Perspectives and Experiences of Off-field Problematic Behaviour Among Elite New Zealand Athletes

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Abstract

In recent years, the off-field problematic behaviour of elite athletes has received considerable media interest and attention. However, such behaviour has been investigated largely in college/university athlete populations and has focused predominantly on specific sports and on-field behaviours. This qualitative study examined perspectives and experiences of off-field problematic behaviour among elite New Zealand athletes. Semi-structured interviews with 10 athletes (five female and five male) from seven sporting codes were completed. Interview transcripts were analysed and interpreted using thematic analysis. Five key themes emerged from the data, which provided insight into the development of off-field problematic behaviour in the current context and the wider consequences such behaviour has for athletes and others. The findings suggest that a range of off-field problematic behaviour is present within the elite New Zealand sporting environment. Alcohol misuse was the most prevalent type of behaviour discussed. A number of other problematic behaviours were also reported, such as risk-taking, violence, inappropriate sexual behaviour, disordered eating, and psychological manipulation. Participants' definitions of 'problematic behaviour' were broad and included a number of less severe behaviours that were considered to be problematic within the elite sporting context. The main factors that appeared to increase the likelihood of off-field problematic behaviour were the influence of the media, pressures associated with professionalism, and the impact of management-athlete relationships. Having an elite public profile and the influence of drinking culture were identified as added pressures for participants, specific to the New Zealand sporting context. Furthermore, being on tour or competing overseas appeared to exacerbate potential vulnerabilities and provided unique opportunities for athletes to engage in off-field problematic behaviour. Numerous stressor factors appeared to have dual functions and, at times, also had protective value. Having stable support networks and positive athlete-coach relationships were protective factors central to the current study. Barriers to seeking help in relation to off-field problematic behaviour were also identified as an interesting finding in this study. Mistrust of professionals and breaches of confidentiality greatly impacted

athletes' willingness to seek help. Participants also made a number of recommendations to address off-field problematic behaviour that are highly relevant to professionals working within elite sporting environments. Overall, this study confirmed that off-field problematic behaviour of elite athletes was present in New Zealand; however, there were perceived differences as to whether such behaviour was increasing or decreasing in the current climate. Further research is needed to validate these findings and to better understand the experiences of elite athletes within the New Zealand sporting context.

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Chapter One

Introduction

New Zealand is the third most successful sporting nation in the world (per capita) and our elite athletes are recognised internationally for their sporting achievements (Greatest Sporting Nation, 2013). Images of our national sporting heroes, such as Edmund Hillary reaching the summit of Mount Everest in 1953, and athletes such as Peter Snell, Caroline and Georgina Evers-Swindell, and Valerie Adams winning consecutive gold medals at the Olympic Games, are firmly etched in the minds of generations of young New Zealanders growing up in Aotearoa[1].

Sport and physical recreation is a major part of the lives of New Zealanders. It has been estimated that more than three-quarters of New Zealand adults[2] (79%) participate in at least one sporting or recreational activity during any given week (Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2008). Of New Zealand adults, 44 per cent of women and 52 per cent of men met the national physical activity guideline of at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on five or more days of the week. New Zealanders also have a high level of participation in group sporting activities. More than one-third of adults (34.9%) were members of one or more sporting or recreational clubs or centres (Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2008).

Although New Zealand has a long-standing history of participation in sport, the majority of sports in this country remained amateur until at least the 1970s (Watson, 2013). The rise of professionalism over the past 40 years has led to a much greater focus on advertising, sponsorship, media coverage, and commercial involvement in sport. Professional sporting organisations are now highly competitive businesses and elite athletes have to cope with a much wider range of pressures due to changes in their professional roles and status. As a result, research within the sport

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[1] The Māori name for New Zealand.

[2] Adults were considered any persons aged 18 years and older.

psychology field is beginning to focus more on effective intervention and prevention techniques to improve the performance of elite athletes.

In addition to these pressures, New Zealanders tend to place successful sportspeople on a pedestal and expect them to be well-rounded individuals, both mentally and physically. This mindset has contributed to the widespread misconception that elite athletes are somehow less susceptible than other people to mental health issues and other stressors. The advent of professional sport has led to greater media interest and scrutiny regarding off-field problematic behaviour (OFPB) among elite athletes. Appendix A provides an illustrative list of articles that have appeared in the media recently concerning the OFPB of elite athletes, both in New Zealand and overseas.

Historically, attention has focused mainly on the physical training and performance of elite athletes and the psychological aspects of sport have been largely ignored. However, recent statistics suggest that the prevalence of mental health issues among elite athletes is comparable to that of the general public. For instance, Cleaver (2013b, October 30) reported that approximately one in five cricketers have used mental health support programmes[3]. This is similar to the 12-month prevalence figure (20.7%) for New Zealanders experiencing a mental disorder cited in Te Rau Hinengaro, the New Zealand Mental Health Survey (Oakley Browne, Wells, & Scott, 2006).

The off-field difficulties faced by some of New Zealand's most prominent sportspeople have been highlighted recently in a series of media articles and campaigns focusing on mental health. High profile athletes, including Zac Guildford, Lou Vincent, and Sir John Kirwan have all spoken publically about personal issues experienced during their professional sporting careers. Anecdotal evidence from retired players also tends to contradict the commonly cited 'healthy body, healthy mind' mantra (New Zealand Rugby Players Association, n.d.). As a result, problems that were once seen as taboo, such as depression, relationship

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[3] This figure should be interpreted with caution as is not a result of empirical research and the sample size and specific participant information appears to be omitted in the discussion.

issues, suicide, and addiction, are now being discussed more openly (Cleaver, 2013b, October 31).

This study attempts to contribute to our understanding of the pressures involved in being an elite athlete in New Zealand and to identify possible strategies to improve athlete engagement and development. Specifically, the research aims to explore the perspectives and experiences of OFPB among elite New Zealand athletes.

Researcher Perspective

It is important to note my perspective as the researcher on this topic. I am a 24-year-old woman who has grown up in the Waikato region of New Zealand. This topic appealed to me as a research project because of my interest in sport psychology stemming from a long personal history of sporting involvement, my inclusion in the Sir Edmund Hillary Scholarship Programme at the University of Waikato as a sport scholar, and my current aspirations as a clinical psychology student. I have observed changes in the nature of professional sport throughout my time in these environments adding to my interest in this topic. The recent increase in media attention on elite athletes misbehaviour and their perceived status as role models in our society, my developing insight into factors that shape and reinforce behaviour, and my own personal experiences of sport-related stressors provided the motivation and enthusiasm to undertake this study.

I have competed in netball, swimming, basketball and surf lifesaving at both the provincial and national levels, with my highest achievement being the 2008 Swim New Zealand Olympic Trials. Involvement in competitive sport and training regimes for both individual and team sports has provided me with unique insights into the sporting environment and specific behaviours present within each context. It is recognised that this exposure could increase the risk of personal bias in that I may view things differently to people who have had no previous sporting involvement. However, it is hoped that my personal connection to sport will enhance the analysis and interpretation of the data and

recommendations that come from this study, making a positive contribution to knowledge in this area.

Definitions

This study sets out to explore a topic area where key words are often used interchangeably or may have numerous definitions, depending on the specific context. Four key terms that are used extensively throughout the research are defined below.

Elite. The online Oxford dictionary defines *elite* as "a group of people considered to be superior in a particular society or organization" (Oxford University Press, 2013). For the purposes of this study, an *elite* athlete is defined as 'someone who has represented their province at the highest level, or New Zealand at the international level, in their chosen sport and/or who is currently eligible to do so.'

Off-field. Rutten, Dekovic, Stams, Schuengel, Hoeksma and Biesta (2008) defined *off-field* as "…before or after the match or training, when there are no sports-related rules and less supervision from the coach and the referee" (p. 372). However, off-field team social situations and other team responsibilities are also of particular interest in this study. Therefore, the *off-field* context is defined as 'any time or situation other than during a match/race or training.'

Problematic behaviour. The terms *antisocial*, *problematic, inappropriate* and *troublesome* are often used interchangeably to describe behaviour that deviates in some way from accepted cultural or societal norms. In this study, *problematic behaviour* is defined as 'behaviour which is a source of concern for the individual or others in their surroundings, is undesirable according to the social and/or legal norms of society, is negatively associated with relationship quality, moral reasoning and health-related outcomes and/or elicits some form of negative social response.'

Risk management. Fuller and Drawer (2004) defined the process of *risk management* in sport as a process that "…enables risk factors that might lead to injuries to be identified and the levels of risk associated with

activities to be estimated and evaluated" (p. 349). This definition was adapted for this study so that it was more applicable to the risk management of off-field problematic behaviours. Therefore, *risk management* refers to 'a process which enables risk factors that might lead to off-field problematic behaviour to be identified and the levels of risk associated with activities to be estimated, evaluated and potentially prevented.'

Research Objectives

This study is situated within the sport psychology field with links to clinical and social psychology and psychopathology experienced by elite athletes. The research goal was to investigate the perspectives and experiences of OFPB among elite New Zealand athletes. This study focuses solely on the perspectives of elite athletes in relation to OFPB because it was felt that this group would have greater knowledge and experience of the particular phenomena being investigated.

The specific aims and objectives of the research were to:

1. explore risk management in elite athletes through their own experiences and perspectives;
2. identify factors that may facilitate or impede the development of OFPB; and
3. gain insights into prevention and intervention strategies with regard to OFPB.

Thesis Outline

This initial chapter provides a foundation for the thesis. It presents working definitions of key terms used throughout this study, the researcher perspective, and the specific aims and objectives of the research. The remainder of this thesis is structured into five chapters. Chapter Two outlines the relevant international and New Zealand literature related to the OFPB of elite athletes. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology and the methods and procedures used to collect and analyse data. Chapter Four reports the key findings, themes and subthemes with key figures and is organised under the main themes derived from this research. Chapter Five presents a discussion of the

findings and linkages to the existing research and includes recommendations for practice and areas for future research. Chapter Six concludes the thesis and highlights the unique contribution made by the research.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

The literature on a range of areas related to off-field problematic behaviour (OFPB) in elite athletes is examined in this chapter. The contribution of sport psychology as an emerging field of study is explored. Studies that have investigated antisocial and moral behaviour in elite sport are reviewed, as well as research focusing on specific problematic behaviours among athletes. Potential stressors in sport, coping and help-seeking behaviour among athletes are discussed. The role of the media in relation to elite sport is also examined. This chapter concludes by highlighting the knowledge gaps and rationale for the current research and the potential for this study to add to the growing body of literature in this field.

Sport Psychology as an Emerging Field

Sport psychology comprises numerous areas, including motivation, health, participation, exercise, and the use of psychological theory and mental skills to enhance performance. Influential psychologists and theorists, William James and E. W. Scripture, and sport and physical education coaches, James Naismith and Luther Gulick, first applied sport psychology in laboratory settings in 1890. Scripture's interest in the area of 'new psychology' (i.e., the idea that psychology could improve life in a variety of ways) led him to investigate how research from within his psychology laboratory could be applied to sport (Kornspan, 2012).

During the 1920s to 1940s, sport psychology focused mainly on psychological testing and measurement within laboratory settings to identify those individuals who had the attributes needed to become successful, skilled athletes. The introduction of cognitive behavioural and mental skills methods in the 1940s and 1950s led to increased interest in how psychology could be applied to improve athletic performance. By the 1960s, there was greater awareness of sport psychology and research and acceptance of this field increased steadily over the next 20 years. Since the

1990s, further attention to issues of ethics and professional practice has resulted in the development of practice, education and training standards (Kornspan, 2012). More recently, the increase of professionalism in sport has led to greater interest in the performance enhancement of elite athletes through the application of psychological approaches to coaching and training.

Theories of social learning and cognition. Social learning theory and social cognitive theory should be considered in relation to the current study. Social learning theory proposes that learning occurs mainly through observation and is a cognitive process that takes place within social contexts (Bandura, 1977). It is argued that the perceived status of elite athletes as role models could promote the normalisation of OFPB within the elite sporting environment. Social cognitive theory highlights the role of cognitive processes in relation to learning and behavioural outcomes (Bandura, 1991). It is suggested that cognitive processes, such as moral disengagement and cognitive distortions, may increase or decrease the likelihood of OFPB among elite athletes. While the impact of social learning and social cognitive theories in regard to OFPB is beyond the scope of this study, this may be a relevant area for future research in relation to factors that either maintain or precipitate OFPB.

Antisocial Behaviour and Sport

Research into the cognitive and behavioural aspects of morality in sport has increased markedly over the past 30 years (Kavussanu, 2012). Much of this research has focused on the negative social behaviour exhibited by athletes on-field, such as verbal abuse, purposeful injury, or cheating, and is commonly referred to as antisocial behaviour (Kavussanu, 2012). In general, antisocial behaviour is defined as voluntary behaviour that is intended to cause harm or to disadvantage another (Kavussanu, 2006). More recently, antisocial and prosocial behaviours have been described as behaviours that have the *potential* to affect others (Kavussanu, 2012).

Studies that have examined moral behaviour in sport have consistently linked a range of motivational factors to on-field antisocial

behaviour. These include: (a) ego orientation, as explicated in achievement goal theory (e.g., Ames, 1992; Nicholls, 1984), where an athlete may focus on normative superiority and base and evaluate personal competence on the success on others (Kavussanu, 2006); (b) extrinsic motivation, as distinguished in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), where athletes engage in activities for extrinsic reasons, such as rewards or incentives; and (c) perfectionism and fear of failure (Kavussanu, 2012).

Other factors, such as lack of positive moral identity, moral disengagement (i.e., mechanisms athletes use to minimise negative affect, thereby allowing them to engage in antisocial behaviour), and deficits in self-regulatory efficacy have also been associated with moral behaviour in sport (Kavussanu, 2012). However, only one study has considered the consequences of morally relevant behaviour in sport and this is noted as a significant gap in the literature. Sage and Kavaussanu (2008) found that acts of aggression or cheating on-field at the beginning of the season predicted athlete perceptions of "intra-team rivalry" and "superiority over others" (p. 729).

Achievement goal theory refers to two major goal types that individuals utilise to demonstrate or develop competence in achievement environments (Kavussanu, 2012). These two goal types are the 'task' and 'ego' orientations, which reflect variations in the criteria individuals use to define success and evaluate personal competence (Hermansson & Hodge, 2012; Kavussanu, 2012). Task-oriented individuals use self-referenced criteria to evaluate success, while those who are ego-oriented tend to use other-referenced criteria, such as doing better than another person (Kavussanu, 2012). These achievement goal orientations are thought to play a major role in different aspects of moral behaviour; task orientation may affect prosocial behaviour and ego orientation may affect antisocial behaviour (Kavussanu, 2012).

Self-determination theory argues that individuals who are intrinsically or autonomously motivated in their behaviour (as opposed to being extrinsically motivated or controlled) experience greater interest, which leads to better performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-determination theory is underpinned by the assumption that human behaviour is

determined by the need for autonomy (i.e., sense of ownership over ones' own actions), competence, and relationships (i.e., ability to form meaningful relationships). When these three basic psychological needs are met, behaviour is guided by autonomous/intrinsic motivation. However, if these needs are not satisfied, behaviour is directed by controlled motivation (Ntoumanis & Standage, 2009). In sporting environments, being intrinsically motivated has been shown to increase adaptive outcomes, such as positive sportspersonship (Ntoumanis & Standage, 2009). In contrast, extrinsic or controlling types of motivation have been associated with maladaptive consequences, such as acceptance of cheating (Ntoumanis & Standage, 2009).

Ntoumanis and Standage (2009) tested the hypothesis that athlete sportspersonship and antisocial attitudes could be predicted by their autonomous or controlled motivation levels. They concluded that athletes' satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs, combined with a training environment where the coach had created autonomy, was directly linked to autonomous motivation. Indirectly, autonomous motivation was associated with high sportspersonship and low levels of antisocial moral attitudes (Ntoumanis & Standage, 2009). Similarly, in another study, the role of autonomy-supportive coaching was found to be associated with prosocial behaviour, whereas controlled motivation was associated with antisocial behaviour (Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011).

The social environment also plays a significant role in athletes participating in moral or antisocial behaviour in sport. The attributes, beliefs, and behaviours of those in athletes' social environments (e.g., coaches, family members, teammates, and even the referee/umpire) have all been shown to influence athletes' behaviour in sport. In a review, Kavussanu (2012) reported that performance-motivated climates and worry-conducive parent-initiated motivational climates often condoned and promoted antisocial conduct in sport. Other studies have highlighted the importance of contextual factors in explaining antisocial behaviour in sport. Rutten et al. (2008) found that 21 per cent of the variance of off-field antisocial behaviour could be attributed to certain aspects of the sporting environment, such as relational support from a coach, exposure to sociomoral reasoning, and positive team attitudes towards fair play. High

quality coach-athlete relationships were also found to be related to less antisocial behaviour (Rutten et al., 2007).

Motivational climate is another construct of achievement goal theory that has been associated with antisocial behaviour. Motivational climate refers to the situational achievement goals that are identified and portrayed to athletes by others (e.g., coaches, teammates) as important for success. In the sporting achievement context, coaches or significant others can create either performance or mastery-based motivational climates. Performance-based climates focus on rewarding only the top players, while mastery-based climates focus on skill development, work ethic, and individual improvement (Kavussanu, 2012). It is argued that performance-based climates may lead to antisocial behaviour in sport (Kavussanu, 2012), whereas a mastery-based climate tends to promote prosocial behaviour (Kavussanu, 2006).

A consistent finding in the literature on moral behaviour in sport is the role of gender in relation to antisocial behaviour. A number of studies have reported that male athletes from a range of team sports tend to have higher levels of antisocial behaviour than female athletes (Kavaussanu & Ntoumanis, 2003; Kavussanu, Stamp, Slade, & Ring, 2009). Competitive level is another factor that has been identified to explain the variation in moral behaviour in sport. Instrumental aggression (i.e., aggression employed to achieve a goal) as opposed to hostile aggression (i.e., aggression employed to cause harm) appears to increase with competitive level (Romand, Pantaléon, & Cabagno, 2009). Other studies have suggested that age may also be associated with moral behaviour in sport; however, most of the research in this area has been undertaken with adolescent populations. Two studies that explored age differences in moral behaviour suggested that antisocial behaviour was more common in older adolescents and young adults (Kavussanu, Seal, & Phillips, 2006; Romand et al., 2009). However, it should be noted that these studies only focused on male samples aged between 8 and 25 years, thus limiting the generalisability of these results.

In summary, a considerable amount of research has been undertaken in relation to antisocial behaviours that occur on-field during competition.

However, very little is readily available for elite athlete populations, especially in relation to off-field antisocial behaviours. Similarly, no empirical theories were identified to explain the OFPB of elite athletes, possibly due to the varying degrees of behaviour that can occur and the numerous precipitating and maintaining mechanisms that may affect this.

Off-field Problematic Behaviour

Aggression and other antisocial behaviours are commonly referred to as 'moral behaviour' in the literature. As discussed above, moral behaviour is defined as a range of intentional acts that may lead to positive or negative consequences for others' physical and/or psychological wellbeing (Kavussanu, 2012). However, it is important to distinguish between moral behaviour and problematic behaviour, which is the phenomenon being investigated in the current study. The term 'problematic behaviour' was chosen as it allows for a broader definition that includes behaviours that have negative consequences for the individual, as well as others.

Specific types of problematic behaviour that are of particular interest to this study include substance abuse, aggression and violence, inappropriate sexual behaviour, disordered eating, mental health issues, and extreme risk-taking. While it is acknowledged that there are many other types of OFPBs, these behaviours will comprise the main focus of the next section. For instance, there is some literature available on performance enhancing drug use, which is considered a specific type of OFPB. However, these studies were not included in the literature reviewed below because it was considered that they fell outside the scope of the current research. It should also be noted that there is a paucity of research investigating the problematic behaviour of elite athletes outside of the sporting environment. The majority of studies published in this area have focused mainly on American (US) high school and college/university level athlete populations who display problematic behaviour during competition (Dunn & Thomas, 2012; Kavussanu, 2006; Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009; Lisha & Sussman, 2010).

Substance abuse. Engagement in sport is recognised as being important for general wellbeing and positive health outcomes and early studies tended to view participation in sport as a protective factor which mitigated against substance abuse (Pate, Heath, Dowda, & Trost, 1996). Even now, there is comparatively little research about patterns of substance use and related harms among sportspeople, especially those within the elite category. Some studies have looked specifically at alcohol abuse, others have examined drug abuse, while others have investigated both of these topics concurrently under the heading 'substance abuse.' In the literature reviewed below, substance abuse refers to both alcohol use and illicit and recreational drug use by elite athletes, since these behaviours are more likely to occur in the off-field sporting environment.

Alcohol abuse. In general, a positive association has been found between sporting engagement and alcohol consumption (Lisha & Sussman, 2010). Several studies have reported that athletes are more likely to participate in hazardous drinking behaviour and binge drinking than their non-athletic counterparts (Ford, 2007a; Leichliter, Meilman, Presley, & Cashin, 1998; Martens, Dams-O'Connor, & Beck, 2006b; Nelson & Wechsler, 2001; Wechsler & Davenport, 1997). These studies also found that athletes tend to consume more alcohol than their non-athlete peers, although it should be noted that elite athletes were not included in these sample groups. Overall, the research suggests that, in college/university populations, both athletes and sports fans drink more excessively than non-sportspeople (Leichliter et al., 1998; Lorente, Peretti-Watel, Griffet, & Grélot, 2003; Lorente, Souville, Griffet, & Grélot, 2004; Nelson & Wechsler, 2001; Wechsler & Davenport, 1997).

In contrast, the findings from one study on elite student athletes found a negative association between sporting activity and substance use (Peretti-Watel et al., 2003). In this study, prevalence rates of alcohol, cannabis and cigarette use were lower for elite student athletes when compared to other adolescents. However, caution needs to be taken in interpreting these results as the differences could be accounted for by cultural variations, values, and norms. A protective effect may be that of seasonal variation in use, which was not accounted for in this study. Furthermore, alcohol use among young elite athletes may not be

comparable to older elite athletes who are at different stages of their careers.

Dietze, Fitzgerald, and Jenkinson (2008) investigated self-reported patterns of substance use in a sample of elite Australian Football League (AFL) athletes. These researchers found that alcohol consumption varied at different times of the year, which is supportive of a seasonal drinking hypothesis. During the regular playing season, risky/high-risk alcohol consumption for long-term harm was lower in AFL players than in age-matched Australian men. However, during end-of-season and vacation periods, risky/high-risk alcohol consumption for long-term harm was higher in AFL players than age-matched peers (Dietze et al., 2008).

Drug abuse. In contrast to the literature on alcohol use and sporting participation, Lisha and Sussman (2010) reported that both illicit and recreational drugs were used less often by people who engaged in sporting activity. A study of elite professional athletes in Australia also found a low prevalence of illicit and recreational drug use among this group, especially in those who had completed secondary education or who had obtained higher qualifications (Dunn, Thomas, Swift, & Burns, 2011). A number of risk factors were also identified that appear to increase the likelihood of engaging in illicit drug use, such as being male, being older, identifying as a 'full-time' athlete, knowing other athletes who used illicit drugs, and having been offered or had the opportunity to use drugs (Dunn & Thomas, 2012).

Differences in substance use between sporting disciplines. In studies of college/university athlete populations, it was clear that the relationship between sporting participation and substance use differed between sporting disciplines. For example, Ford (2007a) found significant differences in substance use on the basis of sport/team affiliation. In this study, male hockey and female soccer players were at the greatest risk of substance abuse, while lower levels of substance use were found in male soccer, basketball, and cross country/track athletes and in female cross country/track and swimming/diving athletes. This author concluded that variations in sport type and substance use might be explained by social norms and peer influence (Ford, 2007a). Sport-type differences with

regard to alcohol use were reported by Martens, Watson, and Beck (2006) who found that swimming and diving athletes tended to engage in higher levels of drinking than athletes from other sports. Differences appeared to be accounted for by greater social and enhancement motives found among the participants in this study. In contrast, Lorente et al. (2004) reported that the type of sport per se did not appear to be a predictive variable for increased alcohol consumption among a group of French high school athletes.

Some studies have also included comparisons of different sporting levels (e.g., social, competitive, and elite) in relation to substance use. Wechsler and Davenport (1997) compared students who classified themselves as being involved, partly involved, or not involved in athletics. These authors found that a greater percentage of students defined as 'involved' in athletics were considered binge drinkers (i.e., typically consumed four or five drinks in a row), compared with those defined as 'not involved.' However, a greater percentage of those 'not involved' in athletics used tobacco and marijuana, compared with those who were 'involved.' A possible limitation of this study was that involvement in athletics was defined as "students who spent one or more hours per day in intercollegiate sports and thought participation in athletics was important…" (Wechsler & Davenport, 1997, p. 3). Therefore, included a wide range of athletes, not just those competing at the elite level.

A more recent study by Lorente et al. (2004) found that alcohol consumption may depend on multiple variables associated with sporting activity, for example, the type of sport, the context (i.e., competitive or not), and the number of training sessions. Participating at the national and international level was associated with reduced daily alcohol consumption (Lorente et al., 2004). However, as noted above, this study focused solely on an adolescent population and, therefore, may not be generalisable to elite athletes. In contrast, an earlier review of French sport science students (n=677) by the same authors, found that frequency of intoxication was unaffected by competitive level (Lorente et al., 2003). These findings highlight the mixed results in the limited literature that is available on athletes.

Differences in alcohol use have also been reported in relation to individual involvement in team processes. For example, Leichliter et al. (1998) found that the rate of alcohol consumption increased as the level of involvement in sport increased (i.e., from non-participant to participant, and from participant to team leader). These results tend to disconfirm the hypotheses that athletes who hold leadership positions use alcohol more responsibly. A similar correlation was found among both male and female athletes; however, it appeared to occur more frequently in male athletes. Finally, other differences in substance use reported in the literature were that alcohol use tends to be most prevalent in team sports, rather than individual sports (Lorente et al., 2004), and that male athletes typically consume more alcohol than their female counterparts (Wechsler & Davenport, 1997; Wilson, Pritchard, & Schaffer, 2004).

Motives for substance abuse. While the literature provides some guidance about differences between sports with regard to frequency and type of substance use, it is still not clear what motivates athletes to engage in such behaviours. The limitations of motive-based research are acknowledged in the literature as a challenging issue for researchers. Research on motives often involves highly heterogeneous content, making comparisons between studies difficult. Numerous ways of assessing motives have been identified in order to examine athlete behaviour more effectively. However, one of the main challenges in investigating motives is to identify specific motives, since what is valued by one person or group may not be the same for another. As a result, the underlying motives for substance use can vary greatly between different contexts and populations (O'Brien, Ali, Cotter, O'Shea, & Stannard, 2007).

It is also recognised that numerous positive and negative reinforcers may operate in relation to certain situations or times (but not in others), highlighting the changeability of motives as another difficult aspect for researchers. A final issue relating to motive-based research is the reliance on self-reports, including both interviews and questionnaires/screening measures, to assess motives. The validity of such techniques may be compromised by the social desirability of participants. Socially desirable responding occurs when questions are answered in a manner that reflects favourably on the interviewee. Topics such as drug use, antisocial

behaviour, and personal capability are sensitive to social desirability bias, making true estimates and comparison of motives extremely difficult.

A large number of studies have looked at motives for substance use among different groups of athletes and a wide range of potential motive theories has been suggested. Studies that have focused on alcohol use in student athlete populations (i.e., both college/university and elite samples) have hypothesised that athletes who are also college/university students are exposed to unique challenges and stressors in addition to those faced by peers who are not involved in sport. Alcohol may be used to relieve stress associated with educational and academic responsibilities (Ford, 2007b; Leichliter et al., 1998; Lisha & Sussman, 2010; Yusko, Buckman, White, & Pandina, 2008). In addition, social pressures, anxiety, and competitive sporting stress may increase substance use (Lorente et al., 2003; Martens et al., 2006b; Wilson et al., 2004).

A 'social norm influence' also appears to impact substance use behaviour among student athletes (O'Brien, Kolt, Webber, & Hunter, 2010). For example, athletes who viewed parties as an important part of college/university lifestyle and who had large amounts of friends and/or engaged in frequent socialising, tended to have an increased frequency of binge-drinking behaviour (Ford, 2007b; Leichliter et al., 1998; Martens et al., 2006b). The social norms approach is extremely relevant to college/university student athletes who are placed in new unfamiliar situations. For example:

> *During these ambiguous times, normative influences on behavior are enhanced. As college students enter new social situations, it is often difficult for them to rely on normative guidelines from the past; consequently, they look to their new social groups to help them determine what attitudes and behaviors are now appropriate (Ford, 2007a, p. 372).*

Social pressures from peer groups may also be linked to increased substance use (Ford, 2007b; Nelson & Wechsler, 2001). Negative consequences from social peers for not engaging in substance use may influence the likelihood of such behaviour (Ford, 2007a).

In addition to college peer influence or non-athlete influence, it has also been hypothesised that those involved in sport may view substance use as normative behaviour (Ford, 2007a). The competitive nature of athletes may encourage displays of drinking ability to see who can manage or 'hold their liquor better.' Furthermore, it has been suggested that alcohol may be consumed in sporting contexts due to perceptions of other athletes' drinking behaviour (Lisha & Sussman, 2010; Yusko et al., 2008). Finally, masculine drinking values may also be the norm in team sporting codes (Lorente et al., 2003) and frequent socialisation of team members may increase the level of alcohol consumption among athletes (Martens et al., 2006).

Another key motivation is that some sporting environments may promote or condone substance use, while other team environments discourage substance use (Ford, 2007a). For example, Grossbard, Hummer, LaBrie, Pederson, and Neighbors (2009) found that strong attraction to one's team may increase alcohol use. The use of alcohol is typically associated with winning and losing, often seen in post-match situations (Leichliter et al., 1998). As a result, alcohol may be used as a coping mechanism and stress-related drinking can occur (Lisha & Sussman, 2010). Furthermore, one study found that drinking motives appeared to increase during the sporting season, compared to the off-season (Martens & Martin, 2010). Traditional and cultural links between sport and alcohol may also be present, leading to the encouragement of drinking behaviour (Leichliter et al., 1998; Lisha & Sussman, 2010; O'Brien et al., 2010). Drinking in line with team or sporting traditions may at times override a personal desire to consume alcohol.

