AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Master of Sport Exercise and Health

12846 words, excluding references.

Exploring Youth Road Cycling Racing in Auckland: Motivations, Challenges, and Support

A Dissertation Submitted to Auckland University of Technology in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Sport Exercise and Health

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October 2023

Abstract

This study explores the motivational experiences of male youth road racing cyclists in Auckland, New Zealand. The study used a qualitative descriptive research design and investigated the motivations, challenges, and support systems in the youth road cycling racing environment. Focus group interviews and thematic analysis identified critical social and environmental factors influencing engagement in the sport. Four main themes emerged from this study: the search for recognition, intrinsic joy, the role of community support, and the balance of life demands. These themes align with established motivational theories. The study highlighted the crucial roles of coaches, mentors, and others in the community in fostering motivation and skill development. The study's implications extend to designing targeted interventions and evidence-based guidelines to create an optimal motivational climate for young male cyclists. The study amplifies youth voices and contributes to a more inclusive and supportive environment in youth sports, specifically road cycling racing. These insights are a foundation for further strategies to support youth engagement and performance in the sport.

Keywords:

Youth Road Cycling, Motivation, Male Athletes, Qualitative Research, Thematic Analysis

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I Johnathon Gee hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor uses artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Motivation in Sport

Motivation shapes individual engagement, performance and persistence in various domains, including sports and physical activities. Each action in sports, like a stride or swing, comes from this drive. Athletes' motivation affects both immediate events, such as a single race, and long-term events, like entire competitive seasons. Menting et al. (2019) studied the link between motivation and pacing strategy in athletic performance, particularly among young athletes and found that motivation significantly influences pacing in young athletes. They describe pacing as a planned distribution of energy throughout a specific exercise. Pacing involves deciding when and how much energy to use, and poor management of it can lead to injuries, overtraining, or athletes leaving the sport.

The research on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation has expanded over the past two decades, especially within the self-determination theory (SDT) framework (Ryan & Deci, 2020). SDT has changed how people see motivation. Instead of only being affected by external factors, SDT focuses on the natural tendency to learn and grow. In schools, SDT looks at how motivation affects positive results across different grades and cultures. Meeting student autonomy, competence, and connection needs can improve motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

While motivation is essential, other factors like talent, training, and the environment influence athletic success. Coaches need to be aware of the ‘constraints-led approach’ (CLA) to skill learning (Davids et al., 2008). This method says behaviours like pacing come from the balance of task, individual, and environment. With this knowledge, coaches can design training that mirrors real competitions, helping athletes perform at their best. By understanding an athlete's motivation, coaches can also guide them in pacing, ensuring they use their energy effectively.

In short, many factors affect sports participation, but motivation is central. Knowing how it relates to pacing and other aspects can guide athletes to be their best at their sport and reach their full potential.

1.2 Motivation in the Sport of Cycling

As an endurance sport, cycling thrives on the fusion of physical and psychological elements. While physical aspects like maximum oxygen uptake (VO2 max) are undeniably crucial (McLaughlin, 2010), recent research, including a study by Röthlin et al. (2023), underscores the pivotal role of motivation in cycling.

Within the realm of cycling, athletes have increasingly recognised that performance hinges on physical prowess and psychological factors. Röthlin et al. (2023) delved into this

complex relationship by studying young Swiss national team cyclists, revealing the profound interplay between physiological and psychological aspects in shaping endurance performance.

Among the physiological factors, VO2 max, representing an athlete's maximal oxygen consumption capacity, emerges as a central determinant of endurance performance. It is a foundational element for energy production during prolonged exercise and consistently wields substantial influence (McLaughlin, 2010). Röthlin et al. (2023) confirmed a direct correlation between higher VO2max values and improved endurance performance among young cyclists.

Going beyond physiology, Röthlin et al. (2023) explored various psychological factors alongside VO2max. The study encompassed aspects such as using mental techniques, self-compassion (Neff, 2003), mental toughness, achievement motivation, and action versus state orientation. The comprehensive research by Röthlin et al. (2023). paints a detailed picture of how psychological attributes contribute to cycling performance.

Notably, achievement motivation, particularly perseverance, emerges as a potent factor in enhancing endurance performance. Cyclists with heightened perseverance demonstrated an enhanced ability to endure the perceived effort during their rides, resulting in superior performance (Röthlin et al., 2023).

Mental techniques, such as self-talk, imagery, goal-setting, and arousal control, outlined by (Vealey, 2007), serve as practical tools that cyclists use to boost motivation during gruelling competitions. These techniques have proven effective in enhancing cyclists' endurance and mental resilience by reducing perceived effort and extending time to exhaustion during high-intensity cycling exercises (Blanchfield et al., 2014; Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2018), ultimately contributing to improved performance during competitions.

Self-compassion, as emphasised by Neff (2003), aids athletes in managing setbacks and sustaining motivation (Ferguson et al., 2015; Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2018). Mental toughness fosters resilience and coping abilities (Gucciardi, 2017; Gucciardi & Gordon, 2009). Action-oriented athletes, capable of refocusing quickly after failure, typically outperform state-oriented athletes in stressful situations (Kröhler & Berti, 2019).

In conclusion, cycling success hinges on physiological factors, such as VO2 max and psychological attributes, with perseverance and mental techniques taking centre stage. These elements define an athlete's capacity to endure perceived effort and maintain motivation during challenging cycling. Consequently, recognising the interconnectedness of physical and mental factors for cyclists is crucial for achieving peak performance in this demanding sport (Röthlin et al., 2023).

1.3 Youth Motivation in Sports

Young athletes have specific motivational needs. Raabe et al. (2019) found that coaches, through providing autonomy support, strongly influence the motivational dynamics among young athletes. Similarly, Gould (2019) noted the significant role of peers and parents. A supportive environment, particularly one that fosters autonomy and self-determined motivation, enhances commitment.

However, being sensitive to external factors can be challenging. High levels of pressure can lead to burnout, and young athletes often struggle to balance sports with other commitments (Back et al., 2022; Gomez et al., 2018)

As they move towards elite sports, understanding their motivation is crucial. Elferink-Gemser et al. (2011) showed that many factors impact on an athlete's progress, from training to parental support. Recognising these factors, by coaches, athletes, and parents alike, is vital for both current performance and future growth in sports.

1.4 Research Aims and Objectives

My study aimed to explore what motivates young male road cyclists in Auckland, New Zealand. The research questions were: "What are the main motivational factors that influence the engagement of youth in road cycling racing in Auckland, and how can these factors be utilised to support their continued participation and performance in the sport?". In answering the research questions, my study was aimed at achieving three core objectives:

1 To provide an authentic account of the cyclist's experiences in their real-world context, focusing on their subjective perceptions and interpretations. This objective was realised through a qualitative descriptive approach grounded in a subjectivist epistemology (Amabile et al., 1994; Reeve, 2009).

2 To identify the salient social and environmental factors influencing the cyclist participation in road racing. This objective sought to shed light on the complexities of cyclists' engagement in the sport (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vallerand et al., 1993).

3 To lay the groundwork for the developing future strategies that cater to the needs of these young athletes, with the ultimate goal of enhancing their continued involvement and performance in the sport (Amabile et al., 1994; Reeve, 2009).

Rationale for the Study: Understanding Youth Motivation in Road Cycling

Understanding what motivates young people to engage in sports is crucial for promoting healthy, active lifestyles. This study sought to fill this gap by focusing on the unique motivational factors that drive young male road cyclists. While existing research has mainly looked at adult athletes or the general population, the experiences of young cyclists have often been overlooked. This study focuses on this specific demographic to uncover their distinct motivational dynamics.

My personal background and experiences, which include teaching in male-only secondary schools, coaching male youth road cyclists in the past, and being a male road cycling athlete, have provided me with a deep understanding of the male road cycling context. This familiarity with the male cycling community motivated me to undertake this study, aiming to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of youth engagement and performance in road cycling racing, particularly among males.

Research by Eime et al. (2019) underscores the importance of understanding the decline in sports participation during adolescence. Although their work was specific to Victoria, Australia, their insights provide a valuable perspective for examining the Auckland, New Zealand situation. Recent data from Active New Zealand (2020) reveal a significant decline in youth sports participation, particularly among males. This study concentrates on U16 and U19 athletes, so its findings may help develop strategies to reverse this trend. By exploring the experiences of young male road cyclists, this study aims to identify their motivational challenges and support needs. The goal is to contribute knowledge that can inform strategies for creating an inspiring and motivating environment for these athletes.

In summary, a thorough exploration of motivation in youth male road cycling could provide valuable insights to enhance long-term sporting opportunities and potential. Focusing on this specific demographic can deepen the understanding of the factors influencing their commitment and performance. The findings could serve as a valuable resource for devising strategies that nurture a motivational environment, ultimately supporting young cyclists in Auckland, New Zealand, as they strive to excel in their sport and reach their full potential.

Chapter 2: Understanding Motivation in Context: A Qualitative Exploration

2.1 Introduction

Athletic performance depends on motivation. Understanding the factors that drive and sustain motivation is vital for promoting long-term engagement and development in the context of young male road cycling. This chapter provides a qualitative exploration of motivation in youth male road cycling, focusing on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, achievement goal theory, autonomy support interventions, and the junior-to-senior transition.

To lay the groundwork for this exploration, the significance and relevance of studying motivation in young male road cycling must be established. Previous research (Raabe et al., 2019) has emphasised the impact of motivation on individual participation and performance in sports and physical activities. Specifically, intrinsic motivation, driven by enjoyment and personal fulfilment, has been identified as a critical factor in sustaining engagement and performance (Graef et al., 1983).

