

Skydiving and the Metaphorical Edge.

Dr James Hardie-Bick
Lecturer in Sociology
School of Sociology and Criminology
Keele University
Tel: 01782 587038
Email: j.p.hardie-bick@appsoc.keele.ac.uk

Abstract – Much of the academic work on risk in the social sciences maintains that risk anxiety has become a pervasive feature of everyday life. Yet despite the focus on risk and risk aversion there is increasing evidence that high-risk activities, such as skydiving and other extreme sports, are becoming increasingly popular. This paper presents findings from ethnographic research carried out at a parachute centre in the United Kingdom and is primarily concerned with participants’ perceptions of fear and risk. By reflecting on a number of dangerous situations that both novice and experienced informants had personally experienced or directly observed whilst at the drop zone, this paper will investigate the meanings that are imputed to risk and how these meanings relate to skydiving related activities.

Introduction

William James (1897) argued that it is only by taking risks from one hour to the next that it is possible to experience life. However, in recent decades this positive view of risk has been replaced by the notion that any risk is by definition a problem (Furedi 1999), requiring avoidance where possible or control where unavoidable (Fox 1999). Although risk awareness has become central to the way in which human agents and modern institutions organise the social world, the way risk has been conceptualised in the social sciences may have over emphasised the relevance that risk has in people’s everyday lives (Elliott 2002). The theoretical considerations given to the current focus on risk avoidance fails to account for the growing numbers of individuals who actively seek experiences that could result in personal injury and the ultimate sanction of death (Vanreusel and Renson 1983). This paper presents findings from recent research conducted at a parachute centre in the United Kingdom and is primarily concerned with investigating

participants' perceptions of fear and risk. By describing the practical contingencies that can and do occur this paper considers the extent to which skydivers recognise their activities to be particularly dangerous or extreme. This paper will not attempt to draw a distinction between rational and irrational assessments of risk; instead, adopting a similar approach to Tulloch and Lupton (2003), I will be concerned with investigating the meanings that are imputed to risk and how these meanings relate to skydiving related activities.

The Concept of Risk

Much of the academic work on risk maintains that risk anxiety has become a pervasive feature of everyday life and that individuals are increasingly attacked by feelings of anxiety, vulnerability and uncertainty in relation to the risks to which they are exposed (Beck 1998; Giddens 1990). Risk has become a term that is used to describe negative or undesirable consequences and it is precisely this new position that explains why previously commonplace activities are now treated as a safety issue. As Furedi states 'hardly a week now passes' without the introduction of 'some new risk to the individual being reported, and another safety measure proposed' (1999: 1). Experts are constantly drawing attention to what people should be fearful of and suggesting various strategies to ensure that people are as safe as possible. There are concerns over whether mobile phones can cause brain tumours, whether people can trust their own General Practitioners and environmental pressure groups are continuously warning of the potential disastrous effects of global warming and the depletion of the ozone layer.

More general health issues also comprise an area dominated by debates about risks. Health promoters continuously warn against smoking, drinking alcohol, eating fatty foods and encourage taking regular exercise. People are urged by health promotion authorities to evaluate their risk of succumbing to disease and to change their lifestyle accordingly. Children's safety is also at the centre of risk anxiety (see Scott, Jackson and Backett-Milburn 1998) and an increasing number of schools have now adopted a 'comprehensive range of cameras, swipe cards and other security measures' that has unnecessarily resulted in schools looking 'more like minimum security prisons' than educational institutions (Furedi 1999: 2). Concerns relating to the exposure of risk range from banning conkers and snow ball fights in schools to 'a wave of near hysteria' (Jackson and Scott 1999: 88) concerning paedophiles and the resulting vigilante behaviour. Anxiety about food, health, crime, and the environment, together with an endless variety of new risks have now become associated with nearly every mundane human experience. As Beck states, even the threat of terrorism should only be considered as the latest risk 'in the evolution of global risk society' (Beck 2004: 144).

Voluntary Risk-Taking

An examination of the general field of risk analysis concentrates on how people are seen to be increasingly worried about risks and highly critical of the institutions that produce them. In many of these accounts human actors are portrayed as vulnerable and anxious, desperate to acquire the latest knowledge to avoid becoming another victim. Yet despite the focus on risk and risk aversion in the social sciences there is increasing evidence that high-risk activities, such as those involved in extreme sports, are becoming more popular

(Palmer 2002; Stranger 1999). Since high-risk activities have the potential to increase our understanding of how individuals view and understand risk (Ferrell et al. 2002), voluntary risk-taking deserves far ‘more serious attention than it has hitherto been accorded’ (Boyne 2003: 118). Indeed, for societies that are imagined to be obsessed by risk, it seems surprising that ‘we find an almost total absence of rigorous inquiry into such activities’ (Boyne 2003: 78).

Taking into account the strong emphasis placed on avoiding and detecting risk it is hardly surprising that those who actively seek out *unnecessary* risks on a *voluntary* basis are generally viewed as careless and irresponsible individuals who are ‘dangerously out of control’ (Ferrell 2005: 77). Although an individual will usually take effective measures to reduce ‘the eventfulness – the fatefulness – of his [sic] moments’ and manage their personal time so that ‘courses of action can be managed reliably and goals progressively and predictably realised’ (Goffman 1969: 128), there are many activities ‘that are consequential, problematic and undertaken for their own sake’ (Goffman 1969: 136). Goffman prefers the term ‘action’ to describe activities where individuals take a practical gamble. For Goffman, ‘serious action is a serious ride’ (1969: 199) and ‘is to be found wherever the individual knowingly takes consequential chances perceived as avoidable’ (1969: 145). According to Goffman, there is a romantic division of the world:

On the one side are the safe and silent places, the home, the well regulated role in business, industry and the professions; on the other are all those activities that

generate expression, requiring the individual to lay himself on the line and place himself in jeopardy during the passing moment (1969: 204-205).

Although most individuals do take effective measures to reduce the 'eventfulness' of their moments, there are others who are clearly prepared to wager their 'future estate on what transpires in the seconds to come' (Goffman 1969: 137).