Some studies have found that athletes may experience a "work hard, play hard" ethic to a higher degree than non-athletes (Leichliter et al., 1998; Martens et al., 2006). Likewise, using substances for enhancement (e.g., to get high or for excitement) has been identified as a motivating factor (Wilson et al., 2004; Yusko et al., 2008). Additionally, alcohol is often viewed by athletes as having less detrimental immediate negative consequences on the body and performance, making it more appropriate than other substances that have greater side effects and performance-based consequences (Lisha & Sussman, 2010; Nelson & Wechsler, 2001;

Yusko et al., 2008). Similarly, some athletes may perceive themselves to be immune from the negative effects of alcohol due to strenuous physical training regimes that make it relatively easy for them to "work off" alcohol (Martens et al., 2006). Alcohol is also readily available, in comparison to other substances (Lisha & Sussman, 2010).

Hypotheses for motives for other substance use, such as cigarette use and drug use also vary. One study identified hypotheses for the reduced frequency of cigarette use in athletes. Similar to the social norm influence above, athletes often socialise with other athletes whose social norms are unsupportive of smoking. Smoking also has more detrimental effects on heart and lung function, which potentially influences one's ability to participate in physical activity. Finally, cigarettes are less advertised within sport compared to alcohol (Lisha & Sussman, 2010).

Substance abuse in New Zealand. The 2004 New Zealand Health Behaviours Survey – Alcohol Use (2004 HBS-AU), part of a coordinated cycle of population-based health-related surveys, found that an estimated 81.2 per cent of New Zealanders between the ages of 12-65 had consumed alcohol in the last 12-month period (Ministry of Health, 2007). Overall, 15.1 per cent of people had felt the effects of alcohol over multiple contexts of their life more than once and rates for self-reported problems from alcohol use were significantly higher among males and Māori[4], compared with females and non-Māori (Ministry of Health, 2007). In addition to personal harms acknowledged by people who used alcohol, respondents had also experienced problems as a result of someone else's drinking (e.g., impact on their family life, social life and finances, and physical and sexual harassment or assault (Ministry of Health, 2007).

A similar survey of drug and alcohol use conducted three years later (2007/08 NZADUS) with a sample group of 438,200 people found that one in six New Zealand adults (16.6% of New Zealanders aged 16–64 years) had used drugs for recreational purposes (Ministry of Health, 2010). Of the population groups analysed, men, younger people and those of European/Other or Māori ethnicity were more likely to have used drugs

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[4] Indigenous person of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

in the past year, highlighting drug use as being common in most parts of society. Risks associated with drug use, such as social harm, health issues, and financial problems were also found to be present in many people's lives (Ministry of Health, 2010).

The results of these surveys also suggest that there is a link between sport and drug and alcohol use. According to the 2004 HBS-AU, sports events and sports clubs were rated as the eighth and tenth most common locations respectively for drinking alcohol (Ministry of Health, 2007). Furthermore, it has been estimated that, on average, nearly 34 per cent of sporting clubs' incomes is derived from the sale of alcohol (Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2010). Similarly, sports events and sports clubs were identified as the eighth most common location for using drugs in the 2007 HBS-DU survey (Ministry of Health, 2010).

Within the New Zealand context, considerable attention has been placed on New Zealand's drinking culture in general (Kahu-Kauika, 2011). However, research that focuses solely on elite athletes is limited and studies that have investigated drinking behaviour among athletes have had mixed results. The results of an early study of a cohort of New Zealand rugby players who were competing at the secondary and tertiary levels[5] (Quarrie, Feehan, Waller, Williams, & McGee, 1996), were similar to those reported in the literature on college/university student athletes in the United States. In the New Zealand study, frequent consumption of large quantities of alcohol were the norm for this group, with both males (11.2) and females (8.7) scoring above the significant cut off score of eight used to identify alcohol use disorders on the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) (Quarrie et al., 1996). A further similarity between these findings and the international literature was the conjoint evidence of males drinking substantially more than their female counterparts and scoring significantly higher on the AUDIT (Quarrie et al., 1996). However, since this study did not compare athletes with non-athletes, or elite athletes with non-elite athletes, these findings are highly specific.

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[5] Secondary education in New Zealand refers to the high school population. Tertiary education refers to post-secondary school training and education beyond the compulsory school system (e.g., university, polytechnic).

Gender differences were also identified in another New Zealand study that looked at alcohol use across competitive levels, including elite athletes from a number of sports (O'Brien et al., 2007). These authors found that male athletes drank more hazardously than female athletes. In contrast, gender was not found to be a significant factor for substance use in two other studies, one with elite New Zealand athletes (O'Brien, Blackie, & Hunter, 2005) and one with a sample group of university athletes (O'Brien, Hunter, & Kypri, 2008).

O'Brien et al. (2005) also explored the drinking behaviours of elite New Zealand athletes. They concluded that both elite provincial and international/country level representative sportspeople had significantly higher levels of hazardous drinking, when compared with non-elite athletes and non-sportspeople. In this study, provincial elite level sportspeople demonstrated the highest rates of binge drinking (O'Brien et al., 2005). Also of concern was the finding that both elite international and provincial athletes had higher scores on the 'harmful consequences' subscale of the AUDIT, indicating that their level of drinking resulted in greater rates of harmful consequences (O'Brien et al., 2005).

In another study, O'Brien et al. (2007) found that elite provincial athletes displayed the most problematic drinking behaviours. In contrast to the findings outlined above, elite international sportspeople were found to have the lowest rates of hazardous drinking behaviour, compared with elite provincial and club/sport or non-elite athletes. In this study, the rates of hazardous drinking for elite provincial athletes, club/social sports, and elite international athletes were 68, 53, and 50 per cent respectively, with only 4 per cent of the sample abstaining from alcohol use. These findings are considerably higher than the hazardous drinking rates found among the general public (21.1%) (Ministry of Health, 2008). Consistent with the international research findings, it would appear that team sport players tend to drink more hazardously than individual sport players (O'Brien et al., 2007).

Motives for alcohol abuse discussed in the New Zealand literature. Similar to the international motives reviewed, motivating factors for New Zealand athletes in using alcohol also included dealing with competitive

sporting pressures and social stress, social norm influences, and for enhancement purposes (e.g., to get a buzz) (O'Brien et al., 2007). Motives for drinking differed across levels of sporting participation, with elite provincial and international sportspeople placing greater emphasis on drinking as a coping mechanism (O'Brien et al., 2007). However, athletes at the elite provincial level placed greater emphasis on drinking for positive reinforcement for team/group purposes, compared with athletes at the elite international level (O'Brien et al., 2007). Furthermore, rugby union professional athletes reported higher levels of positive reinforcement and team/group influences as motives for drinking, compared with rugby league professional athletes; however, similar responses were found in both groups with regard to sport-related coping motives (Luck, 2012). This study also found that athletes who were not involved in any form of education reported more positive reinforcement as a motive for drinking than athletes currently involved in education (Luck, 2012).

The detrimental impact of alcohol use on athlete performance is often disregarded in order to create meaningful friendships and develop a sense of unity within the New Zealand sporting culture (Kahu-Kauika, 2011). In particular, individuals who were involved in team sports, such as rugby, were more inclined to use alcohol to satisfy peer pressure from the social environment. Engagement in this tradition also created a sense of belonging and connectedness for the athletes involved (Kahu-Kauika, 2011).

One New Zealand study, where 32.4 per cent of the sample group was considered elite, found gender differences in drinking motives among university sportspeople aged 18 and above (O'Brien et al., 2008). In this study, males placed greater emphasis on drinking for social and enhancement reasons, whereas females placed greater emphasis on drinking to cope, as well as for social enhancement (O'Brien et al., 2008).

Finally, in one survey completed by retired elite rugby players, 23 per cent engaged in alcohol and substance use when transitioning from elite sport to retirement (New Zealand Rugby Players Association, n.d.).

While there is some research on the drinking behaviour of elite athletes in the New Zealand context, there is very little variation in the samples investigated. Most of the research has been conducted with rugby players and there is an obvious gap within the New Zealand literature on the OFPB of elite athletes in other sporting codes.

Sponsorship and substance abuse. A final area of interest within the literature around problematic substance use and elite athletes is the topic of sponsorship and alcohol-related harm. There is some research to suggest that alcohol industry sponsorship of sportspeople is related to higher levels of hazardous drinking, both in New Zealand and overseas (O'Brien et al., 2008; O'Brien, Miller, Kolt, Martens, & Webber, 2011). O'Brien and Kypri (2008) found that players who received free or discounted alcohol felt obliged to attend post-match functions at sponsors' premises and drink their products. In addition, athletes who received sponsorship over multiple levels (i.e., individual, team, club) reported greater participation in drinking. Similar results were also found in an Australian sample of elite AFL players (Dietze et al., 2008).

A more recent study investigated whether alcohol-related sponsorship of sportspeople was associated with alcohol-related physical and social harms (O'Brien, Lynott, & Miller, 2013). The findings suggested that receipt of alcohol industry sponsorship by university-level athletes was related to higher rates of received aggressive behaviour, such as physical violence and verbal abuse. Since participants in this study were recruited from Australian university campuses, these results may be more generalisable to New Zealand populations.

Violence/aggression. In most cultures, violence and aggression are generally regarded as unacceptable behaviours that violate established social norms and mores. However, within sporting contexts, such behaviour is not only tolerated but is often encouraged and promoted as 'part of the game' and sporting culture. Sports often endorse a high degree of physicality, which may blur the boundaries in terms of what is considered to be antisocial behaviour.

Aggression and violence in sport has long been a focus for both practitioners and academics (Grange & Kerr, 2010; Kerr, 2005; Terry & Jackson, 1985). According to Kavussanu (2012), aggression (both verbal and physical) in relation to on-field sport has been the most widely studied class of antisocial behaviour. However, relatively little attention has been given to the aggression and violence of athletes in non-sporting contexts (Grange & Kerr, 2011). In general, when this aspect of behaviour has been examined in athletes, attention has been on male violence and aggression against women (Crosset, 1999), while research on same sex aggression in non-sport social settings has been virtually non-existent.

Historically, aggression in sporting contexts has been discussed mainly in relation to the beneficial effect that sport may have in reducing aggressive behaviours in other situations. Research has also focused on the link between sporting participation and elevated levels of aggression outside the sporting context (Endresen & Olweus, 2005). However, more recent studies have suggested that involvement in sport cannot be linked consistently to off-field aggression (Kimble, Russo, Bergman, & Galindo, 2010). This finding was supported by Miller, Melnick, Farrell, Sabo, and Barnes (2006) who found that participation in sport did not account for differences in physical aggression in non-sporting contexts.

A recent review of the general aggression and sport literature concluded that research on off-field violence and antisocial behaviour was sparse (Kimble et al., 2010). According to these authors, previous studies that have examined off-field antisocial behaviour(s) often failed to investigate the topic from a scientific perspective, resulting in erroneous assumptions being made about athletes' tendencies for violent behaviour. In particular, the research has been criticised for lacking enquiry through sound scientific methods, having poor methodological approaches, and failing to analyse results in relation to adequate comparison or control groups (Kimble et al., 2010).

Despite the concerns raised above, studies that have looked at off-field aggression or violence among sportspeople suggest a number of trends, such as the relationship between sport contact level and aggressive behaviour (e.g., Endresen & Olweus, 2005). In this study, participation in

power sports, such as boxing, wrestling, and weightlifting, and high contact sports, led to increased off-field aggression, compared with athletes who were not involved in these sports. Similarly, Kreager (2007) reported a positive association between contact sports and interpersonal violence.

In contrast, no significant differences in aggression were found over three contact levels (collision, contact, non-contact) in a study on male and female athletes (Keeler, 2007). Lemieux, McKelvie, and Stout (2002) also explored the contact, non-contact hypothesis for off-field aggression against non-sporting control groups. Their results indicated that hostile aggression occurred more frequently in participants who were physically bigger, regardless of whether they played contact or non-contact sport. This finding was consistent across all groups and no differences were found between athletes and non-athletes in terms of hostile aggression in off-field contexts.

Social and environmental factors in the sporting context related to OFPB were also evident in the literature. For instance, Miller et al. (2006) found that 'jock identity', rather than physical participation in sport per se, played an influential role in the frequency of off-field violence in adolescents. Similarly, Endresen and Olweus (2005) found that repeated contact with 'macho' attitudes, norms, and ideals that focus on toughness and social norm violation, were all possible mechanisms for violence outside the sporting context in adolescent athletes. Another study found that as self-regulatory efficacy (i.e., ability to resist peer pressure and violate rules) decreased, physical aggression in non-sporting contexts increased (Ciairino et al., 2007). This study also concluded that positive coaching led to higher self-efficacy of athletes, which reduced physical aggression towards peers in non-sporting contexts (Ciairino et al., 2007).

Of the research reviewed, only three studies appeared to focus on elite athlete populations. In the US, the National Football League (NFL) has a reputation for numerous code of conduct violations and arrests involving players (Ugolini, 2007). During the 1999 NFL season, violence related incidents included murder, sexual and physical assault, drugs and weapon charges, and breaking and entering with intent to harm (Staffo,

2001). A question that still remains unanswered is whether or not athletes are over-represented in such antisocial behaviours or whether they are the targets of increased media attention as a result of their elite profile?

While some athletes are extremely aggressive when they take the field, the research is not conclusive about whether this behaviour transfers to other contexts. In one study, interpersonal aggression was found to be common in the lives of ice hockey players, both when engaged in their sport and when in off-field social settings (Pappas, McKenry, & Catlett, 2004). More recently, a study of elite-level footballers, who were renowned for their on-field aggressive play, found that they did not transfer their aggression to non-sporting or off-field social settings (Grange & Kerr, 2011). In fact, these players were often reported to be the targets of aggression from others.

No literature that investigated aggression and violence in elite New Zealand athlete samples was identified for inclusion in this review, highlighting a substantial gap in the literature.

Motives for violence/aggression. Hazardous drinking has a strong association with other problematic behaviours (Leichliter et al., 1998; Nelson & Wechsler, 2001). In a review of predominantly US research Sønderlund et al. (in press) found that all but one study demonstrated a significant relationship between alcohol use, sports participation and aggression and/or violence. Overall, higher rates of alcohol related antisocial and aggressive behaviour has been reported in college/university athletes who drink, as opposed to athletes and non-athletes who do not drink (Nelson & Wechsler, 2001).

In addressing the research gap on aggression and antisocial behaviour in non-US college athletes, O'Brien et al. (2012) reported Australian university sportspeople/athletes as having greater alcohol-related aggressive and antisocial behaviours than their non-sporting counterparts. Consistent with the US research, other studies have also found that alcohol-related aggression was common among the professional athletes investigated. For example, 26 per cent of a sample of professional AFL players, were involved in fights (verbal and physical)

when drinking (Dietze et al., 2008) and alcohol-related aggression was also found in professional ice hockey players (Pappas et al., 2004). Similarly, O'Brien et al. (2013) also found concerning rates of other aggressive behaviours among Australian university athletes, which appeared to be influenced by the amount of alcohol consumed. In this study, male athletes were significantly more likely to have received and displayed aggression due to intoxication, compared with female athletes. Other motives or explanations for off-field aggression and violence among athletes suggested in the literature included the culture of masculinity and encouragement of violence being carried to off-field activities, strong bonds with teammates reinforcing aggressive behaviour, male athletes' tendency to objectify women, and potential team cultures that had lesser regard for women (Pappas et al., 2004).

Sexual violence. Another aspect of violence and aggression within athlete populations mentioned in the literature is that of sexual aggression (Kimble et al., 2010). This topic has received considerable attention in the US recently due to several high-profile incidents involving college/university and elite athletes (e.g., rape allegations against Kobe Bryant and Duke University Lacrosse players). However, limited research has been carried out in this area and the results are mixed. Two studies found a moderate association between athletic participation and attitudes related to sexual aggression and reports of sexual aggression among male college/university populations (Gage, 2008; Murnen & Kohlman, 2007). Similarly, Boeringer (1996) suggested that college/university athletes engage in more sexually coercive and aggressive acts than non-athletes. However, other studies have reported no significant statistical correlation between athletic membership and any form of aggression, including sexual aggression (Gidycz, Warkentin, & Orchowski, 2007).

Some studies have reported that sexual aggression may be associated more with particular types of sports. For example, Gage (2008) found that male football players were significantly more likely to display sexual aggression than those who were involved with track and field or tennis and that the type of sport may be important in the development of maladaptive attitudes and behaviours. However, no research was identified that addressed this behaviour in elite athlete populations and

sample groups outside of the US were extremely rare. It should also be noted that there was no mention of sexual aggression or violence in relation to same sex incidents in the literature reviewed.

Motives for sexual violence. Possible motives for sexual violence and aggression identified in the literature were similar to those for other types of aggression and violence. These included: the encouragement of aggression towards women via sporting culture; norms of masculinity being enforced outside of the team and sporting context into social settings; pressure to conform to team norms (Gage, 2008); influence of 'jock' culture (Safai, 2002); encouragement of aggression by coaches, fans and teammates (Pappas et al., 2004); team bonding and culture that objectifies women (Mewett & Toffoletti, 2008); and cultural 'spill over' i.e., the idea that acceptance of violence in one area of life, such as sport, may be carried over to other settings (Boeringer, 1996).

Disordered eating. Athletes are not exempt to sociocultural ideals and pressures with regard to appearance, weight and physique. According to Petrie and Greenleaf (2012), women are expected to be thin but curvaceous, and men, lean but muscular, both unrealistic body ideals. Although studies on disordered eating in athletes date back to the 1980s, there is only a small amount of literature available on the eating habits of elite athletes, compared with other types of problematic behaviours. It should also be noted that many of the early studies were not based on empirical methods, making it difficult for researchers to draw valid conclusions on this topic (Byrne & McLean, 2001).

In general, studies have found a higher frequency of disordered eating or eating problems among athletes, compared with non-athletes, especially in sports that are dependent on low body weight and leanness for competitive edge (Byrne & McLean, 2001; Sundgot-Borgen & Torstveit, 2010; Torstveit, Rosenvinge, & Sundgot-Borgen, 2008). Sundgot-Borgen (1993; as cited in Byrne & McLean, 2001) investigated athletes grouped on body type requirements for their specific sports and concluded that:

A significantly higher percentage of athletes competing in the aesthetic sports (diving, figure skating, and gymnastics) and weight-dependent

sports (judo, karate, and wrestling) met the criteria for eating disorders
(25%) compared with athletes competing in other sports (12%) or controls
(5%). (p. 151)

Similar results have been found in more recent studies. Sundgot-
Borgen and Torstveit (2004) reported that the prevalence of subclinical or
clinical levels of eating disorders (including anorexia nervosa, anorexia
athletica, and bulimia nervosa) were substantially higher in athletes
(13.5%), compared with control groups (4.6%). Differences in disordered
eating as a result of sporting type and gender were also evident. Sundgot-
Borgen and Torstveit (2004) found that eating disorders were more
prevalent in males who engaged in antigravitation sports (22%) compared
to ball (5%) and endurance sports (9%), and in females competing in
aesthetic sports (42%) compared to endurance, technical, and ball sports
(24%; 17%; and 16% respectively). Krentz and Warschburger (2011) also
found higher rates of disordered eating across both genders in aesthetic
sport athletes compared to non-athletic control groups. In relation to ballet
(another aesthetic sport), eating pathology has been documented as being
as severe as non-athletes diagnosed with eating disorders (Ringham et al.,
2006). It would appear that athletes who are evaluated not only on how
they perform, but on how attractive they look when competing, tend to
have increased body consciousness (Petrie & Greenleaf, 2012).

Although there is limited research on the prevalence of eating
disorders at the competitive level, it has been suggested that athletes who
train and compete at higher levels may be at increased risk, mainly due to
the need to excel and focus on perfectionism (Petrie & Greenleaf, 2012).
Higher rates of disordered eating have also been reported in female
athletes compared with male athletes, and in male athletes compared to
non-athlete males (Byrne & McLean, 2001; Haase, 2011; Sundgot-Borgen &
Torstveit, 2004; Torstveit et al., 2008).

Motives for disordered eating. A range of motives and risk factors for
developing disordered eating have been identified in the sport psychology
literature, including personal, social and environmental pressures. The
psychological make up and personality characteristics of elite athletes may
increase the risk of disordered eating (Byrne & McLean, 2001; Sundgot-

Borgen & Torstveit, 2010). Sport specific pressures to improve body composition/physique and to be leaner to enhance competitive advantage have also been found (Byrne & McLean, 2001; Krentz & Warschburger, 2011; Sundgot-Borgen & Torstveit, 2010). Additionally, sociocultural pressures to be an ideal body shape have been identified, especially for women involved in sport (Byrne & McLean, 2001; Sundgot-Borgen & Torstveit, 2010). It has also been suggested that a muscular body type associated with playing sport does not always meet accepted societal ideals of attractiveness and this may lead athletes to try to change their body shape, resulting in disordered eating (Sundgot-Borgen & Torstveit, 2010).

Similarly, the sporting environment may tolerate disordered eating behaviours that would be considered abnormal in other contexts (Petrie & Greenleaf, 2012). Factors such as ego goal orientations, pressure from peers and coaches, and performance-oriented motivational climates have been associated with more frequent dieting, obsessive focus on weight, and unhealthy perfectionism (de Bruin, Bakker, & Oudejans, 2009). Inappropriate coaching behaviours have also been identified as a specific risk factor for the development of disordered eating among athletes (Jones, Glintmeyer, & McKenzie, 2005; Sundgot-Borgen & Torstveit, 2010). Due to the high prevalence rate of disordered eating in elite athletes, screening is recommended for those competing in leanness sports, along with better education about health and performance nutrition (Sundgot-Borgen & Torstveit, 2004).

Other mental health issues. The majority of research on mental health in athlete populations has focused on disordering eating and substance abuse as the most prevalent types of OFPB (Reardon & Factor, 2010). Research on the mental health of elite athletes is limited because sport psychology has tended to focus mainly on performance enhancement (Hughes & Leavey, 2012). Indeed, sport psychology and psychiatry focusing on diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders is only a comparatively recent development (Reardon & Factor, 2010). A range of suggestions have been put forward to explain the lack of literature on mental health of elite athletes, including the misconception that elite athletes are immune to such illnesses, that elite athletes may

minimise signs of mental illness due to fear of stigmatisation, and that sporting organisations and officials tend to downplay or ignore such symptoms or problems (Reardon & Factor, 2010).

The literature suggests that mental disorders are just as prevalent among sportspeople as in the general population (Maskser, 2011). However, elite athletes may be exposed to different precipitating factors, which make them more vulnerable to certain types of mental disorders than other people. (Maskser, 2011; Reardon & Factor, 2010). Appropriate diagnosis of mental health issues may therefore be crucial for the continuity of an elite athlete's career (Reardon & Factor, 2010). The vulnerabilities outlined below are largely in relation to depression in athletes (for a comprehensive review of mental disorders and athletes, see Reardon & Factor, 2010).

The requirements of being an elite athlete may result in a loss of personal identity in that athlete identity is shaped solely by an individual's sporting involvement. Some studies have found that when athletic identity is removed (e.g., due to burnout, injury, or retirement from sport) there may be a corresponding increase in psychological distress and affective disorders, such as depression (Reardon & Factor, 2010). For example, in one sample of injured athletes (adolescents), high athletic identity was associated with high early depressive symptoms (Manuel et al., 2002). These authors also found that positive social support was associated with lower depressive symptoms and that depressive symptoms appeared to reduce over time. Another study that explored the influence of lifestyle change and loss of athletic identity found higher levels of depression in those currently involved in sport, compared with retired athletes (Weigand, Cohen, & Merenstein, 2013). In contrast, a New Zealand survey reported that 35 per cent of retired rugby players experienced feelings of despair or depression (New Zealand Rugby Players Association, n.d.).

Injury was also noted as a significant factor that may influence the mental health of athletes. In one study, Walker, Thatcher, and Lavallee (2007) reviewed literature looking at psychological responses to injury of elite athletes. This study suggested that extreme responses to injury may

occur, which are similar in intensity to the grief process. Walker et al. (2007) reported that clinical intervention may have been required for 10-20 per cent of the athletes in one study and noted that suicide was also highlighted as a major concern in another study.

Schaal et al. (2011) investigated gender and sport-based differences of mental illness in athletes and found that 17 per cent of the sample groups had an ongoing or recent disorder, with generalized anxiety disorder being the most prevalent diagnosis (6%). They also found that female athletes experienced higher rates of psychopathology than male athletes. Schaal et al. (2011) concluded that variation in psychopathology between sports indicates that there may be specific sport-related factors which increase the likelihood of mental health disorders in some athletes.

Risk-taking behaviour. A number of articles looked at a range of different areas to do with risk-taking and sport, such as health compromising behaviours, risk perception, and the relationship between other extreme behaviours and risk-taking. For instance, the relationship between hazardous drinking and other risky behaviours, such as antisocial behaviour, and unplanned or unprotected sexual relations, has been acknowledged in the literature (O'Brien et al., 2007). Waldron and Krane (2005) investigated health compromising behaviours in non-elite female athletes and found that athletes with a strong social approval orientation (i.e. who seek acceptance from teammates, coaches and parents) may engage in unhealthy behaviours, such as binge drinking, hazing or overtraining, to gain approval.

Peretti-Watel et al. (2004) examined risk behaviours in elite student athletes and found that young athletes who endorsed personal, social, and sporting success motivations were more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours "on the road" (p. 241). These authors concluded that the boundaries between the sporting field and the outside world often became blurred and that athletes' risk-taking values from on the field may have been transposed to the "real world." Similarly, a competitive spirit in female athletes was linked to unsafe sex; however, no significant finding was noted for males. These authors also considered the impact of an opportunity effect impacting risk-taking behaviour. For example, an

opportunity effect was found in athletes for increased risk of cannabis use when involved in outings with both athletes and non-athletes. However, an opportunity effect was found for risk of alcohol use only in males and when involved in athlete-only outings. Unsafe sex and drunk driving were related to outings with non-athletes in males only. These findings tend to reinforce the ambiguity of the opportunity effect and how both sporting and masculine values may influence risk-taking behaviour. The opportunity effect may explain the relationship between sporting participation and substance use, especially when athletes are competing overseas (Peretti-Watel et al., 2004).

The concept of perceived risk in high school athletes versus non-athletes was examined by Wetherill and Fromme (2007). These authors found that athletes reported greater substance use, more sexual partners, and lower perceived risk (e.g., evaluation of likelihood of negative consequences), compared with non-athletes. In addition, gender differences in perceived risk were identified, with female athletes holding higher perceptions of risk than male athletes. Similar results were reported in a study of non-elite adolescent athletes, where female athletes had a higher level of perceived risk of injury than male athletes (Kontos, 2004). However, the age range of this sample group was 11-14 years, potentially limiting the generalisability of the results. This is an important limitation as differences in perceived risk may also be linked to relative differences in cognitive development among this age group.

Overall, the existing literature suggests that athletes are a high-risk population for risky behaviours. Common findings influencing risky behaviour were that of social influence, performance motivations, and the level of perceived risk.

Stressors in Sport

The early work of Gould, Finch, and Jackson (1993) on figure skaters sparked research on sources of stress and coping mechanisms experienced by athletes. In general, these early studies focused mainly on individual sporting codes and only looked at performance-related stressors. Performance stressors experienced by athletes included preparation,

injury, pressure, opponents, self, events, and superstitions about not wearing their 'lucky' kit or about the venue (Hanton, Fletcher, & Coughlan, 2005).

It is evident that athletes at the elite level experience a wide spectrum of stressors (Fletcher & Hanton, 2003; Hanton et al., 2005; Noblet & Gifford, 2007; Thelwell, Weston, & Greenlees, 2007). More recently, studies have investigated performance-related, personal, self-presentational and organisational stressors reported by athletes in both individual and team sports.

A wide range of organisational stressors experienced by athletes beyond the competitive environment has also been explored. These include training and team environments, accommodation and travel, selection and recruitment, financial arrangements, coaches and coaching styles, communication, expectations, and the training environment itself (Fletcher & Hanton, 2003). Organisational stressors result from the interaction of an athlete with the sporting organisation and immediate off-field environment. Fletcher and Hanton (2003) examined four types of organisational stressors; environmental issues, such as selection and finances; personal issues, such as injury and nutrition; leadership issues, such as coaches and coaching style; and team issues, such as atmosphere and support.

Additional sources of stress have also been reported by elite athletes involved in team sporting environments. These often comprise a range of stressors from the broader training environment as well as specific competition stressors. Specific stressors found among team sports included external factors, personal factors/issues, match specific issues (Thelwell et al., 2007) and negative aspects of culture and organisational systems, performance expectations and standards, career development, interpersonal relationships, demanding nature of work, problems with the work/non work interface (Noblet & Gifford, 2007).

The increase in stressors that occur with large international sporting events is a unique aspect related to the elite environment. Hodge and Hermansson (2007) examined pressures on New Zealand athletes

competing at the Olympic Games, especially for those involved in 'minor' sports. These included greater levels of media coverage, increased public profile, and higher expectations of success, both from sponsors and the general public. Hodge and Hermansson (2007) identified a number a stressors that may interfere with an athlete's mental preparation before a major event, such as winning and losing, media coverage, funding, injury, and interpersonal conflict with teammates, coaches and management. Athletes' responses to such pressures and other minor issues at big events were labelled as the "2nd Week Blues." These authors also talked about the success of the "One Team/One Spirit" philosophy/vision in strengthening team dynamics and cohesion. This mental skills strategy consisted of a range of activities aimed at helping elite athletes to cope with the overwhelming hype and pressures associated with competing in high profile events (Hodge & Hermansson, 2007).

Research that has examined stressors across a range of sports is of particular relevance to the current study. Similar findings have been reported in the literature in relation to competitive/performance stressors commonly experienced by athletes from different sporting disciplines. However, in contrast, organisational stressors appear to be more varied and are generally subject to wider societal influences such as sociocultural, economic, political and technological factors (Fletcher & Hanton, 2003; Hanton et al., 2005).

More recently, differences in sport specific stressors that were not identified in earlier research have been reported that have implications for intervention and prevention methods. Although there are a number of stressors commonly experienced by elite athletes across sporting codes, there also appears to be sources of stress that are unique to specific sports. There is a need, therefore, to consider circumstances and factors that may be stressful within each sport (Noblet & Gifford, 2007; Thelwell et al., 2007).

Media. Media publicity is another potential source of stress for elite athletes. In the twentieth century, mass media was largely confined to print materials, static radio, and television coverage. However, media coverage of sport has increased dramatically in the twenty-first century

with the advent of new digital technologies, such as the internet and social media (Stead, 2008). Live streaming has made it possible for news media to report on sports events as they are happening in real time, with no delay in transmission. As a result, there is now a significant media focus on elite athletes, especially for those involved in the most popular sporting codes.