The theories to be discussed include the expectancy-value theory, self-determination theory (SDT), organismic integration theory (OIT), achievement goal theory, social cognitive theory (SCT), goal-setting theory, cognitive evaluation theory (CET) along with a heuristic model offering a comprehensive framework to comprehend the complexities and influences within the youth sports system. These theories have been used to explore motivation in various sports and physical activity contexts and offer valuable insights into understanding and nurturing motivation among young cyclists.

2.2 Overview of the Field

The study of motivation within youth male road cycling is critically important due to its influence on individual participation and performance (Raabe et al., 2019). Specifically, intrinsic motivation, kindled by personal enjoyment and fulfilment, is central to ensuring sustained engagement and progression within this demographic.

The literature underscores the dual importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in maintaining sports engagement and performance. Intrinsic motivation arises from an individual's interest and desire to participate in an activity and is linked with prolonged participation and positive outcomes. In contrast, extrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity to obtain external rewards or avoid punishment.

The SDT, AGT, and CET collectively enhance the understanding of motivation in this specific context. Each theory provides unique insights into different facets of motivation, whether it is the interplay of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation (SDT), the role of personal and competitive goals in sports engagement (AGT), or the impact of external rewards and feedback on intrinsic motivation (CET).

Integrating these theories provides a comprehensive view of the motivational landscape within young male road cycling.

2.3 Review of Relevant Theories

This section dissects the theories pertinent to the study on motivation in youth male road cycling, each selected due to their prominence in sports psychology and relevance to this sport.

Expectancy-value theory (EVT) (Atkinson, 1957; Eccles, 1983; Wigfield, 1994) facilitates understanding of how an individual's beliefs about their likelihood of success and the value they attribute to a task shape their motivation to engage and persist. In the context of youth male road cycling, EVT provides insight into how cyclist expectations about their abilities and the value they associate with cycling can influence their motivation and persistence in the sport.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Organismic Integration Theory (OIT) both address intrinsic motivation and the psychological needs driving sports engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT highlights autonomy, competence, and relatedness in supporting intrinsic motivation, while OIT examines various forms of extrinsic motivation and their influence on internalising external factors. Integration of these theories contributes to a nuanced understanding of how autonomy, competence, and relatedness influence young male road cyclist motivation.

Achievement Goal Theory (AGT) (Ames, 1992; Nicholls, 1984) investigates youth athlete goal orientations, differentiating between task-oriented goals, which focus on skill development and mastery, and ego-oriented goals, which concentrate on outperforming others. This theory can enhance understanding of how different goal orientations influence motivation among male youth road cyclists.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) focuses on social and environmental factors influencing motivation and behaviour (Bandura, 1986). Considering the role of observational learning, self-efficacy, and social support, SCT enhances understanding of how social and environmental factors influence young male road cyclist motivation.

Goal-setting theory (GST) (Locke & Latham, 1990) provides additional insights into how specific, challenging, and achievable goals can foster motivation, engagement, and performance among young male road cyclists. The interrelation between GST, SDT, and EVT can offer a more comprehensive understanding of how goal-setting influences motivation in this sport.

Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) (Deci et al., 1975) investigates the impact of external rewards and feedback on intrinsic motivation, emphasising that overreliance on external rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation. It suggests a balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivators for sustained engagement and enjoyment in young male road cycling.

In conclusion, these theories collectively enhance the understanding of young male road cycling motivation. They underscore the significance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, achievement goal orientation, and goal-setting interventions and emphasise the importance of social and environmental factors. Integrating these theories provides a robust theoretical foundation that aids in understanding the complex dynamics of motivation in young male road cycling and guidance for developing effective strategies to promote engagement and performance among young cyclists.

2.3.1 Intrinsic Motivation in Youth Male Road Cycling

Intrinsic motivation, characterised by personal fulfilment, enjoyment, and psychological needs satisfaction, is integral to persistent engagement and performance in sports and physical activities. According to Graef et al. (1983), it represents the internal desire and interest an individual experiences when participating in an activity.

In youth male road cycling, cultivating intrinsic motivation is pivotal for fostering long-term engagement and development. Building upon the foundations of self-determination theory (SDT) and organismic integration theory (OIT), we can understand the importance of intrinsic motivation in the sport.

Graef et al. (1983) extended motivational research to everyday experiences, exploring how often these experiences are described as intrinsically motivating and accessible and the impact of such experiences on overall life satisfaction. Based on their findings, it might be inferred that when young cyclists perceive road cycling as an enjoyable, challenging, and meaningful part of their everyday experiences, they are more likely to sustain their involvement in the sport. This concurs with SDT, which underlines that intrinsic motivation — the drive stemming from genuine interest and enjoyment in an activity — is crucial in fostering autonomous and self-determined behaviour, meaning that individuals engage in the activity willingly and govern their actions with a sense of volition and choice.

In addition, an individual's perceptions and attitude towards an activity predict motivation and behaviour repetition more than do the environmental conditions (Graef et al., 1983). The deduction drawn from these perceptual and attitudinal influences implies that crafting a supportive and motivational environment, which nurtures feelings of competence, connection, and autonomy, may wield substantial influence over the intrinsic motivation of young male cyclists, consequently shaping their sustained engagement in road cycling. OIT

complements the understanding provided by Graef et al. (1983) by highlighting the role of social and environmental factors in internalising and integrating extrinsic motivations, ultimately promoting intrinsic motivation.

To bolster intrinsic motivation among young male cyclists, coaches and educators can employ practical strategies that focus on continuous improvement and personal growth. Such strategies could include prioritising individual progress, offering skill-building exercises, and providing constructive feedback. By aligning these strategies with the principles of SDT and OIT, coaches and educators can create a motivational climate that supports the intrinsic motivation of young cyclists.

Additionally, the motivational climate established by coaches, peers, and parents profoundly influences the intrinsic motivation of youth athletes. A positive and supportive climate that encourages a growth mindset, effort, and improvement over purely outcome-based measures can foster an environment that values learning and motivates young cyclists to take on challenges. Promoting collaboration, teamwork, and peer support will also enhance intrinsic motivation, fostering a sense of belonging within the cycling community.

With a deeper understanding of intrinsic motivation, grounded in the theories of SDT and OIT, a more engaging and sustainable sporting environment for young male road cyclists can be fostered, thereby supporting their long-term development and success in the sport.

2.3.2 Extrinsic Motivation in Youth Male Road Cycling

Extrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity to obtain external rewards or to avoid punishment (Amorose & Weiss, 2008). While internal factors drive intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation can also play a significant role in youth male road cycling by providing external incentives and benefits.

Extrinsic motivation in road cycling may include rewards such as recognition, trophies, medals, or financial incentives. These external rewards can be powerful motivators for young cyclists, especially when they align with their personal goals and aspirations. Coaches and trainers can leverage extrinsic motivation by designing incentive programmes that directly acknowledge and reward achievements and milestones in the sport.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of motivation in youth male road cycling, it is necessary to consider the interplay between extrinsic motivation and the underlying goal orientations of athletes. Achievement goal theory provides deeper insights into how athletes chosen goal orientations can influence their motivation, behaviour, and performance outcomes (Ames, 1984; Dweck, 1986; Nicholls, 1984).

This theory introduces two distinct types of goal orientations - task-oriented, and ego-oriented. Task-oriented goals focus on personal improvement and mastery, promoting greater immersion and persistence in the sport when applied in a cycling context (Harwood & Biddle, 2002). By fostering a task-oriented goal orientation, coaches and educators can help young male cyclists focus on their individual progress, skill development, and continuous improvement.

On the other hand, ego-oriented goals emphasise performance relative to that of others. This orientation can reduce intrinsic motivation due to the stress of outperforming others, leading to increased fear of failure and decreased enjoyment (Harwood & Biddle, 2002). Coaches and educators must be mindful of the potential adverse effects of ego-oriented goals and strive to create a supportive environment emphasising personal growth, mastery, and intrinsic motivation.

Coaches can help young male cyclists perceive extrinsic rewards as meaningful and supportive of their intrinsic motivation by aligning external rewards with athlete's personal goals and values. Additionally, creating a supportive environment that promotes teamwork and community fosters motivation and enhances the road cycling experience for young males.

By combining a nuanced understanding of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation with the strategic application of achievement goal theory, coaches and educators can optimise the cycling experience and outcomes for these athletes, fostering sustained engagement, enjoyment, and overall development.

2.3.3 Autonomy Support Interventions: Implications for Youth Male Road Cycling

The promising effectiveness of autonomy support interventions in enhancing motivation and engagement among young athletes has been documented in various contexts, including physical education (PE) teachers and youth sports coaches (Cheon et al., 2019; Raabe et al., 2019; Reeve, 2009). These interventions establish an environment that nurtures autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are core psychological needs claimed in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

According to the findings of studies examining autonomy support interventions, positive outcomes and improved teacher-student relationships were reported (Cheon et al., 2019; Raabe et al., 2019; Reeve, 2009). When PE teachers and youth sports coaches implemented autonomy-supportive behaviours, they observed increased student motivation and engagement (Raabe et al., 2019). The potential of these interventions to enhance essential psychological need satisfaction and promote self-determined motivation for physical activity among young people is evident (Cheon et al., 2019; Raabe et al., 2019; Reeve, 2009).

These findings suggest that behaviour can be altered, supporting the idea that an autonomy-supportive style can be taught (Cheon et al., 2019; Raabe et al., 2019; Reeve, 2009). In the context of young male road cycling, it is particularly the coaches who play a pivotal role in implementing these changes. Specifically, coaches, when guided by autonomy-supportive intervention programs (Cheon et al., 2019) or through strategies informed by studies on autonomy-supportive environments (Raabe et al., 2019; Reeve, 2009), can provide choices, recognise cyclist perspectives, and minimise controlling behaviours. Consequently, this fosters an environment that supports autonomy and intrinsic motivation among the athletes.

