they had very little money as a single parent family. Beatrice explains the exception for her mother from non-bicycle-riding adults in somewhat positive terms: her mother's poverty offered a respectable, or at least acceptable reason for an adult to ride a bicycle. Nonetheless, Beatrice ascribes a value to the MCD relational pair of 'non-bicycle-riding adults' and 'bicycle-riding children'; as indicated by Beatrice's use of the words "crazy" and "extreme" to describe her mother's cycling.

The disparity between the reference to the MCD of no adults riding bicycles, and the reality (where some adults actually did ride bicycles) speaks to the incorrect perception of my correspondents (i.e. that no adults rode despite evidence to the contrary). It also speaks to what can be revealed about taken-for-granted assumptions when Membership Categorization Analysis is used to explore aspects of culturally constituted meaning. Even with evidence to the contrary, the prevailing categorization of adults as non-bicycle-riders holds firm for my interviewees, which provided me with an opportunity to consider how people understand time in relation to material culture objects, and the bicycle in particular. The next section will define social time and position the bicycle (in a North American context), within that concept, as social time provides clues as to which activities are considered appropriate at various stages of life.

6.3 Social Time.

The processes by which people understand and construct this particular MCD may be explained by using the concept of social time. The bicycle as object forms part of an activity that Vivanco, in *Reconsidering the Bicycle: An Anthropological Perspective on a New (Old) Thing* (2013), notes is perceived to be a childish toy to be given up when one reaches the age of majority. Specifically he writes that the "manner in which bicycles have been sold in the U.S. has contributed to, and helped sustain, dominant American attitudes toward bicycles as children's toys and as sporting goods (Vivanco, 2013, p 50). Whilst Vivanco does not use the terms 'age-grading' or 'culturally constituted meaning', the situation he describes matches these concepts. Vivanco adds a qualifier to the Membership Category of bicycles as age-appropriate for adults as he notes that bicycles can also be sporting goods, so leisure-use by adults may be considered acceptable.

Vivanco's claims are supported by the work of Richard Turpin (2013, 2014, as described in Chapter 2) who examines how U.S. marketing strategies categorized bicycles as children's toys. The work of both authors discusses how marketing campaigns helped to create value judgments about bicycles: indicating that adults did not typically use bicycles, unless those adults inhabited a liminal category where, ostensibly they were adults, but they were doing an activity associated with childhood and childish behaviours.

Neither Vivanco or Turpin refers to Dittmar (1992) or McCracken (1990), however, it is clear that Vivanco and Turpin do explore the media-driven, culturally constituted meanings of the bicycle. In addition, the value judgments they describe are consistent with the narratives of several of my correspondents. For example, my correspondent Samuel underlines these value judgments, as he says that his uncle expected him to quit riding his bicycle when he turned sixteen (when one can get a drivers license in Canada) exclaiming by adopting his uncle's voice, "Oh, that'll stop as soon as you get a car!" (Interview #24062014WM). In effect then, there is significant evidence that bicycle riding is associated with the category 'child' and not the category 'adult' within North American social time constructs.

As already noted, social time is a concept germane to my research, as it can help explain why, particularly in North America, there a time-bound, age-graded distinction of who typically uses a bicycle and who does not. Social gerontologist K. Warner Schaie's (2007) work *The Concept of Event Time in the Study of Adult Development* deals with the various ways the passage of time can be experienced[2]. For my purposes, I concentrate on social time, which is "based on the notion that every society has social expectations for behaviors that are thought to

[2] He outlines the five experiences of time humans understand, listing them as physical, biological, psychological, social, and intrinsic time.

be appropriate at different life stages" (Warner Schaie, 2007, p 122). Warner Schaie argues that, based on the societal clues available to them, people understand what they should be doing, and when they should be doing it. Social time frames people's actions and activities. My correspondent Stephen references this type of understanding when he notes that bikes were: "kind of taken for granted. At a certain age kids would get a bike, that's *just what* you did, with the unspoken assumption that probably at a certain age you transition to cars" (Interview #16052014CM). So, children do childish things (like ride bicycles) until they are considered teenagers. Teenagers (as nearly adult) have different activities they are expected to do (like get a driver's license).