What is reported in the media tends to influence and frame people's beliefs and ideals of reality. There is a common perception among athletes that the media tends to focus largely on the 'sensational aspects' and 'scandals' of sport, often distorting actual sporting performance and results (Sisjord & Kristiansen, 2008). Indeed, some authors have suggested that sports journalism is fast approaching the status of celebrity journalism (Rowe, 2007; Sanderson, 2010). Sisjord and Kristiansen (2008) commented that, "journalists play a crucial role in producing athletes and athletic events as marketable commodities, and the media seem to have changed the Olympic motto from 'faster, higher, and stronger' to 'sensationalize, scandalize, and entertain'" (pp. 350-351).

Much of the research on the media and elite sport has tended to focus on the impact of the media on athletes' on-field performance and behaviour (Greenleaf, Gould, & Dieffenbach, 2001). Only a small number of articles have investigated the impact of the media in relation to the off-field behaviour of elite athletes and research on the stressor influence of the media is largely unexplored (Kristiansen, Roberts, & Sisjord, 2011). The public are often informed about winning or losing (as defined by the media), with little regard for the effect these stories may have on athlete preparation or performance (Kristiansen, Hanstad, & Roberts, 2011).

The proximity of the athlete-media/reporter relationship and media attention, both before and during competition, has been reported as a potential stressor (Greenleaf et al., 2001; Kristiansen & Hanstad, 2012; Kristiansen, Hanstad, et al., 2011; Kristiansen, Roberts, et al., 2011). Similar results were also found in a study by Kristiansen, Hanstad, et al. (2011) that investigated achievement goal theory in relation to media stress. Footballers who were higher in ego orientation and perceived a performance-based team climate were more likely to experience the media

as a stressor. However, little attention has been given to how athletes react to the way they are portrayed in the media.

One study investigated intense media attention on elite football goalkeepers as a stressor and the ways in which athletes coped with constant media attention (Kristiansen, Roberts, et al., 2011). The results showed that elite goalkeepers utilised three main strategies to cope with negative media content: social support; avoidance (e.g. not reading or watching news reports and refusing match day interviews); and problem-focused coping. However, Kristiansen, Roberts, et al. (2011) also found that coach evaluation was more important than media game reports and that age and experience were key factors that enabled elite athletes to cope with negative media content. Similarly, the athlete-journalist relationship was identified as a strain for Norwegian Olympians, both before and during competition (Kristiansen, Hanstad, et al., 2011). Evidence of problem-focused support and avoidance coping strategies were also found among this group of participants. In a further study, the perception of important media coverage was found to differ between athletes and journalists, outlining a stressor influence impacting both parties (Kristiansen & Hanstad, 2012).

Sanderson (2010) explored how both the media and sporting fans framed professional golfer Tiger Wood's marital infidelity. The results of this study suggested that, while the press account framed Woods negatively, fans tended to view his extramarital affair as a private matter that demonstrated his human nature (Sanderson, 2010). This study also highlighted the role of social media and the influence that 'Facebook' and 'Twitter' appear to have on reconfiguring the sports world. Sanderson (2010) also pointed out that social media sites can be valuable tools that allow athletes to counteract and contest negative framing and increase their support base. In addition, social media sites also enabled fans to promote alternative perspectives about the alleged behaviour of athletes.

Gender stereotyping and differences in reporting based on gender were prominent topics discussed in the research on sport and the media. Bernstein (2002) reviewed the literature on the media in relation to women's sport over the last two decades and reported an obvious increase

in the amount of female sport coverage. However, the type of coverage given to female athletes is still a work in progress. For instance, numerous studies have demonstrated how the media undermine and trivialise female sporting success. Compared with media reporting on male athletes, female athletes were often infantilised (e.g., referred to as 'girls') and their appearance was frequently accentuated over skill and performance (Bernstein, 2002).

New Zealand sports media also has an overwhelmingly male dominated focus (Wensing & Bruce, 2003). Masculinity is strongly associated with sport and this is seldom challenged, especially since the majority of people reporting on sport were male (Bruce, 2008). In examining coverage of women's sport, Bruce (2008) found that New Zealand media reinforced gender stereotypes in that successful female athletes who demonstrated cultural ideals of attractiveness, heterosexuality, and femininity typically received the most media coverage. However, it was also noted that New Zealand sports media do celebrate and give mention to women's sporting success, usually around major sporting events (Bruce, 2008).

Coping in Sport

Most of the research on coping in sport has looked at performance-based stressors and coping. The most prominent descriptions of coping in the sport psychology literature are those of the process and trait perspectives (Nicholls & Polman, 2007). With the trait approach, coping styles are stable and individuals have a set of coping responses and strategies that remain stable over time and across contexts (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). Alternatively, a more recent model is the process or transactional approach, which views coping as a dynamic process that involves interactions between the individual's internal (e.g., personal values, beliefs, and goals) and external environments (Lazarus, 2000). The transactional process defines the imbalance between the individual and the environment as stress, and argues that stress is a relationship between the person and the environment where the demands outweigh coping resources (Kristiansen, Hanstad, et al., 2011).

Research suggests that athletes tend to use a number of coping strategies and specific dimensions of coping have been found in the literature (Gould et al., 1993; Nicholls & Polman, 2007). At the macro level, problem, focused, and avoidance-coping strategies were commonly adopted. Psychological-coping has also been reported, where techniques such as cognitive disengagement occurred (Nicholls & Polman, 2007). Use of external coping agencies, such as social support from family, coaches, teammates, sport psychologists were also highlighted as specific strategies that athletes used to overcome stress (Thelwell et al., 2007).

Only one study has looked specifically at off-field or organisational stressors and coping (Kristiansen, Halvari, & Roberts, 2012). These authors found that a performance-oriented climate was associated with greater coach-athlete stress, whereas a mastery-oriented climate reduced coach-athlete stress. These findings have important implications for sporting management since it appears that athletes cope better with stress when a mastery-oriented climate is employed by coaches (Kristiansen et al., 2012).

Elite at a young age. Another area of interest in relation to the current study is the specific stressors and coping in relation to young elite athletes. Although considerable research has explored performance and organisational stressors and coping with adult athletes, far less research has been conducted with young elite athletes. This aspect of coping in sport is important because young athletes may be going through an important time in relation to the development of coping strategies (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007).

A meta-analysis by Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck (2007) identified a number of factors in relation to stressors and coping strategies of young elite athletes. They found that athlete appraisals of stressors were influenced by contextual differences (e.g., stressors at university differed from those in the sporting environment) and that coping responses were also highly contextual. Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck (2007) reported that as stressor appraisals changed, so did coping responses. Coping responses also appeared to change over time; however, coping was dependent on the development or availability of coping resources. Support networks appeared to influence the way athletes appraised stressors and coped with

them. These authors concluded that positive coping messages from coaches may increase coping mechanisms and that modelling of positive or negative ways of coping may also influence how young athletes cope with stressors (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007).

Kristiansen and Roberts (2010) reviewed both performance and organisational stressors in young elite athletes and found that they often felt 'overwhelmed'. Athletes reported pressure from organisational stressors (e.g., from national sporting associations) as outweighing performance stressors. Informational, emotional and cognitive strategies were important in coping with both types of stressors. Social support was highlighted as being more important for performance-based stress, while coaching support was equally important for coping with both organisational and performance stressors. This study supported the idea that coaches should aim to develop and maintain a stable mastery motivational climate. It would appear that a performance-based climate that emphasises winning is an increased stressor for young athletes who have underdeveloped coping strategies.

Another concern noted in the literature was that psychosocial challenges experienced by young athletes may lead to other problems, such as substance abuse or disordered eating, as a result of maladaptive coping (Tamminen, Holt, & Crocker, 2012). In general, the literature suggests that athletes tend to cope more effectively with stress with age; therefore, younger athletes may need education on effective coping strategies in order to increase their repertoire of skills (Nicholls & Polman, 2007).

Help-seeking Behaviour

Overseas research on help-seeking behaviour has found that males, young people, and those living in affluent areas are least likely to seek help for mental health problems (Oliver, Pearson, Coe, & Gunnell, 2005). However, other studies with regard to gender and help-seeking behaviour do not fully support the hypothesis that men are less likely than women to seek help when ill (Galdas, Cheater, & Marshall, 2005). One potential factor influencing men's' help-seeking behaviour that has gained some

support is the role of "traditional masculinity and/or masculine beliefs" (Galdas et al., 2005, p. 621). Galdas et al. (2005) suggested that men were less expressive of mental illness, due to a socialised male role where displaying weakness and asking for help are not considered masculine. However, they acknowledged that further research with men of different socioeconomic status, age and ethnicity is needed to confirm this theory (Galdas et al., 2005).

Avoidance, demographic, and situational factors have also been found to impact help-seeking behaviours and avoidance of counselling. Avoidance factors include social stigma, treatment fears, fear of emotion, anticipated utility and risks, self-disclosure, social norms, and self-esteem, while demographic and situational factors include gender, race and ethnicity, setting and problem type, and age (Vogel, Wester, & Larson, 2007). Some studies have shown that younger athletes and males may demonstrate more negative attitudes (i.e., stigma) towards help-seeking behaviour, such as seeing a sport psychologist, than older athletes and females (Martin, 2005). Research on the help-seeking behaviour of student athletes found lower help-seeking rates among this group, compared with non-athletes (Pierce, 1969; as cited in Gulliver, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2012). Although this research was conducted more than 40 years ago and focused largely on college/university samples, more recent studies have confirmed that student athletes tend to have less positive attitudes with regard to help seeking than their non-athlete counterparts (Watson, 2005).

Specific research into help-seeking behaviour and mental health of athletes is limited. According to Schwenk (2000) conceptualisations of and approaches to mental health in athletes has been affected by stigma, denial and dichotomous thinking of 'psychological' versus 'physical.' In one study, perceived barriers for seeking counselling in college samples were found to include time to seek services and social stigma, both societal and sport specific (Lopez & Levy, 2013). College athletes also preferred counsellors that had a familiarity with sport, although no age, gender or ethnicity preferences were reported (Lopez & Levy, 2013). Another potential factor influencing help-seeking behaviour in athletes is sporting type. For instance, Martin (2005) found that athletes who had been

socialised in sports high in physical contact had increased stigma towards help-seeking behaviour.

Only one study was found that investigated help-seeking behaviour in relation to elite athletes. In this study, which focused specifically on the mental health of young Australian elite athletes (n-=15) aged 16-23 years, stigma was perceived as the most important barrier to seeking help (Gulliver et al., 2012). Consistent with the findings of the general help-seeking literature, being perceived as weak or not being able to cope, were areas of concern for participants. Other significant barriers for help seeking among this group were a lack of mental health literacy (e.g., a lack of knowledge of mental health symptoms), negative past experiences (specifically non-adherence of confidentiality), a lack of knowledge of where to seek appropriate help, and gender, since males were less likely to seek help (Gulliver et al., 2012). Factors that appeared to facilitate help-seeking behaviour included positive attitudes from peers, positive relationships with providers, and encouragement to seek help from trusted others (Gulliver et al., 2012).

Two studies have looked at help-seeking behaviour and attitudes of coaches and athletes in New Zealand. Both of these studies, which were conducted more than 10 years apart, focused specifically on sport psychology consultation. Sullivan and Hodge (1991) investigated the status of sport psychology in New Zealand and the usage of sport psychology by coaches and elite athletes. Overall, the findings were extremely supportive of sport psychology use for performance enhancement and the training of elite athletes. Actual use of sport psychology was also found to be high among this sample of elite athletes (Sullivan & Hodge, 1991). A more recent study by Anderson, Hodge, Lavallee, and Martin (2004) also reported that New Zealand athletes generally hold positive attitudes with regard to sport psychology. These attitudes appeared to be influenced by previous experience with sport psychology, as well as gender. Contrary to the international research, the results indicated that New Zealand athletes did not perceive stigma associated with working with sport psychologists and that age and competitive level did not influence attitudes. However, consistent with other studies, female athletes were more open to engaging in sport

psychology than male athletes and were more confident in the utility of sport psychology. New Zealand athletes also demonstrated a preference for consulting clinicians who were from the same cultural background as them. Athletes who had worked with a sport psychologist previously also had greater confidence and less stigma associated with sport psychology (Anderson et al., 2004).

Cultural differences for a range of psychology consulting issues have also been noted in the international literature. In a comparative study of Japanese and US college athletes, Naoi, Watson, Deaner, and Sato (2011) found that Japanese athletes rated the importance of working with consultants of the same race who had knowledge of their culture, were from a similar sporting background, and were close in age more highly than their American counterparts. Differences in discussion topics and openness to using medication for mental health problems were also found between these two groups, highlighting cultural variation with regard to psychological consultation in athletes (Naoi et al., 2011).

Māori Perspectives on Sport

Very little literature was available specific to OFPB of elite athletes in New Zealand. In addition, to the best of my knowledge, no research has focused on this topic specifically with New Zealand Māori athlete populations. Hippolite (2010) explored the experiences of being Māori in the sporting context and provided a different cultural perspective on New Zealand sport. The results of this study suggested that racism currently exists in New Zealand sport and that New Zealand sport is culturally unresponsive and 'blind.' According to Hippolite (2010), the cultural incompetence of the New Zealand sporting environment was powerful enough to cause behaviour change in some athletes. It is hypothesised that elite Māori athletes within the New Zealand sporting context may experience different stressors and challenges in addition to those faced by their non-Māori elite counterparts.

Chapter Summary

The vast majority of the research on problematic behaviour in sport has focused solely on on-field performance and has been conducted

mainly with college/university level athletes in the US. The literature suggests that athletes are exposed to a wide range of stressors and, of these, organisational stressors appear to be the most disruptive and influential. The role of the media was found to be a constant pressure for athletes, especially in relation to discrepancies in reporting based on gender.

The New Zealand literature on substance abuse was generally consistent with the international literature, outlining the high substance abuse rates of athletes as a major area of concern. Research was not available on other OFPB with New Zealand samples; however, athletes appear to have higher rates of disordered eating compared to non-athlete samples in the international literature. While comparable prevalence rates were found in relation to mental health in athletes and non-athletes, it was evident that athletes are exposed to a number of specific triggering factors that the general public may not face. Achievement goal theory, self-determination theory and the importance of the motivational climate were discussed in regard to antisocial behaviour. While athletes use a range of coping strategies to deal with OFPB, a key finding from this review was the role of the social environment and coach-athlete relationship in mediating OFPBs. Similarly, a range of help-seeking barriers and variables that enhance help-seeking were identified as impacting the behaviour of athletes.

Rationale for the Current Study

In carrying out this review of the literature, it became clear that there is a paucity of research investigating elite athletes behaviour outside of the sporting environment, both internationally and within New Zealand. To the best of my knowledge, no research has been undertaken to explore OFPB, in all forms and variations, from the perspectives of elite New Zealand athletes. This study presents a unique opportunity to further investigate these issues and attempts to fill that gap, along with other areas where the literature suggests further research is needed.

The main aim of this study is to explore OFPB from a range of perspectives (i.e., coaches and athletes), within an elite adult sample. Much of the literature has tended to focus on individual sports, specific

sporting codes, and younger non-elite samples. In order to enhance the knowledge base in this field, the current study focuses specifically on adult elite athletes from both individual and team sports across multiple sporting disciplines.

There were a number of gaps and limitations within the current international literature that this study hopes to provide some insight on. For example, research on elite athletes outside of the US, the impact OFPB or morally inappropriate behaviour has on others, sexual aggression in elite populations, help seeking and mental health among elite athletes of different cultural backgrounds and ages (Galdas et al., 2005; Hughes & Leavey, 2012). Another area of interest in the current study is the nature of the association between competitive level and use of alcohol, since other studies have reported mixed findings in this regard (Lorente et al., 2003).

Similarly, there were a number of gaps and limitations within the current New Zealand literature that suggest possible areas where the current study may add further information. For example, the majority of New Zealand studies have focused specifically on university samples (e.g., O'Brien et al., 2007; O'Brien et al., 2008) or the sport of rugby (e.g., Luck, 2012; Quarrie et al., 1996). In general, the research has looked mainly at sport-related alcohol use and specific research on other aspects of OFPB, such as violence and aggression, is lacking. The current study intends to build on these findings by including elite athletes of both sexes across a range of sporting codes.

In studies that have explored problematic behaviour outside of the sporting environment, the focus has mainly been on disordered eating and substance abuse. There is an obvious gap in the literature in terms of other kinds of problematic behaviours, especially in relation to the New Zealand context. These findings prompted exploration into how New Zealand athletes explain their experiences and the factors impacting OFPB at the elite level. It was considered that an investigation into how athletes make sense of their elite environment would allow for a better understanding of the risk factors and needs of this population.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The methodological framework and methods for this research are explored in this chapter. This is followed by discussion of the choice and appropriateness of the qualitative research methodology. Ethical considerations associated with the methods utilised in this study are discussed. The participant group, participant recruitment processes, and the research procedure are also explained. A detailed description of the processes utilised in collecting and interpreting data is presented. Finally, an explanation of thematic analysis and an outline of the data analysis process for interpretation of participants' narratives will conclude this chapter.

Research Focus

As noted in Chapters One and Two, the focus of this study is to explore off-field problematic behaviour (OFPB) among elite New Zealand athletes across a range of sporting disciplines from the perspectives of the athletes themselves. The research sets out to explore what types of behaviour elite athletes consider problematic, identify risk factors for OFPB, and how they are managed within their individual sporting environments. The aim is to gain an understanding of possible precipitants of this behaviour and how to better manage athlete engagement within the elite sporting environment and management, prevention and intervention of OFPB.

Qualitative Research

This study utilises a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is a field of inquiry in which the researcher attempts to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to particular events and experiences in their lives. In this approach, a variety of empirical techniques may be used to try and understand the socio-cultural contexts in which participants live and work (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In contrast to quantitative methodologies, qualitative research aims to explore and understand the naturalistic, socially constructed nature of reality, rather

than measuring behaviour experimentally (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In order to do this, it is important to avoid using preconceived variables that might shape or limit participants' explanations about the meanings they attribute to particular behaviours and experiences (Willig, 2008). Instead, categories or themes are derived through an inductive process where possible explanations for social phenomena emerge gradually from the data (i.e., from the ground upward), rather than being predefined by the researcher (Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000).

Semi-structured or open-ended interviewing techniques are particularly suited to qualitative research because they allow for gradual theme development. This interview method is participant-led and guided by the researcher, with further questioning as necessary. These are both crucial factors in producing meaningful theoretical and conceptual accounts of the phenomenon under investigation (Breakwell, Hammond, Fife-Shaw, & Smith, 2007). The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that the researcher is able to follow up on interesting and unexpected issues that develop throughout the discussion (Breakwell et al., 2007).

Qualitative research allows for triangulation of data in an attempt to reach an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This method permits inquiry into the social experiences of athletes and the perceived meanings attributed to them. Qualitative research is concerned more with understanding the quality of human experiences, rather than the identification of causal relationships (Willig, 2008). Qualitative methods enable researchers to capture individual perspectives and allow their experiences to be more fully understood, something that is seldom achieved in quantitative studies.

The use of semi-structured interviews also promotes the use of participants' own words, which further enhances the validity of the research findings. Qualitative research permits the research structure to be flexible and for participants to share their understanding of their social worlds and the meanings attributed to relevant social events (Willig, 2008). This is appropriate to the current study in terms of addressing an important social problem within the elite New Zealand sporting culture.

While qualitative research has many advantages, it is recognised that different methods have relative strengths and weaknesses. Qualitative research has often been criticised as exploratory, unscientific and lacking objectivity, mainly due to the influence the researcher's own experiences and socio-cultural background may have on the data analysis process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Although it is important for researchers to be aware of and acknowledge personal biases when interpreting data, it is also recognised that objective reality can never be captured fully during both data collection and analysis phases. For example, I am of New Zealand European/Pākehā[6] ethnicity and, therefore, my worldview, values and beliefs may differ from people of other races and ethnicities. It is acknowledged that my middle-class upbringing has shaped and influenced my understanding of what is considered socially acceptable and/or problematic behaviour.

Ethical Considerations

A proposal and ethics application for human research was submitted to the University of Waikato Psychology Research and Ethics Committee. Approval was required before any contact could be made with potential participants. In developing the research proposal and ethics application, a number of ethical considerations were identified:

- *Protection of participant identity:* The major ethical concern was that of participant anonymity, as many of the participants in this study were people who currently have, or have had, a very high public profile. Some of the stories about their personal experiences would have been very familiar to family, friends, and peers. To safeguard the privacy of participants, any information that could possibly lead to identification was changed or excluded. All participants were given pseudonyms and had the opportunity to delete and/or modify material that they felt uncomfortable with.

- *Need for informed consent:* All participants voluntarily consented to participation in this study. Consent highlighted that participants were fully informed of what was required and understood their rights as a

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[6] New Zealander of European descent.

participant. This was clearly outlined in the participant introductory letter (see Appendix B), participant information sheet (see Appendix C) and consent form (see appendix D).

- *Right to withdraw:* Information in the participant introductory letter and information sheet stated that participants were free to decline to answer questions and could withdraw within the set timeframes without penalty. As some participants may have been recruited through figures of authority or power (e.g., coaches, management, leadership groups), it was important to explain that declining to participate would not affect the athlete's position in their team environment or sport and that those who had initiated contact would not be made aware as to whether or not participants chose to take part in the research.

- *Confidentiality:* Due to the specific population utilised for this study, it was extremely important to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants. Consent forms, interview tapes, and transcripts were stored securely in a locked filing cabinet during the research. As required by the University of Waikato regulations for postgraduate research, all non-identifying information will be archived for a minimum period of five years.

- *Commitment to wellbeing:* It was identified that the interview content may result in participants recalling specific events from their past that could have emotional/distressing associations. To minimise the risk of potential harm to participants, prior to undertaking the individual interviews time was given to discuss any concerns the participant had about the research. It was also necessary that participants and management were aware of the potential emotional aspect of these interviews. This included acknowledging when, and if, the interviews would be appropriate for the athlete's current situation/schedule and the effect this may have on sporting performance. It was crucial to remain sensitive to any issues that appeared during the individual interviews and provide appropriate support, where necessary. There was also awareness that participants may have already experienced considerable media attention throughout their sporting career. Therefore, in order to counteract any negative stigmatisation, it was important to highlight the potential positive implications of the current research.

- *Access to research findings:* At the completion of data analysis, participants were given a summary sheet of the research findings and were made aware of how to access to the full research via the University of Waikato Research Commons (see Appendices E and F).

- *Respect for Māori:* The support of a cultural advisor (secondary supervisor) was used throughout the duration of this research to ensure that all areas focusing on Māori interests and behaviours were interpreted and understood appropriately.

- *Dual relationship:* Due to my personal involvement in the sporting environment, it was important that my own interests and networks were acknowledged. Ensuring confidentiality was key in approaching this relationship.

Research Participants

Prior to the recruitment phase, screening criteria were developed to identify potential research participants. In order to be selected for this study, participants were required to:

- be over 18 years of age;
- have represented New Zealand or a New Zealand province at the highest level in their chosen sport; and
- understand and converse in English in order to be able to participate in the interview.

After the first participant interview had been conducted, an application to the School of Psychology Research and Ethics Committee for an amendment to the initial research proposal to include a second participant group (elite coaches) was developed. The purpose of including elite coaches in this research was to gain another perspective to further enhance the richness of the data. For elite coaches to be selected for this study, they were required to:

- be over 18 years of age;
- have coached a New Zealand or a New Zealand provincial team at the highest level; and

- understand and converse in English to be able to participate in the interview.

Similarly, before participants could be approached it was important to determine what was considered elite. As discussed in Chapter One, participants were required to be elite athletes who had represented their province at the highest level, or New Zealand at the international level, in their chosen sport and/or who were currently eligible to do so.

Recruitment of participants. Participant recruitment occurred via three general stages. Firstly, surveying for potential interest and making initial contact with participants took place. Secondly, research information was sent to potential participants for review and, finally, further connections and discussion with participants occurred.

A third person liaison involved in professional sport made initial contact with potential participants, sending them an initial email with the participant introductory letter and information sheet. Participants then replied to the liaison showing interest or not in the study and were asked how they wished to proceed (e.g., were they happy for their information to be passed on to me to contact them or would they initiate further contact). Of the participants recruited in this way, all were happy for their contact details to be passed on and for me to contact them directly. Participants were then sent further information about the study and the research process was discussed with participants individually through email and/or phone communication. Once participants had given verbal consent to be interviewed, a meeting was arranged in a location of their choice.

Using a neutral source as the first point of contact was designed to encourage participants to partake in the research out of their own interest and free will. The aim of this approach was to avoid participants feeling pressured to participate if approached by individuals within their own sport who were in a position of power. Although the third party liaison had worked with participants in the past, there was no direct involvement with participants in their current role. This meant there was no influence

over potential outcomes (either positive or negative) for athletes who choose not to participate in the research.

A "snowball" approach (Goodman, 1961; Noy, 2008) was utilised to identify further participants. For example, during interviews, participants recognised other potential athletes and/or coaches who might be interested in participating in the research and helped initiate contact via their established networks. Interested participants were asked to contact me through a range of communication methods (i.e., telephone, cell phone/text message, email or letter) or to provide contact details so that the contact could be initiated.

Other potential participants were identified through informal contact with my sporting peers, previous coaches, and trainers that were facilitated through my role and position in the sporting community. Initial emails were sent to a range of athletes and coaches known to me personally who met the established participant criteria for this study. Contact was also made with other possible participants through my sporting associates using a similar process to that outlined above for the third party liaison. If they indicated a willingness to participate, Appendices B, C and D were sent to potential participants outlining the purpose and nature of the research. If athletes and coaches still showed an interest in participating, an interview time was scheduled.

Description of participants. A total of 10 participants, five females and five males ranging in age from early 20s to late 40s, from seven different sporting codes were interviewed for this study. The participants included six current elite athletes, two retired elite athletes, one currently non-active elite athlete, and two current elite coaches. One of the elite athletes was also a current coach and the other current coach had been an elite athlete earlier in his sporting career. Three participants were recruited via enquiry from the third party liaison involved in professional sport, one through a participant's network, and six as a result of my own sporting networks. Participant ethnicity varied, with the majority identifying as New Zealand European/Pākehā (eight), one as New Zealand Māori and one as Other European.

Participants were all asked to provide information regarding their age, ethnicity, level of education, sporting discipline and years at the highest level in their chosen sport in order to highlight the sample variation. All names, sporting codes and specific identifying information were made anonymous or not included to protect the identity of participants. Pseudonyms have been used in Table 1 below, which outlines the demographic information of the research participants.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Current Status
Anna	33	Female	NZ European/Pākehā	Retired athlete
Dom	49	Male	NZ European/Pākehā	Athlete/coach
Greg	34	Male	NZ European/Pākehā	Athlete
Kim	27	Female	NZ European/Pākehā	Athlete
Lucy	24	Female	NZ European/Pākehā	Non-active athlete
Sarah	30	Female	NZ European/Pākehā	Retired athlete
Summer	25	Female	NZ European/Māori	Athlete
Ted	27	Male	NZ European/ Pākehā	Athlete
Thomas	36	Male	Other European	Athlete/coach
Trev	34	Male	NZ European/Pākehā	Athlete

Research Procedures

The participants were all very busy people with demanding sporting schedules. As a result, research interviews took place over a nine-month period from November 2012 to July 2013. A total of ten interviews were conducted. All participants were interviewed on one occasion only. Attaining data saturation guided the point of closure for the interview process, as the information being shared contained no new information or themes (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Seidman, 1998).

As mentioned above, the interview time and location was determined by each participant: two interviews were conducted in a pre-booked room at the University of Waikato; two participants requested that interviews be conducted via Skype (a free video/audio internet calling

application) due to their current sporting commitments; and the remaining six participants preferred the interview take place at another location of their choice. Interviews ranged from 39 minutes to one hour and 50 minutes in duration.

Prior to commencing the interview, participants had an opportunity to ask questions about the details outlined in the participant introductory letter and information sheet. All participants were made aware of their rights and were encouraged to seek clarification throughout the data collection process. Participant and researcher copies of the consent form were discussed and signed before the interview began. At this time, the anonymous nature of the interview was reiterated, along with the purpose of audio-recording the interview for accuracy of data collection.

At the beginning of the interview, each participant was thanked for showing interest and agreeing to participate. The flexible structure of the interview was outlined and an introductory statement about myself and my interest in the research topic was provided. Demographic information about participants was collected and an introductory question around the athlete's background and how they became involved in their chosen sport was used as an icebreaker. Definitions and examples of the kinds of OFPB considered to be relevant to the research were also outlined.

A semi-structured interview format was utilised to explore the experiences and perspectives of elite athletes on OFPB within this population in New Zealand. The use of a semi-structured approach allowed participant leads that were relevant to the research topic to be followed. At the end of each interview, participants were thanked for their contribution and given time to reflect, add information and ask any questions they had in relation to what had been discussed. Each participant was given the option of suggesting a pseudonym to be used in the publication of the research[7]. Participant and researcher contact information was confirmed and the best method for sending a copy of the completed transcript was organised. Participants were informed that they

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[7] Although some participants were not concerned about using their real names, at my advice and to be consistent, a decision was made for an 'all or none' approach to using pseudonyms.

would be sent a copy of the transcript to be reviewed, for amendment and approval, and that all comments and changes needed to be returned within three weeks. If transcripts were not returned, it was assumed that the information was a true and correct representation of the interview.

Upon completion of each interview, notes were taken on aspects of the interview, which may not be clearly identifiable or portrayed in the recorded conversation. This included information relating to the setting, environment, distractions and the participant's engagement and responses.

Data Analysis

Transcripts were analysed using a process of thematic analysis, a method used to identify, analyse and report patterns and themes in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the data analysis process starts during data collection when the researcher looks for patterns of meaning and potential areas of interest in the data being gathered. An inductive approach to data analysis was also utilised, whereby the literature was not engaged with fully during the early stages of data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The aim of this method was to eliminate potential biases of predefined aspects outlined in the literature, at the expense of other potentially relevant aspects.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and any relevant information that assisted understanding was included in square brackets; for example, information including change in body language, tone, long pauses, humour, interruptions, confusion and misunderstandings. Once transcribed, participants were sent a copy of their transcript to review. The only amendments to transcripts were clarifying names and sport specific information, such as team names or terminology, and highlighting of excerpts that participants were not comfortable to have included in the thesis. After this initial review, participants were informed that a copy of the specific excerpts from their individual transcript, which may be quoted, would also be sent to them to be reviewed for anonymity at a later date. The research supervisors examined a number of the transcripts to ensure the data gathered was relevant in relation to the research objectives

and to provide formative feedback. Transcripts were re-read in parallel with the audio recording to ensure detailed understanding of the interview content and to begin identifying potential coding schemes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The transcripts were analysed using a custom-made database. As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) the interview content was examined line by line and important concepts, words, and key ideas were highlighted. The analysis was then re-focused and codes were sorted into potential themes. Themes were developed by considering how different codes could be combined to form overarching ideas. Themes represent some level of meaning or patterned response from within the data set and were used to classify important information in relation to the research question and aims (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The database allowed for comparisons and collation, both within and between transcripts at code, subtheme, and theme levels. As recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic/hierarchy maps were established to further refine the raw data, identify overarching themes, and develop working names for themes and sub themes of the data set. These maps are discussed in detail in Chapter Four. A thematic map of the entire data set is also presented in Appendix G.