It is, however, crucial to recognise that the effectiveness of autonomy support interventions may depend on individual and contextual factors. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of these interventions on motivation and sustained engagement in physical activity in specific contexts, like young male road cycling, through longitudinal studies (Cheon et al., 2019; Raabe et al., 2019; Reeve, 2009).

The insights provided by autonomy support interventions could benefit coaches, teachers, and educators in the context of youth male road cycling. By adopting autonomy-supportive strategies, they can create an empowering and motivating environment that promotes the development of self-determined motivation and overall well-being in these young athletes.

2.3.4 Motivation in the Junior-to-Senior Transition: Focus on Cycling

Transitioning from junior to senior levels is crucial for young athletes, especially in demanding sports like cycling. Drew et al. (2019) highlighted the prominence of extrinsic motivation during this transition. Young cyclists might be driven by desires such as trophies, financial gains, or broader recognition. However, prioritising these external factors over the intrinsic joy and passion of the sport is challenging. As these young athletes progress, balancing cycling with other life aspects, like education, becomes increasingly challenging (Carey et al., 2012; Pummell et al., 2008). Thus, it becomes essential for mentors and coaches to understand these dynamics and guide young cyclists appropriately.

Another perspective on the challenges of transitioning focuses on the objective measures of success. Gallo et al. (2022) observed a decline in success rates as cyclists moved to higher age groups, notably during the transition from U19 year 2 to U23 year 1. Their data suggests that as young cyclists progress, they face stiffer competition and potential challenges to their motivation. While these findings shed light on the obstacles athletes might face, they also underscore the importance of providing targeted support during such pivotal transitions. Recognising these nuanced challenges can help ensure a more supportive environment that promotes the sustained engagement of young cyclists.

In conclusion, understanding the various motivational dynamics during the junior-to-senior transition allows coaches, trainers, and sports psychologists to develop effective strategies. Addressing intrinsic and extrinsic factors is paramount in fostering an environment that nurtures young cyclist's well-being and continued passion.

2.3.5 Adolescent Perspectives on Cycling as a Physical Activity

A deep understanding of adolescent viewpoints on physical activity (PA), specifically cycling, is pivotal for fostering active and health-conscious lifestyles among young people. In their systematic review of qualitative studies, Martins et al. (2021) explored adolescent opinions on the facilitators of and hindrances to PA. The review comprised 30 studies published from 2014 to 2020, which included approximately 1,250 adolescents aged between 13-18 years from 13 different countries.

The findings from the review pinpointed several vital themes that illuminate the factors influencing adolescent engagement in physical activity, with possible implications for cycling. These themes encompassed factors related variously to the individual, social and relational contexts, the nature of PA, and life issues, along with sociocultural and environmental factors (Martins et al., 2021)

Individual factors significantly dictated adolescent PA engagement, such as motivation, self-efficacy, and knowledge about PA and health (Martins et al., 2021). While the study does not explicitly address cycling, it is reasonable to infer that individual factors may come into play. For instance, adolescents with more advanced physical fitness and motor skills, compared to their peers with basic skills, might be more likely to engage in cycling.

Social and relational factors, such as support from family, friends, and significant others, exert a notable impact on adolescent PA engagement (Martins et al., 2021). These factors gain relevance in the context of cycling, wherein encouragement and backing from family and peers could amplify adolescents' involvement. The involvement pertains to adolescents' active participation, commitment, and sustained interest in cycling as a form of physical activity. This supportive environment can facilitate not only the initiation but also the maintenance of cycling habits among adolescents, thereby fostering a physically active lifestyle during this critical developmental period.

The nature of physical activity also impacts participation. Findings by Martins et al. (2021) suggest that activities deemed enjoyable and engaging are significant facilitators. Applying this to cycling, the competitive yet fun nature of the activity, combined with the opportunity it provides for adolescents to explore their environments, exercise independence, and experience a sense of autonomy, could attract adolescents. This sense of autonomy might

emanate from the ability to travel greater distances unaided and make independent decisions about routes and pacing, which in turn, can serve as compelling factors in their involvement in cycling.

Practical factors such as the availability of time and the balancing of numerous activities also influence PA engagement, which could be particularly relevant for cycling given its specific requirements (Martins et al., 2021). Ensuring harmony in managing academic responsibilities, training schedules, and personal life is crucial for sustaining engagement in cycling, due to its demands for regular practice, equipment management, and potentially, travel to suitable cycling venues or events.

Lastly, sociocultural and environmental factors are pivotal in shaping adolescent PA behaviours, including cycling (Martins et al., 2021). Environmental factors pertain to physical and infrastructural aspects, such as the availability of bike paths, trails, parks, and cycling programs. Safety considerations, impacted by traffic conditions, road design, and lighting, alongside local weather and terrain, can also dictate the feasibility and appeal of cycling for adolescents. Concurrently, sociocultural elements encapsulate perceptions and societal beliefs regarding cycling, including aspects related to gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural norms, which could either facilitate or hinder adolescent involvement in cycling as a physical activity.

2.3.6 Dropout from Organised Sport

Understanding dropout in organised sports is fundamental for devising effective strategies that promote sustained engagement and participation. Past research efforts, such as those by Crane and Temple (2015), applied the leisure constraints theory (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Crawford et al., 1991; Jackson et al., 1993) to shed light on these factors, and several studies have further examined this issue in the context of specific sports.

Investigations by Walters et al. (2017) into rowing dropout rates in New Zealand secondary schools identified several influential factors, including lack of enjoyment, academic time pressures, financial difficulties, and low level social support. These elements underline the complex nature of dropout, both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, necessitating a holistic approach to address both individual and environmental factors.

Corrales and Olaya-cuartero (2022) built upon the findings of Walters et al. (2017) by focusing on dropouts from endurance sports, meticulously examining high external stress, autocratic coaching, and gender role. They identified burnout as a substantial dropout contributor, characterised by physical and psychological exhaustion, disillusionment with the sport, and the inability to meet personal aspirations, wherein 'disillusionment with the sport'

refers to the development of negative attitudes such as loss of interest, decreased enjoyment, and frustration towards endurance sports.

Sors et al.'s (2020) study found that former road cyclists who sustained involvement in non-competitive aspects of the sport—such as social rides, coaching, or event support—reported lower burnout levels than those who had completely disengaged from it. This insight underlines the potential value of promoting various forms of engagement with the sport, beyond competition, as a strategy to manage burnout and prevent dropout, thereby highlighting the need for supportive environments and alternative involvement pathways in youth road cycling.

These insights are particularly relevant for young males' road cycling in Auckland, New Zealand. Factors such as rigorous training schedules, lack of psychological resilience, and unaccommodating coaching styles could potentially harm young athletes' motivations, escalating their risk of burnout and dropout. Hence, future research and interventions should aim to foster supportive and less stressful environments. Back et al. (2022) reinforce this approach by illustrating the imperative of a high-quality motivational climate fostering enjoyment, competence, and social support.

To conclude, these various studies highlight the multifaceted nature of dropout in organised sports, offering valuable directions for future strategies to boost youth engagement and performance in road cycling racing.

2.3.7 Motivation within Dorsch's Heuristic Model of the Youth Sport System

Dorsch et al. (2022) put forth an expansive heuristic model which acts as a structured guide to better comprehend youth sports, particularly underlining the necessity to perceive this domain through a well-orchestrated, interdisciplinary lens. The model's core tenets — holism, feedback loops, and roles — strive to elucidate that young athletes are deeply entwined entities within a network of individuals and contexts that mutually influence one another within the youth sport system. To elaborate, "youth sport" in this context refers to structured or unstructured sport activities where the involvement of young individuals is guided and shaped by their interactions with various persons (such as peers, parents, and coaches) and multiple contexts, spanning personal characteristics (like age and ability) and situational factors (such as level of participation and stage of maturation). The term "this arena" refers to the youth sport system, where athletes, individuals, and contexts navigate through dynamic, reciprocal relationships and processes. Moreover, "organisational, community, and societal levels" pertain to the multi-layered environments where youth sport unfolds, encompassing administrative structures, local and broader communities, and

encompassing societal norms and values, each influencing and being influenced by the athlete's participation and development in sports.

A salient point from Dorsch et al.'s (2022) work relevant to my study is the dynamic nature of motivation in youth sports. Feedback loops, integral to Dorsch et al.'s model, illustrate how motivation in young athletes is not static but continually influenced by the feedback and experiences they garner from their surroundings. Positive or negative feedback from coaches, peers, spectators, the media or family can significantly mould the motivational trajectory of a young cyclist.

Furthermore, Dorsch et al. suggests that the degree to which specific aspects of the model become relevant might vary depending on the organisational structure and competitiveness of the sporting context. Motivation in athletes is influenced and moulded by the distinct attributes inherent in each specific sporting environment.

An implication from Dorsch et al.'s (2022) work is that to fully understand the motivational experiences of young male road racing cyclists in Auckland, one must account for the web of influences that encircles them. From immediate relationships with coaches and peers to the broader ethos of the cycling community and society, each facet shapes a young cyclist's motivation.

2.3.8 Success and Its Impact on Motivation in Elite Cycling

While the primary focus of this dissertation is on the motivational factors underlying youth cycling participation, it is essential to understand the broader context of motivation in competitive cycling. One dimension of this context is the relationship between race results and motivation. Schumacher et al.'s (2006) paper, "Success in Elite Cycling: A Prospective and Retrospective Analysis of Race Results" comprehensively explored tangible outcomes in elite cycling.

Though the paper primarily emphasises evaluating performance outcomes, Schumacher et al. offer indirect insights into the role of success in shaping an athlete's motivation. Consistent success across races could bolster an athlete's intrinsic motivation, reinforcing their passion and love for the sport. Conversely, recurrent failures or underperformance might challenge their motivation, leading them to question their commitment or even consider dropping out from organised sport (see also section 2.3.6, Dropout from Organized Sport).