Such a practical gamble becomes a routine and mundane aspect of everyday life for individuals whose occupation exposes them to chemicals, equipment, practices and environments which are dangerous to their physical well being (Hunt 1995). Criminals, sex workers, miners, fire fighters, high steel ironworkers, body guards, social workers, police officers, soldiers, war correspondents and prison officers are all typical examples of occupations where problematic consequences can be faced on an everyday basis. The important point here is that these individuals cannot voluntarily decide to withdraw from chance taking without serious consequences for their occupational status. Nevertheless there are also many fateful activities where:

The individual is under no obligation to continue to pursue once he [sic] has started to do so. No extraneous factors compel him to face his fate in the first place; no extraneous ends provide expedient reasons for his continued participation. His activity is defined as an end itself, sought out, embraced, and utterly his own. His record during performance can be claimed as the reason for participation, hence an

unqualified direct expression of his true makeup and a just basis for reputation (Goffman 1969: 136).

There are a variety of ‘extreme’, ‘adrenalin’ or ‘high-risk’ sports (Celsi 1992; Shoham, Rose and Kahle 2000) that are purposely ‘sought out’ and ‘embraced’ for the experience they provide. Activities that seek to test the limits of human endurance include a diversity of pursuits such as skydiving, white water rafting, B.A.S.E. jumping (an acronym for Buildings, Antennae, Spans and Earth), swimming with sharks, para-gliding and rock and ice climbing. As Le Breton has pointed out, part of the satisfaction of engaging in such demanding activities comes from resisting ‘the temptation to give up’ (2000: 1) and provides a powerful sense of personal mastery and achievement. Indeed, many participants claim that the risk of death is an exciting challenge to be managed and controlled through their own individual capabilities (Lyng 1990).

Methods

This empirical investigation explored the routine activities that take place at a parachute centre in the United Kingdom. Three main methods were used during the research. Participant and non-participant observation was conducted for a period of fifteen months (March 2003 – June 2004). This strategy allowed the researcher the opportunity to be a direct witness to relevant events, appreciate the skills and routines skydivers need to master and to generally build rapport with skydivers at the parachute centre. In addition, fourteen in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted varying in length from one to three hours. The participants ranged from 20 to 53 years of age and five of the

interviewees were women. This sample reflects the high proportion of male skydivers at the drop zone. Data from my fieldwork was therefore supported by a series of interviews and the data from both my fieldwork and interviews were each used to ‘illuminate the other’ (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 131). This strategy complimented my active membership role (Alder and Alder 1987) and enabled me to ‘tease out participants background expectancies and systematically question their routinised understandings’ (Monaghan 2002: 697). The interviewees were specifically chosen to represent the differing stages of progression within a skydiving career and the recruitment of interviewees was facilitated by gaining the trust of informants whilst conducting fieldwork.

Finally, documentary sources such as the British Parachuting Association reports, manufacturer’s brochures, skydiving magazines, skydiving related websites, training films and skydiving videos and DVDs. These secondary sources provided ‘checks’ (Neuman 1994) on the data provided by interviewees together with my own observations whilst conducting field work.

Feeling the Fear

Suddenly I feel dizzy and extremely nervous. My stomach is convulsing. I know that I am next. I can’t seem to look out of the window as the plane makes a sharp right turn. I’m feeling faint. I look out of the plane and contemplate climbing out on to the step. Such contemplation only serves to increase my symptoms. I feel I have turned very pale. The instructor looks at me and genuinely asks if I am

OK. I tell him I am, although I know that my response is unconvincing. ‘How long have I got to prepare myself’ I ask. ‘About twenty seconds’ he shouts in my ear. All I can do is stare at the horizon, and try not to look down. I concentrate on my breathing, slowly inhaling through my nose and out through my mouth. I tell myself to be confident, and that it will be no problem, but I’m not sure my body will move when I need it to. I try to distract myself by looking at the aircraft controls in front of me. I can feel the instructor checking my parachute, pulling and pushing me back and forth. The instructor leans over me to talk to the pilot before shouting ‘CUT’. He then shouts in my ear ‘I want you to arch your back for Britain OK’. I nod. Then I hear the instructor shout those dreaded words – ‘ON THE STEP’¹

(Personal field notes)

I experienced high levels of fear during my first jump. As I informed the instructor, jumping out of a plane was the most terrifying act that I have ever voluntarily experienced. Thankfully I experienced what I can only describe as a mild form of nervous anticipation whilst climbing to altitude. I remember feeling confident about the safety procedures and enjoyed the views from the aircraft. Nevertheless, as soon as the first student jumped I felt my heart rate dramatically increase.² When I was instructed to ‘get into position’ I did not know if I was going to faint or if my body would move. I feared that I might suffer from fear paralysis (Fenz 1974) and be forced to come back down in the plane (see Haward, 1969). During my research I learned that this happened

more than I imagined. One instructor commented on how he 'felt sorry' for one student who had refused to jump three times over three consecutive weekends. Even though this student was determined to overcome his fear of jumping, after his third failed attempt he decided to call it a day. Despite high levels of fear, the majority of novice students do manage to make a successful first jump. Nevertheless, some participants have no intention of repeating the experience. I talked to one student who I trained with after he jumped. I asked him how it went: 'It was alright, but I wouldn't do it again. It's so dangerous, I didn't feel in control at all.' He clearly didn't want to talk about it and left the centre straight away.

Although Tim also felt 'extremely nervous' before his first jump, he had a positive experience and assured me that he would 'definitely like to do another jump'. He described his experience of climbing to altitude:

Being in the plane was rather like being in an old beaten up transit van, it really was, there was dodgy bits of carpet on the floor, you know, and it was uncomfortable. Probably in some respects I was hoping that we would never reach the height at which we jump. I was up like a pole cat you know, on my knees, and the pilot, who you know, was just a young scruffy guy who doesn't look like a pilot at all, it's like he's driving a tractor you know, he turned around and he gave me this kind of friendly wink and smile, and you know, I can read these kind of things, they know that you're in a situation, and you probably look

very fearful, you know you're beaming delirious and your eyes are like pins or whatever, you know, they can probably register that you're shitting yourself.

Emily also experienced high levels of fear on her first jump:

I got really nervous just before the first person was about to jump. The instructor shouted cut and I can remember my stomach just going weeeeerah, I just hated it, my stomach just went bluurgh. I mean the fear is big at that point. And then you hear the instructor say go, and then there's this big flapping of their chute opening up. When it was my turn, and the instructor said cut, my fear levels went even higher, much higher, I mean they just shoot right up and that's probably the worst point and that's probably when all my levels of fear go as high as they can. When I hear the word cut, that's my ultimate fear which I have never reached other than there.