Chapter Summary

This study involved ten current and/or former New Zealand elite athletes from seven different sporting disciplines. It was considered that a qualitative methodology was the best approach for gaining a detailed understanding of elite athletes' off-field problematic behaviour. The data collection process involved individual interviews and utilised a semi-structured, open-ended questioning approach to guide discussion. A key ethical consideration was the issue of anonymity, due to the high profile, public lifestyles of many of the participants. Data gathered from the interview process was analysed and interpreted using a thematic approach and a number of emerging themes were identified.

Chapter Four

Findings

As an outcome of the interviews conducted and thematic data analysis, five themes emerged that best expressed participants' perspectives and experiences of off-field problematic behaviour (OFPB) in the New Zealand sporting context. This chapter presents the major findings from this study and is structured according to the five emergent themes: (a) experiences of OFPB; (b) stressors, motives, and risk factors; (c) protective factors; (d) impact of OFPB; and (e) help-seeking behaviour. The findings are expressed predominantly as quotes to enable true meaning and to enrich understanding for the reader. Excerpts have been edited to ensure clarity and assurance of anonymity; however; the essential meaning has been retained. Information included in square brackets is an author note to enhance the message and understanding of the text.

In this chapter, each of the themes and respective subthemes relevant to the research aims are expanded on and discussed. More specifically, participants' experiences and definitions of OFPB will be outlined, along with a range of stressor and protective factors that were identified as impacting on behaviour. The impact of OFPB on participants and others' lives is explored. A number of barriers and limitations for help-seeking behaviour and suggestions for future prevention and intervention strategies offered by participants are described. Each theme will be followed by a summary of the key findings.

Figure 1 identifies the five main themes that emerged from participants' perspectives and experiences. All of the themes relate to the main research goal of perspectives and experiences of OFPB among elite New Zealand athletes and will be discussed in detail in the following sections in relation also to the specific research aims.

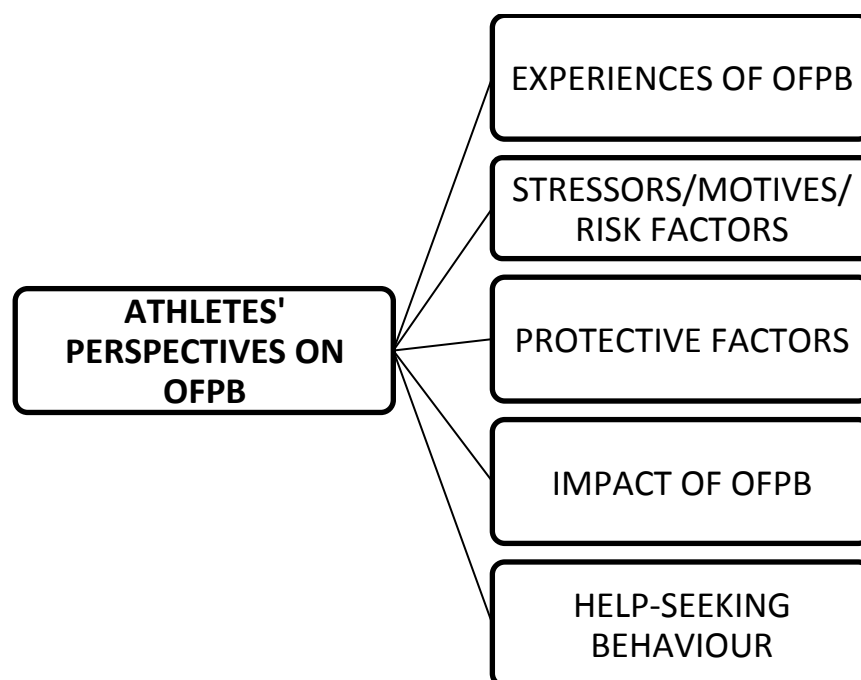*Figure 1.* Overview of emergent themes.

Experiences of OFPB

Figure 2 outlines the key ideas associated with the theme of 'Experiences of OFPB.' The subthemes were divided into the types of OFPB, such as 'antisocial' and a category of 'other OFPB.' Participants' perspectives of whether OFPB was 'increasing or decreasing' were also identified.
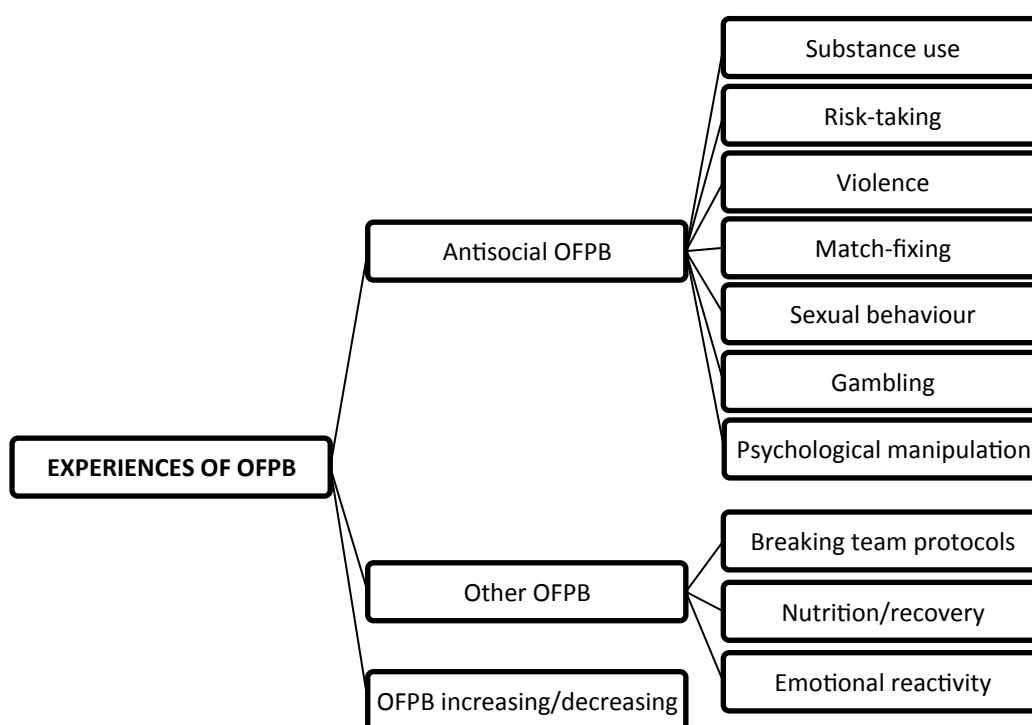

Figure 2. Subthemes relating to 'Experiences of OFPB.'

Antisocial OFPB. Participants discussed a wide range of off-field behaviours that they considered to be problematic. These varied from minor misbehaviours, such as rule violations, lateness, non-adherence to team protocols, and poor recovery and nutrition, to antisocial behaviours carried out in excess that would be inconsistent with accepted cultural and societal norms (e.g., substance use, disordered eating, sexual promiscuity, and match-fixing). Since this study focuses solely on problematic behaviours, it should be noted that terms such as substance use, sexual behaviour, gambling, and risk-taking will refer to excessive/inappropriate/ hazardous occurrences of these behaviours from this point onwards.

Substance use. All of the participants reported substance use as problematic behaviour they had either experienced personally or witnessed in others. Participants mentioned that substance use occurred throughout their careers but tended to reduce in frequency as they aged and moved to higher competitive levels. A range of different contexts was outlined where substance use was prevalent, such as during regular training phases, during competition and post-competition, when on tour or competing overseas, and during holiday periods. With regard to alcohol use, several participants talked about binge-drinking experiences that occurred during the regular season, at the end of the season, and after major events:

> …binge drinking is like, if you go to the end of the Olympics for example and look around the Olympic village, every single sport when they finish is just carnage. It's all about sex and booze right [laughs]? Most athletes and [my sport] in particular you get to the last night at nationals, everyone goes out drinking and it's just the way it is. (Anna)

> We have had two players who had a drinking problem…it wasn't like they had a problem with you know not being able to stay away from alcohol, they just drank too much every weekend. (Thomas)

All of the participants talked about experiencing or observing problematic drinking situations. Thomas, who had also represented

another country, believed that his experiences in New Zealand sport were comparable to what he had observed overseas, thus highlighting the homogeneity of alcohol use cross-culturally:

> A lot of people say there is a drinking problem in New Zealand, you know binge-drinking culture, but to be honest it's not much different than other areas around the world. I think it's everywhere…well except in very religious countries where you just grow up not being able to do that…(Thomas)

Substance use, specifically alcohol use, was evident across all sports investigated. In comparison, illicit and recreational drug use was only reported by a small number of participants and did not appear to be overly prevalent behaviour among this sample group or witnessed by this sample. Some participants noted that drug use was more common overseas, compared with their experiences in the New Zealand context:

> We were in Amsterdam and one of [my teammates] went too hard on the [hash] cookies over there and completely passed out and [we] sort of had to seek medical treatment to get him back around. Obviously that doesn't go down too well and is quite problematic behaviour. (Ted)

While some instances of drug use were identified, participants explained that these were usually one-off incidents and were often linked to contextual factors, such as being on tour. Participants were aware of others potentially engaging in drug use, but often did not take any action to reduce such behaviours:

> One of my best mates who I roomed with used to go out in the middle of the night in tournament and have a smoke on the balcony…I knew it, and the others probably knew it, hell even the coaches may have known, I don't know, but I thought it was highly inappropriate. (Thomas)

Some participants felt that random monitoring by national and international drug testing agencies tended to discourage elite athletes from using drugs:

> We are heavily tested and especially as you get up the ranks as well, so that's probably the major deterrent in the drug-taking scene. You know, for me, I am monitored 24 hours a day literally with my drug whereabouts so that's never really been an option. (Ted)

Substance use, specifically alcohol use, was the most common type of problematic behaviour identified by participants in this study. However, participants also believed that behaviours resulting from being under the influence of drugs or alcohol were just as problematic as the act of using these substances:

> I don't think it's the drinking that is an issue. I think it's more the behaviour when they're drinking or how [athletes] can control themselves when they are drinking. (Summer)

> Not everyone drinks to excess but there are some people who do and I suppose the problems that come along with being out [socialising] are guys out looking for an acquaintance for the night, all those sorts of things. (Greg)

A range of different motives, stressors, and risk factors were identified specific to substance use (e.g., being elite at a young age, having an elite profile, media influence, mental health, nutrition/recovery, New Zealand drinking culture, being on tour, peer influence, personality, pressure to perform, professionalism, relationships, selection issues, team culture, temptations, upbringing, winning/losing). In addition, protective factors that reduced the likelihood of such behaviour were also noted (e.g., being elite at a young age, media influence, SES/culture, team culture, upbringing). Each of these factors will be discussed below under Theme Two, 'Stressors, motives, and risk factors' and Theme Three, 'Protective factors'. As noted above in relation to the 'elite at a young age' code, a number of factors were considered to have both risk and protective value. These factors have been placed under the theme that the data was most

supportive of; however, the dual function of these factors will also be discussed and highlighted.

Risk-taking. Extreme and risk-taking behaviours such as frequent partying, drinking to intoxication, using class A substances, and restrictive eating were also considered by eight out of the 10 participants to be problematic behaviour. Participants suggested that elite athletes often adopted a "work hard, play hard" philosophy. Recreational activities outside of sport appeared to emulate their sporting lives in that athletes were constantly pushing themselves to the extreme. Doing things "full on" with "no in between" was a common trend reported by participants:

> I think it's a balance isn't it that you have got to be able to blow off some steam now and then. But you've got to do it at the appropriate time and appropriate place and have some checks [and balances] in place to make sure you don't go overboard. It is a problem with athletes of course and you see this is why it happens so much at the Commonwealth Games and the Olympics because they have just been working hard for so long. They haven't touched any alcohol…then the four years is over and they want to party, there's no control… (Thomas)

> I have been on tour and things have gotten out of control because you know you're in this tour environment, in this wee bubble. Every now and then you get a night of freedom or something like that and it goes back to that extreme and you wake up the next morning and you're like shit, you are just about ruining the whole reason you are over there for. (Ted)

Extreme and risky behaviours were not just limited to substance use. A number of participants also referred to extreme restrictive eating behaviour as problematic. Interestingly, only female athletes reported this type of behaviour:

> It's more the message that [young athletes] are conveyed, they take them to the extreme. So they need to get their skin folds down for

instance…and they stop eating completely. So they achieve their goal but they're not going about it in a performance way. (Kim)

The idea that athletes may engage in risk-taking behaviour due to higher risk thresholds or risk perceptions was an intriguing finding. For those athletes where the risk level of performing training tasks and competition on a daily basis was high, differences in risk level perception were noted:

I know a number of [top athletes] who would do coke [cocaine] and heroin on a semi-regular basis. But again you are talking about a sport where the risk level is…[high], so for them a risk like that is not a risk…They don't consider that to be as risky as what they do every single day of the week. (Anna)

Violence. Eight out of the 10 participants discussed situations of violent behaviour. Although a number of different triggers were identified for violent behaviour, provocation and impulsivity appeared to be the most common explanations:

I feel sorry for [athletes] sometimes in that they actually do have people come up and try and start stuff with them…I have seen it happen in bars and the guys are like "Nah, nah, nah" until it gets too much for them… (Summer)

So there were instances where I lost the plot. I think I was about 23 when again the team was announced…I wasn't in and I was puzzled and [the coach] made it look like it was the 'normalist' thing in the world and I grabbed a chair and just picked it up and just slammed it at the wall and walked out. (Thomas)

As mentioned above, the aspect of provocation is also linked to having an elite profile (discussed further in Theme Two, 'Stressors, motives, and risk factors.') Some high-profile participants felt they were targeted by members of the public when they were out with friends, especially in relation to bar or restaurant settings:

People out there go and start the fights with [athletes] and then are more than happy to go and report about it. Like they were a victim to [an athlete's] abuse or whatever and they've actually gone and sought it out themselves… (Summer)

Match-fixing. Five out of the 10 participants mentioned match-fixing/corruption in relation to OFPB. While none of the participants had first-hand experience of this kind of problematic behaviour, they were aware of it happening in some sports and highlighted it as something that was increasing in elite environments:

I certainly think the corruption side of sport is becoming an area that the Olympic Committee is becoming really internationally interested in. Cricket is a classic example…the black market and the corruptions…and throwing games and all that kind of stuff definitely exists. (Anna)

In terms of a temptation, there are things called honey traps now…some girl will want to pick you up in the bar. The next thing, if you do follow through with that…there's photos and basically she's saying if you don't fix tomorrow's game then these photos are going to be sent to your wife or the media...You have got to be quite careful there and a few guys that have been caught. (Trev)

However, match-fixing did not appear to be prevalent in the New Zealand sporting environment. One participant had an awareness of teammates being approached, while another mentioned that it was only a talking point within their national team at the current time:

I know a couple of the New Zealand boys have been approached by bookies, or sometimes what they will do is pose as sponsors, whether it be clothing or [sports equipment] or just a sponsor and say "Look, here is a contract." Like stupid money, like a hundred grand, to use a [product], that doesn't normally happen…Some guys will sign it, here's a hundred grand, and then you will get this "Oh we need you to something for us now." So they will get their claws into you whichever way they can. (Trev)

Sexual behaviour. Three out of the 10 participants also considered sexually offensive or abusive behaviour and sexually promiscuous behaviour, as problematic. They talked about both verbal and physical advances with sexual overtones:

> This particular senior athlete, along with a couple of other senior boys in our team, really just made a lot of sexual comments about their female team members. (Anna)

One participant discussed how members of her sport had used other players to account for their whereabouts when they were overseas. This resulted in the truth being manipulated and placed other athletes in a difficult situation. The impact of this kind of behaviour on team performance and dynamics was a concern for one participant:

> So using us as her scapegoats for her behaviour, staying up late at night, going into some else's room. I mean it doesn't affect our performance but I mean, if she's too tired to perform the next day or if she has exerted her energy in other ways, then that does. (Lucy)

Gambling. A small number of participants also mentioned problem gambling as an area of concern. One participant suggested that this type of behaviour was more problematic among elite athletes because they had the potential to earn large amounts of money at an early age:

> …The gambling, like the boys overseas with the money and stuff, like they've got nothing to do with their money - I think that's the problem. They get money at such a young age, and such a big amount of it, that some of them just don't know what to do. They go out and just have fun and they want to spend their money and they don't even realise that they are starting to develop all these really bad habits. (Summer)

However, other participants were less certain whether gambling was disproportionately represented among elite athletes in comparison to the general population:

I've seen people with gambling addictions, people with alcohol issues, but whether it's disproportionately represented…I'd say no, I don't think so. I don't think there's more [problematic behaviour] in what I am doing now than there was when I was [in my previous occupation]. (Dom)

Psychological manipulation. Problematic behaviour was also discussed in terms of mental or psychological aspects that appeared to impact on athlete performance and behaviour (often directly related to on-field performance). One participant questioned the influence of coaches and other athletes' behaviour in interfering with the mental state and preparation of other athletes. She suggested that some individuals might look to expose the flaws and weaknesses of other athletes' abilities to enhance on-field performance or to get a winning outcome for themselves. Playing "mental mind games" with other athletes and coaches was identified as a frequent occurrence in elite sporting environments. This was something she found to be problematic and meets the definition of "off-field" used in this study. This behaviour was reported as carried out by both athletes and coaches:

I have certainly seen the impact of negative comments within Olympic environments on elite athletes. You know, when you're in a very mentally fragile place, you can go either way…I have definitely heard mind games being played. So I think that subtle manipulation is an incredibly concerning problem… (Anna)

When it comes to Olympic successes or failures, in almost [all] cases the athlete has blown themselves apart mentally. They have either been squashed down by people deliberately finding trigger points and using it or it's very rare that it's a physical [problem]…In 95 per cent of cases, [it] would be complete mental disintegration and that happens so easily because there are just so many distractions within the Olympic environment where you are in close proximity to rivals and the access for you to get to them or for them to get to you is high. (Anna)

Other OFPB. Two other significant types of OFPB identified by participants in this study were highly specific to the elite sporting context. A range of non-compliance with team protocol factors were described such as poor nutrition and recovery, breaking curfew, being late, and wearing the wrong sponsored clothing. Several participants mentioned that non-compliance with established team protocols in relation to nutrition and recovery could be viewed as problematic behaviour, especially within a team environment:

> There were girls in our team that just wouldn't eat but would go back to their room and gorge on lollies. So, for a lot of us, that was really problematic behaviour because they didn't [have] energy on the field because they weren't fuelling themselves enough. (Lucy)

Similar examples were also provided by male participants who described nutrition as a big "downfall" in their careers. Nutrition appeared to be more of a problem for those in non-contact sports. As Trev stated, "[My sport's]…not a contact sport, you don't need [good nutrition], it's not about strength and power and all that sort of crap."

OFPB increasing or decreasing? Participants provided mixed responses when asked whether they thought OFPB was something that is increasing or decreasing. Sarah, Ted, and Greg felt that OFPB was decreasing within the New Zealand sporting context due to greater media attention and higher levels of professionalism. However, the majority of participants were undecided on this issue but all felt that there was a proliferation in media attention due to the high profile of elite athletes. In trying to compare his experiences both as an athlete and coach, Dom stated, "You can't compare them. If I look back and try to think about the guys I played with, there were similar sorts of issues as there are today but life had shaped them better." Aspects to do with the role of the media will be further explored in Theme Two, 'Stressors, motives, and risk factors.'

Summary. Participants identified a large number of OFPB, ranging from high-risk self-destructive behaviours to minor, often trivial, behaviours especially when taken out of context. Substance use, specifically alcohol consumption, was the most common type of OFPB

identified by participants. The potential for increased risk-taking as a result of engagement in specific sports was an interesting finding. Participants were more likely to identify instances involving observable behaviour change as being problematic. Only a small number of participants identified problematic behaviours involved with psychological coping mechanisms or mentioned changes in thinking style as contributing to problematic behaviour. A few participants were aware of gambling issues; however, match-fixing was something that some participants felt was an increasing risk. The majority of participants mentioned that greater media attention, rather than an increase of OFPB, had raised public awareness of these issues, especially at the elite level. Overall, what participants considered as OFPB depended largely on gender and the cultural norms/values that were associated with different sporting codes.

Stressors/Motives/Risk Factors

The theme of stressors, motives, and risk factors is linked to athletes' perceptions and opinions of factors they felt were central to increasing the likelihood of OFPBs. Stressors and risk factors were often discussed in terms of internal and external factors that were more distal in nature. In comparison, motives were generally proximal in nature and relevant to the current here and now. The following quote from Trev summarises his general experiences and opinions on the role of stressors within the elite environment:

> I always refer to the pressures whether it be [public/media attention] or your home life or your form or your competence or whatever it is, it is like you have a trailer on the back of you. So if you're sweet and everything's going fine and you've got no pressures, the trailer's empty, the trailer's light and you're away and you just keep going at a hundred per cent. But if you throw like the price tag of a contract and I haven't performed, I have a little niggle I can't shake, the media's on my back, my home life's fucked, you know the wife's going to leave me or whatever it is or I can't make the mortgage payments…you're throwing all that pressure into this trailer. It just drags you down and it slows you down…I always refer to things like

that as it is just more shit in your trailer that you're having to deal with. (Trev)

Table 2 lists a wide range of stressors, motives, and risk factors that were identified by participants. For the purposes of this study, only those factors that were mentioned by all 10 participants or which had particular importance/emphasis placed on them (e.g., they may only have been discussed by one or two participants but the amount of information was rich and central to the research aims) will be discussed below due to the amount of data generated and the scope of the research.

Table 2

Individual, Social/External and New Zealand (NZ) Sporting Stressors, Motives, and Risk Factors Identified by Participants

Individual stressors	Social/external stressors	NZ sporting factors
Decision-making	Coaches/management	NZ drinking culture
Early sport engagement	Media influence	Elite profile
Elite at a young age	Tour/travel	Pressure to perform
Gender differences	Peer influence	Winning/losing
Injury	Professionalism	
Mental health	Relationships	
Moved for sport	Selection issues	
Personality	Social isolation	
SES/culture	Sponsorship	
Studying and elite	Team culture	
Upbringing	Temptations	

Individual stressors, motives, and risk factors. Individual stressors were factors that impacted solely on the individual at the time (e.g., moved for sport, studying and elite, being elite at a young age, early engagement in sport, gender differences, and injury) or were regarded as being largely part of the individual (e.g., decision-making, mental health, personality, social economic status (SES)/culture, and upbringing).

Elite at a young age. All 10 participants had come into the elite environment at a young age. Although they were very proud of this achievement, they also recognised that being a young elite athlete posed some significant challenges in relation to engaging in OFPB. In contrast, athletes also discussed being elite at a young age as having some protective value and this will be explored further in Theme Three, 'Protective factors.' Participants discussed the impact of being young in an elite environment both from personal experience and through observation later in their careers. In general, they felt that becoming an elite athlete at a young age posed a number of potential pitfalls that young athletes needed to overcome to stay on track. Key ideas that were mentioned consistently by participants in relation to stressors, motives, and risk factors for young elite athletes included peer influence, temptations, and wanting a normal teenage social life:

> Definitely the peer pressure when you are younger, as well from probably more your peers outside of the sport, is probably a big factor. As you get older, that changes a little bit and it definitely did for me. Once I sort of made it in sport I realised "Hey I am far better off on this side of the fence." (Ted)

Self-esteem, maturity level, and lack of confidence in the elite environment seemed to be linked to many of the other factors involved with coping as a young elite athlete. Participants reported that young athletes were often impressionable and could be influenced down the wrong path, and tended to respond differently to feedback and expectations:

> Coming into the squad as a really young athlete, it was interesting because…being very young, and not having that much confidence around these older people, I was very influenced by them...and so I suppose the group I got into was a bit more of the party side of culture away from sport. (Sarah)

A number of participants also mentioned the expectations of being an elite athlete and the pressure to cope with the hype that comes with being an elite athlete in New Zealand as a stressor for young athletes. One

participant referred to the transition into the elite environment for young athletes as "sink or swim":

>…Sometimes just being selected at a really young [age] and just being thrown into the big time, it's overwhelming…Like you're selected in a team, you go into this massive press conference where everyone like blows so much smoke up your bum that you're like "Holy God, I'm amazing!" Then the next day you're in one-on-one meetings with a nutritionist who is telling you that you need to lose a hundred [millimetres] on your skin folds. (Kim)

Participants also discussed situations where they were taken advantage of due to lack of confidence and immaturity. In one case the problematic behaviours of others, which were sexual in nature, were dismissed and not taken seriously. As a young athlete, Anna did not feel comfortable to safely express her concerns within the elite team environment:

>…I really probably didn't have the right outlet within that games environment. Like I told one of the coaches and the coach just kind of laughed at me and said, "That's hilarious. That's just a guy being a guy" kind of thing. (Anna)

One participant spoke of New Zealand sporting society failing to build resiliency in young people. As a result, he believed that athletes often lacked life skills and self-sufficiency when exposed to the elite environment at a young age:

>I think there are all sorts of pitfalls for young players. I think the biggest issue for professional sport…is that guys get identified so early and looked after so early that they never become self-sufficient. I think one of the strengths of New Zealand society is the amount of times people have to move to be educated. So [they] are forced to go to university in a different town or a different city and cope with all the new experiences and new challenges. None of our players, or very few of our players, have to deal with that sort of stuff…When

they do get to move, it's into a very cosy environment where they are very well looked after. (Dom)

Decision-making. Decision-making was discussed by seven of the 10 participants as a potential factor influencing OFPB. Links were made between being an elite athlete at a young age and how poor decision-making impacts problematic behaviour, particularly in regard to substance use. Decisions became impaired when under the influence of alcohol and were often exacerbated by an athlete's young age. A number of participants outlined poor decision-making and limited understanding and foresight around consequences as a risk factor for young elite athletes:

> …At the time you don't think about [consequences] and I think that's probably what a lot of the…young men go through…When you're driven on emotions, you don't think of the ramifications or the consequences until after it's happened. (Lucy)

> I think the drinking thing is…I struggle between having to make that hard decision "Am I going to be a professional athlete and sacrifice the parties and what not?" or "Oh no, I still want to hang out with my friends and do what they do."…I think it's really hard for the young girls to make a decision as to where they want to go and how far they want to take it. (Kim)

However, the impact of appropriate decision-making was also raised as an issue throughout the careers of athletes and was not just limited to being a young elite athlete:

> In some cases too I think "Oh gosh, you're human, you're allowed to let your hair down" but then again it just comes down to decision-making. (Kim)

Some participants mentioned the need for elite athletes to consider whether their decisions aligned with team values and personal brands. They also talked about the impact poor decision-making could have on an athlete's reputation and status as a role model:

…You don't want to be seen as a hypocrite…I don't want to commit to [an anti-drinking] campaign like that and then go out…This is what I mean about making decisions to align with your brand. Like if I commit to a campaign like that, am I still allowed to go out on a Saturday and be seen at [a pub]…this is how you get placed as a role model. (Kim)

Participants also gave other examples of problematic behaviour, such as excessive drinking behaviour and eating inappropriate food after matches when fans were present, that brought disrespect to the team brand. The protective value of personal and team brands is discussed further in Theme Three, 'Protective factors.' Decisions also appeared to be influenced by a range of other factors, such as the media, fatigue, poor emotional regulation, financial enhancement, and level of family and social support:

…We spend all this time training ourselves, so we're so tired that we need a day off. At the same time, on that day you don't want to waste them because you don't get them very often. So that could probably lead to poor decision-making on that day. (Ted)

I think for some guys…when they get their first taste of money, they feel like they have become something…especially when they get a name with it as well…You've got a headline and someone wants to interview you and you go out and you get recognised and you want to shout the bar and suddenly you're everyone's best friend. Next thing, if you can't make the right decisions and say no…you just keep drinking until you don't make the right decisions. (Trev)

Participants also referred to the impact of wider support systems on decision-making. Kim suggested that athletes often try to implement behaviour changes to enhance performance that may not align with their collective family or cultural values and beliefs. For example, while an athlete may be attempting to eat healthy foods to get their skinfolds down, their family may not want to change their eating habits and do not understand the reasons behind this behaviour change.

One participant also talked about the influence that his personal characteristics and temperament had on decision-making:

> I could say something like my upbringing, or coming from a small town, good education, good morals instilled in me from the start, but I am quite a conservative, cautious guy and I think I have always thought of repercussions before I delve into anything. I'm not a spontaneous person by any stretch so I probably have always thought "How is this going to look? What could go wrong here?" (Trev)

Injury. A small group of participants acknowledged that a major individual stressor/risk factor for OFPB was that of injury. In general, the impact of injury was almost always negative. An injury compromised an athlete's goals and plans, often impacting significantly on their place and position in teams, funding, and personal capacity to deal with such an unplanned stressor. Injury appeared to be much more detrimental to athletes within the elite environment. What also came to light were how ways of coping with injury were underdeveloped and the impact injury had on an athlete's sense of belonging:

> ...Especially when they get long-term injuries and if you're not established in a team, which gives other guys a sniff and they only have to do half well and they're going to take your place, that's a massive downer for guys as well. (Trev)

Participants felt that injury could also have a significant impact on mood, self-esteem, and self-efficacy among athletes. This was especially problematic when an individual's personal identity was strongly linked to their athletic status or when they had entered into elite sport at a young age with little or no other qualifications:

> He's got a fight because everything about him was linked to his sport, everything in his personality and his self-esteem was linked to his efficacy on the rugby field. (Dom)

Changes in mood and temperament, such as "having a short wick," being frustrated, and feeling sad were noted by participants in relation to injury. In some cases, injury led to reduced social interaction with others and caused additional stress due to uncertainty about the future, especially when there was no back-up plan outside of sport. Participants mentioned that, for some athletes, sport is all they know and injury can result in an increase in low mood:

> I certainly think injuries are definitely one of the key areas of why people go down. You know something just happens and all of a sudden it just changes their whole plan and they don't have a plan B or plan C or plan D or plan E. That was it, that one plan. (Anna)

Injury as a stressor appeared to be greater in those athletes who were reliant on performance output for funding. The potential long-term impact of injury on athlete's subsequent career plans was mentioned as a key factor in relation to changes in mood, temperament, and motivation.