In 'Recognizing adulthood? Young adults' accomplishment of their age identities', King (2012) explains changes to social time in his research on how the age-graded categories of youth, adult, and elderly have modified over the past decades. King outlines "a 'standard model' [of adulthood that] reached its zenith in the mid decades of the 20th century, during a period of sustained economic stability and social conservatism" (King, 2012, p 111). This standard model became the hallmark of what North American society typically believes about adulthood. It forms the basis of what, as children, my correspondents knew and believed about adults. So although Vivanco and Turpin reveal who is *expected* to use bicycles in society, and gerontologist Warner Schaie's work (2007) on the concept of event time provides some understanding as to why *only this group* is expected to use bicycles, my correspondents' talk reveals a sort of limbo when endeavoring to navigate issues around who *actually is* using bicycles. This limbo seems to imply changes to the social forces that help us recognize appropriate behaviours for specific ages.

Analyzing what my correspondents remembered about who rode bicycles when they were children created an opportunity for me to explore social changes in perceptions of time and age-appropriate behaviours. The talk of my correspondents indicated what they believe about knowing the boundaries of where childhood begins and ends. Such taken-for-granted perceptions of time indicate a sophisticated understanding of cultural meaning and cultural categories in relation to age (Baars & Visser, 2007; Hockey & James, 2003; King, 2012; Warner Schaie, 2007). In their talk my interviewees consistently referenced an ambiguity of cultural meaning: that is, if children do ride bicycles, and adults do not, yet clearly some adults actually do ride, then how can these adults be categorized? I suggest that for my correspondents there exists a liminal state that does not fit in the category of child or the category of adult.

6.3.1 Liminal States

Liminal states occur where there is no clear delineation of boundaries between one state and another. Liminal states also occur when boundaries between categories are shifting. In my study, a liminal state exists when a person uses a bicycle at a time of their life when cycling is considered culturally inappropriate for their age, and therefore outside of the appropriate social time.

My correspondent Henry alludes to this complex relationship of social change, and tacit and explicit knowledge when, after I asked if he remembered any adult riders when he was a child, he states:

> I don't remember… seeing… there's only one crazy, crazy, middle-aged guy in town that rode a bike… He was, word was, he dropped like 30 hits of acid on a

> dare, so he was never right after that. My sister knew him, you know he was like an ace student, athlete, got really heavily into drugs, and he really did some serious brain damage. And he rode his bike everywhere.
>
> (Interview #20062014TM)

Henry's comments associate adult bicycle riding with a person with severe mental health issues, which allude to Henry-as-child's beliefs about adults who ride bicycles. Henry also refers to two other adult cyclists that he recalls from his youth: the owner of the local bike store and a friend of his mother. He recalls that his mother's friend:

> Would ride the Raleigh 20, and I 'member she had polio so she walked with canes, like the arm canes, so she had a lot of trouble walking but she'd ride the Raleigh around because it, it was therapeutic for her. Mostly it was because, she had really bad balance problems when she was walking, but she'd ride the bike you know, maybe four or five blocks from our house to theirs and she'd ride the bike over to our house, and she'd have to carry canes on the bike cause as soon as she got off the bike she couldn't walk.
>
> (Interview #20062014TM)

Another correspondent, Samuel, talks of the types of cycling with which he had experience as a youth. These types included sport cycling or bicycle racing, both of which were considered acceptable forms of bicycle use for adults, whereas commuter cycling was not. He says:

> Like if I was 18, and biking to high school that would be really weird and wrong. I remember one buddy saying, like, if you see an adult on a bicycle and, you know, we could separate by that time between what a road cyclist was and a mountain cyclist, but if you saw someone riding like a commuter bicycle, you, you're just like DUI, and especially in the country like, why else, would you do that? [ride a bicycle]
>
> (Interview #24062014WM)

Samuel's comments reflect many category associations between types of cycling: for instance, the "weird and wrong"–ness of riding to high school; the stigma of adults riding (unless they were mountain biking); the acknowledgement that the only reason you would ride a bicycle was because of a DUI (Driving Under the Influence) infraction that removed your ability to drive; and finally, the differentiation between types of cyclists in a hierarchy, with commuter cyclists at the bottom. Here, Samuel has indicated both acceptable and non-acceptable adult bicycle riding categories.