All respondents experienced a considerable amount of fear on their first few jumps. Some interviewees claimed that their second jump was even worse as they were 'more aware of what they were doing'. Experienced skydivers also talked about their first few jumps being 'horrendous'. Karl admitted to praying for the weather to dramatically change so that he didn't have to jump. Anna declared that she was extremely fearful on her first jump and remembered thinking that she 'could be nothing' and Adam stated that on his first few jumps he 'crapped' himself 'all the way to altitude'.

It is hardly surprising that novice parachutists experience high levels of fear on their first few jumps. During the RAPS training course the instructors focused on various factors that can realistically go wrong.³ Students learned how to deal successfully with a malfunctioned canopy, what to do in an aircraft emergency and how to avoid hazards that may be encountered below canopies such as electricity pylons, fences, motorways, houses, factories and even planes and micro-lights. Before my first jump I remember being particularly concerned about falling off the step and being suspended underneath the plane. During the training the instructors had provided dramatic descriptions of a 'static line hang up'⁴ and their descriptions had left a vivid image in my mind. The prospect of injury and death has not been 'stripped away' from this activity (see Palmer 2002). Emily was extremely aware of the various factors that could go wrong when a student jumps from the plane:

When you actually put it all together I think a lot of things can actually go wrong. Like your lines might not untangle and when you actually realise all the things that can go wrong it's actually pretty amazing that things go right because you could end up with a line that doesn't really hold your canopy right and so on and your static line might get tangled up before you even go out or it hasn't been packed properly, or even more basic things, you might not even have the harness on properly maybe something gets caught up in what you're wearing, your arm or leg gets caught up in the lines or you hit the plane as you jump, I don't know if that is possible but it certainly seems like it should be possible. And where

you land, all kinds of things can go wrong there, gusts of wind. I mean the plane might not even work, and it might crash [Laughs] so all sorts of things can actually go wrong.

Although the instructors always emphasised that accidents were extremely rare, accidents do occur.⁵ During my field work a student was taken to hospital with a broken leg after flaring his parachute too early and I saw another student after her first jump with blood over her face and jump suit. I learned that she had hit her face on the step when exiting the aircraft. The most serious accident occurred to a student on her first jump who was fortunate to survive.⁶ Although I did not injure myself during my fieldwork, on my second jump I narrowly avoided landing on a barbwire fence, and on my sixth jump I nearly landed on the roof of the reception. I also developed colourful bruises after being hit by the static line on two occasions. Steve described his first ‘near miss’:

I think it was on my third jump that I nearly crashed into a factory [laughs]. I was coming into land, and I’d just got the whole trying to control where I was landing completely wrong. So I ended up heading over the cabin where the reception is on the left hand side towards the car park and realised I was going to land on a car, so I sort of hooked it left and then found myself facing the factory with a blue roof...And I thought shit I’m going to hit it. I landed about a metre short of it. And I just thought damn I’m going to break my leg because there were a couple of big rocks in the grass in front of it, and I was more concerned about hitting them. But actually I just landed short. The canopy went over the

roof of the factory, but I was completely uninjured [laughs]. I think at the time I didn't realise quite how dangerous that was.

Another dangerous incident occurred to Karl's wife (Becky) on her first jump. Karl admitted that he had been trying to convince her to 'give it a go' for several months prior to jumping. After several unsuccessful attempts, Karl decided to book her a place on the RAPS course as a surprise birthday present. Becky did not return to make a second jump. Karl described her landing:

It was really bad. She was about 2ft from the floor and the wind took her up and brought her back over on to her head and shoulder and she damaged the muscles and everything in her back so badly the whole of her back was just a swollen lump. Not a little lump in her back, you couldn't see her spine or her ribs or anything and it really put her out for about 2 months. It wasn't even that windy. It was a freak gust that lifted her up and brought her back down on to her head. It lifted her about 10ft into the air. It was nasty to watch as well.

Like many interviewees, Andrew believed that one of the main factors for students not returning to the centre after their first few jumps concerns fear:

As for the people that do a few jumps and then leave it, probably the major factor is fear. Particularly after the first few jumps you start to know more and more and it starts to seep in about how many things could potentially go wrong.

People do get very scared. But at that point you do know enough to know a lot about what can go wrong, but you don't know enough about the training and the equipment to know why a lot of those things aren't going to happen.

Interviewees explained that fear was something that they initially had to overcome. Some of the experienced skydivers were not ashamed to reminisce about the early stages of their skydiving career when they also refused to jump. Steve was pleased to describe his own experience of when he turned 'white as a sheet' and 'froze' on one of his student jumps:

On my fourth jump I froze, I just told the jump master that I'm not going. There was no way I was jumping out of that plane. I had an experienced jumper behind me. He just climbed over me and jumped out which scared me even more.

After his fourth jump Karl stopped jumping for three months. Nevertheless, he was determined not to let fear 'get the better' of him:

I just thought about it, you know, just getting on the step and I thought why on earth do I want to do that. I became scared of jumping basically, really nervous and it took me a few months to overcome the fear.

Skydivers talked about a gradual transition that occurs during the early stages of their career. This transition involves viewing fear as a positive rather than a negative aspect of the sport. As Adam stated, 'it wouldn't be positive if I was still as scared as on my first

jump, if I had to do that every jump I think I'd probably have quit by now'. Experienced respondents claimed that although fear was an important safeguard against complacency, it was also vitally important to 'embrace' and 'live' with the fear. Steve provided an example from Chuck Palahniuk's novel *Fight Club*:

You know where he pours the acid on his hands and says 'embrace the fear'.

I: Yeah.

There's something about embracing the fear as well, you know, living through the fear. I know that I am going to jump. As a student I bottled out of a couple of jumps because I didn't feel that I was capable of what I had to do. But now that I know that I can do what I have to do I know that I'm never going to not jump, so fear in a sense doesn't matter. You just have to live with it. I mean if you didn't have any fear at all, then what's the point [laughs]. You might as well go cycling instead.