Furthermore, as delineated by Schumacher et al. (2006), understanding the dynamics of success in elite cycling might explain what motivates young cyclists to persevere, aiming to reach elite levels. These dynamics can also show how the perception of potential future success or the aspiration to achieve elite status might influence youth engagement in road

cycling racing. Incorporating Schumacher et al.'s perspective into the present study helps paint a comprehensive picture of motivation in cycling, bridging the gap between youth participation and elite performance.

2.4 Critiques of and Gaps in the Literature

While the existing literature provides valuable insights into motivation in sports and physical activities, it is essential to recognize critiques of and gaps in the earlier research. Examining these issues helps in identifying areas for further research to enhance understanding of motivation in young male road cycling.

One notable critique highlights an overemphasis on quantitative research methods, which often overlook the rich and nuanced experiences and perspectives of individuals engaged in road cycling, albeit providing valuable statistical data. Qualitative research methods may offer a deeper exploration of young cyclists' subjective experiences, motivations, and perceptions (Drew et al., 2019).

Moreover, most existing studies have focused on adult athletes or general populations, leaving a significant research gap concerning the motivational factors and influences on young male road cyclists in Auckland, New Zealand. This gap underscores the need for research tailored to that specific group, to better comprehend their unique challenges, motivations, and developmental needs.

While several motivational theories have been explored in the literature, there is a call for a more integrated and comprehensive understanding of motivation in the context of young male road cycling. The applicability of theories like self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1980), achievement goal theory (Ames, 1992), and cognitive evaluation theory (Deci et al., 1975) to the specific context of road cycling among young males in Auckland, New Zealand, requires further investigation. This literature gap becomes especially pertinent when considering the experiences of high-performance student-athletes who must excel both academically and athletically (Gomez et al., 2018). Gomez et al.'s (2018) research highlights the unique stressors and challenges faced by high-performance student-athletes, emphasizing the need for further exploration within the context of young male road cycling.

The existing literature needs a focus on interventions and practical strategies to enhance motivation among young male road cyclists. While there is a growing body of research on motivation interventions in sports, specific guidance and evidence-based practices tailored to young cyclists' unique needs and challenges are needed.

Addressing these critiques and gaps in the literature is vital for advancing an understanding of motivation in young male road cycling. The present study aimed to contribute to the existing literature and provide practical insights for coaches, trainers and educators

working with young cyclists, by conducting qualitative research focused on Auckland, New Zealand's specific context, and integrating theories and interventions.

By filling these gaps and providing a comprehensive understanding of motivation in young male road cycling, this research can advance the field and add to the existing body of knowledge. The insights gained from this study can inform the development of targeted interventions, enhance coaching practices, and promote the well-being and sustained engagement of young cyclists in Auckland, New Zealand.

2.5 Concluding Thoughts

This literature review offers a thorough look into what motivates young male road cyclists, using critical theories such as self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985), achievement goal (Ames, 1992), and autonomy support interventions (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Personal enjoyment and fulfilment, or intrinsic motivation, are vital for keeping young cyclists engaged. They need supportive environments and opportunities to develop their skills and feel accomplished (Graef et al., 1983; Harwood & Biddle, 2002).

On the other hand, external rewards also matter. However, to effectively motivate cyclists, those rewards must align with the cyclist's personal goals (Amorose & Weiss, 2008). Moving from junior to senior levels brings new challenges, and understanding these can help coaches provide better support.

Employing Dorsch et al.'s (2022) model to young road cyclists in Auckland entails a nuanced exploration of the interdependent relationships between athletes and their environments. This application seeks to illuminate how coaching strategies, parental involvement, and peer interactions collectively and reciprocally shape an athlete’s motivational landscape. It could uncover how these elements, through holistic examination and understanding of role negotiations and feedback mechanisms within the youth sport system, dynamically influence cyclists' performance and ongoing engagement in the sport.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Design: Qualitative Descriptive Study and Reflexive Thematic Analysis

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design, gathering information through focus group interviews held in classrooms at young male cyclists schools. The discussions were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy. A set of prepared questions guided these interviews, probing into different aspects of motivation.

Positionality Statement

My research is deeply connected to a personal experience: a severe road bicycling accident that left me with serious injuries and a memory gap of over a month. Although I do not remember the accident, it has shaped my focus on the worlds that young cyclists navigate. My recovery journey gives me a unique and heartfelt approach towards understanding the challenges young athletes face. This personal connection does not just guide but lives within my research, making it an academic exploration and a personal narrative. Tracy (2010) posits that personal or societal events can drive impactful research, especially when that research has a deep personal connection, as also noted by Miles and Huberman (1994). This personal connection has driven me to investigate the motivational aspects affecting young racing cyclists. With the transformative power of sports and the concept of reflexivity (Moch & Gates, 2000) in mind, I've gained deeper insights into the lives of these athletes.

Research Significance: Personal Motivation and Broader Impacts

The importance of this research is twofold: firstly, it provides a better understanding of what motivates young cyclists, setting a foundation for future studies in youth sports, especially cycling (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vallerand et al., 1993). Additionally, it emphasizes the value of including the perspectives of young athletes, pushing for a more inclusive sports environment (Amabile et al., 1994; Reeve, 2009).

Although the research was specific to Auckland, New Zealand, its conclusions may offer valuable insights for youth cycling practices in the region. Moreover, the findings may be instrumental in devising strategies to create an optimal motivational setting for young athletes (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vallerand et al., 1993).

3.2 Participant Group

The study concentrated on young male cyclists in the Under-16 (U16) and Under-19 (U19) age brackets. The age bracket marks a transformative period in an athlete's journey, introducing unique challenges and experiences (Back et al., 2022).

The study included 14 male cyclists from secondary school teams in Auckland. Their feedback provided valuable insights into the motivations, challenges, and dynamics of youth road cycling, significantly enriching the data pool for the research.

Recruitment was undertaken across Auckland schools known for supporting road cycling programmes. To ensure diverse participant backgrounds, schools were selected with varying student demographics.

The initial recruitment strategy had to be modified due to a lack of response, leading to a more direct outreach to school sports coordinators. Ethical considerations, especially with younger participants, were always prioritised.

3.3 Ethical Protocol

The ethical considerations for this research project were meticulously planned and executed to safeguard participants' safety and well-being, particularly within youth and school contexts. Each participant received a detailed Participant Information Sheet, as per standard procedure, to ensure informed consent was comprehensively secured.

Engaging with the ethical dimensions embedded in the research design was pivotal, especially considering the potential power imbalance in researching youth and navigating the dynamics between the researcher-coach and the young athletes. Guided by the reflexive practice framework of Moch and Gates (2000), this study minimised possible harm and discomfort while navigating these dynamics.

Extra attention was given to participants under the age of 16, necessitating parental or guardian consent and assuring that the youth and their families understood the participation implications. Parents or guardians received a detailed consent form. Principals of the involved schools were supplied a principal information sheet to comprehensively understand the research within their institution, which is available in Appendices D.

Explicit assurances were given that participants and schools could withdraw from the study at any point without repercussions, prioritizing their comfort and security.

Confidentiality was a cornerstone to ensure participant comfort and trust. Assurances were given that identities and contributions would be confidential and that participants could withdraw without any consequences. Focus group discussions were audio-recorded and anonymised through unique codes during the analysis and reporting phases.

All these detailed ethical considerations and processes were conducted under the approval of the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 9th December 2022, AUTEC Reference number 22/271, ensuring adherence to institutional ethical guidelines and standards.

Through this ethical approach, the research endeavoured to satisfy procedural requirements, establishing a trusting and transparent environment, thus enabling participants to share their experiences comfortably and safely.

3.4 Data Collection: Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews were this study's primary data collection tool, designed to capture rich insights. The guiding questions, informed by Ryan and Deci's (2017) self-determination theory, explored motivational facets such as relatedness, competence, and autonomy (see Appendix A: Focus Group Interview Transcript - Youth Male Road Cycling, and Appendix B: Additional Five Questions). The structure and conduct of these interviews were strategically shaped, utilizing an interview guide that drew upon the expertise and methodologies proposed by Morgan (1996), Gill et al. (2008), and Stewart and Shamdasani (2014).

The interviews took place in a familiar classroom setting within the participants' schools, with seating arranged in a semi-circle to create a conducive atmosphere for open discussions. As the facilitator, I was positioned centrally to lead the conversation. An audio recorder, placed at the heart of the semi-circle, ensured accurate data capture. Techniques such as reflecting on comments and probing were employed to delve deeper into the topics, with care taken to avoid leading or loaded questions that could sway participant responses. This process began with initial coding and evolved through pattern recognition to derive the core themes.

As outlined in the Athlete Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C), participants knew beforehand that each session would last between 40 to 55 minutes and would consist of four to six of their peers. This clarity helped manage expectations and fostered transparency about the interview procedure.

3.5 Data Interpretation: Thematic Analysis

For the data analysis, I employed reflexive thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2021). Their approach is noted for its adaptability, enabling me to adjust my lens based on the participants' inputs without compromising the data's authenticity (Lambert & Lambert, 2012; Sandelowski, 2000). Rooted in the philosophy that individual experiences are distinct (Lincoln et al., 2011), reflexive thematic analysis harmonizes with this study's principles. This analytical approach, particularly pertinent to my research, enhances the focus on participant voices, enabling the unveiling of common themes whilst respecting the uniqueness and variability of individual narratives. Furthermore, it provides a structured methodology to navigate through the rich, diverse data, assisting in uncovering not only explicit

but also latent themes, thereby revealing deeper, perhaps unforeseen, insights about the motivational aspects within young cyclists' experiences.