In another example, Sydney recalls the influence of his aunt as a cyclist, saying:

> I had mentors in cycling, I guess though, you know, like my Aunty Helen lived in Calder with us and she cycled to her government job near the Legislature, everyday, you know, for 20 years or something like that, so that was a ***little*** bit uncommon to make that kind of commute to work, I think. …. but then I remember my aunt being a bit of a *weirdo*, I think, commuting all the way from Calder to so… the norm would have been different… maybe it was **good** for kids they had all their

> liberation, maybe freedom at one point but it was weird for adults to ride the distances that I do all the time now (Interview 20052014TM).

His comment here is one of the few that specifically recognize and reflect upon the past in relation to the present – that is, his words indicate that, whilst his aunt would have been considered a 'weirdo' to ride then, he rides similar distances today, all the time.

In my interview data, this judgment of "weird" in relation to cycling is repeated several times. Designating "weirdness," "extreme," "crazy," or "hippie" to the activity of cycling when undertaken by an adult, suggests that the bicycle-riding adult is someone who is doing or performing a childish thing. These terms suggests a space in the lifecycle where, because of being in a naïve, impoverished or irresponsible state, the adult - despite being an adult - nevertheless rides a bicycle and so is not quite fully an adult. With Henry's latter examples, he separates some adult riders from the liminal category of 'child-like adult as indicated by their bicycle-riding' because he associates some adult-level prestige with owning the bike store. Further his acknowledgement that his mother's friend had other severe health issues offered a kind of 'permission' for her to use bicycles while also inhabiting the social category of adulthood.

In all of the cases outlined above, adults are recollected by my correspondents as partaking of a child's activity, cycling. It is not a childish activity only if they race (or used to do so), ride a specific type of bicycle, own a store, or have a disability. In these very specific circumstances, these bicycle-riding adults are allowed to contravene the particular social time in which people usually relinquish their bicycles. However, for my correspondents today, there exists a larger liminal state, where the age-based boundaries of childhood and adulthood are

more permeable than they were in previous years. Therefore, a category of age ('childhood') that once had fairly definite and recognizable boundaries has been obscured by other changes in the social perception of time (e.g. the introduction of "tweens"). This age-related boundary confusion would seem to allow for the initial conundrum I encountered when conducting my interviews: that of bicycle riding adults telling me in their narratives that adults do not ride bicycles.

6.3.2 Adults and Bicycles Today

My main criterion for selecting correspondents to participate in this research was that they had to be a frequent cyclist, presently riding more than three times a week. My correspondents either chose to continue to ride bicycles as adults, despite their awareness of value judgments concerning bicycle-riding adults (e.g. 'weird'). Alternatively, some of my correspondents stopped riding a bicycle at some point, in part because of those judgments, but came back to bicycling as an adult. I attribute the continuation or resumption of bicycle riding as an adult to social change in the perception of what is considered age-appropriate behaviour, which link to changes in the culturally constituted meaning of bicycling.

Today, the connotations of adulthood allow the incorporation of activities that were previously stigmatized when performed by adults in the aforementioned 'standard model' of adulthood (King, 2012). To use Sacks' terminology, the MCD of age-bounded behaviour has been modified as members of the category grow older themselves, and reach the age previously associated with being an 'adult'. My correspondents rode as children. Presently, they all ride as adults. Therefore, the predictable trajectory for my correspondents was that, as they grew up they too would discard bicycles to maintain their status as a non-cycling adult. However, that is not

what happened. Some may have avoided cycling for a while only to eventually return, while others changed their reasons for riding, or the locations to which they rode; yet others never quit cycling.