Mental health. Mental health was an individual risk factor raised by eight participants in relation to OFPB. Both mental illness being present prior to becoming an elite athlete or as something that developed while involved at the elite level were discussed. Mental health was considered to have an impact on behaviour and add stress to the athlete role within the elite environment. The pressures of sport were often referred to as exacerbating predispositions or vulnerabilities for mental illness, with specific mention of depression, anxiety, self-harm, addiction, self-esteem, and disordered eating. Participants discussed an interaction between stressors and athletes' abilities to cope effectively in the elite environment:

> I think there are a few factors; that time away from home, the seclusion at times, probably the problem drinking for some guys. All that leads to a sort of recipe for depression I assume…and trouble with home life being difficult being away... So I think all those factors lead into some problematic behaviour. (Greg)

Taking into consideration the large number of factors faced by elite athletes, participants often compared their experiences to that of lay

people and how the elite environment appeared to expose the development of such disorders if predispositions were present:

> You know, people with predispositions to addiction…it's just like mushrooms growing in a dark environment. It's a great environment for people to fail, it really is, because they've got so much money, they've got little accountability, they don't have to think of other stuff outside of [sport] and so the ability for those little weaknesses to grow is huge. (Dom)

Having a strong sense of personal identity outside of sport was also noted as being important for positive mental health by some participants. For example, Lucy mentioned that others often judged her based solely on her sporting achievements and did not consider other aspects of her life. Other trigger circumstances reported by participants as influencing mental health were post-competition and retirement. "Olympic Game depression" was highlighted as a post-competition trigger for some athletes. It was suggested that athletes return from big competitions and go into a "deep and utter hole" as they try to transition into the "normal" world. Similarly, retirement was noted as a challenging experience for many elite athletes:

> Definitely, athletes retiring…I know for me, you just don't know what you're going to do, you don't know what you've trained for even though you've got degrees. It's actually quite a hard transition period. I think depression or anxiety-related issues are definitely…well in my experience, quite common among athletes generally. (Anna)

Concerns around body image were found among female participants who were generally involved in female-dominated sports or sports where performance is dependent on body composition. Participants reported that athletes often changed their eating habits in response to negative comments and expectations from other people or because of their own distorted views of body image:

…They handed around a sack of potatoes, saying that's what each person had to lose to be in shape. They thought or management thought [that] was required to win a World Champs gold. They do skin folds and everyone is meant to have a personal range. Even if you're within that range but they think you look heavy… slowly, pressure gets put on you and I think that's the misconception when you get the phone call from the nutritionist. (Kim)

I think it's maybe a girl thing in particular that they do care a bit about what they look like…So that pressure comes from themselves to look good and what society's ideal of 'norm skinny' is supposed to look like and then it's sort of not helped by the type of nutritionist that you have. (Summer)

A small group of participants noted that having personal discrepancies and flaws highlighted within the team environment was a precipitating factor that increased the likelihood of disordered eating:

…She had always been a big-boned girl and she was fine with it until it got highlighted and then it was like "Am I the fat girl? Shit." …if you have an eating problem like that, I think it has started before that. I think [negative self-image] is just the trigger for [the eating behaviour]. I don't know, you must have had some sort of self-esteem or low confidence about your body to be able to take something so literally. (Summer)

Only one participant referred to the role of cognitive processes such as schema development or negative automatic thoughts that maintain mental health issues within the elite sporting environment:

We are always, always trying to think of ways to include guys who are not getting game time and just ways of engaging them. But when you're paid to play…but then you're not playing…it says a bit to you. You know, you hear the voices and you can make your own stories in your head, "I'm not good enough, they don't think I'm good enough, I don't think I can cope at this level." (Dom)

In addition to being a stressor, participants believed that disclosing symptoms of mental illness might have a negative impact on team selection and the development of their sporting careers. This is discussed further in the section on 'selection' below in relation to the subtheme 'external stressors, motives, and risk factors.' The stigma and shame attached to mental illness was also apparent in this study and will be explored in Theme Five, 'Help-seeking behaviour.' As noted above in the section on mental health, injury was also considered to affect athlete mental health.

Upbringing and socio-economic status (SES)/culture. Stressors related to upbringing and SES/culture are discussed together due to the high degree of overlap between these two areas. Challenges associated with upbringing and SES/culture were often referred to when exploring how athletes adapted to the elite team culture and the way they coped with different situations once in this environment:

> I can see it all the time with the guys who come through a stable home and how secure they are when they come into the team and it has a direct correlation to their performance and how they fit into a side. Whereas other guys who have those insecurities that have started from a very young age, it takes a little while to find their feet and sometimes the only way they do find their feet is I suppose by feeling part of the culture by getting into that drinking side of things. (Greg)

Two participants also highlighted differences between definitions of prosocial or antisocial behaviour based on upbringing and culture. These participants explored the idea that early experiences impact on athletes' understanding and tolerance of different behaviours:

> Different sports attract different cultures and demographics from the population based on relative training and skills and the background of the class society. For example, equestrian in the past was dominated from the upper classes versus rugby league, which is very strong in South Auckland. This could lead to different cultures of what is acceptable behaviour within a certain sport. (Ted)

Basically, a typical athlete was… [a] Polynesian boy who had had no academic success, who had had very little expectation placed on them at home with regard to external things, obviously towed the line with regard to the family - be quiet and listen and that sort of thing - and so was never engaged in dinner conversation, never encouraged to express an opinion. When you're disciplined, it was physically and maybe a third of them had seen domestic violence or been exposed to domestic violence…that shapes a person. (Dom)

The positive impact of upbringing and SES/culture was also noted throughout the interviews. It will be discussed in more detail in Theme Three, 'Protective factors.'

Social external stressors, motives, and risk factors. All of the participants mentioned a range of external stressors, motives, and risk factors within the elite sporting environment that were related to OFPB. Some of these external stressors were connected to the organisation or wider societal agencies that athletes tended to have very little or no control over. However, participants also identified a number of external stressors within their team and personal social environments that appeared to influence athlete performance, coping and behaviour.

Media influence. One of the main findings of this study was the role of the media in terms of promoting positive and negative outcomes for elite athletes. As discussed previously, six out of 10 participants felt that there had been an increase in media attention and reporting of OFPB, as opposed to an increase in problematic behaviours among elite athletes. Participants also highlighted a number of stressors that are associated with greater media scrutiny and the influence such stressors have on off-field behaviour within the elite sporting environment:

There are so many journalists now, there's websites, there's obviously Twitter, there's bloggers, and things like that. So many people that have an opinion that seems to find its way to you or your family and so I think guys deal with that a lot…I think guys put on an act of bravado around it saying they don't care. But I think that definitely hurts and I think the biggest problem is that the good

publicity is so good that people buy into that. The negative publicity
is [so] bad that they follow that roller coaster. So there is [no] middle
ground and I think… a lot of guys [struggle to] deal with that. (Greg)

Participants reported that media publicity often led to greater
scrutiny and increased pressure to perform, in addition to other stressors
already at work within the elite environment. Media reporting was
described by one participant as "reckless" because it singled out and
blamed specific individuals inappropriately. Participants felt that dealing
with such criticism could be very difficult for some athletes, especially if
they were struggling with other issues or were overly sensitive:

We didn't perform at one regatta and [a reporter] just ripped us to
shreds…It was quite hard to stay positive and try and not read the
media. But from that experience I mean I learnt…don't read it
because you might not want to hear what other people have to say
and their opinions... (Sarah)

A much more common theme in discussions on media influence was
social media. Participants described the increase in social media as central
to the recent growth in media attention. Participants also discussed social
media as an additional avenue for public scrutiny and pressure:

She was carrying a bit more [weight] than what she normally would
and people were so mean. Not necessarily a paper report or in the
paper about her, but just on our Facebook pages and stuff like that.
Just general sort of public opinions and it was just sad because she is
still doing her job out on court. It's kind of like we don't come into
your office and judge how you look in your office gear [laughs]
when you're sitting on your laptop, you know! (Summer)

The possibility that off-field behaviour might be exposed or reported
inaccurately via social networking sites was a new risk factor for many of
the participants in this study. Due to recent advances in digital
technologies where sports events are now broadcast live in real time, elite
athletes are now much better-known among the general public. A number
of participants expressed concern that normal every day events in their

lives might be distorted or taken out of context and then viewed by others as problematic or antisocial:

> You know with all the social media these days and the connections people have, you know the whole six degrees of separation[8], I think it's easier to get exposed. That's why somewhat, when you get up to elite, elite, elite status you've just got to be so careful about what happens and how you act in situations. (Kim)

> I don't think a lot of [athletes] understand…the damage they can do to themselves. They can destroy a reputation within 10 seconds. (Thomas)

Participants also talked about the pressures of being seen as role models and having to contend with wider societal and cultural expectations to look and behave in certain ways. For example, what the public or the media expected athletes to do, say, or look like often differed from what was required of them to perform professionally in their sporting code:

> I think because [my sport] is quite a glamour 'girly' kind of sport for New Zealand, there's always a bit of pressure to look good. (Summer)

Two participants also mentioned that being in situations away from media attention sometimes increased the temptation to over-indulge or engage in risky behaviours that were not in accordance with their expected role as an elite athlete:

> …When you get the chance to get away from it all, you kind of can go out and probably party a bit much knowing you're not under scrutiny for a change…not everything is being measured or watched and stuff like that. So it probably can have that temptation when you are free from it all a little bit. (Ted)

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[8] Six degrees of separation is the theory that everyone and everything is six or fewer steps away, by way of introduction, from any other person in the world.

Additional media-related stressors were the lack of neutral reporting on issues and the tabloid nature of the New Zealand media:

> I think [the media] probably don't balance everything necessarily the way it should be balanced. I think they just take something and just run with it and they don't always get a balance or kind of the opposite side of that… (Anna)

The constant media focus on issues that were not related to sporting performance was a source of frustration for some participants and, at times, made them feel more guarded when in the media spotlight:

> I think New Zealand media's become 'tabloidy' and they are just searching for dirt when it's not there…It didn't affect my performance but it made me more aware of what I do and I became a lot more guarded with interviews…The by-product of that was being a bit more guarded in public as well...I always said, and my wife said it as well, there was…the normal me and then there was the [athlete] and I had like the façade or force field and I wouldn't let anything get into me and I wouldn't let anything attack me. But the other side of that was that nothing would come out, like the real emotion and the real me wouldn't come out. (Trev)

Another finding in relation to the media was differences in media stressors across sporting codes. For high profile sports, media exposure increased significantly around the time of major sporting events, such as World Championships, Commonwealth Games, and Olympic Games. However, for less mainstream sports, media attention was not a routine part of athletes' daily lives and some participants viewed the media in a positive way. For instance, Kim stated that, "Any media is good media." Some participants also discussed the protective influence the media had in moderating athlete behaviour and this idea will be explored further in Theme Three, 'Protective factors.'

Professionalism. All of the participants emphasised the role of professionalism when discussing external stressors, motives, and risk factors. Throughout the interviews, professionalism was generally

associated with the process of making a living from sport (e.g., issues with funding, increased wealth). Participants commented on the fact that professionalism is still continuing to develop in New Zealand and the positive impact this is likely to have on sport in the future. However, some participants also mentioned specific stressors associated with professionalism in sport and held strong beliefs about the function of increased financial wealth in relation to OFPB:

> If rugby is their job and say for instance they've only got one training a day…or one game a day for that day, then they have got all this time to kill. What do you do?…So [athlete's name] is able to express himself through [gambling]...But [athlete's name] was able to do that because of the money side of things. (Lucy)

> [My sport] is I think renowned for investing in really young players and because our sport is slowly progressing to becoming professional…You don't get paid your 200 dollars now, players are getting a minimum of 15,000 dollars. So that's a significant amount for say a high school girl coming into the league. (Kim)

While some participants believed that having a lot of money was a risk factor for the development of OFPB, this was only found in relation to some high profile sports:

> Money, unless you're doing really well, you're not earning that much money in [my sport]. So throwing around money certainly is not a factor I don't think… (Sarah)

One participant also highlighted how the money associated with the role of an elite athlete also acts a stressor. For example, Trev felt greater pressure to perform because the public knew how much he was earning as an elite athlete and this increased both internal and external expectations:

> You would think that [money] would just sort your life out…you don't have to worry anymore, that's cool. Financially, you're all sorted but, to actually live up to this price tag, I always said it was

suddenly you had a price on your head, like it was some sort of bounty. (Trev)

Another participant also identified the stressors associated with having to perform in order to receive funding:

Certainly from an athlete who is reliant on performance for their funding for the year, you know you don't get any money if you don't perform. I think there is definitely stress put on athletes to deliver on that and that can manifest itself in a variety of ways. (Anna)

Professionalism was also reported as having protective aspects in relation to OFPB. This will be explored in further detail in Theme Three, 'Protective factors.'

Selection issues. Another stressor related to professionalism touched on by participants was selection issues. Participants discussed the stressors associated with team selection and the added pressure of having to maintain selection in the professional climate:

If you're not good enough and you can't handle it, you're very quickly, you're out of there, because there is just always going to be another person fighting to get in and overtake you. It's really cut throat… (Sarah)

A number of participants also noted the influence that selection has on athlete behaviour and the negative impact that non-selection can have on team dynamics and the athlete-coach relationship:

One of the big issues in professional sport, in the environment that I am in, is when a guy doesn't get picked…it's a really long time when you're not playing and there are some guys who have had only minutes, minutes of game time. There is an issue you feel, however inclusive the group is, and it can start playing on your mind and it can start disenfranchising you from the group. (Dom)

The problem for me because I was working so hard that when I didn't feel I was being recognised or being rewarded for that, that's where I had the frustration and then I became quite a difficult person to deal with. I became very difficult for the coach. (Thomas)

Increased professionalism in sport also presented a dilemma for coaches in terms of job security, as noted by a small number of participants:

I think this is probably one of the biggest issues. They're performing a job so they're on a two-year contract, a three-year contract, so a lot of the time they are coaching or managing for the protection of their job…On the face of it, it's about improving the culture of the team and the systems but all they're trying to do is win so they can get another job. So that sounds extremely callous but in reality that's it. These guys are on contracts that can be ripped up at any stage. (Greg)

The influence that coaches have on an athlete's sporting career reinforces the concerns reported by athletes and supports the finding of professionalism and selection issues as a stressor, risk factor, and motive. Elite coaches within this sample also acknowledged that this was a stressor for athletes. Participants mentioned that a coach could "make or break" an athletes career:

In our environment, we tend to pick people who we feel aren't gonna struggle with those sorts of things, because it's just a bad investment. Purely from a business perspective and that's a horrible way of looking at it now I think about it, you know, we avoid the train wrecks because we think [they'll] crack. (Dom)

Coaches/management. Nearly three quarters of the group talked about the impact of their coaches and placed emphasis on the importance of having positive relationships with their management teams. Failing to get along with coaches/management was viewed as a major source of stress for some athletes. Poor relationships with coaches/management

also appeared to have an effect on team dynamics and sometimes resulted in negative attitudes towards coaching staff:

> Sometimes if you feel there is more access to the coaches in terms of a mentor and talking and not feeling that you have to walk on eggs every time you're in that environment, I think maybe people relax a little bit and so they don't feel they need to go away and go into hiding or somewhere else to actually have a bit of a good time. (Thomas)

Team culture. Participants also reported that team culture is another factor that is changing as a result of increased professionalism in sport. Athletes mentioned that there seems to be more emphasis now on drinking at appropriate times, whereas this was not a consideration in the past. The importance of having a positive team culture was highlighted by eight of the 10 participants:

> I think environment is crucial to achieving. Whether you're in an individual or team sport, if you haven't got the environment right, then you drag everything and everybody down with you. (Thomas)

> I mean if you've got that sense of whanaungatanga[9] and support in a team, which a lot of the Super 15 teams and ITM cup teams[10] are trying to do…then it's perfect because it creates that family environment…But if you don't have that environment, then people are just stuck in their rooms doing their own thing or isolating themselves. (Lucy)

A major finding in relation to team culture was that some sporting environments inadvertently promoted the development of OFPB through philosophies such as "train hard, party harder" or by ignoring inappropriate behaviours when they surfaced:

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[9] Whanaungatanga is a traditional Māori concept, which refers to a relationship through shared experiences and working together which provides people with a sense of belonging.

[10] Super 15: The largest professional rugby union competition in the Southern hemisphere involving teams from NZ, Australia, and South Africa. ITM cup: The highest level NZ domestic professional rugby union competition.

I think it starts from the build up to the game where you train and practice so hard…Then that release which leads to either a celebration, which sometimes can get out of control, which is just excessive drinking and I think people are encouraged to excessively drink. Not bullying but it just becomes part of the culture that once you finish your game you go and have a drink and sometimes it gets a little bit out of hand. (Greg)

That stuff needs to be dealt with pretty quickly, the internal bullying that goes on within teams that is really just immaturity…It's culture that's allowed to permeate and allowed to exist and when you don't have strong leadership role modelling within team environments… (Anna)

While some participants identified the negative side of team culture as increasingly the likelihood of OFPB, it was also noted that engaging in different aspects of team culture such as having a drink after a game may "help with team dynamics" and "moving the team forwards." Team culture was also discussed in terms of its protective values. This will be explored further in Theme Three, 'Protective factors.'

New Zealand sporting factors. All 10 participants discussed factors relating to the New Zealand sporting culture when considering stressors, motives, and risk factors for OFPB.

Elite profile. Participants spoke extensively about their roles as elite athletes and how this influences their behaviour, especially when they are out in public. In particular, participants talked about the daily pressures and responsibilities that are involved in being an elite athlete. Having an elite profile is a theme that occurs in many of the stressors identified in this study. For example, being an elite athlete is associated with increased media attention, negative appraisal and scrutiny, and is also a stressor for young athletes. Having an elite profile also was discussed in relation to substance use and was linked to extremes and risk-taking OFPB when on tour. A number of participants felt that OFPB would not be considered such a big issue if athletes did not have an elite profile:

…If Joe Bloggs was getting wasted in Rarotonga, would we really care about it? And that's where I feel sorry for [elite athletes]. But then I guess that's what comes with the territory of being who they are, is that they are in that spotlight…even if they don't want to be seen as role models. (Summer)

Participants also felt pressured to behave in certain ways, due to being perceived as role models. Being a role model was something a number of participants thought was determined by the public. Even if participants did not want to be seen in this way, they were often perceived as role models regardless. Similarly, it was apparent that having an elite profile also had some specific stressors linked to the media. Participants reported not knowing how to deal with increased media exposure and felt that that they were often written and talked about by people who did not know them as individuals:

I think it relates to that you're always on trial in a lot of ways. So I think guys become a little bit reclusive towards dealing with people and probably that's another reason why guys probably drink too much because it makes all of that a little bit easier to deal and you can be a lot more approachable than if you haven't. (Greg)

Being on tour also appeared to be a risk factor/opportunity for OFPB to occur and several participants referred to episodes that had happened overseas where their elite profile was less well known:

Times like New Year where you really just want to have a good time and then sometimes when you go out in a public place you feel as though you can't really not be yourself, but let that side of you relax. Especially if you're in a location where you're known…whereas, if you're overseas… it doesn't matter, you can do whatever. (Kim)

Other less well-known athletes identified certain situations where they were able to get away with OFPB because they did not have such a high profile.

I think they are young and they have every right to enjoy themselves, but they have to realise that everyone is watching them because the All Blacks and even the Black Caps are such public figures. Us as [other athletes] could almost get away with it…unless you're someone who is prominently in the media all the time, we can get away with that sort of stuff to an extent. (Sarah)

A few participants suggested that being a high profile sportsperson might encourage some people to feel a greater sense of entitlement which, in turn, could make them more vulnerable to engaging in OFPB, compared to other less well-known athletes:

I think that they either feel like they can get away with it or they feel that they stand above [others], or above the law or whatever. (Thomas)

I find it disappointing because I think coming from a code that's not as big as those other codes, I'm like we would die to be at that level or we would appreciate it and I wonder sometimes if they're just abusing their…good fortune. But then I am also like "Oh God, like it happens every Saturday and if they weren't who they were, would anyone 'give a rats'[11]?" (Kim)

Being an elite athlete often resulted in greater media exposure and some participants recognised that this could also act as a protective factor. For instance, Greg said that increased public scrutiny means that it is no longer acceptable for elite athletes to engage in OFPB, as was the case previously. He also noted that this might have a positive influence on changing the New Zealand sporting culture in terms of the widespread "acceptability of drinking."

Pressure to perform. The pressure to perform and to live up to public expectations was another recurring theme in the stressors identified by participants that may influence OFPB:

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[11] A slang term used in New Zealand meaning 'would anyone care or be upset?'

Expectations of the media, the public…you start just wanting and needing to perform every game. (Trev)

A number of participants mentioned that pressure to perform often came from a range of sources, including family members, partners, and other team members:

There is a shit load of pressure on you to perform and be at your best every single day. Sometimes you just want to say screw it all, I'm going to go let my hair down or I'm going to go and do something else because I just need a break. You know, the pressure from the media, the pressure from family or whoever is putting it on you, you know, you just want to get away from it sometimes and I think that drinking is an easy way out. (Sarah)

Some participants recognised that internal pressures and other factors, such as becoming a regular or senior player in a team where you are expected to provide consistent performances, were also potential stressors for elite athletes. A common finding was that athletes experienced greater pressure, often self-imposed, during the later stages of their careers. As senior athletes, participants reported that they critiqued themselves more frequently and were more critical of their performance, due to a greater understanding of what was required to be successful in their chosen sport.

Winning or losing. A number of participants suggested that the elation and disappointment associated with winning and losing could prompt some athletes to engage in different types of OFPB:

If I go back to [the Olympics], we probably underperformed. We…were favoured to at least get a medal…I remember we sort of went out the next 10 nights in a row and completely just ruined our bodies and destroyed ourselves afterwards. (Ted)

…I think you put so much hard work and effort into playing a game and then…whether you win or lose, it's almost a release and I think I talk to my wife about it now. When you come home from a game,

and say you finish at 10 o'clock at night, then you can't actually go to sleep until four or five a.m. because you've got so much adrenaline running and most the time the guys deal with that by going out and drinking. (Greg)

One participant also mentioned that the way in which different sporting competitions and codes were structured had the potential to increase or decrease the likelihood of OFPB:

You get caught in that routine of play, travel, celebrate or commiserate. Whereas I think other sports that play once a week or even build up for every six months or every year that release comes once a year, whereas in [my sport] it comes possibly three times a week, possibly a couple of times a week, so it's probably a little bit more prevalent than it is in other sports. (Greg)

The role of sponsorship in relation to winning or losing was also seen as a temptation by some participants:

You…will have a chilly bin full of beer or a table full of their sponsored drinks on the table and you can choose from them, so temptation is there because, as soon as you've had one, you know, can you stop? If you've had a win, can you stop? If you've lost, do you want to drown your sorrows and keep going? (Lucy)

New Zealand drinking culture. As noted in the section on substance use, many participants believed that the high level of acceptance for the use of alcohol in our society was another factor that might contribute to OFPB:

New Zealand society places a huge emphasis I reckon on drinking to conform and drinking to relax and drinking to form relationships. So it was huge when I played and it obviously affected everybody because people would turn around and play the next week and when people [became] emotional about things we would just go and handle it with alcohol. (Dom)

…I suppose this is specific to [my sport], but it probably is part of society as well, I think you grow up as soon as you start playing…then probably drinking is the biggest part of the game. Most guys play the game so they can have a few beers after the game, it's almost the thing guys get excited about more than the game itself… (Greg)

Participants also noted that long-standing national traditions, such as having a drink after the game or having a drink while playing backyard cricket, had a strong influence on New Zealand sporting culture.

Summary. It would appear that there are a wide range of stressors, motives, and risk factors that impact on the OFPB of elite athletes. These tend to vary according to sporting code and environment and are also influenced by athletes' personal situations, coping mechanisms and potential predispositions. Many of the factors identified by participants as stressors, motives, and risk factors also had protective value in other areas. A number of specific aspects considered as stressors within the New Zealand sporting context were discussed that highlight the influence of social and cultural norms and values in shaping behaviour.

Protective Factors

Figure 3 illustrates the key ideas associated with the theme of 'Protective factors' with regard to OFPB. This theme refers to particular variables that participants identified as having protective value in relation to OFPB and includes both internal and external factors. Due to the large number of variables identified, only those factors that were discussed by all 10 participants, or which had special importance or emphasis attached to them, will be discussed below. The dual protective function of some stressors that were identified in Theme Two, 'Stressors, motives, and risk factors' will also be explored in further detail.
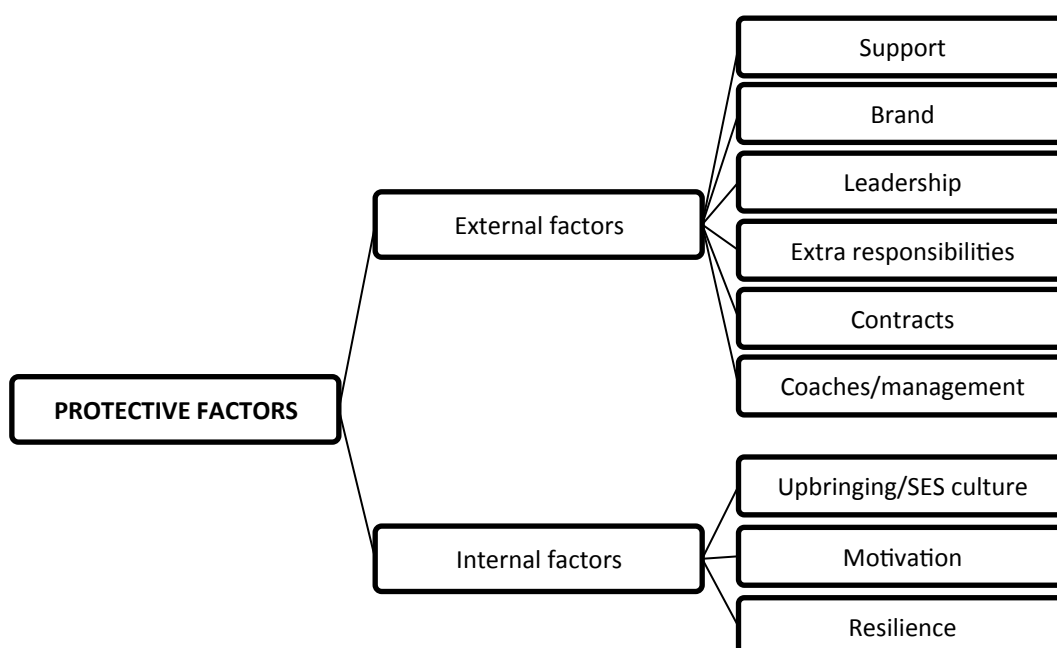
Figure 3. Subthemes relating to 'Protective factors.'

External factors. Participants identified a wide range of external factors, which they believed reduced the likelihood of elite athletes engaging in OFPB. In general, external factors referred to variables that were largely outside of participants' immediate control. For example, the influence of contractual agreements was noted as an external factor that may have some protective value for elite athletes. Eight participants reported that there was a "code of conduct" or clause in their contract about "bringing the game into disrepute" that might discourage OFPB. However, these statements tended to be quite general in nature and were viewed as being "murky' and "open to interpretation." Two participants were not aware of any specific guidelines about expected standards of behaviour for athletes in their particular sporting code when in off-field situations. Seven participants also talked about the idea that coaches and management staff had a protective role and this will be explored further in Theme Five, 'Help-seeking behaviour.'

Support from others. All of the participants acknowledged that having stable support networks, both prior to and during their elite careers, was a crucial protective factor in preventing athletes from heading down the "wrong path." Support from family members, partners and

friends was acknowledged and this was viewed as being especially important for young elite athletes:

> I had [a] very good support system…It wasn't hard for me to make that decision that "Yip, I'm going to train hard and it doesn't worry me if I don't go to parties." (Kim)

Some participants mentioned that having siblings who played the same sport at an elite level provided additional support during the early stages of their careers, especially if they had moved away from home. A number of participants also highlighted the importance of a welcoming/positive team environment and the need to feel supported by their teammates:

> …If you don't create that supportive environment then it makes it hard for an individual to fit in because they are always fighting to do this… (Lucy)

Even when a teammate had engaged in OFPB, participants argued that it was crucial for the team to "stand by" that athlete, regardless of whether or not they agreed with their behaviour.

In addition to support, one participant believed that having good quality relationships with teammates and coaches was also a protective factor. Having a quality relationship with someone else involved in her sport had helped Anna to "keep honest" and gave her some accountability for her behaviour. She knew that this person was relying on her to turn up and be ready to perform, which influenced her behaviour away from sport:

> My personal experience of senior athletes generally [is] they have to have at least one other person alongside them to share that experience. Like it might be their coach…it might be their partner who is also their coach, or whatever, but there is a shared experience that's keeping them [motivated]. (Anna)

Where athletes had moved to pursue their sport or were competing overseas, the loss of their personal support networks and structures appeared to have a major influence on their performance and behaviour:

> Because my family was so tight and so supportive, it was more that off-court support stuff that I found really hard, being in a new place and just having all this pressure and expectations on. (Summer)

> You almost get on a vicious roller coaster of being incredibly social or antisocial. It's a hard balance and talking about that time away from home and not being around I suppose your closest friends who can handle all that stuff. I suppose if you look at it like that it sounds like it would be a recipe for disaster. (Greg)

Having close contact with their support networks appeared to be a very important protective factor for participants, while being removed from it was identified as a triggering event for a range of OFPB.