Once the focus group interviews were transcribed, NVivo software was used for data analysis. The software streamlined the data's organisation, easing the coding process and helping to highlight emerging themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). With NVivo's help, themes were coded, and their relationships were explored, offering insights into the participant's road cycling motivations and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Moreover, the analysis ventured beyond mere theme identification, seeking to understand their significance within the broader study and existing literature context.

This process began with initial coding and evolved through pattern recognition to derive the core themes, encompassing not only what was explicitly stated but also exploring the implicit, potentially uncovering unanticipated insights into youth cycling motivations and experiences.

3.6 Reflexivity in the Research Process

Reflexivity was central to understanding the motivational experiences of young male cyclists in Auckland, as Moch and Gates (2000) emphasised. While I did not have a coaching relationship with the participants in this study, my previous experiences coaching cycling athletes of the same age in a different region of New Zealand could introduce potential biases.

For instance, during one of the focus group sessions, a participant described a training regimen I had previously endorsed in my coaching. Acknowledging my initial inclination to view this regimen positively due to my past experiences, I took a step back to assess the data without letting my previous coaching stance influence my interpretation.

While my prior coaching connections offered a valuable perspective, ensuring these experiences did not unduly influence my interpretations was essential. I consistently re-evaluated any biases and made efforts to maintain an environment where participants felt free to express diverse viewpoints.

For example, when one participant's experience starkly contrasted with what I had encountered in my prior coaching, I actively refrained from interjecting with my own experiences. Instead, I probed further to understand his perspective more deeply.

By emphasising reflexivity, this study sought an authentic depiction of young male cyclists' motivations in Auckland, free from the influence of my prior coaching experiences.

3.7 Engagement with Māori Perspectives

This study respects the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, which promote collaboration, protection and participation (Hudson et al., 2010; Sport New Zealand, 2019). However, the focus was mainly on young male road racing cyclists in the U16 and U19 age groups. The study did not pay special attention to participants' ethnic backgrounds.

Not specifically investigating Māori participants views has drawbacks:

- Māori youth might have unique reasons for joining or staying in sports, influenced by their culture and history. Without their input, we might miss out on these reasons.
- The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) used is mainly based on Western ideas about behavioural motivation and may not accommodate Māori ways of thinking.
- Any conclusions from this study might not fully apply to Māori youth cyclists.

In short, while this research provides valuable insights into young cyclists in Auckland, it might not capture data about Māori youth and their reasons for cycling. More focused studies on Māori youth in New Zealand sports are needed.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction to Analysis and Discussion

Four themes were identified representing participants experiences, using thematic data analysis, and based on motivational theory. These themes aim to provide a clear view of the experiences of youth road racing cyclists in Auckland. The study included 14 male cyclists from secondary school teams in Auckland. Their feedback gave insight into motivations, challenges, and the dynamics of youth road cycling. Adhering to the Treaty of Waitangi, the research included a range of ethnicities and prioritised participant anonymity. Drawing upon the heuristic model proposed by Dorsch et al. (2022), this study examined the influence system on young cyclists. These influences range from personal relationships to larger community structures.

4.2 Overview of Themes

Theme 1: The Journey for Recognition

This theme elucidates the various struggles that participants highlighted relating to cycling participation in the New Zealand, with key issues being the lack of proper infrastructure, inadequate funding, and limited access to international competitions. It focuses on the broader social and systemic hindrances that participants encountered in seeking recognition and support for their sporting endeavours. Participant quotes supporting each theme in this chapter are provided verbatim, including the original grammar and spelling.

Safety concerns and lack of support: Discussing the risks involved, one participant noted, "And if you get in an accident, it's like you can get killed... Well, I've had a few run-ins with some bad drivers and some not-so-nice people."

Challenges of road conditions: Highlighting the issue of road debris, one participant mentioned, "There's lots of glass. People just throw things out of their car, like McDonald's and stuff. So, it makes the gutters all kind of clogged up."

Limited support and recognition: Addressing the need for more attention given to road cycling, one participant commented, "Road cycling compared to other sports in schools is quite small. So, sports directors go and watch other sports, but never really come along to things like cycling."

Difficulties in finding competitions: Describing the scarcity of races, one participant noted, "Finding racing in New Zealand is difficult; there's not many races, so it's hard to get noticed and eventually make steps overseas."

Overcoming personal obstacles: Reflecting on a setback, one participant revealed that, "Last year in July, I got pretty sick, and there was a big race at that time. I didn't do very well in it. It was disappointing..."

These quotes underscore various challenges experienced by participants in their quest for acknowledgment and success. The highlighted obstacles range from safety issues to feeling overshadowed by other sports and the difficulty in maintaining motivation amidst physical and personal setbacks. This struggle for recognition mirrors cyclists' broader societal challenges, which involve physiological and psychological factors influencing their endurance performance and experiences (Röthlin et al., 2023), thereby highlighting the necessity for greater understanding, support, and infrastructural improvements for these athletes.

Theme 2: The Intricacies of Intrinsic Motivation and the Delight of the Journey

This theme uncovered the intrinsic motivation of participants, their joy in cycling, the learning process, and the gratification derived from tangible progress. Many participants enjoyed training in the natural environment and in the company of friends. This theme emphasises the personal fulfilment participants experienced from their journey in the sport, overshadowing the need for external validation or achievement.

Finding joy in cycling: Describing the initial attraction to the sport, one participant shared, "I started cycling as a cross-training for rowing in the off-season. I did mountain biking at school a couple of years ago and enjoyed it. I always like being on a bike."

Motivation from personal progress: Highlighting the satisfaction of improvement, one participant expressed, "I get really motivated when I can see an improvement, and I can notice that it's getting easier to hold a pace or feel like I'm getting faster."

Social aspects and camaraderie: Describing the motivation derived from camaraderie and competition, one participant explained, "What motivates me is the competition. I like preparing for an event and racing, of course. You get a lot of adrenaline when you're just in this massive group just riding really fast and hanging out with my mates."

Personal fulfilment and achievement: Expressing a sense of accomplishment, one participant shared, "I would say it's probably because I'm good. I wouldn't want to switch sports because I'd be bad. My hand-eye coordination is okay, but I'm better at cycling. And I just like being in the top five riders of my grade."

These quotes reflect the role of passion for the sport, the thrill of competition, and the satisfaction of personal growth in fuelling athlete motivation. From the adrenaline rush of speeding down a flat road to the camaraderie experienced with teammates on new roads, these participants experienced a joy in the journey that transcended mere achievement. Their experiences demonstrated that cycling to them was is not just a sport but a personal

endeavour that challenged them, brought joy, and imparted a sense of achievement. The intrinsic motivation shown in these experiences underscores that while competition plays a role, personal growth and enjoyment propelled these athletes forward in their cycling journey.

Theme 3: Strength in Solidarity: The Essential Community Support

This theme captures the significance of support systems, such as parents, coaches, and friends, in shaping the cyclist experience. Data highlights the influence of these networks on participants' initial engagement with the sport and how communal connections contribute to their continued passion and improvement.

Support system reliance: Highlighting the limited support available, one participant noted, "We only get support if you make it to Worlds [international competition]. However, school support is good. They fund riding."

Parental and familial support: Emphasising the pivotal role of parents, one participant shared, "Support mostly comes down to you and your parents. They get me to and from every event and provide [pay for] all the kit."

Guidance and motivation from coaches: Recognising the impact of coaches, one participant expressed, "Coaches give advice and motivation. When you're in a bunch, they'll help you."

Team building through communal training: Describing the collaborative nature of training, one participant acknowledged, "Parents and coaches facilitate early morning training rides. Without them, we wouldn't have the team we do."

Family influence and inspiration: One participant commented on the various sources of his personal motivation: "I was interested in cycling because my dad did it. I saw a notice on the school board that said road cycling, and both of my parents did road cycling socially, so I thought I'd try it."

These quotes highlight the community's vital role in the athlete's cycling experiences. From providing the necessary resources to offering motivation, advice, and transportation to events, the community forms an essential support system that empowered these cyclists.

Theme 4: Navigating Life on Two Wheels: The Balancing Act

This theme illustrates cyclists' frequent challenges in integrating their dedication to cycling with other life demands. The struggles extend from personal motivation, adjusting training into hectic schedules, and handling perceived risks of the sport to confronting the lack of support and infrastructure in New Zealand's cycling scene.

Overcoming motivation hurdles: Highlighting the challenge of finding motivation, one participant shared, "Sometimes finding the motivation to train is hard. Once we start training, it's good, but getting there can be difficult."

Juggling multiple commitments: One participant explained the struggle of balancing various sports, noting that: "I've got other sports on Saturdays and throughout the week. So, even making trainings on Tuesday mornings is hard due to clashes. But I try to find as much motivation as I can."

Time management challenges: Describing the difficulty of incorporating cycling into a busy schedule, one participant mentioned, "Fitting cycling in with everything else is a challenge. Sometimes rides are up to two hours and finding that time is difficult."

Coping with stigma and self-consciousness: Acknowledging social acceptance challenges, one participant shared, "Keeping motivation is a big challenge. And it can be embarrassing sometimes to say that you're a cyclist or you wear Lycra."

Perceived lack of respect on the road: Highlighting the struggle of sharing the road, one participant expressed, "You don't feel accepted on the road most of the time. A lot of people don't have any patience for cyclists."

This theme articulates the challenges athletes faced in harmonising their commitment to cycling with other life duties. They commonly struggled to maintain motivation, find training time amid other obligations, and tackle the risks and biases linked with cycling. They also discussed the limited infrastructure and support, which adds another complexity to their passion. Despite these difficulties, their enduring love for the sport shone through, indicating the resilience necessary to balance these demands while aiming for growth and achievement.