Additionally, the culturally constituted meaning of bicycles has altered from what Turpin defined as primarily a toy for children to an acceptable adult-oriented object. This change, although beyond the topic of this thesis, can nonetheless be charted through increasingly positive marketing and advertising from the 1970s onward in North America and Europe (see for example, Cox's (2005) paper "Conflicting Agendas in Selling Cycling" where he outlines to whom bicycles and cycling is being sold and his (2007) paper "Activism and Market Innovation: Changing Patterns in the Cycle Trade", where he discusses changes in the bicycle industry and its advertising).

In summary, in this Chapter I have analyzed my interviews through using the Membership Category Devices of the adult/child relational pair. I have also explored the values associated with these age-graded categories with regard to cycling, in order to better understand how my correspondents locate themselves within specific social groups that are associated with bicycle use. Finally, I also consider how the meaningfulness of these categories may have changed over time. The changes over time are attributed to a modified standard model of accepted social behaviour for adults.

7 Chapter Seven - Conclusions

This thesis set out to consider the bicycle as object in the field of material culture studies and to make connections between the creation of personal and social identities in relation to a person's attachment to their bicycle. It addresses a gap that exists in the literature found in several disciplines (material culture studies and discourse analysis, for example). This gap is the lack of consideration given to the bicycle itself as a focus of material culture research. Instead the bicycle is used as examples of how people experience loss in extensions of self (as in Belk, 1988, 1991); or how people (particularly men) progress to increasingly mechanized machines, (as in Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981); or even how people experience riding bicycles to showcase using windsurfers (as in Dant, 1998).

As discussed in my review of material culture literature, the bicycle is generally regarded as a 'fait accompli' (i.e. an invisible object), whereas other fields that do consider the bicycle (e.g. sports or fitness studies) tend to focus on the fitness or competitive aspects of the bicycle, but leave out the "thingness" of it. With this gap in scholarship exposed, I focused my research on attending to the nature of the bicycle as a particular type of object that fosters certain kinds of attachment. To achieve my goal of exploring how peoples' identities are associated with their bicycles, I interviewed 28 frequent cyclists about their experiences of their bicycles. As a result, I uncloaked the bicycle from its peculiar obscurity in material cultural studies (particularly those material culture approaches that consider peoples' psychological and social attachments to goods) and offered the academy another lens through which to view the bicycle.

My research indicates several ways in which the bicycle acts as a special object in the lives of my correspondents. I will summarize five of these here, as my main concluding points:

- First, the bicycle provides unique embodied experiential moments as a result of its use. The complexity and continuity of interaction with the bicycle creates a hybrid "experiential object" that engages the person with it in very tangible ways. Because a bicycle is one of the few things from childhood that is still potentially used in much the same way in adulthood, the experiential aspect of the user's attachment to their bicycle over time is a powerful generator of memory and emotion. The amalgam of memory, emotion, and continued embodied use factors into the way in which an individual becomes attached to their bicycle and uses it to help create their personal and social identities.

- Second, the bicycle is a vehicle for socio-psychological, symbolic information that is transmitted to the bicycle rider and others through use. Because people know other people and also know themselves through a mutual understanding of what objects represent (i.e. the concept of 'culturally constituted meaning'), the bicycle as object helps to create and maintain aspects of a person's identity over time. Using Dittmar's (1992) Five Propositions (as discussed in Chapter 4) and Guevarra and Howell's (2014) concepts of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Chapter 5) this study indicates that bicycles as objects provide individuals with the ability to gain self understanding, while developing personal relationships with other people, and also with wider communities (places). The bicycle as object can reinforce and show a person's connection to, and disconnection from, others. Additionally, I found that as a person rides his or her bicycle, he or she engages with memories of autonomy, competence, and relatedness that immediately feedback into feelings of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the

present. This feedback loop is a potential generator of strong attachment bonds, which further confirms the triad of identity, attachment, and object.