Brand. A number of participants mentioned adherence to their own personal brand or the team brand when discussing factors that inhibited OFPB. A 'brand' was loosely described as a set of rules and beliefs that athletes adhered to in order to portray a positive image consistent with their own or the team's values. Thinking about how their behaviour would align with the team brand appeared to be a protective factor for many participants:

> Unfortunately sportspeople are placed in a difficult situation, but…we choose that path. I think at the end of the day, without even knowing it, you've got a brand and how you behave, you've got to think "Does that align with my brand or my product?" If it doesn't, just don't do it, save it for another time or do it in your own home. (Kim)

Leadership. Participants mentioned that leadership had a strong protective value within the team environment. Effective leadership was identified as being especially important for younger athletes to ensure they were "guided" appropriately. Leaders were looked upon to model

high standards of behaviour and to "nurture" and support younger athletes. It was anticipated that leadership would come from senior players within the sporting organisation:

> …Unless you have someone leading from the top, equally someone leading within the team environment, to not accept [inappropriate] kind of chat and [sexual] kind of comments then it's not going to change. (Anna)

Leaders were expected to have a low tolerance for OFPB and have the necessary interpersonal skills to be able to deal with issues in a positive and consistent manner. However, it was also apparent that participants did not think that becoming a leader would necessarily prevent someone from engaging in OFPB. One participant noted that leaders were more likely to uphold team values if the leadership role was determined through a peer voting system:

> I think once you get those responsibilities as well, I was going to say burdens but they are not burdens, responsibilities, you actually have a responsibility to uphold the team values. Our senior player groups are normally voted on so if your peers are going to vote you because you show certain traits then I believe you've got to live up to them as well. (Trev)

Extra responsibilities. Although all of the participants in this study were competing at an elite level, some sporting codes were still considered to be semi-professional. Athletes participating in these sports normally had to work part-time in order to supplement their incomes, especially if they had a family to support. Five out of the 10 participants reported that having extra responsibilities such as work, study, or dependent children sometimes led to increased tension and stress. However, they also acknowledged that these responsibilities provided balance in their lives and had a positive influence on decision-making in that they only had limited time available to engage in OFPB:

When you are an amateur athlete, semi-professional [you've] still got
to turn up and work a 40-hour week during the week. So that is what
my decisions are based on. (Lucy)

Participants also identified a number of external stressors that
appeared to have a dual protective function, such as being elite at young
age, media influence, professionalism, sponsorship, and team culture.
These factors will be explored further in the next section.

Elite at a young age. Due to their demanding academic and sporting
schedules, elite athletes reported that they often had less time and
opportunity to engage in antisocial behaviour than their peers when they
were younger:

…When I was at the age where people started experimenting with
maybe drugs and alcohol I was so full on with my [sport] I just
didn't have the time, to be honest. I might be home for one weekend
and I actually would just rather sit at home and watch a DVD with
my parents [laughs] than go out…I was like "Oh well, I am sort of
doing bigger and better things". In the big picture, no one is going to
remember who turned up to Joe Bloggs' party. (Summer)

Some participants also talked about having a limited understanding
of their role as elite athletes when they were younger and, to some extent,
this naivety appeared to act as a protective factor.

…As my career went on I felt more pressure…I mean you're like a
possum in headlights when you first start playing. Everything's cool
and you know your first taste of the big life and the big show and
then you just kind of ride that wave and you ride that as long as you
can. (Trev)

Young elite athletes also had less experience of being part of a team
environment and were often unaware of OFPB that was happening
around them:

It has been interesting…being usually a young one on the team…you don't know what is going on, the deeper things. There was a member of the team that was going through like an eating disorder. I had no idea and she was like my friend. (Summer)

Media influence. Although the media was generally viewed as a stressor for elite athletes, participants felt that increased media attention often deterred athletes from engaging in OFPB. For example, knowing that there was likely to be a large media presence at major sporting events led athletes to be "more careful" and "pick and choose" which nights to go out and socialise:

I do think a lot of [athletes] are a lot more careful now with drinking. They don't want to get caught in a photo with a drink and their eyes half closed. Even though it was just a photo and they had only one drink that night…that bottle in your hand with your eyes happening to be a little like this…straight away it's the wrong image. Then it becomes really difficult for them to say "Well it was only the one drink." So I think it has had…a good impact in that they probably go out less and are a lot more cautious. (Thomas)

Participants also talked about how digital technologies, such as CCTV footage and smartphones, had the potential to make people more accountable for their actions and might encourage elite athletes to behave more responsibly when they were out in public. Using social media as a way of monitoring athlete behaviour was also suggested by one of the participants. This coach had used a news post from Facebook to confront an athlete about not attending training sessions:

You know you get people saying I can't come to training tonight because I have got this and this on…Then you see that at two o'clock the next morning there's photos uploaded from them in town…Then I have to sit there and say "Look you're skipping training because you say you're too busy, yeah, but then you have time to go out in town." (Thomas)

Although the majority of participants discussed the influence of the media in relation to individual athletes, two participants also noted the potential for the media to pressure sporting organisations and management teams to deal with OFPB more effectively. They suggested that the combined weight of public opinion, as expressed through the media, might motivate organisations to be more proactive in dealing with OFPB and this was highlighted as a positive function of the media:

> I think when [OFPB is] exposed they…have to be seen to be managing it properly. It's those cases that aren't exposed, that's when you've got to ask, "Is it being managed appropriately?" …Sometimes I think, although it's bad, the media can bring the best out of an organisation. (Kim)

Professionalism. Due to the increased professionalism of sport, participants tended to regard their sporting career as an occupation, which appeared to be a protective factor:

> …With it becoming such a professional age and people getting paid, there is a lot more expectation for people to treat it as a job. You know, they are getting paid, this is their job, they have got to take responsibility as a normal person would in their job. You know you get drug tested at work, you know you don't come to work pissed or go out, most people don't go out work nights...and professionalism is really pushing it towards that. (Sarah)

Similarly, participants reported that performance-based funding meant that athletes were constantly expected to perform to the best of their abilities and this was a powerful motivation to avoid engaging in OFPB:

> I think certain results, say [medallists] at the Olympics and a few others, you know those Olympic performances, everyone started to realise [that] we need to buck our ideas up...if we want to continue. Because we could see the funding as well, you know funding started to get more into play. The better you did the more money you got, so

yeah I guess money has been a factor in changing behaviours... (Sarah)

Sponsorship. Although sponsorship was generally viewed as a stressor, it was also mentioned as a protective factor. In order to receive sponsorship, athletes needed to "put on a smart face" regardless of the particular circumstances they were faced with. One participant reported that being aligned with a sponsor tended to have a positive influence on behaviour. However, she also mentioned that sponsorship is sometimes decided by sporting organisations and athletes have little say over whether they support it or not:

> You know, and this is where, like obviously there are opportunities but this is how you get placed as a role model. When sponsorship singles you out or you're seen to be supportive of something, that's when I think…[it] definitely puts pressure on or you need to account for it. (Kim)

Team culture. Participants acknowledged the importance and influence a positive team culture can have on athlete behaviour:

> Wherever the team culture is heading is how everyone behaves. So that's captain and coach and senior players. They have the biggest influence on the behaviour of the team and what's acceptable and what's not. The standards that they set [are] what is followed, so it's as simple as that. (Greg)

Internal factors. In addition to external protective factors, nine out of the 10 participants identified the importance of internal protective factors in reducing the likelihood of elite athletes engaging in OFPB. Intrinsic motivation and resilience were highlighted by several participants and family upbringing was also seen as protective by eight participants.

Upbringing/SES culture. Some of the stressors associated with upbringing and SES/culture were described by participants under Theme Two, 'Stressors, motives, and risk factors'. However, upbringing/SES culture was also mentioned as having high protective value and support

from family and friends was seen as a crucial factor in avoiding OFPB. Some participants reported that they often moderated their behaviour because they did not want to let their family down. It was apparent that participants often reflected on personal values that had been part of their upbringing and transferred these to their current environment:

> Although my parents are supportive and protective, at the same time they taught me if things are not going to plan you work harder because that's the background they have. (Thomas)

One participant also identified the protective value of different cultural and religious backgrounds in moderating OFPB:

> Half the group don't drink anyway, that's the difference from when I played. There was the huge emphasis and expectation and a lot of peer pressure to drink and to drink to excess and now that just doesn't exist. That's a positive perspective in terms of Polynesian influence because a lot of Polynesian families don't drink. (Dom)

Summary. Participants identified a range of protective factors, both internal and external in nature, as being relevant to OFPB. An interesting finding was that dual functions were demonstrated for a number of protective factors that were also identified as stressors. In general, participants felt that protective factors had a positive impact on behaviour and reduced the risk of engaging in OFPB. For example, consideration of personal and team brands, exposure to positive leadership, and having extra responsibilities in addition to sporting commitments were all seen as factors that enabled participants to avoid OFPB. Difficulties sometimes arose when participants were no longer able to utilise specific protective factors, such as support networks and quality relationships, which increased their vulnerability to OFPB.

Impact of OFPB

Figure 4 outlines the key ideas associated with the theme of 'Impact of OFPB.' The subthemes are divided into 'impact on others, 'impact on

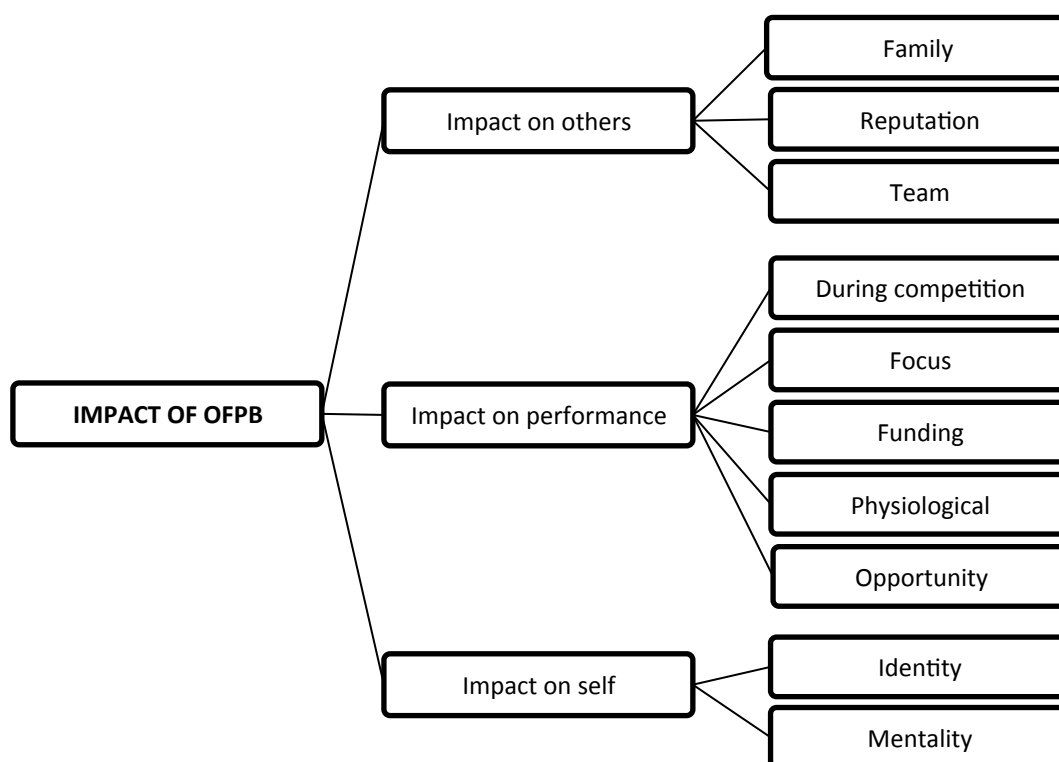performance', and 'impact on self', and will be discussed in the next section.

Figure 4. Subthemes relating to 'Impact of OFPB.'

As the primary focus of this study was to explore perspectives and experiences of OFPB within the elite New Zealand sporting environment, the subtheme of 'impact on performance', which refers to on-field performance, will not be explored in detail. However, participants noted a considerable impact of OFPB on their performance during competition and felt that this affected both their focus and future opportunities and potential for funding. Participants also reported that the physiological impact of OFPB on performance was a powerful motive for behaviour change and helped them to avoid OFPB.

Impact on self and others. The impact of OFPB on self will be discussed in conjunction with 'impact on others', as there was considerable overlap between these two subthemes. Participants reported that engaging in OFPB had a significant impact on their personal identity and reputation as an athlete and also affected the quality of their relationships with others. A unique finding in relation to the 'impact on self' subtheme was that one participant's experiences had enabled her to better understand how potential flaws in her sporting code encouraged

the development of OFPB. This had a positive impact on her mental attitude towards her sport because she was able to use her own personal experiences to strengthen and improve athlete support in a later role within the elite environment.

However, the impact of OFPB was reported by all 10 participants as having far greater implications than just personal consequences. Athletes also referred to the impact of OFPB on their families and wider support networks, as well as the negative effects on team dynamics, reputation, and image.

Family. A number of participants talked about the impact that engaging in OFPB, or being accused of being involved in some form of OFPB, had on them, their family, and their wider support networks:

> It impacted on my mood, I guess how I behaved around others, my partner at the time. I don't think I was necessarily a pleasant person to be around sometimes…Even though I didn't live with my family at the time, it [brought] stress on my family as well. Mum, Dad they want you to do well, they don't want to see their kids go through these things. (Thomas)

Reputation. Several participants mentioned that OFPB could damage their image and reputation as an elite athlete, as well as how the general public perceived their sport:

> It probably affected me negatively because I was seen with these people and I did go out. I was the younger one and other people saw that as really bad and maybe my behaviour was out of line sometimes…[I got] a call from I think he was the High Performance Commissioner at that time saying "What are you getting up to?" (Sarah)

Team. An athlete's OFPB also had a flow-on effect to other aspects within the team environment. Participants suggested that, at times, changes in team cohesion and dynamics occurred as a result of ongoing OFPB. For example, Kim talked about an inappropriate comment that a

member of her team had made to the media, which affected the "energy" and "feel" of the team. Another athlete referred to the OFPB of one team member as having a negative influence on the "collective psyche" of the team. Similarly, the OFPB of individuals often impacted on the positive achievements and performance of other team members:

> That guy hugely impacted on the team environment and it really tarnished a huge achievement for me...As I say, it was the first time [our team] had ever won the national championship and this clown's behaviour became the topic of the day. It was in all the big newspapers, it was the big news, not the fact that we won it. (Dom)

One participant also discussed the potential negative effects that OFPB can have on other team members. In this case, a team member who was going though a tough time influenced another athlete to engage in similar behaviours, which was disruptive to the team:

> …Last year [a player] in our team was sort of struggling off the court with her relationship breaking up. She sort of started to pull other players out of the team dynamics and into her problem and her issues. She wanted to be wild and crazy sort of thing so she started leading others astray quite a bit and that was really disruptive to the team environment… (Summer)

The impact on the team was particularly crucial for athletes involved in team sports because they were reliant on each other at a performance level. One participant said that engaging in OFPB could not only derail performance output but also affect the "balance" and "culture" a team is aiming to achieve. Letting others down and being disruptive to team development were common perceptions:

> I had…one night on tour…excessive drinking, far too much sort of thing, way over the extreme and ended up sort of vomiting all through the team hotel and pretty much making a mess and waking up half the team…right in the middle of a hard training phase. (Ted)

A number of participants also highlighted the impact OFPB had on relationships within the team environment:

> I think it goes through stages. There is the sense of camaraderie and people wanting to stick up for someone and then, depending on how many times it happens, guys get pretty ruthless and dismissive of that person and say [they're] not part of the team anymore. (Greg)

In teams of the same-sex, certain types of OFPB appeared to be more prevalent than others and were often dealt with in gendered ways:

> …They were small things like timing, you know, she didn't see five minutes late as being a big problem. But when you're consistently five minutes late, that irritates people and then you start getting the bitchiness. Then you start getting the talking behind the back about "Is this player committed?" "Does she want to be here?" You just start to question her as a player. (Summer)

OFPB often affected on-field relationships as well, which had a negative impact on the whole team:

> We would be like "Oh you didn't turn up to your session. Where were you?" And it was like lying for each other and you begin to not trust them. In a team sport you just can't not have that trust with someone because then it leads on to on-court issues and suddenly it goes all downhill. (Summer)

Some participants also suggested that, when a teammate is struggling with OFPB, it influences how others behave around them and affects the team environment as a whole. Terms like "tiptoeing" and "pussyfoot around" were used to explain having to provide space to a teammate who was dealing with OFPB:

> It affects everyone else around you. If they're in a bad mood, you can't approach them and she was the captain of one of our regional teams. So you can't approach her because you don't know how she

[will respond], she's crying all the time, she's feeling really down…
(Lucy)

In contrast to the negative implications and impact of OFPB explored above, some positive impacts were also identified. For instance, one participant mentioned that seeing a friend struggling with OFPB had a positive impact on her mental attitude:

It made me realise that, you know, you've got to be very balanced in your lifestyle…you've got to have other perspectives...just to realise that your sport's not going to be the 'be all and end all' of everything. (Sarah)

Another participant observed that having a post-match drink together as a team, if in moderation, could enhance team dynamics and help to identify the "root" of problems.

Summary. Theme Four 'Impact of OFPB' explored participants' experiences and perspectives about the impact that OFPB has on the individual, the team and sporting performance. The impact of OFPB appeared to be varied among sports and across gender. The range of impacts on the team was most commonly reported but participants also felt that OFPB impacted on their families and reputation negatively.

Help-seeking Behaviour

Figure 5 outlines the key ideas associated with the theme of 'Help-seeking behaviour' in relation to OFPB. This theme refers to participants' experiences of prevention and intervention strategies and their perspectives on areas that need further development to be more responsive to athletes' needs. Three major subthemes were identified: access; prevention; and intervention. These were broken down further into: trust/confidentiality; lack of awareness; stigma; prevention (past and future); and intervention (past and future).
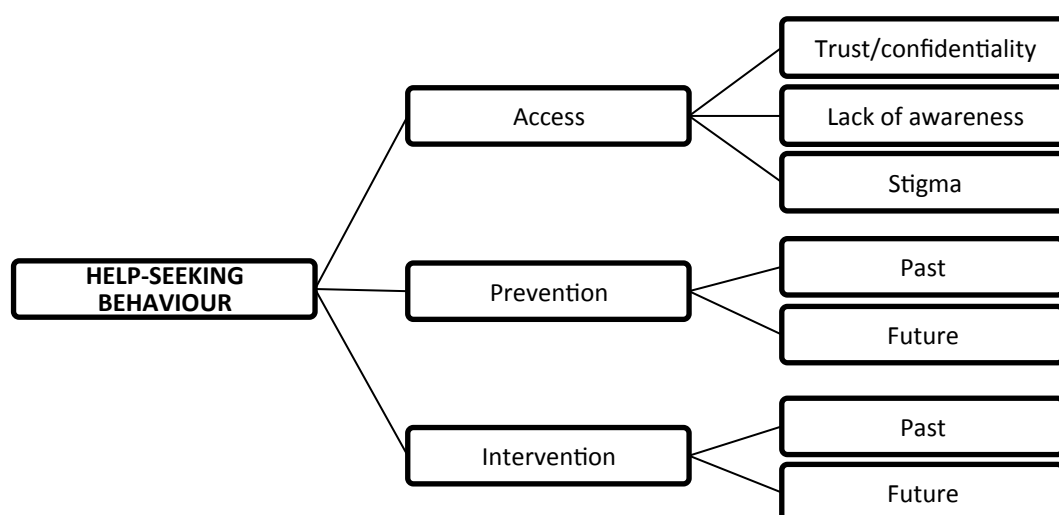
Figure 5. Subthemes relating to 'Help-seeking behaviour.'

The primary goal for this study was to explore the perspectives and experiences of elite athletes in New Zealand with a particular focus on OFPB. This section will focus on areas of intervention and prevention that participants believed were necessary to enhance athlete engagement and decrease the likelihood of future OFPB and barriers to seeking help. It is important to acknowledge that participants also discussed prevention and intervention strategies that have occurred in the past, and that are in place currently, and the influence such methods had on athlete behaviour within the elite environment. Some reflection on previous methods of prevention and intervention will be alluded to, but the main focus is to present the future-focused findings highlighted within this study in regard to help-seeking behaviour.

Access. Participants discussed prevention and intervention with regard to help-seeking behaviour and barriers to accessing help. Issues with trust and confidentiality, limited awareness of appropriate ways to seek help, and avoidance of help-seeking behaviours due to stigma are areas that will be explored under this subtheme.

Trust/confidentiality. Having guaranteed confidentiality and being able to trust people when seeking help were identified as important factors by participants in this study. In cases where athletes had an awareness of who to approach for help, it was suggested that confidentiality was a significant issue. A number of participants believed

that lack of confidentiality and privacy of information between management and intervention personnel tended to limit the amount of help-seeking behaviour exhibited by athletes. Most participants felt that if problems or issues were considered detrimental to the team, personal health, performance, or anything else that the professional thought was important for the coach to know, then confidentiality was likely to be broken:

> I reckon the problem with [my sport] is confidentiality…If I had a problem with nutrition and I went to our nutritionist, I guarantee the head coach would know about it and that I think is what stops players addressing issues. (Kim)

Issues of confidentiality and trust were also related to the factor of selection issues identified as a stressor in Theme Two, 'Stressors, motives and risk factors.' A number of participants reported that they avoided seeking help, even if it did not have a direct impact on their performance, because of the detrimental effect this might have on their impending selection in a team or squad:

> As much as the manager can say my door is open, that's all shit. Or the coach, my door's open, or the captain at the end of the day. You're also selecting or not selecting, so I am not going to come to you and say I am really struggling here, I'm scared, or whatever your worry is. (Trev)

Due to the blurring of boundaries around confidentiality, many participants were reluctant to admit they might have a problem, even for very trivial behaviours. They said they would rather keep an issue or problem to themselves because it was "too risky" to put information out there and hope that it would remain confidential:

> Sometimes…you just don't want to risk a petty little thing, or an issue that you may have, impeding your potential selection in a squad, and it happens, it happens. (Kim)

Having trust, both in teammates and coaching and management staff, was also identified as an essential factor for effective intervention and prevention. Participants said they only approached people where trust had been developed and would not seek help if appropriate trust networks were not in place:

> I probably trusted the physio and the massage therapist more than I trusted the sport psych, just because I thought the sport psych was such a 'book' person...and I didn't trust that [they would not] go and tell someone else in the sport. (Sarah)

One participant did not want to seek help from the team professional employed to deal with performance and OFPB related issues, due to a personality clash. Ted found it difficult to relate to the professional on a personal level and felt more comfortable going to other management staff, such as the CEO.

Another participant also acknowledged the current 'Athlete Life'[12] programmes in place by High Performance Sport New Zealand as being "well developed." However, Anna emphasised the importance of trust in developing relationships that are supportive of help-seeking behaviour in order for programmes like this to be successful.

Lack of awareness. Participants identified other major barriers to seeking help for OFPB, such as lack of knowledge of specific problems and limited awareness of appropriate intervention services. Participants noted that help-seeking behaviour was often influenced by self-denial and/or failure to admit personal difficulties and that some athletes may not recognise when they needed to seek professional help:

> Most people will be aware that, if they really needed to, they probably could get help. But it's probably more they are not using it, or choosing not to, or letting it become more of a problem, before

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[12] The Athlete Life Programme assists athletes through a process of short and long term planning and decision-making focusing on performance enhancement through a performance lifestyle approach (High Performance Sport New Zealand, 2013).

they decide to, or maybe not admitting it's a problem. So I think a lot of the time it comes down to, not self-denial, but the reluctance to seek that help and maybe the impact that may have on your sporting career. (Ted)

Participants suggested that problem acceptance and motivation for change was even less likely to occur in situations where there was no direct link to, or negative implications for, individual or team performance. Two participants also talked about the importance of raising awareness among teammates. Having "open communication" between teammates was seen as a crucial factor for increased awareness and acceptance of OFPB:

> I think a little bit more team care and awareness would go a long way and I am confident that is the case in most sports…Sometimes it's nice to open your eyes just a little bit and kind of just take a little bit of athlete care around some of your other teammates and just see that things are [okay], because depression is varied in a lot of forms. (Anna)

Anna also pointed out that increased awareness of problematic behaviours needed to come from someone who was trusted before athletes could begin to accept that a problem may be present or that change was needed. In addition to limited problem awareness, participants also mentioned that help-seeking behaviour may be impaired by athletes' lack of knowledge of appropriate avenues or services available to seek help:

> I think there is still a lot of lack of awareness of what avenues are out there though for people get help or get support or whatever…Sports that are exposed to the high performance environment and High Performance Sport New Zealand get support…provided to them through that system but if you're operating outside the system, which a lot of athletes do and a lot of sports do because they're just not funded…Their understanding of what is actually available for them is less. (Anna)

Stigma. Fear of discrimination and loss of respect from others was evident with regard to participants accepting and dealing with mental health difficulties and other OFPB (e.g., addiction, violent behaviour). It was apparent that the stigma associated with not coping was another barrier present within the elite New Zealand sporting environment. The possibility of being seen as "weak" was a common finding in relation to athletes' help-seeking behaviour:

> He didn't want any of the other [athletes] knowing though, because he didn't want to be seen as being weak...He didn't want to be discriminated against because he had a problem and thought that well, if he went out there are said that he had depression, he was going to get discriminated against. (Sarah)

Two participants also noted that some difficulties may not be picked up or identified properly due to the "taboo" nature of topics like mental health:

> I remember one guy [overseas], we were touring…I mean, looking back, all the signs were there and we just missed it with depression. I think the whole mental side of it is still a bit taboo, even when we had a sport psych guy it wasn't really talked about. (Trev)

Prevention and intervention – future. Participants discussed a number of other areas where they believed intervention and prevention strategies needed to be improved within the elite sporting environment.

Education. The need for increased educational opportunities was mentioned by a number of participants. The main areas in which athletes said they would benefit from further training and education were public relations (PR) and dealing with the media:

> We have drug education, anti-corruption education…a little bit of nutrition but, like I said, not enough media stuff and public PR stuff. I don't think there is enough of that. That's why you will see more often than not experienced or senior guys doing most of the interviews because they can handle it, they know what to say. (Trev)

…I think the social media side of things is going to be something that [sporting organisations] are going to start picking up…I know we have had the first actual disciplinary problems because of Facebook and social behaviour and social media. So there is nothing in place now, but I can see something being done to try and educate the players on a regular basis. (Thomas)

Dealing with social situations where alcohol may be present was also identified as an area where further education is needed. A number of participants commented that social situations can be "overwhelming", especially for younger athletes:

The thing about a young athlete and I think a popular athlete…where everybody would like to know you, where everybody is willing to buy you a drink. So that's where, I suppose, if the players were educated better around that and they could have a way of dealing with that. (Greg)

The physiological impact and training disadvantages of OFPB were also highlighted as potential areas for improved athlete education:

Probably if we got education around what harm some of those excessive behaviours can do to our performance, [it] would help a little bit. Because it might make you realise, hey you're doing all this training for maybe half a second, whereas, if you cut out that you might get the half a second. Probably more a realistic approach to what harm it can do, rather than the scientific approach. (Ted)

In discussing education, one participant also mentioned the need for successful intervention strategies to be shared among different sporting codes, something she believed was lacking currently:

…Within sports I think still a lot of education and just open discussion and just collaboration can be done too. You don't need to reinvent the wheel and I think if people don't share information and share the challenges they're having, both within sport from region to region from club to club…because often the issues are the same

across a wide range of sports. It's just that people feel they have to deal with it internally or intrinsically within their own environment, whereas there has actually been a sport that is dealing with the same thing. (Anna)

Specialist in the environment. Participants expressed strong support for the idea of employing full-time professional staff, such as sport psychologists, who were trained to deal with OFPB. While participants valued the input of different professionals in their sporting environment, it was apparent that their roles tended to focus mainly on training and performance aspects. In general, specialist staff were not employed fulltime and, therefore, their services were only available to athletes on an intermittent basis. Participants felt that having a fulltime specialist in the environment might help to identify and reduce the stressors that led to a "big explosion" before it reached that stage, hopefully minimizing any "damage":

I think there's a place in, well I can only say [my sport]…for like maybe a psychologist or mental skills guy, but I would call them something almost like player liaison…I mean like a player liaison guy, almost like a dude who is just a health check for individuals and for the team. That's why I say he has got to have some sort of mental skills knowledge and background but…this is going to sound really like weird, but he's just a good bastard. You know, he is just a good guy who has this ability to bring together individuals and to make the team feel good about themselves. (Trev)

One participant mentioned that coaches, management staff, and senior team members were often expected to intervene when an athlete was struggling, even though they had no professional training or expertise in this area. Greg suggested that this could have potential negative ramifications for athletes, especially if leadership groups and coaches held negative attitudes, such as "You've just got to get hard" or "That's just him." As a result, he believed that the problem might not be dealt with effectively and this may led to further issues down the line:

…We've got coaches [for various skills and areas] but if we are on tour 10 months a year there is no doubt that someone's going to have some sort of emotional problem that they need to deal with. But [a professional is] just not there and it's expected for senior players or the coach to sort it out and they have no skill set at all to do it…It leads to probably more problems, where [as] if you had a specialist in that environment it probably could stop a lot of that behaviour before it even starts. (Greg)

Distraction methods. Two participants talked about how distraction methods, or replacing situations where opportunities for OFPB might occur with other meaningful activities or behaviours, could have potential benefits for elite athletes:

You know, they could have offered alternatives overseas…like we're going to…take you all out for dinner or, instead of going out drinking, we are going to take you on [a] tour or something. I mean…when I was a younger athlete, that would have been something that I thought could have helped me. (Sarah)

The concept of "down time" was also discussed by a number of participants. They suggested that professional athletes often had time to engage in further education or to take on other external responsibilities, but tended to overlook these kinds of opportunities.

Increase self-efficacy/resilience. One participant felt that it was important to provide opportunities for younger athletes to build a sense of efficacy or resilience before entering into the elite environment:

I would like to see opportunities, we talked about it with our young guys, sending them to Spain…and doing three or four months of [sport] and try to cram in that sort of experience. You know the…traditional OE experience that people get…I think anything that can grow that self-sufficiency…and severs that total reliance on other people who do basic things for them. Anything like that I would support strongly. (Dom)

Although participants agreed with the need to increase specialist supports and education, they had strong views about how these suggestions might be implemented in practice. Some participants believed that, in the past, too many rules, a punitive approach, and inflexible techniques had had a negative influence:

> We used to have [team protocols] as well with the national squad where [athletes] had to sign papers and code of conduct and things they could and couldn't do. But it's almost like when they do that they push off against, like they don't like it. (Thomas)

> There should have been more intervention…instead of saying "We're going to punish you for drinking." (Sarah)

Consistent intervention. In addition to limited awareness of issues such as OFPB, some participants also mentioned that, once problems were identified, they were often ignored by coaches or management. They discussed the need for consistent intervention, regardless of rank or position in the team or length of time in the elite environment:

> …If you're consistent with say one guy, say he gets on the piss three times a week and you deal with him a certain way and there is another guy getting on the piss three times a week, you've got to do the same with him, no matter if one guy's 21 and one guy's 31 and played one test or 101 tests. I think if there is consistency to how it is dealt with, and I don't just mean in terms of a punishment but how it is approached and dealt with, then there shouldn't be a problem… (Trev)

Even when team rules and protocols had been established, participants reported that they were often not adhered to and no consequences were given for inappropriate behaviours. Participants felt that ignoring OFPB was not a proactive response to some of the problems being experienced within their environments. In particular, the lack of consistent intervention appeared to exacerbate issues within the team:

> I think how it affects the team is [the] most important thing because, if a player if behaving irresponsibly, he is either getting dealt with harshly or he is either getting dealt with favourably. If he is getting dealt with favourably, then that affects other people in the team. They start talking about this and why is he being dealt with in this way? Why is he being given a chance when I haven't? So then it builds that double standard within the team and then it builds a lack of trust and everyone becomes insular and they just look after themselves, it just has [a] terrible effect within a group. (Greg)

In contrast, three participants reported the positive impact and support of an increasing number of professional associations for players. These were described as places where you can be "open and honest" and "fantastic" as the first port of call for a problem.