4.3 Analysis and Discussion of Theme 1: The Journey for Recognition

Theme 1, 'The Journey for Recognition, plays a pivotal role in decoding motivational dynamics, especially as it intertwines with the extrinsic motivators discussed in the literature review. The pursuit for recognition, symbolising an external validation of a cyclist's skills or performance, echoes the concept of extrinsic motivation common in the athletic domain (Corrales & Olaya-cuartero, 2022; Drew et al., 2019).

This theme resonates with the heuristic model proposed by Dorsch et al. (2022), as they argue for the complex interplay of individuals and contexts in shaping young athlete experiences. The quest for recognition arises as a response to various systemic influences. These include parents, peers, and coaches, who often value and provide feedback based on observable successes and rewards.

This journey becomes pronounced during the junior-to-senior transition, an intense phase where extrinsic rewards such as recognition or elevated wages become a spotlight (Drew et al., 2019). As Dorsch et al. (2022) have pointed out, this transition period necessitates a holistic understanding of the youth sports system, emphasising the importance of feedback loops and role adaptation as young athletes progress in their sports journey.

However, while extrinsic motivators can ignite performance, it is crucial to acknowledge their potential drawbacks. A strong dependency on external rewards may foster stress and diminish intrinsic motivation (Corrales & Olaya-cuartero, 2022; Drew et al., 2019), which underscores the necessity for a balanced motivation structure for athletes, resonating with the principles of self-determination theory that emphasise autonomy, competence, and relatedness for optimal performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000), as well as with Dorsch et al. (2022) systemic perspective on youth sports.

Achievement goal theory (AGT), as detailed by Ames (1992) and Nicholls (1984), offers a foundational understanding of how athletes set and pursue goals. At its core, AGT identifies two main types of goals that athletes might adopt. First, are task-oriented goals, which focus on personal skill development and mastery. These are goals about self-improvement, where athletes derive satisfaction from their progress rather than comparisons. The second type, ego-oriented goals, revolve around competing against others and being recognized as superior. In the context of "a cyclists journey for recognition", AGT illuminates how a mix of these goals might drive athletes. Some may seek recognition as a form of validation for their mastery, while others may see it as a benchmark for comparing themselves to their peers.

Crane and Temple (2015) systematic review of dropout rates from organised sports adds depth to this discussion. They highlighted social pressures, which arguably encompass the journey for recognition, as crucial factors influencing dropout rates. The dropout phenomenon is another aspect that can be understood under the lens of Dorsch et al.'s (2022) integrated approach, which would consider the collective influence of diverse roles and contexts on this critical decision.

Concurrently, the findings from Raabe et al. (2019) on autonomy-supportive interventions suggest a potential solution to this journey. By facilitating a transition from extrinsic to intrinsic motivators, these interventions could help athletes harmonise their pursuit

for recognition with the delight of their journey, a proposition aligning with Dorsch et al.'s (2022) call for understanding the role transitions in youth sports.

In this study, a comprehensive analysis of the journey for recognition was meticulously undertaken, integrating it with prevalent theoretical frameworks. The insights shed light on the complexities of the journey, especially when seen through the lens of Dorsch et al.'s (2022) integrated understanding of the youth sports system. Despite the depth and thoroughness of the current exploration, it should be acknowledged that the academic community has ample opportunity to extend beyond the foundation established herein. Future research might explore the interplay between the journey for recognition and theories such as self-determination theory or social cognitive theory, thereby enriching a holistic understanding of youth sports motivation. The present research serves as a stepping-stone, inviting further inquiry and investigation into this intricate domain.

4.4 Analysis and Discussion of Theme 2: The Intricacies of Intrinsic Motivation and the Delight of the Journey

The participants' stories illuminate the profound role of intrinsic motivation and the joy accompanying their cycling journey. This theme interweaves with multiple theoretical structures, most notably, self-determination theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (2000), and organismic integration theory (OIT). The former, SDT, underscores the vital role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in nurturing intrinsic motivation.

In cycling, athletes link their enthusiasm to specific psychological needs. Athletes set personal goals valuing autonomy, refine their cycling techniques to improve skills and establish relationships within the cycling community. This intrinsic motivation aligns with Ames's (1992) and Nicholls (1989)'s work on achievement goal theory. For many, personal growth, skill enhancement, and self-challenge offer more pleasure than winning competitions. They often find satisfaction in improving themselves and setting new personal records.

Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory provides another layer of understanding of the cyclist's intrinsic motivation. The exposure to influential figures within the cycling community might have contributed to their perception of road cycling as a joyful and self-motivating activity.

Building on Dorsch et al.'s (2022) work, it becomes evident that athlete motivations cannot be viewed in isolation, but are situated within a broader sports ecosystem. Dorsch et al.'s work meticulously underscores the complex mesh of individual, dyadic, group, and institutional factors that harmoniously converge to create a conducive sports environment that amplifies intrinsic motivation, as outlined in the following paragraphs.

Individual Factors: These relate to the athlete's attributes, such as their beliefs, aspirations, resilience, and inherent talents. For instance, consider a tennis player like Rafael Nadal, whose tenacity and "never-give-up" attitude is testament to his motivation to excel, regardless of the odds.

Dyadic Factors: Here, the emphasis is on the relationships and interactions between two entities – typically an athlete and a significant other (e.g., coach, parent, or teammate). A classic example would be the mentor-mentee relationship between a seasoned coach and a budding athlete. An example is the synergistic bond between NBA superstar Michael Jordan and his coach, Phil Jackson, where trust, mutual respect, and shared goals enhanced Jordan's intrinsic motivation to achieve basketball greatness.

Group Factors: These factors pertain to dynamics within teams or training groups. They involve synergy, communication, and camaraderie among members, which can uplift or deflate an athlete's motivation. The New Zealand national rugby union team, the All Blacks, is a prime example. Their collective ethos, encapsulated in their pre-match haka (Māori action challenge) embodies unity, shared purpose, and a group-driven motivation to excel.

Institutional Factors: Broadly, institutional factors encompass organizational and systemic influences, including training infrastructures, policies, support systems, and cultural practices. For instance, countries like Norway have adopted a "children first" approach to youth sports, emphasizing enjoyment over early specialization. Such institutional policies can nurture intrinsic motivation by allowing young athletes to find joy and passion in sports without the immediate pressures of performance.

Understanding these multifaceted influences makes it clear that an athlete's journey is influenced by a confluence of factors that go beyond individual aspirations. Dorsch et al.'s (2022) work serves as a poignant reminder that fostering a positive sports environment requires a harmonious interplay of all these factors, each contributing uniquely to bolster intrinsic motivation.

Practical strategies derived from these theoretical perspectives could be utilised to promote intrinsic motivation among young cyclists. Skill development aligns with the SDT's focus on competence, and coaches can create a growth-centric climate that encourages skill enhancement.

Similarly, fostering a sense of community and belonging aligns with the SDT's aspect of relatedness. Building team dynamics, arranging group rides, and nurturing positive peer interactions can support this aspect, resonating with Dorsch et al.'s (2022) emphasis on community support in sports.

In summary, the theme of intrinsic motivation and the joy of the journey aligns with recognised motivational theories. Incorporating insights from Dorsch et al.'s (2022) work on integrated youth sports systems provides a robust framework for enhancing the motivational climate for young cyclists.

4.5 Analysis and Discussion of Theme 3: Strength in Solidarity: The Essential Community Support

Theme 3, titled 'strength in solidarity: the essential community support', is a pivotal motivational element among the young male road racers participating in this study. Their narratives underscored the bonds, mutual support and shared enthusiasm within cycling communities, accentuating the critical role of social and relational dynamics in driving motivation (Martins et al., 2021).

This insight aligns with Dorsch et al.'s (2022) findings that highlight the importance of community support in fostering motivation in sports. This concept extends beyond the realm of autonomy-support interventions. Coaches and mentors, they argue, are key figures who foster a sense of choice, competence, and camaraderie among athletes, thereby contributing to an environment that nurtures unity and mutual support.

In road cycling, coaches can boost community strength by organising group rides, promoting positive peer interactions, and fostering a team spirit (Cheon et al., 2019). These efforts can increase motivation and cultivate a sense of belonging among young cyclists.

The literature also underscores the significance of a supportive community during the transition from junior to senior levels (Vazou et al., 2006). By fostering a robust community, coaches can provide valuable support during this potentially challenging transition period, sustaining or boosting the athlete's motivation.

The theme of 'strength in solidarity: the essential community support' also aligns with studies examining physical activity's barriers and facilitators. Social support and a solid community atmosphere often emerge as critical factors that propel individuals towards engaging in and persisting with physical activity (Crane & Temple, 2015; Martins et al., 2021).

The cycling community can serve as a valuable resource for young male road racing cyclists, offering support, shared objectives, and motivation. By integrating these insights with Dorsch et al.'s (2022) findings on the importance of community support in sports, we can further understand the significance of a supportive community in shaping a young athlete's commitment to their sport.

In sum, the theme of 'strength in solidarity: the essential community support' resonates deeply with existing literature on motivational determinants in sports. By capitalising on this unity and support within the cycling community, coaches can build a conducive

environment that amplifies motivation and provides young cyclists with the support network they need in their athletic journey (Cheon et al., 2019).

4.6 Analysis and Discussion of Theme 4: Navigating Life on Two Wheels The Balancing Act

The theme 'navigating life on two wheels: the balancing act' describes the experiences of young male road racing cyclists in Auckland. These athletes shared a range of responsibilities, from academic commitments to family obligations and social activities. This intricate web of demands closely aligns with the complex interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic factors in motivation, as emphasized in the literature (e.g. Martins et al., 2021).

My understanding of this theme was strengthened by the insights gleaned from the research conducted by Gomez et al. (2018), which sheds light on the challenges high-performance student-athletes face in balancing their academic and athletic pursuits. Their study focused on elite student-athletes who, like the young cyclists in the present study, grapple with the demanding dual role of excelling in academics and sports. The student-athlete's life is an intricate tapestry of responsibilities, akin to a juggling act, wherein they must carefully balance their training and sporting commitments with the demands of their academic courses.