Other studies (Hargreaves 1997; Stranger 1999) have also demonstrated that voluntary risk-taking is often pursued for the sake of facing and conquering fear and displaying courage. The challenge is to prove to themselves and to others that they have successfully controlled their fear and feelings of susceptibility and anxiety. The participant's first challenge is to see how they will respond to the 'emotional intensity' produced by the 'dialectic of fear and pleasure' (Le Breton 2000: 4). Nevertheless, there is a transition

that takes place that involves transforming fear into pleasure. Whereas novice parachutists constantly referred to the craziness of jumping and concentrated on the thrill, buzz and adrenalin, the vocabularies of motive provided by experienced skydivers no longer relied on such stereotypic responses. For the novice parachutist the initial challenge involved simply jumping out of a plane. But the challenge for skydivers becomes incorporated into the various disciplines of the sport. The vocabularies of motive for experienced skydivers focused on the different disciplines and the endless array of new challenges that the sport is seen to provide. Experienced skydivers also talked about the challenge of entering different competitions or obtaining different qualifications such as the individual canopy, canopy formation and freeflying qualifications or of becoming an accelerated freefall or static line instructor. The accounts of experienced skydivers demonstrate a desire to develop and master technical skills in relation to the sport (also see Branningan and McDougall 1983; Celsi et al. 1993). The shifting vocabularies of motive reveals how experienced interviewees' justificatory accounts are subculturally acquired (Monaghan 2002). The changing accounts that claim to mediate action should therefore be seen to be incorporated in the process of becoming a skydiver.

Perceptions of Risk

Skydiving is an activity where the 'stakes are high' (Lipscombe 1999) and individual decisions can have serious consequences. As Steve explained 'if you do cock it up, basically, you're in big shit whereas if you make a mistake playing rugby or whatever it's

not such a big deal'. Although the general public may not have enough technical knowledge to have an informed opinion, such incidents do confirm why skydiving should be understood as an extreme sport. Every time a skydiver jumps they have to deal with 'extreme heights' and 'extremely hostile conditions' and sometimes it can and does 'bite hard'. According to Giddens 'hazardous sports' such as skydiving should be understood as 'institutionalised risk environments' that provide individuals with the choice 'to risk scarce resources, including their lives' (1991:124). Nevertheless, Giddens provides little sense of the details and complexities of these risks and the various ways in which they are managed and controlled by participants. Although all my respondents insisted that they were not 'doing something crazy' they did not try to deny that there are serious dangers that everyone must be aware of. Consider the following quotes:

Everyone thinks skydivers are dangerous and crazy. But now that I have done it I see it quite differently. There are dangers, but I'm not doing something crazy. It's extreme, but it's not extremely dangerous.

(Karl)

Most people wouldn't consider getting out of a perfectly good aeroplane and they would definitely see it as being far too dangerous. There's obviously a danger element involved, and I suppose I would say it's an extreme sport because you know there's no sort of denying that but I think there are more dangerous things to do. There's no reason why you shouldn't live every time and come away uninjured.

(Stewart)

As these quotes suggest, skydivers do not deny that there are risks involved with skydiving. Although Andrew acknowledges that the risks cannot be completely eliminated, he also claimed that the amount of research that has gone into producing the equipment has significantly reduced the risks – ‘Anyone who knows the statistics knows that it’s really unlikely that you’re going to end up dead.’ Informants believed skydiving to be a calculated risk:

I suppose I think of it as a calculated risk. You know you get all the training, you know the training works, you see all of the equipment, you have faith and confidence in the equipment you’ve got. To me dangerous is, you know, I used to do a lot of climbing. I’ll use that as an example. Now I always climbed with ropes because then although it is high risk, there is a safety net there. I also know lads that don’t climb with any ropes at all. Now I would consider that as dangerous, if you fall, there’s no safety net and you are basically dead. You know the heights that I’m talking about you know, 100’s of feet, 1000’s of feet. Now that’s something I consider to be crazy and dangerous.

Here Karl provides an interesting example by comparing skydiving to climbing without ropes. For Karl, climbing without ropes is ‘dangerous’ and ‘crazy’ because unlike skydiving there is no safety net. If one of his friends made a mistake, in all probability they would be killed. Skydivers always jump with two (main and reserve) canopies. If they have a malfunction, they can activate the reserve. Also, most skydivers jump with an

automatic activation device (AAD) which will automatically open the reserve canopy at a pre-determined height.⁷ This is in case any unforeseen events that may occur such as being knocked unconscious during freefall. Obviously the AAD might not work and the reserve canopy may have a malfunction, and that is precisely why skydiving is considered to be a calculated risk. Like Karl, Stewart also had faith in his equipment and in his own ability. Stewart described his malfunction, which was the most dangerous malfunction out of my informants:

I was still going at a hundred and ten miles, a hundred and twenty miles an hour towards the ground, most people usually have something above their head [their main canopy], it might be spinning but it's still slowing down the rate of descent. Mine was like one of the fastest ones to deal with but it was then and there, that was it sort of thing...it's really nice to know that in that situation you can cope.

Thankfully Stewart remained calm in the extreme circumstances produced by a high speed malfunction. His individual capacities were challenged and control was maintained. Stewart explained that when you have a problem at one hundred and twenty miles an hour, when 'things don't go quite according to plan', you have to do 'what everyone is trained to do in such a situation. Diagnose the problem and deal with it.'

For skydivers a malfunctioned main parachute 'can be sorted' and is therefore viewed as a controllable risk. Informants maintained that they were far more concerned about the

risks of something going wrong with the plane than having a malfunction. Some skydivers literally ‘hated’ being in the plane below one thousand feet, because if anything went wrong with the plane they were too low to jump out. This was a risk that was beyond their control. The following quote emphasises the importance of control:

You’re in control, it’s like you’ve got that control, with a roller coaster ride you do nothing, ninety-nine point nine, nine, nine percent of the time you just sit there and enjoy it, there’s nothing you can do to stop it, if it goes wrong there’s nothing you can do, it’s basically just there, you are there for the ride whereas parachuting you’re not there for the ride, you’re the pilot, if that makes sense.

(Stewart)

As this quote suggests, skydivers dislike voluntarily placing themselves in life threatening situations that they have no control over. Whereas rollercoaster enthusiasts constantly place their lives in the hopefully competent hands of others (Holyfield 1999), one of the main attractions of skydiving is that the skydiver is literally the pilot as opposed to a trusting passenger who has no control over life threatening situations. Skydivers are not interested in ‘putting their life in somebody else’s hands’. Even at an early stage of their skydiving career, novice students are keen to learn how to pack their own parachutes, rather than being forced to rely on the competence of people they hardly know. As Celsi et al. (1993) also recognised, skydivers seek controllable risk contexts where their individual capabilities can be challenged and tested.