Summary. Based on the way participants have interpreted their experiences, it would appear that they often felt judged and stereotyped, which often impaired their help-seeking behaviour. This finding was linked heavily to eligibility for selection within sport, which was highlighted as a major barrier influencing help-seeking behaviour. Participants discussed previous intervention and prevention methods that were both effective and ineffective within their individual sporting contexts. Participants also developed a number of recommendations for future prevention and intervention methods for areas, which they felt were currently influencing the maintenance of OFPB. Issues around confidentiality, trust, stigma, increased awareness, education and appropriate supports were mentioned as areas in need of significant development and review.

Chapter Summary

Five major themes emerged from the data that appeared to best represent athletes' experiences and perspectives of OFPB within the elite New Zealand sporting environment. While each theme was discussed separately to show theme development, they were not necessarily mutually exclusive. Participants' experiences of OFPB included a wide range of behaviours and opinions about what was considered problematic

within their individual sporting environments. The findings suggest that excessive alcohol use was the most prevalent type of antisocial behaviour experienced by elite athletes. However, other OFPB, such as match-fixing and gambling, were considered to be increasing. Participants also identified a number of relatively trivial behaviours, such as lateness and defiance of team protocols, which met their definitions of OFPB. A range of stressors, motives, and risk factors within the elite environment emerged as important in understanding why some athletes engage in OFPB. Key stressors, motives, and risk factors identified by participants included being elite at a young age and having vulnerabilities to mental illness. Three interrelated stressors identified were media influence, having an elite profile, and the professional nature of sport. Participants also discussed stressors specific to New Zealand sport and culture, such as longstanding sporting traditions, high public interest in sport, and differences in cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

A number of protective factors that appeared to reduce the risk of athletes engaging in OFPB were also identified. Participants emphasised the importance of a supportive team culture, effective leadership, and the quality of relationships, both inside and outside of sport. They viewed the impact of OFPB as an important issue, not only for their sporting careers but also for their lives outside of the sporting context. The interactions participants had with their sporting codes and external agencies in addressing OFPB was reflected in the final theme of help-seeking behaviour. Athletes proposed numerous suggestions for future intervention and prevention consideration. Overall, these themes identified key areas that participants believed were relevant to the development, avoidance, prevention, intervention and consequences of OFPB in the New Zealand context.

Chapter Five

Discussion

Some of the similarities and differences between the existing literature on off-field problematic behaviour (OFPB) of elite athletes and the major findings that emerged from this study are examined in this chapter. The discussion will be presented in relation to each of the major themes and will consider whether the behaviours identified as problematic in the current research are consistent with the findings in the literature. Possible hypotheses for discrepancies with previous studies are provided. Factors that may facilitate and/or impede OFPB will be explored and the impact of OFPB on self and others will be outlined, followed by the key findings on help-seeking behaviour. Relevant theories will be highlighted throughout this chapter with a specific focus on OFPB. An examination of the strengths and limitations of this study, the implications for practice, and suggestions for further research will be discussed.

Key Findings

The results presented in Chapter Four demonstrate that the elite New Zealand athletes in this study have experienced (either personally or observed in others) a wide range of OFPB. Excessive alcohol use was the most common type of OFPB reported by participants. Consistent with previous research on antisocial athlete behaviour, other types of OFPB, such as sexualised behaviour and promiscuity, physical aggression, extreme risk-taking, and disordered eating, were acknowledged as common problems. To a lesser extent, match-fixing, gambling, psychological manipulation, and non-compliance with team protocols were also identified as other types of potential OFPB.

Participants discussed a number of stressors, motives, risks factors and protective factors that either increased or decreased the likelihood that elite athletes may engage in OFPB. It was apparent that specific factors related to the New Zealand elite sporting environment had a strong influence on these behaviours. Key stressors included media

influence, increase in professionalism, coach behaviour and relationships, being on tour, having a well-known elite profile, and being involved in sporting cultures than condone drinking culture. An unexpected finding that emerged from the research was the impact of OFPB on others. Issues with confidentiality and trust in professionals, lack of awareness, and the stigma associated with not coping were all mentioned as possible barriers to seeking help for OFPB. Protective factors included having stable, prosocial support networks, positive team cultures and coach relationships, and having extra responsibilities outside of sport. The participants also made a number of recommendations for future prevention and intervention, including: (a) an increased focus on media education; (b) the need for full-time support professionals; and (c) consistent implementation of effective intervention strategies for OFPB across sporting disciplines.

Experiences of OFPB

Previous research has identified gender differences in athlete behaviour, with males being more likely to engage in antisocial behaviour than females (Kavaussanu & Ntoumanis, 2003; Kavussanu et al., 2009). This finding was confirmed in the current study, with male participants reporting greater involvement in OFPB than female participants. A large proportion of the examples of OFPB provided by participants also involved male athletes or made reference to male-dominated sports.

The literature also provides some evidence of age differences in relation to antisocial behaviour in sport (during competition). A number of studies have found that older athletes (aged between 17-25 years) tend to exhibit more antisocial behaviours than their younger counterparts (Kavussanu et al., 2006; Romand et al., 2009). However, participants in the current study (aged between 20-50 years) believed that some types of OFPB, such as excessive drinking, reduced with age, which tends to refute these findings.

Similarly, as competitive level increased (e.g., Olympian or World Champion) participants reported a shift in priority to sporting performance, with a subsequent decrease in OFPB. This finding also is in

difference to the literature about on-field aggression in non-elite athletes. For example, Romand et al. (2009) found that instrumental on-field aggression increased with competitive level.

These examples illustrate some of the main differences between participants in the current study, compared with sample groups in the majority of the published research. As noted previously, most of the research in this area has been conducted with college/university level athletes in the US. Many of these studies focused on specific sporting codes and only included non-elite athletes. Very little research has examined off-field problematic behaviours, especially from the perspectives of athletes themselves. Participants in the current study tended to be older and were competing at an elite competitive level in comparison to the adolescent regional level athletes in Romand et al. (2009) study. It is suggested that these factors may have a strong protective value for specific types of OFPB in the New Zealand sporting context.

Antisocial OFPB. The findings discussed above in relation to gender suggest that similar patterns may occur in relation to OFPB as those identified in the literature for on-field problematic behaviour. The differences in the impact of competitive level and age also provide justification for the exploration of behaviours in elite versus non-elite athlete populations and between on-field and off-field behaviours. A number of similar tensions identified in the literature as having an impact on mental preparation in sport (Hodge & Hermansson, 2007) are discussed below in relation to off-field problematic behaviour.

Substance use. Alcohol use was the most prevalent OFPB experienced and/or witnessed by participants in this study. This finding is consistent with previous research, which has found that elite and non-elite athletes tend to drink more than non-sportspeople (Lisha & Sussman, 2010; Martens et al., 2006b; Quarrie et al., 1996; Wechsler & Davenport, 1997). New Zealand research also suggests that elite athletes have higher levels of hazardous alcohol use, compared with non-elite athletes and non-sportspeople (O'Brien et al., 2005).

Participants in the current study were aged between 20-50 years and many had reached a stage in their sporting careers where they were regarded as senior athletes in their particular sporting codes. In general, they perceived that hazardous drinking behaviour decreased with age; however, consistent with other studies, a moderate to high rate of alcohol use was found among this group. This may be due to the additional pressures (i.e., both sport-related and personal) that are typically experienced by older elite athletes.

Participants also reported more frequent substance use after major events, when on tour, or when competing overseas, and mentioned that post-event celebrations often occurred to extreme levels in these particular situations. This finding is consistent with Dietze et al. (2008) who found evidence for a seasonal drinking hypothesis among elite athletes. In this study, there was a reported spike in hazardous drinking behaviour at the end of the season and during vacation periods. However, the results of the current study suggest that there are other potential high-risk situations during the season that should also be considered. A possible explanation for this type of OFPB may be that elite athletes have greater opportunities to engage in drinking behaviour when they are on tour because they are less well-known overseas and, therefore, not subject to the same level of scrutiny. Similarly, there are not the same constraints on elite athletes at the end of the season or after major competitive events.

Differences between competitive levels have also been reported in the New Zealand literature, with provincial elite athletes displaying the most problematic drinking behaviour, compared with international elite athletes and non-elite athletes (O'Brien et al., 2007). Participants in this study, in which nine of the 10 participants had represented New Zealand at an elite level, provided additional support for these findings. They mentioned that alcohol use, and antisocial behaviour in general, tended to reduce as competitive level increased. This appears to indicate that competitive level may act as a protective factor, which tends to mitigate the risk of harmful alcohol use. Similar results were also reported in a study of elite national and international college athletes (Lorente et al., 2004), highlighting that competitive level may be a significant factor across different age groups.

The literature also suggests that alcohol use is more prevalent in elite team sports than non-team sports (Lorente et al., 2004; O'Brien et al., 2007). Participants in this study agreed that involvement in team sport tends to increase the likelihood of alcohol use and negative behaviour among elite athletes. A number of factors were mentioned as possible explanations for this, including peer influence and team and cultural traditions. Studies of elite college-age athletes in the US have also reported differences in alcohol use according to sporting type (e.g., Martens et al., 2006). However, this did not appear to be a significant factor in the present study, which included participants from seven different sporting codes. There was widespread consensus that alcohol use permeates across all sports, particularly at the elite level (O'Brien et al., 2007; O'Brien et al., 2005). This would be an interesting area for further investigation in the New Zealand context.

An unexpected finding that emerged from this study was the potential impact of OFPB on others. Participants expressed concern that excessive alcohol consumption could lead to unintended consequences, such as getting into fights, poor decision-making and sexual promiscuity. This supports the work of O'Brien et al. (2005) who found that elite New Zealand athletes had greater harmful consequences of drinking than non-sportspeople. It would appear that the negative consequences of hazardous alcohol use are much greater for elite athletes than for non-sportspeople. For example, it may adversely affect an athlete's career and selection, elite profile and reputation. Such behaviour also has implications for others, both within the athlete's personal and sporting environments and in the wider community.

Recreational and illicit drug use, either on the part of participants or witnessed in other elite athletes, was not prevalent in the current study. This finding is consistent with the results of an Australian study of elite athletes where recreational and illicit drug use was low, according to self-reports (Dunn et al., 2011). Participants in the current study accredited the low rate of drug use in New Zealand to the strict monitoring regime of elite athletes by anti-drug sporting agencies. This suggests that increased competitive level either serves to reduce drug use in elite athletes or that drug use is limited strategically to avoid positive identification.

Participants in this study also identified a wide range of other antisocial behaviours that may contribute to OFPB, such as risk-taking behaviour, violence and aggression, sexual behaviour, and psychological manipulation.

Risk-taking behaviour. Specific factors mentioned in relation to extremes and risk-taking included a "work hard, play hard" philosophy, an opportunity affect, and low levels of perceived risk. For instance, participants reported that when elite athletes were given the opportunity to socialise, they would often drink to excessive levels, especially when on tour. These findings are consistent with previous studies of elite college athletes (Leichliter et al., 1998; Martens et al., 2006).

Other research has also investigated the role of team and masculine cultures in promoting hazardous drinking behaviour. For example, Peretti-Watel et al. (2004) reported an opportunity effect in relation to alcohol consumption among male adolescent elite athletes when on outings with other athletes, but not when these outings occurred with non-athletes. The current study also found that excessive alcohol use was more likely to occur when other athletes were present but participants also reported an opportunity effect when socialising with non-athletes. These differences may be due, in part, to the ages of the sample groups; the elite athletes in the present study tended to be older and had greater access to alcohol. It is also suggested that the role of New Zealand drinking culture exerts a powerful influence on athletes across a range of social contexts.

Peretti-Watel et al. (2004) study of risk-taking among young elite athletes in France also found an opportunity effect for cannabis use with both athletes and non-athletes. However, no opportunity effect was found for drug use in the current study. Again, this may be due to differences in age and competitive level since participants in the current study were all adult elite international athletes. The more prominent role of anti drug agencies, monitoring and testing among top elite sportspeople in New Zealand sport is another possible explanation put forward by participants in this study to account for the low rate of illicit drug use.

Participants in the current study also noted that some athletes had lowered perception of risk towards OFPB due to their involvement in high-risk sports. Similar perceptions of risk were found in a US study that compared high school athletes and non-athletes (Wetherill & Fromme, 2007). Taken together, these findings suggest that, irrespective of age, elite athletes in both countries may have similar attitudes, beliefs and perceptions towards extremes and risk-taking.

Violence and aggression. Although on-field aggression was noted as a common theme in the literature (Kavussanu, 2012), very few studies have specifically examined off-field aggression and violence in elite athletes. In the current study, the role of provocation (i.e., being targeted by others) was identified as the main factor that contributed to elite athletes' engaging in violent behaviour. This finding is in line with the results of a recent study involving elite Australian football athletes (Grange & Kerr, 2011). In both studies, it was apparent that off-field physical aggression was frequently compounded by excessive alcohol consumption by both parties.

Athletes involved in high contact sports have generally also been found to display higher levels of aggression and violent behaviour (Endresen & Olweus, 2005; Kreager, 2007). However, only one sport in the current study was considered a high contact sport, which may account for the minimal discussion of violence in this sample group. Similarly, there was no obvious evidence in the present study to support previous findings on the relationship between macho attitudes and peer influence in promoting aggressive behaviour in elite athletes (Pappas et al., 2004).

Sexual behaviour. Another type of OFPB reported by participants in the current study was inappropriate sexual behaviour. A range of verbal, physical and promiscuous behaviours was identified in relation to elite athletes. It was noted that this type of problematic behaviour tended to occur more frequently in touring situations when elite athletes were away from their normal environments. The association between sporting participation and sexual behaviour in the literature is mixed, with both significant (Gage, 2008) and non-significant (Gidycz et al., 2007) correlations being found. However, contrary to previous research (e.g.,

Boeringer, 1996), no severe cases of inappropriate sexual behaviour were mentioned by participants in this study.

Match-fixing and gambling. Other types of OFPB identified by participants in the current study were match-fixing and problem gambling. Participants felt that match-fixing was likely to increase in future due to the greater commercialisation of sport. They also suggested that problem gambling might occur due to the lucrative financial incentives that some elite athletes are exposed to. However, participants were mixed in their opinions about the extent of problem gambling among elite athletes and suggested that match-fixing was not prevalent currently in the New Zealand sporting environment. It is interesting to note that neither of these areas featured significantly in the literature on the antisocial behaviour of elite athletes that was explored for this study. These findings suggest that such behaviour may become more prevalent as professional sport continues to develop in this country.

Psychological manipulation. Another area that participants considered to be a form of OFPB was that of "mental mind games (i.e., psychological manipulation that occurs in the competitive environment, often in the lead up to major events). Participants reported that they found negative comments from other athletes and coaches focused at undermining their ability or exposing their weaknesses very difficult to deal with. Overall, this finding is consistent with the literature on antisocial behaviour in sport. For instance, a number of studies have examined the impact of verbal abuse on the field or during games in relation to athlete performance (see Kavussanu, 2008, for a review of moral behavior in sport).

The results of the current study suggest that such behaviour also has a similar impact off-field. However, research into verbal abuse and psychological manipulation in relation to off-field behaviour in sport is sparse in the literature and the suggestion that elite athletes may behave in similar ways off-field clearly requires further investigation. For instance, it would be interesting to explore whether athletes who work within a mastery-oriented environment, and who have well-developed task orientations towards their sport, are less susceptible to "trash talking"

than those who operate from within a performance-based environment during off-field situations.

Other OFPB. Participants in the current study also discussed other specific behaviours that they considered to be OFPB. These were often relatively minor in nature and included things like: breaking team protocols (e.g., staying out all night, missing curfews); eating poorly; not wearing the correct sponsored training gear; not adhering to team values; being consistently late to games or missing trainings; and having poor communication skills. The elite athletes in this study felt that these behaviours were extremely disruptive to the team environment, especially if they occurred on a regular basis. It was also reported that these kinds of OFPB often had a negative flow-on effect on team dynamics, which could impact on-field performance.

These factors were not highlighted in the literature on antisocial behaviours in sport. Therefore, it is suggested that these kinds of OFPB may be specific to elite, high stress athlete populations and environments. It is also important to consider indigenous cultural values and influences. In New Zealand, the behaviours listed above violate accepted rules of common courtesy and, depending on frequency and severity, may be viewed as highly disrespectful by some cultural groups.

Summary. The results of this study provide support for the existing international and New Zealand literature on antisocial behaviour in sport. The elite athletes in this study identified a wide range of OFPB, including: substance use (O'Brien et al., 2007); extremes and risk-taking behaviour (Martens et al., 2006); violence and aggression (Grange & Kerr, 2011); and sexualised behaviour (Gage, 2008). In addition, participants discussed areas of OFPB, such as match-fixing and problem gambling, defiance of team protocols, and psychological manipulation, areas that have not been identified in previous research. These findings highlight the need for further inquiry into this topic, both in New Zealand and overseas.

Stressors/Motives/Risk Factors, and Protective Factors

A major aim of this study was to explore risk management in elite athletes and to gain insight into players' perceptions of managing risks. Therefore, it was important to first establish what factors elite athletes considered to be stressors, motives, and risks. The research process enabled risk factors to be identified and the level of risk associated with each factor to be explored with participants. The findings suggest that athletes are exposed to a range of stressors, or there are risk factor vulnerabilities unique to their high performance environment, that may increase the likelihood of engaging in OFPB. Stressors, motives, and risk factors are closely interlinked. What is a risk factor in one situation may be a stressor in another situation and vice versa. In turn, stressors and risk factors can also provide motivation for negative behaviours.

A second aim of this research was to create understanding and to identify factors that may impede or facilitate the progress of OFPB. Again, it was important to explore participants' perspectives of protective variables operating within the elite environment. A range of protective factors were identified and elaborated on by participants as important in reducing OFPB. In this section, factors identified as stressors, motives, and risk factors and those factors identified as protective are addressed. It is important to note that some factors had dual functions as both protective and risks/stressors.

Previous research has examined achievement goal theory (AGT) and self-determination theory (SDT) in relation to antisocial behaviour in sport. The relevance of these theories to off-field behaviour are explored in relation to stressor variables; however, it is noted that they were somewhat outside of the research scope. The literature suggests that athletes with an ego orientation (e.g., those who use other-referenced criteria, such as doing better than someone else to evaluate their own competence) (Kavussanu, 2012), those who are extrinsically motivated (Ntoumanis & Standage, 2009), and those who perceive a performance-based motivational climate (Kavussanu, 2012) tend to display higher levels of on-field antisocial behaviour than athletes with task orientations, intrinsic motivation, and those in mastery-based climates.

Compared with athletes at other competitive levels, it appears that athletes within the elite sporting environment are exposed to significantly higher levels of performance-based motivations, orientations and climates. This was reflected in the current study where participants experienced or witnessed situations where performance-based climates were promoted and where coaches were also subject to performance-based pressures. Greater media scrutiny, selection pressures, and professionalism also increased a perceived performance-based environment for participants that added stress.

Both performance and organisational stressors were identified by participants in this study as being present in the New Zealand sporting environment. These findings are consistent with previous research in elite sport, which has reported a number of factors that impact negatively on elite athlete behaviour (Fletcher & Hanton, 2003; Hanton et al., 2005). These include the following stressors, motives, and risk factors: injury (e.g., Hanton et al., 2005); selection pressures/issues (e.g., Fletcher & Hanton, 2003); poor athlete-coach relationships and inappropriate coach behaviour (e.g., Fletcher & Hanton, 2003; Hanton et al., 2005); team culture (e.g., Noblet & Gifford, 2007); pressures to perform and sport/life balance (e.g., Hanton et al., 2005); winning or losing (e.g., Hermansson & Hodge, 2012; Leichliter et al., 1998); and sponsorship (e.g., O'Brien et al., 2013; O'Brien et al., 2011).

Internal factors: Participants in the current study also reported that personal decision-making, family upbringing, socioeconomic status, and cultural background were potential stressors for elite athletes. It was suggested that these factors might influence how athletes respond to environmental demands, how they cope with having an elite status, and how they define and perceive appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. In addition, some factors were given more emphasis by participants and discussed at length. For instance, becoming an elite athlete at a young age and having predispositions or vulnerabilities to mental health issues were key individual factors that appeared to increase the potential for athlete stress and potentially OFPB. These factors were not identified as significant issues in the literature and suggest possible areas for further investigation.

Elite at a young age. Wanting to have a 'normal' teenage life, being influenced by peers, having low levels of maturity, confidence and self-esteem, and being vulnerable to pressure from others were all reported by participants as potential risk factors for young elite athletes. Coping with the pressure and hype of being an elite athlete, and not having effective tools and resiliency factors in place to cope with such stressors, were also found to increase young athletes' vulnerabilities to OFPB in the current study. The overwhelming nature of being a young athlete is consistent with previous research about young elite athletes (Kristiansen & Roberts, 2010). The current study also provides support for other studies, which have found that young elite athletes tend to have ineffective, maladaptive and underdeveloped coping responses (Nicholls & Polman, 2007; Tamminen et al., 2012). These findings suggest that young elite athletes might be more vulnerable in the elite environment than adult elite athletes.

Being elite at a young age was also found to be a protective factor in the current study. Participants explained that being a young athlete meant that there was only limited time available to engage in OFPB, due to having such demanding academic and sporting schedules. Some participants also mentioned that younger athletes were not always as aware of team politics and were somewhat naïve to the pressures surrounding their role as an elite athlete. It should be noted that there was only limited literature on protective factors and coping as a young elite athlete and, therefore, it was not possible to compare these findings with previous studies. Therefore, further study is necessary to explore such factors.

Mental health. Participants in the current study highlighted a range of sport-specific triggers related to the onset of mental health disorders (Maskser, 2011), and stated how the pressures of elite sport may exacerbate mental health issues in those with predispositions or vulnerabilities. Two major findings in relation to sport and mental health were the loss of personal identity and having personal flaws highlighted and discussed publically.

Participants reported that their identity as elite athletes was inextricably linked to their sporting association. As a result, when instances occurred that removed their athletic identity (e.g., injury, post-competition training phases, or retirement) they often experienced or witnessed a change in mental health. The loss of personal or subsequent athletic identity is consistent with the findings of Reardon and Factor (2010) who reported that psychological stress, including depression and anxiety, increased when athletic identity was removed.

Participants also mentioned that having personal flaws or insecurities highlighted by coaching staff, management, or the media had the potential to trigger mental health problems or exacerbate predispositions. A specific example mentioned by participants was around weight and body expectations and performance. Participants reported changes in eating habits due to comments/criticism from others and unrealistic expectations related to sociocultural pressure. This finding is consistent with previous studies on disordered eating among elite athletes (Byrne & McLean, 2001; Jones et al., 2005; Sundgot-Borgen & Torstveit, 2010). The role of the media in relation to these key findings will be discussed in more detail in the section on media influence below.

Studies have also shown that subclinical and clinical eating disorders are significantly higher in elite athletes, compared with control groups (Sundgot-Borgen & Torstveit, 2004). Similarly, disordered or restrictive eating habits and concerns about body image were identified as a relevant OFPB in the current study. However, it was significant that these behaviours were reported by female participants only. This finding is consistent with previous research where higher rates of disordered eating behaviour has been found in elite female athletes, compared with male athletes (Haase, 2011; Sundgot-Borgen & Torstveit, 2004; Torstveit et al., 2008).

Previous research has also highlighted how psychological make up, such as ego goal orientations and performance-based motivational climates, can impact on disordered eating and increased focus on weight (de Bruin et al., 2009; Sundgot-Borgen & Torstveit, 2010). Within the current study, participants experienced or witnessed situations where

comparisons with other athletes occurred that influenced their eating behaviour (e.g., skinfold testing). Consistent with the literature, the impact of coaching behaviour, such as ego orientations and performance-based motivational climates was also noted as a risk factor for disordered eating in elite athletes (Jones et al., 2005; Sundgot-Borgen & Torstveit, 2010).

None of the participants in the current study were involved in aesthetic sports, such as ballet and gymnastics, where higher rates of disordered eating have been reported in elite samples (Krentz & Warschburger, 2011; Ringham et al., 2006). Only one sport in the current study had weight classifications that emphasised weight for performance or needed for competitive edge. Higher frequencies of disordered eating and eating problems have been reported in such sports (Byrne & McLean, 2001; Sundgot-Borgen & Torstveit, 2010; Torstveit et al., 2008). However, in the current study, disordered eating in ball, endurance, and technical sports were reported more commonly than the sport that had weight classifications. A possible explanation for the presence of disordered eating in the current study may be that those sports where inappropriate eating habits and concerns with body image were reported are prominent New Zealand sports that receive considerable media attention and are subject to cultural and societal views regarding femininity and female body image.

In terms of psychological OFPB, verbal mind games and behaviours related to cognitive distortions and/or schema development, such as disordered eating and depression, were considered an OFPB. However, participants also discussed specific psychological challenges related to sport, including the impact of injury and 'post-Olympic blues.' This result is consistent with other New Zealand research by Hodge and Hermansson (2007) who identified the concept of '2nd week blues' as a significant psychological challenge for elite athletes. These findings highlight that the psychological impact on behaviour is an important factor to consider in addressing OFPB.

Taken together, these findings suggest that it is important for individuals with predispositions or vulnerabilities for mental health issues to be identified within the elite environment. Attention also needs to be

given to sport specific factors, such as emphasis on weight, athletic identity and injury, which may trigger episodes of mental illness. The literature also suggests that athletes in elite environments may be reinforced for focusing on excellence and perfectionism, which places them at increased risk compared to non-elite athletes (Petrie & Greenleaf, 2012). Ensuring that elite athletes have a balance between their sporting and personal/family lives and opportunities to create a sense of identity outside of the sporting environment is crucial and should be a major focus for professionals.

External factors. Three external factors commonly reported by participants in the current study were media influence, the increase in sporting professionalism, and the impact of coaches and professionals. Participants also referred to the media, selection pressures and the increase in professionalism as specific stressors that added to the performance-based criteria for success in their environments. These factors have all been found to increase antisocial behaviour in sport in previous research (Kavussanu, 2012; Ntoumanis & Standage, 2009). It is suggested, therefore, that the impact of performance-based criteria in sport on OFPB is another area that should be considered for future research on elite athletes in New Zealand.

Media. The most obvious finding in the current study with regard to media was the increase in media reporting in elite sport and the additional pressure and scrutiny associated with this. Consistent with other research (e.g., Stead, 2008), participants reported that media attention and exposure has increased significantly in recent years. They also expressed frustration about the tabloid nature of the sports media, which confirms previous studies on elite athletes' perceptions of the media (Kristiansen & Hanstad, 2012; Sisjord & Kristiansen, 2008). Another similarity between the findings of this study and previous research was the role of the reporter-athlete relationship as a stressor for elite athletes (e.g., Greenleaf et al., 2001; Kristiansen & Hanstad, 2012).

Participants had also experienced and/or witnessed in others the negative effects of increased media pressure and scrutiny on athletes' behaviour. For example, expectations for athletes to look and behave in

certain ways were identified by participants in the current study as having an impact on body perceptions and disordered eating behaviours. Appearance being highlighted over athletic skill and performance has been noted as a common trend in the sports media literature (Bernstein, 2002). The findings of this study suggest that media pressure is also common as a stressor in the elite New Zealand sporting environment. It is also concerning that, despite elite status and sporting success, female athletes are still subjected to unrealistic media representations of femininity and attractiveness that do not match sporting reality (Bruce, 2008).

There is limited research that has looked at how elite athletes' cope with negative media attention. Participants in the current study reported that they often avoided buying and reading sports media and portrayed a guarded persona when they were in public or in other situations where the media was present. This finding supports the work of Kristiansen, Roberts, et al. (2011) who reported that elite football goalkeepers utilised avoidance, problem-focused and social support coping techniques to combat negative publicity.

Another key finding in the current study with regard to media was the increase in social media and the negative effect this had on elite athletes. Participants noted the risk of normal social behaviour being misinterpreted and felt that social media was another avenue for passing on the opinions and expectations of others. Contrary to an analysis by Sanderson (2010), participants did not appear to recognise that social media may be a valuable tool for both athletes and fans to increase support and contest negative framing. A possible explanation for this could be that elite New Zealand sporting organisations have policies in place which stipulate that responding to media comments is prohibited by professional codes of conducts or contractual obligations. Alternatively, athletes may lack knowledge or awareness about how social media can be used proactively to promote personal images and brands. Finally, as suggested by Kristiansen, Roberts, et al. (2011), athletes may employ a form of avoidance coping response to dealing with media pressure and negative comments in the social media.

Interestingly, participants in the current study did acknowledge that media attention, especially the increase in technology and social media, can also moderate behaviour and make athletes more accountable for their behaviour in public. In addition, participants noted that media pressure might provide an impetus for New Zealand sporting organisations to address OFPB and be more consistent in their approach, instead of ignoring such issues.

Professionalism. The nature of professional sport was discussed extensively by participants. Although professionalism had many positive advantages in relation to OFPB, it also brought some substantial stressors and motives that elite athletes had to deal with. Being paid large amounts of money to play their chosen sport and pressure to perform to certain levels to attain funding were seen as stressors by participants, especially in relation to on-field performance. One interesting finding was that participants felt increased wealth, often seen in the most high profile sporting codes, was a risk factor and/or motive for some elite athletes to engage in negative behaviour (e.g., gambling, excessive drinking) as there were few financial ramifications.

Professionalism was also viewed by participants as a potential protective factor in terms of moderating athlete behaviour in relation to OFPB. With the increase in professionalism, elite athletes were expected to conform more to organisational requirements and often viewed their sporting career as a 'normal' job. Since funding was frequently determined by performance, participants did everything possible to put out their best performance on-field. As a result, they tended to avoid negative off-field situations that, in turn, reduced the likelihood of engaging in OFPB.