This challenge is not unique to young cyclists in this study; it resonates with the experiences of elite student-athletes who must meticulously manage their time and resources to prevent overtraining or burnout. Gomez et al. (2018) reveal that many elite student-athletes have encountered setbacks in their academic and athletic performances due to overtraining or burnout. This finding is a stark reminder of the delicate equilibrium that student-athletes must maintain and underscores the importance of awareness and education for the athletes and their coaches. As advocated by Gomez et al. (2018), open communication between coaches and athletes is pivotal in addressing the actual impact of overtraining.

Key finding from Gomez et al.'s (2018) research were the essential role of open coach-athlete communication, in-depth planning, and the need for adequate recovery. These aspects directly correlate with the experiences of the young male road racing cyclists in Auckland, who must also navigate the delicate balance between their training, academics, and personal lives. Balancing priorities is a recurring theme among high-performance student-athletes striving for academic and athletic excellence. While the hours dedicated to practice and competition can be substantial, the time required for academic study varies significantly across individual students. The final years of study can introduce additional academic demands, potentially resulting in a heavier workload. Such academic pressures resonate with the experiences of my

young cyclists, who, like the high-performance student-athletes studied by Gomez et al. (2018), must grapple with varying academic pressures throughout their education.

In conclusion, the theme of 'navigating life on two wheels: the balancing act' encapsulates the intricate challenges young male road racing cyclists face in Auckland. Incorporating insights from Gomez et al. (2018) study on high-performance student-athletes enriches my understanding of the delicate balance these athletes must maintain. The need for open communication, in-depth planning, adequate recovery, and holistic support systems echoes in both contexts. As I continue to explore the experiences of my young cyclists, I recognize the shared challenges and opportunities for growth, ultimately contributing to their holistic development as athletes and individuals.

4.7 Overall Interpretation of Findings

The findings in this chapter reveal four main themes: the journey for recognition, the delight of intrinsic motivation, community support strength, and balancing life on two wheels. While these themes focus on different aspects, they are all connected and together give a complete picture of what motivates young male road racing cyclists in Auckland, New Zealand. In Chapter 5, I will go into more detail about these themes and explain why they are essential in the context of youth cycling motivation.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Summary of the Study

This research explored the motivational factors that influence young male road racing cyclists in Auckland, New Zealand. Through qualitative interviews, four key themes emerged: the journey for recognition, the intricacies of intrinsic motivation and the delight of the journey, strength in solidarity: the essential community support, and navigating life on two wheels: the balancing act. Despite facing challenges like inadequate infrastructure and limited access to international competitions, these cyclists demonstrated intrinsic motivation and acknowledged the critical role of a supportive community.

5.2 Contributions to the Field

5.2.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study helps contribute to the gap in the literature concerning the motivations of young male road racing cyclists in Auckland. It emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation and underscores the role of external conditions, such as infrastructure and societal recognition, in affecting youth sports motivation.

5.2.2 Practical Contributions

Beyond theoretical insights, the research offers practical knowledge for training programme designs, coaching strategies, and the creation of supportive environments for youth athletes. The study underscores the significant role of the community in nurturing young cyclists and highlights the balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivators for sustainable sports engagement.

5.3 Practical Implications

The findings propose several real-world applications:

- **Infrastructure advancements:** improving cycling infrastructure to foster safe and accessible routes and facilities for youth cyclists, ensuring their training and competitions are conducted in conducive environments.
- **Financial support and assistance:** facilitate young cyclist access to international events and specialized training, enabling them to gain valuable experience and hone their skills in a competitive environment.
- **Cultivating a supportive ecosystem:** bolster community support by encouraging local businesses to sponsor events or teams, organizing community-led fundraising activities, and creating volunteer opportunities for

community members to get involved in hosting or organizing cycling events. This engagement not only enhances the sports experience for young athletes but also fosters a sense of collective ownership and pride within the community.

- **Fostering recognition and advocacy:** promote media coverage and public acknowledgment by collaborating with local media outlets, utilising social media platforms for wider reach, and organising public events that highlight and celebrate the achievements of young cyclists, thereby elevating the sport's status and providing additional motivation for athletes.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

This research, while shedding light on the motivational factors of young male road racing cyclists in Auckland, comes with several limitations:

- **Small sample size:** the study involves a relatively limited sample size, potentially affecting the generalizability of the findings to the wider population of young cyclists.
- **Single gender and ethnic focus:** the focus on young male cyclists and not explicitly including diverse ethnic backgrounds, particularly Māori cyclists, introduces inherent gender and ethnicity biases in the research outcomes. Future research avenues can enhance and diversify our understanding of youth cyclists motivations. For instance, future studies could explore:
- **Motivations of female youth road cyclists:** given the gender-specific challenges and motivations in sports generally, an in-depth study on the motivations of young female road cyclists could provide valuable insights into gender-based differences, filling a significant knowledge gap.
- **Larger youth road cycling sample size:** conducting qualitative research with a larger sample size of youth road cyclists would enhance the generalizability of findings and offer a more comprehensive understanding of motivational factors, potentially identifying subgroups with unique motivations.
- **Mixed methods approaches:** combining qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys or observational data collection methods could provide a more holistic view of youth road cycling motivations, bridging the gap between rich qualitative insights and quantitative data.
- **Ethnic and cultural perspectives, including Māori:** investigating how motivations and dropout vary among young cyclists from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including Māori, would contribute to a more inclusive

understanding of the sport, addressing diversity and inclusivity in sports psychology.

- **Geographical variances:** Examining how geographic factors, such as urban and rural settings, impact on the motivations of young road cyclists can reveal unique insights relevant to specific regions, aiding in the development of region-specific coaching and support strategies.

In probing into the motivations of young male road racing cyclists in Auckland, this research unearthed the intricacies of their engagement and performance in the sport. The findings resonate with existing literature, emphasizing the role of intrinsic motivation, community support, and external factors. While valuable, the study acknowledges areas needing further exploration. This research contributes significantly to understanding youth cycling motivations and guiding efforts to foster an environment that nurtures young cyclists.

Broader Implications

This research not only advances the understanding of youth cycling motivations but also carries broader implications for the fields of youth sports and sports psychology. Delving into the intricacies of motivation in this specific context sets a precedent for tailored interventions and support systems that can impact positively on young athlete's development and sustained engagement in cycling and other sports. This approach can serve as a model for nurturing youth talent and promoting sports participation in diverse cultural and geographical settings.

Closing statement

This study unveiled the motivational dynamics within the youth road cycling context in Auckland, spotlighting the pivotal roles of recognition, intrinsic joy, community support, and life balance in sustaining engagement and performance. The insights garnered lay a foundation for future strategies and interventions that are sensitive to these identified factors, potentially steering the future of youth engagement in road racing cycling towards a more supportive and fulfilling trajectory.

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Appendix A: Focus Group Interview on Youth Male Road Cycling

Focus Group Interview on Youth Male Road Cycling

Introduction: Welcome to the Focus Group Interview on Youth Male Road Cycling. Your participation is valuable in helping us understand the motivations, challenges, and experiences of youth male road cyclists in New Zealand. This handout contains the icebreaker question and the interview questions we will be discussing during the session.

Instructions:

- Please read and familiarize yourself with the questions provided.
- Feel free to take notes or jot down your initial thoughts and reflections.
- During the focus group, we encourage open and respectful discussion. Please listen attentively and contribute your unique perspectives.
- Your participation is voluntary, and all responses will be kept confidential.

Icebreaker Question: Can you state your name and share what initially sparked your interest in road cycling and led you to start this journey?

Focus Group Interview Questions:

1. What motivates you to participate in road cycling, and why?
2. What are the biggest challenges you face as a youth male road cyclist?
3. Can you describe a time when you felt particularly motivated in your cycling, and what caused that feeling?
4. What factors, both on and off the bike, contribute to your sense of enjoyment in cycling?
5. What do you think could be done to improve the experience of youth male road cyclists in New Zealand?
6. Have you ever felt demotivated in your cycling, and what caused that feeling?
7. How do you feel about the level of support and resources available to youth male road cyclists in New Zealand?
8. What role do coaches and parents play in your cycling experience, and how do they impact your motivation?
9. How do you balance the demands of cycling with other aspects of your life, such as school or social commitments?
10. What advice would you give to coaches and administrators to better support youth male road cyclists in New Zealand?

Thank you for your participation! Your insights will contribute to enhancing the experience of youth male road cyclists in Auckland.

Appendix B: Additional Five Questions.

Additional five questions

1. How has road cycling impacted your overall well-being, including physical fitness, mental health, and overall satisfaction with life?
2. Can you describe a specific instance where you faced a setback or obstacle in your road cycling journey and how you overcame it?
3. What are your thoughts on the role of competition in road cycling for youth male cyclists? How does it influence your motivation and development as an athlete?
4. How do you perceive the influence of social media and online communities on your road cycling experiences and motivation?
5. Can you discuss the importance of teamwork and camaraderie within the context of road cycling, and how it affects your motivation and enjoyment of the sport?

Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet.

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

01 September 2022

Project Title

Unlocking the Motivational Needs of Youth Male Cyclists: A Qualitative Study

An Invitation

I would like to invite you to participate in my research project for my Master's degree, which focuses on the motivational needs of male youth road cyclists. The aim of the study is to investigate the satisfaction of motivational requirements among male youth road cyclists and how this impacts their well-being, enjoyment of the sport, and retention rates. To collect data, I am conducting focus group interviews with around 3-6 U17 or U19 volunteers who ideally competed in the Team Time Trial or Road Race at the NZ Secondary Schools Road Race Championships in Manawatu from October 1-3, 2022.