Dicing with Death?

According to Lyng and Snow, skydiving offers the opportunity for individuals to get as close to the edge as possible:

Jumping under the influence of drugs...jumping into landing areas that are geographically restricted, deploying one's canopy at a low altitude are all examples of how the individual jumper has the opportunity to move 'a little close to the "edge"' (1986: 169).

All of the above examples were referred to as 'irresponsible risks' by my informants. Adam informed me that the majority of skydivers do not deliberately try to increase the risks and he knew no-one who took drugs to enhance their experience. Informants maintained that they 'want to get to the ground safely' so they can 'go up and do it again'. As Julia stated:

I want to push myself to my ability limits. Push and challenge myself...but to the actual danger limits they're, they're already there and I don't need to push them any further, I know they're there. I don't want to increase them.

According to Emily, skydivers are 'definitely not dicing too much with death' because 'they're never doing something which is beyond their level...I mean in some ways they could make it more extreme, but they're not doing that. They're still playing it safe'. I asked Karl why he wasn't tempted to move 'a little closer to the edge':

Well frankly I want to live, I don't, you know, I don't want to die, I don't want to be injured you know and I think that's it, you call skydiving an extreme sport and you have to ask yourself what do you mean by extreme? I call extreme pushing things to the limit, some people say extreme sport is something that's on the edge dangerous-wise you know I don't necessarily see that it is dangerous, I don't see that it is reckless you know.

Taking drugs was certainly viewed as reckless and irresponsible behaviour. The majority of my interviewees were surprised that I even had to ask. I explained that previous research had suggested that some skydivers enjoyed the challenge of jumping 'under the influence of intoxicating substances' (Lyng 1998: 225) and that 'It was not uncommon for a group of skydivers to "blow a joint"' (Lyng 1998: 228) together as they climbed to altitude. Rather than providing a 'seductive way to "stay in the action"' (Lyng 1998: 230), I was informed that such behaviour would ensure no 'action' at all. I asked Paul if he had known anyone to use drugs to enhance the skydiving experience:

I've not heard of anything like that, no I've never heard anyone do that at all. I mean drugs and alcohol are a big no-no in skydiving you know and if I thought that anyone was taking drugs or drinking before skydiving then they certainly wouldn't be on my plane because they're a danger to me as well as themselves and you know we keep an eye on that.

According to Stewart, skydiving was far more 'extreme back in like early 80's and 70's because there were so few people so they, they did everything they could.' Stewart maintained that skydiving has now become far more orientated around issues of safety. Although he knew people at the drop zone to 'smoke weed', jumping under the influence of legal or illegal drugs was not tolerated:

It's basically considered like if you see anyone or if you know that anyone smoked or had been drinking or anything it's like anyone, even if they like weed smoking themselves, they will say get off the lift [plane]. They don't want to see you hurting anyone or whatever.

Not only would the skydiver place herself in danger, but she would also create unnecessary risks for everyone else on the 'lift'. All experienced informants emphasised the importance of safety and attempted to reduce rather than increase the dangers.

Policing the Cowboys

If you're careful about what you do, have a well maintained kit, there's no real reason for it to be dangerous at all, in fact it can be extremely safe. It's when you start taking unnecessary risks, or not looking after your kit or doing things that are beyond your capabilities that it can be extremely dangerous. People get dead when they push the limits.

(Andrew)

Although some respondents commented on how certain individuals ‘are just too cautious’ by jumping with a canopy that was too large and not ‘pushing themselves enough’ their main criticism was reserved for the minority whose behaviour was, in their perception, inexcusable. Some interviewees admitted to knowing a couple of ‘cowboys’ who they believed to voluntarily take ‘unnecessary risks’. Although such unnecessary risks did not involve taking mind altering chemical substances, cutting other skydivers up ‘in the air’, flying and landing in front of other skydivers, ‘bombing’ formations are all extremely dangerous practices. Informants were extremely critical of the minority of skydivers whose actions subjected others to unnecessary danger:

There a couple of people here who I would not jump with, and if they asked me I would have to say no thanks. It’s the way they are in the air. If things go wrong things go wrong but I don’t want someone putting me into a position where things didn’t have to go wrong. I don’t want anyone who can’t control their flight through the air and come crashing into me. I know it can happen, and sometimes it is unavoidable, but there are a couple of people here who have got no real control while they’re up there and that scares me. There was a situation a couple of weeks ago where someone decided that it would be funny to fly right in front of somebody else, and I don’t want anybody to do that to me. It can be really dangerous and it’s that kind of irresponsibility that I’m not to keen on. You know, Keith [Chief Central Instructor] was away and I don’t think it was reported. If Keith was there he would be grounded.

(Karl)

Clearly there are both formal and informal mechanisms at work here. If the CCI directly observed any dangerous behaviour such as bombing formations or intentionally flying in front of another skydiver they would be grounded and would no longer be permitted to jump at the centre. Such behaviour was not tolerated, as the CCI informed me ‘we don’t want any unnecessary accidents here’. But if the CCI failed to notice ‘irresponsible behaviour’, actions were generally not reported. In such situations more informal methods were employed. Skydivers would casually inform the accused individual that they were not prepared to jump with them. Other informants also admitted that they have refused to jump with certain individuals. They were described as ‘arrogant’ and ‘bloody irresponsible’ for ‘jumping with a canopy which is far too small’, for ‘doing stupid things in the air’ and generally ‘being an idiot’. Julia claimed that skydivers ‘didn’t have a problem’ with being open and honest by saying ‘sorry mate, I don’t think you’re safe to jump with. I think you cut people up under canopy and I don’t trust you’. Stewart was convinced that such techniques had positive effects on the accused behaviour:

There’s one guy down there, now, he’s got a bit of a better reputation for himself because people said, no, we’re not jumping with you, and a lot of people said that to him and now he’s starting to think right, well I’m not going to be able to jump at this rate, I’m going to have to start switching on. And he’s sort of, he’s switched on a bit more so he can carry on [jumping].