- Third, the amalgam of the experiential object, plus the identity and attachment creation/maintenance process, means that when a person rides a bicycle (which is a complex object that engages all senses), the person reinforces of his or her sense of self, personal relations and his or her community. The bicycle can help to ensure that an individual develops strong bonds to places, which become psychologically appropriated as particularly meaningful.

- Fourth, the adult/child relational pair examined in my study (that of non-bicycle-riding adults and bicycle-riding children) indicates that, although age-grading exists in the narratives of my correspondents, in this age-grading there is a disparity that would be interesting to examine further. The perception of my correspondents (i.e. that adults do not ride bicycles) is held despite evidence to the contrary. My correspondents recollect adults partaking in cycling; however it was only acceptable as adult behavior if these adults rode under certain conditions (e.g.: if the adult raced, rode a specific type of bicycle, was impoverished, etc.). In such specific circumstances, the bicycle-riding adult does not contravene the particular social time in which people otherwise relinquish their bicycles. Delineating the issue of age-grading in relationship to cycling indicates the effectiveness of Membership Categorization Analysis as a way to explore certain culturally constituted meanings as these meanings appear in peoples' talk.

- Fifth and finally, although my correspondents recalled that the category 'adult' was not usually associated with riding a bicycle, each person I interviewed rides presently, creating an anomalous situation where they do not fit within the same membership categories that they have referenced in their talk. It seems therefore that, in the present day, the boundaries of childhood and adulthood are more permeable than they were when my correspondents were young. The culturally constituted meaning of bicycles has altered from what Turpin defined as primarily a toy for children in the past to, today, being an acceptable adult-oriented object for recreation, transportation and leisure. This is in alignment with King's theory of the changing nature of social time. An in-depth discussion of the changing nature of social time is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it would seem that my correspondents' acceptance of bicycling as adults now, may be linked to (among other social changes) the increasingly positive marketing and advertising of bicycles from the 1970s onward in North America and Europe.

In summary, my research has provided an in-depth understanding of why 'frequent cyclists' ride bicycles. Each of the points made above contribute understanding of the importance of the bicycle to the lives of individuals, and so my research is an innovative addition to material culture scholarship concerning the bicycle.

As an extension of this study, further research could be conducted on the attachment that bicycle riders form to other objects, including other bicycles. Another avenue of future research is the consideration of other membership categories that cyclists reference in their interviews, e.g. categories pertaining to other modes of transportation. Additionally a more detailed examination of the extension of self (as described by Schultz Klein and Menzel Baker) would

make an interesting topic for further study. The greater understanding of the bicycle as object provided by my thesis opens up a wealth of further opportunities for research.

Finally, I contribute this idea – the bicycle is a particular type of object that provides embodied memories, experiences and cultural meanings: all tools that can strengthen one's identity, relationships and well-being. The elision between identity and attachment makes the bicycle more than a mode of transportation juxtaposed against automobiles - something to be measured, critiqued, or politicized. This elision makes the bicycle a material object that uniquely resides in and intersects with autonomy, competence, and relatedness. It creates a temporal state whereby the bicycle as object, although perceived in North America as a child's toy, can accompany an individual throughout his or her life and is one of the few objects that transcend the boundaries of social time and social action associated with most objects. As my correspondent Jerry says in words that indicate his connection to his bicycle as well as to his past and to his present, he is; "in a very sort of modern way, asking my friends to come out and bike."

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Appendices

Appendix A - Interview Schedule

Early object-oriented experiences

1. Tell me about your first bicycle. (Questions to answers that may be included in this first question. How old were you when you got it? How did you get it? Did you save up for it? Was it given to you as a gift?)

2. What did it feel like to ride it?

3. How did you learn to ride?

4. Was there anything that you particularly liked about your first bike? Disliked?

5. Did you personalize your bicycle? Do you name your bikes? What made you choose those names?

6. What other things did you have in your life as a child? Where there any objects to which you were especially attached? How does your first bike compare to that?