What is the purpose of this research?

This study aims to fill a gap in the existing literature by conducting in-depth qualitative research on this topic, which has not yet been explored thoroughly in New Zealand. The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations, providing valuable insights to coaches, teachers, schools, and the wider sporting community.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been invited to participate in this research project because you are a participant in the sport of cycling at your school. You maybe an U17 or U19 volunteer who competed in the Team Time Trial or Road Race at the NZ Secondary Schools Road Race Championships in Manawatu from October 1-3, 2022. To gain permission from the school's principal, I contacted your sports coordinator and the teacher in charge of cycling to request their assistance in my research project.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

To indicate your agreement to participate in this research project, you will be required to sign the provided consent form as soon as possible or within fourteen days of receiving the information sheet. You may return the signed form to either the teacher in charge of cycling or the sports coordinator at your school.

What will happen in this research?

The research will involve your participation in a focus group interview at a suitable time and location, which may be during a lunch break, a study period, at school, or after school, depending on the availability of the group. During the focus group interviews, which will last approximately 35 to 55 minutes, three to six athletes will engage in informal discussions and be asked questions about the factors that motivate or demotivate them in road cycling. The discussions will be audio recorded to ensure that the data collected is accurate. As the facilitator, I will guide the discussion to keep it on-topic but will allow the athletes to explore the subject and questions as they see fit. This will give them the opportunity to express themselves more freely and respond in their own words.

What are the discomforts and risks and how will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

Potential discomforts and risks are associated with participating in this study. You may encounter mild psychological risks and discomfort if your views differ from other participants. Additionally, cumulative fatigue could be a concern. However, I will act as a mediator and encourage a supportive environment while ensuring participants are free to express their own thoughts and beliefs. If you experience distress, I will provide support and you can withdraw from the study at any time.

What are the benefits?

The benefits of youth male cyclists participating in this research project include: contributing to their overall development by understanding the internal representation of their sport, informing best practices for coaching and support through insights gained from their opinions, and potentially leading to increased enjoyment of sport, higher retention rates, and improved psychological well-being. Additionally, the findings

can be shared through academic publications and presentations, providing a platform for the voices of young athletes and informing improvements in coaching and training for young athletes in road cycling.

How will athletes privacy be protected?

To protect the privacy of the school and participating athletes, the name of the school will not be disclosed in the research. Confidentiality of participant identities will also be maintained. Athlete conversations and experiences will be kept private and not labelled in the report to ensure confidentiality. Names and addresses will be replaced with codes, ensuring that no one can identify anyone in a published report. Additionally, no personally identifying information will be disclosed to any outside parties to ensure complete privacy protection. All data collected will be stored securely and only accessible to the research team. Any published reports or presentations will only include aggregate data and will not include any identifiable information.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The only cost to yourself will be your time and effort. The focus group interviews are expected to last for approximately 35 to 55 minutes.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Upon receiving the information sheet and consent form from your school, please carefully read and review the provided materials. If you wish to participate in this research project, please sign the consent form and return it to me, the teacher in charge of cycling, or the sports coordinator of the school as soon as possible, but no later than fourteen days from the date of receipt.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

All participants will have the option to receive a summary of the research findings. I will provide participants with a URL to read the summary of the research findings.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr. Craig Harrison.
Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, *ethics@aut.ac.nz* , (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Johnathon Gee

Email: Johnogee@xtra.co.nz

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Craig Harrison.

www.athletedevelopmentproject.com

Email: craig@athletedevelopment.org.nz

At which telephone numbers can the applicant be contacted during the day?

Phone: 027 2265 181

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 9th December 2022, AUTEC Reference number 22/271

Appendix D: Principal Information Sheet.

School Principal Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

01 September 2022

Project Title

Unlocking the Motivational Needs of Youth Male Cyclists: A Qualitative Study

An Invitation

I am writing to invite your school's road cycling athletes to participate in my research project. As a current Master of Sport, Exercise, and Health student at AUT with a focus on Coach and Athlete Development, I am interested in studying the motivational requirements of male youth road cyclists.

What is the purpose of this research?

This study aims to fill a gap in the existing literature by conducting in-depth qualitative research on this topic, which has not yet been explored thoroughly in New Zealand. The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations, providing valuable insights to coaches, teachers, schools, and the wider sporting community.

How will athletes be identified and how will they be invited to participate in this research?

I reached out to the sports coordinator and or the teacher in charge of cycling at your school, asking for their help in my research project. Specifically, I'm looking for U17 or U19 volunteers who participated in the Team Time Trial or Road Race at the NZ Secondary Schools Road Race Championships in Manawatu from October 1-3, 2022. My goal is to conduct focus group interviews with 3-6 participants each, but I am open to adapting the focus group interviews and project based on the age and availability of secondary school athletes.

How will you agree to participate in this research?

To participate in this research, you will need to sign the attached permission form which grants the researcher access to your organization's school staff and students. By signing this form, you are agreeing to allow the researchers to collect data from your students for the purpose of this study. Please ensure that you read the permission form carefully before signing and feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty.

What will happen in this research?

The research will involve athletes participating in a focus group interview at a suitable time and location, which may be during a lunch break, a study period, at school, or after school, depending on the availability of the group. I am requesting your permission to use a classroom or the school's boardroom to conduct focus group interviews. During the focus group interviews, which will last approximately 35 to 55 minutes, three to six athletes will engage in informal discussions and be asked questions about the factors that motivate or demotivate them in road cycling. The discussions will be audio recorded to ensure that the data collected is accurate. As the facilitator, I will guide the discussion to keep it on-topic but will allow the athletes to explore the subject and questions as they see fit. This will give them the opportunity to express themselves more freely and respond in their own words.

What are the discomforts and risks and how will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

Potential discomforts and risks are associated with participating in this study. Athletes may encounter mild psychological risks and discomfort if their views differ from other participants. Additionally, cumulative fatigue could be a concern. However, I will act as a mediator and encourage a supportive environment while ensuring participants are free to express their own thoughts and beliefs. If athletes experience distress, I will provide support and they can withdraw from the study at any time.

What are the benefits?

The benefits of youth male cyclists participating in this research project include: contributing to their overall development by understanding the internal representation of their sport, informing best practices for coaching and support through insights gained from their opinions, and potentially leading to increased

Appendix D: Principal Information Sheet.

enjoyment of sport, higher retention rates, and improved psychological well-being. Additionally, the findings can be shared through academic publications and presentations, providing a platform for the voices of young athletes and informing improvements in coaching and training for young athletes in road cycling.

How will the school and the athlete's privacy be protected?

To protect the privacy of the school and participating athletes, the name of the school will not be disclosed in the research. Confidentiality of participant identities will also be maintained. Athlete conversations and experiences will be kept private and not labelled in the report to ensure confidentiality. Names and addresses will be replaced with codes, ensuring that no one can identify anyone in a published report. Additionally, no personally identifying information will be disclosed to any outside parties to ensure complete privacy protection. All data collected will be stored securely and only accessible to the research team. Any published reports or presentations will only include aggregate data and will not include any identifiable information.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The only cost to the athletes will be their time and effort. The focus group interviews are expected to last for approximately 35 to 55 minutes.

What opportunity does the principal have to consider this invitation?

Upon receiving the information sheet and the "Permission for Researchers to Access Organization School Staff/Students Form" from the sports coordinator or teacher in charge of cycling at your school, please carefully review these materials. If you choose to participate in the research project, please sign the attached form and return it to either the sports coordinator or teacher in charge of cycling at your school. Please ensure that you return the signed form within fourteen days of receiving it.

Will athletes receive feedback on the results of this research?

All participants will have the option to receive a summary of the research findings. I will provide participants with a URL to read the summary of the research findings.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Craig Harrison.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, *ethics@aut.ac.nz* , (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do athletes contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Johnathon Gee
Email: Johnogee@xtra.co.nz

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Craig Harrison, PhD.

www.athletedevelopmentproject.com

Email: craig@athletedevelopment.org.nz

At which telephone numbers can the applicant be contacted during the day?

Phone: 027 2265 181

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 9th December 2022, AUTEC Reference number 22/271

Appendix E: Participant Consent Form

Consent Form

Project title: ***Unlocking the Motivational Needs of Youth Male Cyclists: A Qualitative Study***

Project Supervisor: ***Dr Craig Harrison***

Researcher: ***Johnathon Gee***

- ○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 01 September 2022.
- ○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ○ I understand that the identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group is confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.
- ○ I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ○ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ○ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then, while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ○ I agree to take part in this research.
- ○ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes○ No○

Participant's signature: .....

Participant's name: .....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

.....

.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 9th December 2022, AUTEC Reference number 22/271

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix F: Request for Focus Group Interview with Male Cyclists - Letter to Sports Coordinators or Teachers in Charge

Dear School Cycling Manager or Teacher In charge,

I am writing to you today to request your assistance in organizing a focus group interview with male cyclists from your school's cycling team. As part of my Master's research project, I am investigating the motivational needs of youth male cyclists in Auckland, New Zealand. Specifically, I would like to discuss the social and environmental factors that impact motivation in this population.

Enclosed with this letter, you will find information sheets and consent forms for participants and the school principal. These documents outline the purpose and scope of the study, as well as the rights of the participants. To ensure confidentiality, the name of the school and participating athletes will not be disclosed in the research, and participant identities will be kept confidential.

I would like to request a meeting with three to six U17 or U19 male road cycling athletes from your school's cycling team. Please note that there is a maximum of ten to twelve participants allowed in the focus group, and a minimum of three is required. The focus group interview will take approximately 35-55 minutes and will be audio recorded. I am flexible with scheduling and location, and I would be happy to work with you to find a suitable time and place for the interview.

I appreciate your help in forwarding this email to the relevant people at your school, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Ngā mihi nui,

Johnathon Gee

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