Hunt’s research on deep sea divers also found that those individuals who took unnecessary risks received negative sanctions and often became subject to ridicule.

Divers who violated the cultural constructions of normal risk were labelled as ‘assholes’ and ‘accidents waiting to happen’ (Hunt 1995: 452). In a similar way to Hunt’s divers, skydivers who were seen as irresponsible were also subjected to rumour and gossip. Both formal and informal mechanisms served to restrict such activities at the drop zone and highlights how perceptions of ‘acceptable’ and ‘irresponsible’ risks served to maintain symbolic boundaries within the skydiving community.

Discussion

High risk sports are not for the faint hearted (Palmer 2002) and skydiving provides an experience that goes beyond the usual everyday activities of the recreationist (Lipscombe 1999). For those outside the skydiving community the consequences of skydiving may seem obvious: jumping out of an aeroplane at roughly thirteen thousand feet and being overwhelmed by the experience of freefalling towards the earth at a speed of 120 miles an hour clearly involves the possibility of serious injury and even death. Skydivers are aware of the negative stereotypical assumptions held by those outside the skydiving community. Experienced skydivers commented on how some of their friends thought they had a death wish and how the media constantly portrays skydivers as reckless individuals who purposely seek out unnecessary risks. Skydivers believed that the stereotypical views suggesting that skydivers are a ‘bunch of narcissistic adrenalin addicts’ or that skydivers’ had to be ‘mad dare devils and completely nuts’ were totally inaccurate. As one of the instructors at the centre informed me:

The stereotype is that we're just crazy, on the edge, that there's no rationale to our behaviour. Apparently we're all adrenalin junkies who are just a bit weird. Some of the really negative stereotypes say that skydivers are people who are not happy with their lives, that we're bored, you know, that we're not satisfied with normal things and so on. And I don't think that's true at all.

(Paul)

Whilst individuals who seem to purposefully threaten their own personal safety are often 'regarded as the height of irresponsibility' (Reith 2005: 230) and generally thought to be involved in either 'excessive' or 'abnormal' behaviour, skydivers have a different view of their own management of risk. Rather than risk being a problem to be avoided, skydivers confidently embraced risk and believed it to be a positive rather than a negative aspect of the sport. Without taking risks, life would be intolerably restricted, unable to offer enough challenges for the individual to overcome. As Andrew stated:

I think it [skydiving] is a way of pushing yourself and seeing what you are capable of whereas taking up something like golf really wouldn't be that much of a challenge. I think it's important to have challenges. Unless you have seen how far you can go, how far you can push yourself, where your own limits are, from a personal point of view I don't think you've explored your life that well.

(Andrew)

Analysing my interview data I became increasingly aware how skydivers viewed the risk of death to be an exciting challenge to be managed and controlled through their own individual capacities. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that the majority of skydivers in this research did not intentionally increase the risks of jumping. Skydivers believed that the risks of skydiving allowed individuals the chance to challenge themselves and to explore and negotiate their own personal boundaries, but they did not attempt to increase the risks that were already there. Skydivers could have made their sport more extreme. For example, skydivers could jump without an AAD, bomb formations, fly in front of other skydivers, take legal and/or illegal drugs whilst jumping, refuse to carry out safety checks, jump with canopies that were too small, insist on jumping in bad weather conditions, deliberately open their canopy at a low altitude or jump without a reserve parachute. Far from what I had expected before entering the field, the majority of skydivers actively sought to reduce, manage and control the risks associated with their sport. Despite their level of skills and ability, experienced skydivers still recognised that there were some circumstances beyond their control. Only those described as ‘cowboys’ took what informants believed to be ‘unnecessary risks’ and both formal and informal sanctions served to discourage ‘irresponsible’ and ‘extremely stupid’ acts.

As I have demonstrated, notions of control are vitally important for skydivers. All believed they were capable of managing the context in which they perform, with most leaving what they believed to be a comfortable margin between ‘controllable’ and ‘uncontrollable’ risks. Uncontrollable risks were acknowledged to be beyond their own

personal capabilities. Not only do such findings shed some ‘critical light on the strong present-day focus on risk avoidance’ (Ferrell, Milovanovic and Lyng, 2002: 180), but they also highlight how risk epistemologies are bound to specific social cultural contexts in which they are generated (Lupton 1999b). Rather than being viewed as an objective or static phenomena that can be determined by observation, this research has demonstrated how risks are routinely constructed. Individuals outside the skydiving community may perceive skydiving to be a selfish and irresponsible pursuit, whilst the moral career of skydivers clearly involves the normalisation of such risks and redefines them as acceptable and even pleasurable. Another turning point in the skydiver’s moral career involves recognising the difference between what they consider to be responsible and irresponsible risks. The latter are subjected to both formal and informal sanctions and highlight how risk is a constantly modified and collectively negotiated construct. As Douglas (1992) notes, rather than being viewed as the products of individual knowledge, perceptions of risk are shared and serve to maintain symbolic boundaries within a particular community.

Conclusion

Becoming a skydiver offers the individual far more than the passive, fabricated and pre-packaged sameness of the amusement park (Ferrell 2001; Holyfield, Jonas and Zajicek 2005). Skydiving occurs outside the realm of ordinary experience and provides the context for a ‘radical one-to-one contest’ through which participants can continuously ‘test their strength of character, their courage and their personal resources’ (Le Breton 2000: 1). So against the dominant discourses on risk that portray it as negative there also

exists a counter discourse in which risk-taking is represented far more positively (Lupton 1999). This counter discourse represents risk-taking as a desirable and pleasurable technique for enhancing the overall experience that life has to offer. The following quotes are particularly revealing in this respect:

To me risk is part of living, if there was no risk in it, you can't wrap yourself up in cotton wool and sit indoors or you wouldn't be living, you've got to go out and take risks and stuff.

(Julia)

I think that we are way too risk averse. You know the way that children seem to be unable to walk or cycle to school now, whereas I used to cycle to school. So yeah, I think it's a terrible thing. People live very sheltered lives. It seems to me to be almost inhuman. We're not designed to be like that. We're designed to be risk takers, it's something that we should do, and to try to eliminate that is terrible I think. And I think that maybe the reaction to that which we're seeing is that people are seeking out their risks elsewhere because they're being eliminated from them in their everyday lives. One reason why people could be taking up sports such as skydiving is to experience those risks.