Early people

7. Do you remember any bikes that other people (friends, family, or others) had around the time you got your first bike?

8. What were those bikes like?

9. Did you ever go cycling with friends or family members?

10. Do you remember what people (friends, family, or others) said about bicycles around the time you got your first bike?

11. What were the attitudes of people (friends, family, or others) towards bicycles? Were they supportive or…

Early habits of riding

12. Do you remember where you used to go on it? How did you get around before you got your bike? What did you do with your bike when you went to those places?

13. Where there any breaks in riding bicycles? Have you ridden consistently since you learned to ride? Why or why not? (What caused the breaks, if there were any?)

14. What brought you back to riding after the break?

Other object-oriented & riding experiences

15. Tell me about any other bikes you have had, other than the one (or ones) you have now.

16. How did those bikes come into your life?

17. Describe for me, if you remember, what it was like to ride those bikes?

18. Where would you ride?

19. Do you remember any bikes that any other people (friends, or family or others) had?

20. What were they like? Why were they memorable?

Current object-oriented & riding experiences

21. How often do you ride now?

22. Tell me about the bike you have now – if you have more than one, do you have a favourite?

23. What is important to you now? The utility or the fun? Or is there a difference?

24. What is it like to ride?

25. Where do you ride?

26. Do you ride all year?

27. Do you carry any thing with you when you ride?

28. Do you repair your own bicycle? If not, where do you get it fixed? Why there? How would you describe the shop and the people that work there?

29. What kind of bike parts do you have on hand? Where do you keep them? (on your bike, at home, workshop?)

30. How do you get rid of bikes that you no longer want? What about parts you no longer want?

31. Have you ever lost a bike or bike parts or had a bike or bike parts stolen? Tell me about it. What do you remember about your lost/stolen bike or bike parts?

32. Do you customize your bike? Are there common things you put on all your bicycles (beyond functional and legal requirements)? Why do you use those things?

33. How does cycling differ for you from other kinds of transportation – like driving or bus riding?

34. When you last rode your bike, what was it for?

35. Do you personalize your bicycle?

36. Do you have any applications on your smartphone that tracks your bicycles or your cycling activity?

37. Do you purchase things to use or wear when using your bicycle? Clothes, shoes, helmets, anything else? (prompt: What kind of clothes do you wear when you are cycling?)

38. Does it change based on destination or type of riding (mtb, store, school)?

39. How do you feel about wearing bicycle specific clothes? Would you say you have a biking persona and do you hide it or exhibit it? does it matter?

40. What do you think about cycling specific clothes in general?

41. Do you encounter people who do not ride bicycles? In what type of situations and what comes up in conversation?

42. What other things or objects are important to you in your life now? Tell me about them.

Current people

43. Who else rides in your life? Family? Spouse? Friends?

44. Are there people who are important to you who feel differently about bicycles than you do?

45. Was there someone who encouraged you or nurtured you when you started to ride?

46. Have you encouraged or mentored anyone with respect to riding?

47. Are you interested in or do you follow any famous cyclists or cycle sports or events? Why or why not?

48. How do people (friends, family, or others) talk about bicycles now compared to what you mentioned them saying earlier..

49. Do you think the attitudes of people (friends, family, or others, society in general) have changed towards bicycles? In what way?

50. Do you think the way people talk about bicycles in society has changed over time? Why or why not?

Other questions

51. How do you think you would feel if you were not going to ever be able to ride a bicycle again?

52. Do you have any especially memorable experiences that we haven't covered in relation to cycling or having a bike? Or is there a bicycle that you find interesting but are unlikely to have access to (tall bikes, unicycles etc.)

Appendix B – Ethics & Reflexivity

In order to undertake this research I applied for Ethics approval in February 2014 and it was granted in May 2014, after which I arranged interviews, starting the weekend of May 21, 2014. The main elements of my ethics application involved confidentiality, informed consent, reflexivity, and participation criteria for the Ethics application. Reflexivity is important to my work and comprises a conscious contemplation of my own beliefs, actions, and values as a researcher, juxtaposed against the beliefs, actions, and values of the participants I study. Recognition of reflexivity affects how data is interpreted (Nazaruk, 2011). Although I am a frequent cyclist myself, I was during the interviews, and continue to be, dedicated to the careful consideration of the participants' views rather than an explication of my own.