(Steve)

So perhaps the imagined obsession with risks does not penetrate so deeply after all (Boyne 2003). As this paper has demonstrated, rather than the notion of risk being a problem (Furedi 1999), 'acceptable' risks were understood to be a positive feature of the

activity and provided skydivers with a heightened sense of personal agency. As novice participants gradually become competent skydivers, they learn and develop skills that are increasingly absent in the 'hyper-banalized' (Haywood 2002) and standardised routines of everyday life (O'Malley and Mugford 1994). As Goffman (1969) recognised, 'serious action' can be seen as compensating individuals for the absence of direct personal control and autonomy they experience in their everyday lives. Indeed, the experiences that have been pushed to the fringes in modern times are precisely the experiences that skydivers value and purposely bring back into their lives (see Simmel 1997). If, as Smith has stated, a defining feature of the risk society may imply that voluntary risk-taking is 'happening around us in our everyday lives to a much greater extent than we realise' (2005: 199), then future sociological research should also cast a critical eye on activities not previously associated with the metaphorical edge. Indeed, the increasing popularity of such behaviours in a diversity of social contexts may 'mirror the climate of late-modernity itself' (Reith 2005: 241). Future research will need to determine whether the skills and abilities required for participating in a high-risk sport such as skydiving are more in demand than one could have previously imagined.

Notes

¹ All static line students jumped from a Cessna 182. As soon as the student parachutist exits the aircraft the static line opens the parachute container and pulls the bag and lines out into the airflow. Before jumping, static line students have to climb out on to a short step whilst holding on to the wing strut. Novice informants were particularly anxious about this procedure. As one student said 'I can't believe we've got to do *that*, I thought I could just shut my eyes and jump.'

² Research has demonstrated that parachuting significantly increases physiological activity. For research relating to physiological changes during a parachute jump see Anfilogoff, Hale, Nattness, Hammond and Carter, 1987.

³ The Ram Air Progression System Static Line course is a progression system that takes the complete novice through various progressive stages until they become a licensed skydiver. The first few jumps involve a static line to ensure that their parachute automatically opens. The static line is securely attached

to a 'strongpoint' in the aircraft and is checked by both the student and instructor before take off. Undoubtedly the most popular course among student parachutists, it was also the chosen route for most of my interviewees. The other route available to the complete novice is the Accelerated Free Fall course. Both the accelerated free fall and the ram air progression system allow the student to reach BPA category 8 and therefore become a licensed skydiver. The AFF course is considered to be the 'fast track' approach to becoming a skydiver. It is literally an *accelerated* teaching method which relies on a high instructor student ratio. The only disadvantage with the AFF concerns the cost. Consequently, most parachute students enrolled on the RAPS course.

⁴ Although the least common type of parachuting emergency, a static-line hang-up results in a student hanging underneath the aircraft after exit. This can happen if the student has a fouled static line which has passed through some of the student's equipment. If this situation does occur, students are taught to place their hands on their head. This indicates to the instructor that they are conscious and aware of this particular emergency procedure. The instructor will show a knife to the student before cutting the static line. As soon as the static line is cut, the student must go through the emergency drills to operate the reserve parachute.

⁵ Research conducted in the United Kingdom claims that the likelihood of death is 1 in 55,000 jumps (Davison 1990), although a Danish study suggests 3 in 55,000 (Ellitsgaard 1987). The most recent statistics from the British Parachute Association cover a period of fourteen years (1990-2004). Out of a total of 3,042,114 jumps, there were 37 fatalities. 12 fatalities occurred on student jumps and 5 students were killed on their first jump. Novice injury rates of 0.43 – 1.1% are much higher than those of experienced jumpers which range from 0.05 – 0.13%. A staggering 84-87% of injuries occur on landing (Amamilo et al. 1987; Davison 1990; Ellitsgaard, 1987; Straiton et al. 1986). As one of my informants suggested, once the canopy has successfully opened the most dangerous part of the skydive has just begun.

⁶ According to her instructor she had actually created the malfunction herself by exiting the aircraft incorrectly. Not only did she create a malfunction, but she also 'failed to act correctly' by not activating the reserve parachute. The instructor informed me that the student simply 'froze in the air' and maintained that the student 'had a real panic attack'. In the words of her instructor: 'Had she cut away and employed her reserve she would have been fine but she didn't, she didn't do anything to save her life. When she hit the ground we assumed that she was dead'.

⁷ The AAD is a mechanical or electronic back up system that compares ambient air pressure with the skydivers descent rate. The AAD will initiate the reserve deployment at a pre set height and therefore serves as a 'back up' rather than a 'substitute for a good manual reserve drill' (Donaldson 2000: 53). Even during the initial RAPS training course, students are informed that the AAD should not be relied upon. Like any other piece of machinery it can go wrong and should therefore be viewed as a life saving back up device.

References

Alder, P.A. and Alder, P. (1987) *Membership Roles in Field Research*. London: Sage.

Amamilo, S. C., Samuel, A. W., Hesketh, K. T. and Mounihan, F. J. (1987) 'A Prospective Study of Parachute Injuries in Civilians', *The Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery* 69-B: 17-19.

Anfilogoff, R., Hale, P.J., Nattress, M., Hammond, V.A. and Carter, J.C. (1987) 'Physiological Response to Parachute Jumping', *British Medical Journal* 295, 415.

Beck, U. (1998) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage.

Beck, U. (2004) 'Ulrich Beck: The Cosmopolitan Turn', in Gane, N. *The Future of Social Theory*. London: Continuum.

Boyne, R. (2003) *Risk*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Brannigan, A. and McDougall, A. A (1983) 'Peril and Pleasure in the Maintenance of a High Risk Sport: A Study of Hang-Gliding', *Journal of Sport Behaviour* 6: 37-51.

Celsi, R. L. (1992) 'Transcendent Benefits of High-Risk Sports', *Advances in Consumer Research* 19: 636-641.

Celsi, R. L., Rose, R. L., and Leigh, T.W. (1993) 'An Exploration of High-Risk Leisure Consumption Through Skydiving', *Journal of Consumer Research* 20: 1-23.

Davison, D.J. (1990) 'A Review of Parachute Injuries', *Injury* 21 (5): 314-316.

Donaldson, C. (2000) *Skydive: Sport Parachuting Explained*. Trowbridge: The Crowood Press.