To ensure that contemplation of my beliefs and values did not overshadow those of my participants, throughout the stages of data collection, analysis, and writing I sought to maintain neutrality or relative disinterest in relation to my participants' responses. In this manner, even though I am a member of the category I examine (i.e. frequent cyclist), as much as possible I attempt to understand my personal beliefs and biases in order to maintain as neutral an interaction as possible during the interviews (although this is based on my recognition that the manner in which interviews are conducted requires co-constructed by interviewer and interviewee).

Co-authored interviews as described above, lend themselves to reflexivity and vice versa. These elements of interview data and reflexivity blend to enhance the idiosyncratic, highly personal, emotional, and embodied experiences discussed in each interview (Oak, 2013). I knew each of my interview participants to a greater or lesser degree. Many of my participants knew

each other. As I transcribed the interviews, I noted my participation in them, which overtly created a more conversational, intimate style of interview.

Information Sheet

The Bicycle and Your Experiences of It.

Research Project

Information Sheet

You are being asked by Karly Coleman to provide information about your experiences with bicycles. This query is part of the requirements for the completion of a Masters Degree in Human Ecology, from the Human Ecology department. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Karly wishes to examine people's experiences of bicycles over time. She has found that whilst bicycles are important to people, their popularity is unexplored. She believes this research will help us understand what people think about cycling.

What is the project about:
This project is based in Material Culture, which is the study of people's relations and connections to objects, based on elements of production, mediation and consumption. Karly intends to examine people's emotional attachment (consumption and mediation) to bicycles, to determine how attachment to bicycles is formed and retained over time.

What is involved?
- The method for collecting information from you will be relatively informal semi-structured conversational interviews to ask about your bicycle(s) that you have owned or currently own, and about experiences you have had in relation to these bicycles.
- To keep accurate details of what Karly hopes to find out, she will ask your permission to audio-record interviews. These interviews will be audio-recorded and then transcribed so that Karly can keep accurate records of what is said in the interview.

What are the benefits and risks to participating?
- There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research; however, participation does provide you with the opportunity to explore and discuss your past and present use of bicycles. Some participants may find the opportunity to discuss this topic rewarding.
- There are no risks associated with participating in this research.

What if you volunteer and then decide you don't want to continue?

- Your participation is completely voluntary, meaning that you are free to withdraw from the interview at any time while it is taking place. You do not have to provide any reason for withdrawal, just tell Karly you no longer wish to participate. There will be no disadvantage to you if you withdraw from the interview or from her study.
- After the interview is finished it will be transcribed. You may still withdraw from the study when the transcriptions are being done. Your transcript and recording will be destroyed if you withdraw.
- Once the transcriptions are being analyzed and written about in Karly's Masters thesis or in publications or presentations associated with her Masters, you will not be able to withdraw from this study (because your interview is a source of data for the thesis); however, if you wish your interview to not be used in future publications after the Masters is complete, please inform Karly and she will remove your interview from her data.,

What will be done to ensure your privacy?

- All information collected from you will be treated as confidential.
- Pseudonyms will be used in all transcripts so your name will not be associated with your words.
- There will be no links between your response and your identity.
- Karly and her advisor will be the only people who will have access to any identifying information about you.
- The raw data of digital voice recordings will be transcribed. The digital recordings will be numbered and coded in such a way that the files will not be associated with your name. The digital recordings and the transcriptions will be kept on a password protected computer. Printed copies of the transcriptions will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the student or supervisor.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Arlene Oak, Associate Professor, at 780-5686 or aoak@ualberta.ca

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant, or how this study is being conducted, you may contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615. This office has no affiliation with the study investigators.