Douglas, M. (1992) *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory*. London: Routledge.

Elliott, A. (2002) 'Beck's Sociology of Risk: A Critical Assessment', *Sociology* 36 (2): 293-315.

Ellitsgaard, N. (1987) 'Parachute Injuries: A Study of 110,000 Sports Jumps', *British Journal of Sports Medicine*. 21 (1): 13-17.

Fenz, W. D. (1974) 'Arousal and Performance of Novice Parachutists: To Multiply Sources of Conflict and Stress', *Studia Psychologica* 16: 133-144.

Ferrell, J. (2001) *Tearing Down The Streets: Adventures In Urban Anarchy*. New York: Palgrave.

Ferrell, J. (2005) 'The Only Possible Adventure: Edgework and Anarchy', in Lyng, S. (ed.) *Edgework: The Sociology of Risk-Taking*. New York: Routledge.

Ferrell, J., Milovanovis, D. and Lyng, S. (2002) 'Edgework, Media Practices, and the Elongation of Meaning', *Theoretical Criminology* 5 (2): 177-201.

Fox, N. (1999) 'Postmodern Reflections on "Risk", "Hazards" and Life Choices', in D. Lupton. (ed.) *Risk and Social Cultural Theory: New Directions and Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Furedi, F. (1999) *Culture of Fear: Risk-Taking and the Morality of Low Expectation*. London: Cassell.

Giddens, A. (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.

Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity*. Cambridge: Polity.

Goffman, E. (1969) *Where the Action is*. London: Penguin.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1995) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Routledge.

Hargreaves, J. (1997) 'Women's Boxing and Related Activities: Introducing Images and Meanings', *Body and Society* 3: 33-50.

Haward, L. R. C. (1969) 'Personality of Parachutists: Neuroticism, Extroversion and Stress Tolerance', *Flight Safety* 2: 121-15.

Hayward, K. (2002) 'The Vilification and Pleasures of Youthful Transgression', in Muncie, J., Hughes, G. and McLaughlin, E. (eds.) *Youth Justice: Critical Readings*. London: Sage Publications.

Holyfield, L. (1999) 'Manufacturing Adventure: The Buying and Selling of Emotions', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 28 (1): 3-32.

Holyfield, L., Jonas, L. and Zajicek, A. (2005) 'Adventure Without Risk Is Like Disneyland', in Lyng, S. (ed.) *Edgework: The Sociology of Risk-Taking*. New York: Routledge.

Hunt, J. C. (1995) 'Divers Accounts of Normal Risk', *Symbolic Interaction* 18 (4): 439-62.

Jackson, S. and Scott, S. (1999) 'Risk Anxiety and the Social Construction of Childhood', in Lupton, D. (ed.) *Risk and Sociocultural Theory: New Directions and Perspectives*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.

James, W. (1897) *The Will to Believe*. London : Longmans, Green & Co.

Le Breton, D. (2000) 'Playing Symbolically with Death in Extreme Sports', *Body and Society* 6 (1): 1-11.

Lipscombe, N. (1998) 'Trainee Skydiving: The Value of Research to Safety', *The ACHPER Health Lifestyles Journal* 45 (2): 8-13.

Lipscombe, N. (1999) 'The Relevance of the Peak Experience to Continued Skydiving Participation: A Qualitative Approach to Assessing Motivations', *Leisure Studies*. 18: 267-288.

Lupton, D. (1999a) *Risk*. London: Routledge.

Lupton, D. (1999b) 'Introduction: Risk and Sociocultural Theory', in Lupton, D. (ed.) *Risk and Social Cultural Theory: New Directions and Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lyng, S.H. (1990) 'Edgework: A Social Psychological Analysis of Voluntary Risk-Taking', *American Journal of Sociology* 95 (4): 851-86.

Lyng, S.H. (1998) 'Dangerous Methods: Risk-Taking and the Research Process', in Ferrell, J. and Hamm, M. S. (eds.) *Ethnography at the Edge: Crime, Deviance and Field Research*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Lyng, S.H. and Snow, D.A. (1986) 'Vocabularies of Motive and High-Risk Behaviour: The Case of Skydiving', *Advances in Group Processes* 3: 157-79.

Monaghan, L.F. (2002) 'Vocabularies of Motive for Illicit Steroid Use among Bodybuilders', *Social Science and Medicine* 55: 695-708.

Neuman, W. (1994) *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Boston MA: Allyn and Bacon.

O'Malley, P. and Mugford, S. (1994) 'Crime, Excitement and Modernity', in Barak, G. (ed.) *Varieties of Criminology*. Westport CN: Praeger.

Palmer, C. (2002) "'Shit Happens": The Selling of Risk in Extreme Sport', *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 13 (3): 323-336.

Reith, G. (2005) 'On the Edge: Drugs and the Consumption of Risk in Late Modernity', in Lyng, S. (ed.) *Edgework: The Sociology of Risk-Taking*. New York: Routledge.

Scott, S., Jackson, S. and Backett-Milburn, K. (1998) 'Swings and Roundabouts: Risk Anxiety and the Everyday Worlds of Children', *Sociology* 32 (4): 689-705.

Shoham, A., Rose, G. M. and Kahle, L. R. (2000) 'Practitioners of Risky Sports: A Quantitative Examination', *Journal of Business Research* 47: 237-251.

Simmel, G. (1997 [1950]) 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', in Frisby, D. and Featherstone, M. (eds.) *Simmel on Culture*. London: Sage.

Smith C. W. (2005) 'Financial Edgework: Trading in Market Currents', in Lyng, S. (ed.) *Edgework: The Sociology of Risk-Taking*. New York: Routledge.

Straiton, N. and Sterland, J. (1986) 'Sponsored Parachute Jumps – Can they cause Prolonged Pain?', *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 20 (2): 60-61.

Stranger, M. (1999) 'The Aesthetics of Risk: A Study of Surfing', *International Review of the Sociology of Sport* 34: 265-276.

Tulloch, J. and Lupton, D. (2003) *Risk and Everyday Life*. London: Sage.

Vanreusel, B. and Renson, R. (1982) 'The Social Stigma of High Risk Sport Subcultures', in Dunleavy, A., Miracle, A., and Rees, R. (eds.) *Studies in the Sociology of Sport*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press.