Coaches/management. A number of studies have found that the impact of performance-based coaching environments has a crucial influence on athlete behaviour (Rutten et al., 2008). Emphasis on performance-based criteria is often needed to create a successful edge that differentiates winning or losing at the elite level. Participants in the current study reported that coaches and management staff who promoted a performance-based team culture to increase on-field success were more

likely to create competitive training environments that encouraged the development of OFPB. This finding suggests that theories used to explain on-field antisocial behaviour may also be relevant to off-field situations.

The increasing commercialisation of sport also appeared to have a negative influence on coaching staff. One participant noted that coaches are under so much pressure to achieve positive results that they often do not have the time or capacity to promote mastery-based, task-oriented climates. This is of concern as mastery-based climates have been shown to reduce athlete-coach stress and enable athletes to deal with issues more effectively (Kristiansen et al., 2012). Relational support from coaches promoting sociomoral reasoning has also been attributed to variance in off-field behaviours (Rutten et al., 2008). In addition, studies have found that performance-based climates can increase stress for young athletes (Kristiansen & Roberts, 2010).

A number of participants in the current study said that failure to get along with coaches and coach behaviour was another major source of stress, which impacted both their attitudes and behaviours towards the coach and their team. Negative evaluations or comments from coaches, or coaches of other athletes, had an impact on eating behaviour, psychological and mental health wellbeing, risk-taking behaviour, and alcohol use. Coaches and coaching style has been found as a major stressor in elite sport (Fletcher & Hanton, 2003). For instance, a competitive team environment that is focused solely on winning may increase antisocial behaviour (Kavussanu, 2012). The findings of the current study suggest that similar stressors are also present among elite New Zealand athletes. This problem may also have greater relevance to elite athletes in this country due to limited availability and access to coaches at the elite sporting level.

New Zealand sporting factors. Two additional factors highlighted as specific to the New Zealand sporting environment that were discussed in length by participants were having an elite profile and the role of New Zealand's drinking culture.

Elite profile. Within the New Zealand sporting context, elite athletes discussed the role of their elite profiles and the impact this had on OFPB. Several participants felt that, if it were not for their high status and elite profiles, their off-field behaviour would not be considered abnormal. As role models for their sport, they felt that having an elite profile put pressure on them to act and behave in certain ways due to societal expectations and perceptions, especially when in public. As noted above, one key finding in relation to having an elite profile was that athletes often engaged in OFPB when on tour or overseas. A small number of participants also discussed how some elite athletes may have attitudes and beliefs around a sense of entitlement to engage in OFPB and may feel they are above others or even the law. The stressor and risk factor role of having an elite profile is strongly linked with increased media pressure and the rise of professionalism.

New Zealand drinking culture. The final factor discussed in depth was the influence of New Zealand drinking culture on OFPB. Participants noted that team culture and the acceptance of drinking in sport might contribute to OFPB. Sporting traditions, such as using alcohol to celebrate or commemorate, or wanting to be part of a wider sporting culture, increased the likelihood that athletes drank alcohol and reinforced the view that drinking alcohol in sport was accepted. Participants acknowledged that alcohol was used to enable them to handle social situations more easily and as a way of building cohesive team relationships. These findings are consistent with previous New Zealand research on male club rugby players where athletes often ignored the negative influence alcohol might have on performance in order to create a sense of unity and friendships within the team culture (Kahu-Kauika, 2011). As in the current study, satisfying peer pressures and interacting more freely with others were found to increase drinking behaviour (Kahu-Kauika, 2011).

These findings suggest that similar social and cultural expectations and attitudes towards drinking may also be present in the New Zealand elite athlete population and across genders. While increase in competitive level and age may be protective of alcohol use, all athletes come to the elite level through grassroots systems, where they may have been exposed

to drinking cultures and socialisation of acceptance of drinking in sport. Therefore, such behaviour could be considered the norm throughout all levels of sport in New Zealand.

Other protective factors. The following areas explore other protective factors that participants felt reduced the likelihood of OFPB in elite athletes.

Support. Participants in this study reported that having ongoing support from others, both prior to and during their professional sporting careers, was a strong protective factor. In particular, support networks were considered to be extremely important for young elite athletes. All participants valued having close relationships with teammates and coaches. Several participants noted that OFPB appeared to increase when appropriate support systems were not in place.

The use of social support to facilitate positive coping strategies is consistent with previous research on elite athletes (e.g., Thelwell et al., 2007). Similarly, good quality relationships with coaching staff and relational support from coaches that is supportive of personal autonomy have also been linked to less antisocial athlete behaviour (Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011). Coaching support has been noted as important in coping with both organisational and performance-based stressors (Kristiansen & Roberts, 2010; Rutten et al., 2007; Rutten et al., 2008). Participants talked about how they utilised support networks to cope and deal with sport-related stressors and emphasised that having supports to debrief with was crucial. This finding is consistent with previous research that explored how support networks influence the way in which athletes appraise and cope with sport-related stressors (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007).

In discussing wider support networks, participants also mentioned that upbringing was an internal protective factor for engaging in OFPB. Participants' behaviours and other athletes' behaviours appeared to be influenced by family and cultural values, expectations, and beliefs. This finding aligns with a recent review by Kavussanu (2012) which highlighted the significant role of the social environment (i.e., including parents and families) in determining whether athletes participate in moral

or antisocial behaviour. This study found that elite athletes use support as a coping mechanism in similar ways to other athletes. The influence that support networks have on athlete stressor appraisal is important and suggests that elite athletes need to have appropriate supports that reinforce prosocial behaviour.

Minor findings with regard to protective factors included: being exposed to appropriate leaders; behaving in ways that aligned with personal and team brands; and having external responsibilities.

Leadership was another factor that participants identified as having protective value, especially for young elite athletes. Participants in the current study felt that some athletes had specific personality traits that increased their likelihood of gaining a leadership position and decreased their likelihood for OFPB. However, leadership was only regarded as protective and as having a positive influence on team behaviour when a peer voting system was used to determine team captains and leaders. The literature also suggests that having a leadership role does not necessarily guarantee prosocial behaviour (Leichliter et al., 1998).

Participants who were in semi-professional sports identified that having extra responsibilities brought additional stress at times. However, such responsibilities also provided balance and meant that athletes did not have excessive "down time" or wealth that enabled OFPB. This positive finding is in contrast to the stressor role of extra responsibilities identified in studies of university/college elite athletes in the US (e.g., Lisha & Sussman, 2010; Yusko et al., 2008).

Adhering to and aligning with team and personal brands was another interesting finding in regard to protective factors. Participants tried to avoid situations that would damage their team brand or personal reputation and this tended to act as a moderating factor for OFPB. However, team brand also appeared to be influenced by team sponsorship, which has been identified in the literature as a potential motive for engaging in alcohol use and alcohol-related harms (O'Brien et al., 2013). In contrast, participants stated that being aligned with a sponsorship campaign, such as anti-drinking, had a positive impact on

their decision-making. The influence of team brands and sponsorship responsibilities as being protective for OFPB has not been examined in the literature and may be a worthwhile topic for further inquiry.

The role of education has also been identified as a protective factor in relation to OFPB among elite athletes. For instance, Dunn and Thomas (2012) reported that completing secondary schooling or being engaged in higher education was protective of illicit drug use in a recent study of elite Australian athletes. Similarly, a New Zealand study of national rugby league and super rugby players found that athletes currently involved in education reported less positive reinforcement associated with drinking than players who were not (Luck, 2012). All except one of the participants in the current study had tertiary qualifications or were involved with higher study at some stage their time as an elite athlete. However, this topic was not discussed in any detail and would be an interesting area for further research in relation to OFPB across different sporting codes.

Summary. The findings of this study tend to confirm many of the stressors, motives, and risk factors that have been identified in previous research. As noted in the literature, both organisational and performance-based stressors were identified. However, organisational stressors appeared to vary across sports, while performance stressors were relatively uniform (Hanton et al., 2005). The role of the media and increased professionalism of sport appeared to be the most significant pressures faced by the elite athletes in this sample group. Factors specific to New Zealand, such as having an elite profile and the role of New Zealand drinking culture in sport, were discussed. It was found that athletes were more at risk for engaging in OFPB when they were on tour or participating in sports events overseas. Participants in this study also identified ongoing support from family, friends, teammates, coaches, management and professionals identified as an important protective factor.

Evidence for the role of AGT and SDT in relation to OFPB was also found in certain areas explored in this study. Performance-based climates tend to focus on rewarding the top players, a factor which has been exacerbated by the growing commercialisation of sport. One possible

interpretation for OFPB in elite athletes is that those with ego or performance-based motivational orientations and climates may generalise this behaviour to other areas of their lives. If athletes use these psychological orientations to evaluate success, they may compare themselves unfavourably to others, thus leading to negative OFPB. If elite athletes are unable to achieve mastery in their sporting environment, they may not have the necessary skills to cope effectively in social situations. For example, the transactional approach to stress, where environmental demands outweigh coping responses (Kristiansen, Hanstad, et al., 2011; Lazarus, 2000) may highlight an athlete's inability to cope with situations where behaving in accordance to performance-based criteria is inappropriate.

Impact of OFPB

The impact of OFPB had significant implications for individual athletes, especially in regard to on-field performance. However, the most significant finding in relation to this theme was the impact of OFPB on others (e.g., family and team members). Participants felt that their OFPB brought shame and stress to their families and the fear of letting down or disappointing others was a significant motivating factor in the avoidance of OFPB. Furthermore, the impact OFPB had on both an athlete's personal reputation and the team 'brand' was identified as having the potential to change how others perceive a sport.

OFPB also appeared to be detrimental to team dynamics and cohesion and had a flow-on effect to on-field performance. OFPB impacted on others' performance and was disruptive to the team environment. The OFPB of others often led to changes in how other athletes behaved around them in the elite environment. Overall, the impact of OFPB on others was negative; however, participants also suggested that seeing others dealing with OFPB helped to put things in perspective and reminded them of the need for a balanced lifestyle.

There is no comparative literature to draw on in relation to athletes' opinions on the impact of OFPB in elite populations. The only study that has considered consequences of moral behaviour in sport discussed the

impact on others with regard to on-field behaviour (Sage & Kavaussanu, 2008). These authors concluded that ego orientations increase antisocial behaviour that might increase intra-team rivalry and superiority. As above considering OFPB through such theories may be an interesting approach to further enhancing understanding of OFPB.

However, the importance given to the impact of OFPB on others in the current study highlights a possible avenue for future intervention. Instead of framing OFPB around athlete integrity and personal motivations, a more effective approach might be to consider the impact of OFPB on family and team members and the role of empathy for others. This finding is consistent with other New Zealand research that has identified the importance of mental skills strategies, such as the 'One Team/One Spirit' philosophy/vision discussed by Hodge and Hermansson (2007) to help elite athletes cope with the unique challenges associated with competing in large international sporting events.

Summary. The negative impact of OFPB on team cohesion, dynamics, relationships and behaviour was evident throughout this study. However, since very little empirical research has been conducted in this area, further research is needed to validate these findings. The negative consequences of OFPB on performance and the individual were noted, however, the most significant finding of this study was in relation to the perceived impact on others.

Help-seeking Behaviour

One of the main research aims was to recognise prevention and intervention strategies that might ultimately improve sporting performance and athlete engagement. This will be discussed below in terms of participants' recommendations for improving intervention and prevention strategies in the current elite environment and in relation to improving access to services for athletes.

Access. A wide range of barriers that may influence the help-seeking behaviour of athletes has been reported in the literature (Lopez & Levy, 2013; Martin, 2005; Vogel et al., 2007). Issues relating to confidentiality and

trust, perceived stigma in seeking help, and lack of both problem and service awareness were evident in the current study.

Trust/Confidentiality. A major finding of this study in relation to the help-seeking behaviour of elite athletes was the lack of adherence to confidentiality by professionals. Participants stated that they often avoided seeking help due to previous experiences where confidentiality had been breached. They also expressed concern about the potential risks that disregard for confidentiality might have on their sporting career and position. Although a number of positive interactions with support professionals were reported, it is important to note that this research was focused on negative social behaviours and areas that need development. In general, guarantees of confidentiality did not appear to meet accepted standards of professional practice, in that coaches and management staff were often told about participants' problems without implicit informed consent. This finding is consistent with recent Australian literature where breaches of confidentiality were identified as the main barrier to help-seeking behaviour in young elite athletes (Gulliver et al., 2012).

This finding highlights a specific need for sporting organisations to develop and implement effective policy and practice guidelines to ensure that elite athletes have confidence in utilising the support available. In this study, participants were reluctant to seek help, even for minor issues that did not impact on their sporting performance, due to concerns that confidentiality would not be upheld. In the current professional climate, such systemic weaknesses act as a major deterrent for behaviour change due to the potential negative outcomes for athletes in disclosing difficulties, such as OFPB. For example, there might be financial implications as a result of non-selection, fines for breaking team codes of conduct or other repercussions, such as withdrawal of funding from sponsors. Similarly, if confidential information was leaked to the media, this could impact negatively on both the reputation and status of elite athletes and cause irrefutable damage to their professional careers.

The concept of trust in teammates, coaches, management, and support professionals was also found to be essential for effective prevention and intervention of OFPB. Participants only felt comfortable

approaching professionals who they trusted and avoided seeking help in situations where positive relationships had not been established. This finding is consistent with the work of Hodge and Hermansson (2007) and Gulliver et al. (2012) who reported that good quality relationships with sport psychologists facilitated help-seeking behaviour in elite athletes. Therefore, providers addressing any form of OFPB need to work hard to build rapport and gain trust to encourage help-seeking behaviour in elite athletes.

Lack of awareness. Another reason for the underutilisation of support services by athletes in the current study was that of limited problem awareness/health literacy and lack of awareness of avenues to seek relevant intervention. Participants reported that they (and others) often failed to recognise serious OFPB and/or were reluctant to admit that they (or others) had a problem (i.e., were in self-denial). These findings are consistent with the literature, where limited problem awareness and health literacy (Gulliver et al., 2012) and problem denial in addressing mental health problems (Schwenk, 2000) were reported as barriers.

Participants in this study felt that encouragement to seek help had to come from someone known to the athlete before relevant behaviour change could occur. This was also reported by Gulliver et al. (2012) as a factor that impacted help-seeking behaviour. In the current study, participants noted that changing sporting cultures to reduce limited problem awareness should be an organisational goal for the future. However, in order to achieve this, athletes need more effective education on the impact of OFPB (i.e., in addition to the direct physiological impact on performance). Participants mentioned that, in their experience, athletes often failed to acknowledge OFPB if no visible performance implications were present. Improving health literacy/problem awareness may also have positive implications for team communication and overall awareness. It was also suggested that increasing problem awareness might encourage athletes to seek help earlier or during prodromal phases where prevention methods can be activated, hopefully moving the ambulance from the bottom of the cliff.

Increasing mutual respect between athletes and professionals is needed in order for athletes to consider their own behaviour as problematic and consequently seek help. If this is unable to be attained in the current climate, alternative options need to be made available to athletes to ensure that appropriate avenues and support are in place when needed.

Stigma. In general, our society perpetuates stereotypical attitudes and beliefs about masculinity, which reinforce the idea that it is not acceptable for men to openly express their problems. The message that men should be "strong" is reinforced in the New Zealand sporting environment, making it difficult for elite male athletes to seek appropriate help for OFPB (Galdas et al., 2005). Elite athletes in this study perceived a high level of stigma from teammates, coaches, the media, and the public to admitting any signs of "weakness" and acknowledged that this was a significant barrier to seeking help for OFPB.

Both social and sport-specific stigmas were identified by participants who feared discrimination and loss of respect from both teammates and coaches if they sought help for OFPB. Help-seeking was often avoided due to OFPB being considered "taboo" and, in general, attitudes to help-seeking were mixed, with both negative and positive opinions being expressed For example, although participants felt there was need for ongoing professional support in their sporting environments, they also stated that they would not approach the current professional. It is important that positive attitudes towards help-seeking are endorsed and promoted in the elite environment.

The impact of stigma in seeking help was evident in both the general (Vogel et al., 2007) and sport specific literature (Gulliver et al., 2012; Lopez & Levy, 2013). The present study tends to confirm these findings, especially the work of Gulliver et al. (2012) where stigma was identified as a perceived barrier to seeking help for mental health issues in young elite athletes in Australia. The limited international literature has also proposed that athletes have less positive attitudes towards help-seeking behaviour than their non-athlete counterparts (Lopez & Levy, 2013). However, these findings are contrary to an earlier New Zealand study (Anderson et al.,

2004) which reported that elite athletes did not perceive stigma associated in working with a sport psychologist. The finding of stigma and reduced help-seeking behaviour in the current study suggests that stigma is a possible barrier experienced by New Zealand elite athletes and is a topic that requires further research.

A possible explanation for the increase in perceived stigma since the work of Anderson et al. (2004) may be linked to greater media attention and reporting, social media, and professionalism in sport over the past 10 years. These findings also add to those of Gulliver et al. (2012) in that stigma towards help-seeking may also be present in elite athletes over the age of 23. This suggests that New Zealand elite athletes are exposed to similar levels and types of stigma as those found in the international literature. It also points out that little change has occurred within sporting environments, especially with regard to mental health stigma, even though such barriers have been identified in previous work.

Personality differences between athletes and health professionals were also identified as a potential barrier to seeking help for OFPB. This finding builds on a similar theme identified by Gulliver et al. (2012) where personality was a key factor influencing whether participants felt comfortable in seeking help. In order to facilitate help-seeking behaviour, it would therefore seem important to ensure that athletes have multiple options to access appropriate professional support.

The gender, ethnicity, and age of health professionals did not appear to influence attitudes towards help-seeking behaviour among participants in the current study. This finding is consistent with the results of a recent study by Lopez and Levy (2013) where neutral opinions or no preferences were found among student athletes for counsellor age, gender or ethnicity. However, an earlier study by Anderson et al. (2004) reported that New Zealand elite athletes expressed a preference for sport psychologists from the same cultural and/or sporting background. It is important to note that this was not an area of discussion that had been planned for during the interviews and, with further probing or specific questions, such preferences may in fact have been present. It is also acknowledged that since only two of the 10 participants in the current study were from

cultural groups other than New Zealand European, the lack of cultural preference is likely to be underestimated.

Intervention and prevention. Participants in this study identified a number of barriers and deterrents that impacted help-seeking behaviour and made several recommendations for future prevention and intervention of OFPB. These included increased education for elite athletes about social media, strategies for dealing with social situations where fans are present (especially for young elite athletes and in situations where alcohol is available), opportunities to find out more about the impact of OFPB in a practical sense (as opposed to solely physiological), and sharing of successful prevention and intervention methods for OFPB between sporting codes.

Participants also suggested that specialists (such as sport psychologists or mental skills coaches) should be employed full time in the sporting environment to identify stressors and "take the pressure off" coaches and leadership groups to manage and deal with OFPB. This recommendation is consistent with an earlier New Zealand study where the role of sport psychology in enhancing success was ranked highly by national elite coaches and athletes (Sullivan & Hodge, 1991). This finding also highlights the need for a more collaborative approach to prevention and intervention in addressing OFPB.

Other recommendations provided by participants in this study included the use of "distraction" methods to reduce the likelihood of opportunities for OFPB, especially when competing overseas or in touring environments. Similarly, participants suggested that other positive options, such as involvement in continuing education, should be considered to fill in athlete's "down time." Participants also discussed the need for sporting organisations to provide opportunities for young athletes to build life skills and develop resiliency prior to entering the elite environment.

Participants emphasised that interventions aimed at reducing or preventing OFPB needed to be applied consistently, regardless of rank or time in the team. As noted by Reardon and Factor (2010), effective

intervention needs to occur in a non-random fashion where OFPB are not ignored and there is adherence to predefined team protocols for inappropriate behaviour. It was also found that avoiding a punitive approach to dealing with OFPB was important in achieving athlete buy-in.

Although there is minimal literature to draw on in relation to athlete perspectives for intervention and prevention for OFPB, the proposed recommendations highlight specific areas for improvement within the elite sporting environment in New Zealand. Participants in this study believed that these were areas of concern that mitigate positive athlete engagement and act as potential maintenance factors for OFPB. These recommendations may have emerged in the current study due to the semi-structured approach used for data collection, as opposed to previous research (e.g., Lopez & Levy, 2013; Watson, 2005) where rating scales, checklists and questionnaires were used to assess experiences and attitudes towards help-seeking behaviour.

Summary. Attitudes towards help-seeking behaviour in the current study appeared to be influenced by negative previous experiences, such as issues with confidentiality, lack of trust, negative relationships with providers, and personality differences. In addition, limited problem awareness, lack of knowledge about available support services, and perceived stigma were factors that participants identified as barriers to help-seeking. New Zealand elite athletes appear to be exposed to similar types of stigma as those found in the international literature for university/college athletes, a finding which tends to indicate that such discrimination occurs at all ages and across different cultures. Positive and negative past experiences of help-seeking, both in the international and New Zealand literature, were found to be facilitators and/or barriers to help-seeking behaviour. Those who had positive experiences had increased confidence in health professionals and reduced stigma (Anderson et al., 2004). Therefore, it is important to ensure that athletes have appropriate understanding of where and how to seek help, and that their experiences in seeking help are positive.

Strengths and Limitations

This study had a number of strengths that enhance the validity of the results. Qualitative research allows for important new information to surface that may not have been anticipated in the original research aims. Previous research on this topic has measured antisocial/moral behaviours through surveys, questionnaires, and scenario examples that tend to be highly specific (Kavussanu, 2008). The use of a semi-structured interview design meant that a wider range of OFPB behaviour could be explored. This structure enabled the conversation to flow more naturally and encouraged participants to provide rich descriptions of their experiences. This allowed the motives behind participants' behaviour to be investigated in greater depth, an approach that has been suggested previously in the literature (Kavussanu, 2008).

However, it is acknowledged that the thematic approach used to analyse and interpret the findings of this study has some minor limitations. By presenting the data as themes, the overall context of an individual's experiences may be compromised. This can lead to fragmentation, as well as an over-representation of similarities and an under-representation of individual differences. It is suggested that, in addition to the thematic approach, case study development may also help synthesise and capture individual uniqueness of data.

The perception and definition of what types of behaviour were considered to be 'problematic' by participants may also have had an influence on the reliability and consistency of responses. The majority of participants in this study were of New Zealand European/Pākehā ethnicity and only two participants identified with other ethnic groups (New Zealand Māori and Other European). Therefore, it was not possible to make valid comparisons about how the experiences and perspectives of participants in this study may be different to people from other cultures. Given the multicultural nature of the New Zealand population, it is acknowledged that this could have been an area of greater focus during the recruitment phase. In hindsight, and future studies need to consider the significant role of culture in understanding the impact of problematic behaviour.

A final limitation of this study is that of self-report bias. Although participants were very forthcoming and shared a wide range of personal experiences, the controversial nature of the research topic may have had an effect on their responses. The issue of socially acceptable/desirable responding therefore needs to be considered. Due to the potentially damaging implications of sharing their stories with someone outside of their immediate networks, it is acknowledged that participants may not have revealed the full extent of their feelings and experiences in the information they chose to share.

Implications for Practice

This study adds to the limited research on elite athletes and, more specifically, to our knowledge of off-field problematic behaviours commonly experienced among this group. It also has the potential to help practitioners better understand negative behaviours typically associated with other groups in society. For example, the impact of social modelling and influence of role model behaviour on vulnerable individuals runs the risk of OFPB being normalised.

In addition to recommendations for improving current provision made by participants, a number of suggestions for practice emerged from this exploratory study. These findings have important implications for sporting professionals and management staff. For example, the employment of mastery climates and task orientations by coaches and managers may help athletes to cope more effectively with stress and have a positive influence on off-field behaviour. Since elite athletes operate in environments where there is an unrelenting focus on performance and excellence, they are at risk for adopting ego-orientations and performance-based motivations (Hodge & Hermansson, 2007). Similarly, those with potential predispositions and vulnerabilities to OFPB need to be identified, monitored and supported prior to, during and when transitioning out of the elite environment. Professionals should also be mindful of other high-risk situations that may increase the likelihood of OFPB. Participants in this study talked about the risks of being on tour, competing overseas, winning or losing, injury, being elite at a young age,

having predispositions for mental health issues, and the loss of support networks.

Potential benefits in reducing stigma and increasing awareness may occur if professionals within the elite environment improve the health literacy of elite athletes and promote collaborative involvement. It is important that elite athletes are provided with multiple avenues for support and that confidentiality is adhered to, otherwise barriers and poor access to services will continue to reduce help-seeking behaviour. The role and interaction with player associations should be increased and maintained to allow alternative avenues and options for seeking help. Guidelines for sporting organisations on the sharing of information and effective prevention and intervention techniques may also reduce the likelihood of OFPB.

Suggestions for Further Research

Although this study identified a number of important findings that add to the existing literature in this field, further research is needed to verify and extend these results. For example, it would appear that young athletes face a number of potential risks and barriers in the elite sporting environment. Comparative studies on the similarities and differences of perspectives and experiences of OFPB with adolescent elite athletes may be an interesting area for further investigation. Since this study focused solely on elite New Zealand athletes, further research on OFPB and stressors, motives, and risk factors in relation to other groups (e.g., semi-professional and professional athletes, male and female athletes, athletes and non-sportspeople in professional roles, and different specific sporting codes) may also enhance our understanding on specific triggers and identify further areas for prevention and intervention.

It is recognised that discussion of cultural experiences and perspectives of OFPB is lacking in this study, mainly due to the characteristics of the sample group. This has been highlighted in the literature as an area where further research is urgently needed. Within the New Zealand context, Hippolite (2010) has argued that the experiences of Māori sportspeople are often dominated by Pākehā culture, leading to

frustration, feelings of hurt, loss of commitment and retirement from sport. It would be interesting to explore this topic with elite athletes from different cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. Comparative research with elite athletes in other countries would also be useful to see if similar trends occur in other cultural contexts.

Investigating this topic over time through longitudinal and/or case study research are other possible areas for future investigation. Participants in the current study were often asked to recall situations and experiences in retrospect. Therefore, a possible goal for future research may be to undertake a longitudinal study of stressor situations throughout athletes' sporting careers or seasons to ensure specific information is recalled in full. Longitudinal research is also crucial for measuring behaviour change, especially in implementing new prevention and intervention strategies.

Another interesting finding that emerged from the current research was the impact of OFPB on others. Therefore, research on the impact of OFPB from the perspectives of family members, partners, children, coaches, and mentors may also be helpful in understanding and preventing OFPB in elite athletes.

While participants in this study all reported involvement in OFPB at some stage during their sporting careers, none of the sample group appeared to have reached a level of clinical significance that warranted a formal diagnosis or extreme disciplinary action. Research that concentrates specifically on elite athletes who have reached a level of clinical significance may promote greater awareness and understanding of this topic.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

The rise of professionalism in sport has meant that the behaviour of elite athletes is now subject to intense scrutiny, both by the general public and the media. International research has found that elite athletes tend to engage in a number of antisocial behaviours, both on and off the field. However, the majority of these studies have focused largely on elite American college/university athlete populations. To date, very little research has been undertaken in New Zealand with regard to the off-field problematic behaviour (OFPB) of elite athletes, particularly from the perspectives of athletes themselves.

The results of this study suggest that a wide range of OFPB is present within the elite New Zealand sporting environment. Consistent with previous research, substance use, violence, inappropriate sexual behaviour, disordered eating, and extreme risk-taking behaviour were identified by participants as types of OFPB they had either experienced personally or witnessed in others during their sporting careers. It would appear, therefore, that elite athletes in New Zealand may face similar challenges and issues to those that have been reported internationally.

A variety of stressors, motives, and risk factors that may precipitate the development of OFPB were found in the current study. Becoming an elite athlete at a young age, having predispositions to mental health issues, the increase in professionalism and media attention, having an elite profile, and the impact of New Zealand drinking culture were the most significant stressors reported by participants. Similarly, a wide array of protective factors that may inhibit the development of OFPB was identified. For example, two key factors mentioned by participants were having strong social support networks and the development of positive relationships with coaches and management staff.

The impact of OFPB on self and others, and on individual and team performance, was a key finding of this study. Numerous barriers, such as

issues with confidentiality and trust, perceived stigma, and lack of problem and service awareness were found to reduce help-seeking behaviour. The potential negative consequences that seeking help may have on an athlete's sporting selection and future career development was an important factor. Participants in this study made a number of recommendations for therapeutic practice and suggested practical strategies that may be of use to professionals working in this field.

Many of the findings of the current study are consistent with previous research. However, some of the results are at variance with the literature. For example, age and competitive level appeared to be linked to a decrease in OFPB, specifically in relation to alcohol use. Similarly, the role of peer influence and macho attitudes was not highly prevalent in this research. Interestingly, a number of variables within the elite environment appeared to have a dual function. Stressors that were identified in the literature were also described by participants as having protective value (e.g., being a young elite athlete).

This study also provides evidence of a wide range of OFPB among elite athletes that has not been systematically explored in previous research. These include match-fixing, problem gambling, psychological manipulation, and non-adherence with team protocols. It is not clear how widespread these behaviours are within the New Zealand sporting environment and participants were divided as to whether or not these problems are increasing. A possible explanation for this finding may be that there is greater awareness of these types of behaviours in the current environment, due to increased media coverage of sport. It is also suggested that changes in the professional nature of elite sport may influence the development of these specific behaviours.

This study also highlights the potential relevance of theories, such as AGT and SDT, to specific areas of off-field behaviour. Practice implications for those working with elite athletes include the need to create task orientations and mastery-based motivational climates, instead of performance-based climates. A key finding in relation to practice was the issue of non-adherence to confidentiality by professionals. Trusting relationships were also considered to be crucial in reducing perceived

stigma and increasing help-seeking behaviour. If athletes are provided with appropriate education and avenues to seek help, and resources are made available, they may choose more socially acceptable ways of dealing with the stressors associated with elite sports. A collaborative approach between elite athletes and professionals in addressing OFPB may yield the greatest results in future. As emphasised throughout this research, elite athletes have valuable opinions and perceptions that are important in creating behaviour change.

This study identifies wider problematic behaviours experienced by elite athletes that are not currently well understood. One question that surfaced in this study was whether OFPB occurred more frequently in elite athletes than in other groups. Therefore, a key recommendation for further research is to compare the role of stressors, motives, and risk factors in different populations (e.g., cultural comparisons between Māori and non-Māori elite athletes). This would allow specific factors to be further identified within and between sports and for prevention and intervention to be more responsive to athletes' needs. Longitudinal research on OFPB in elite athletes might also allow for more in-depth exploration of this topic and help to identify high-risk periods or situations throughout athletes' careers, in addition to those outlined in the current study.

These results may be useful for other competitive levels, such as university athletes or non-elite athletes, and may have implications for other populations with a high propensity for antisocial behaviour. Greater knowledge and awareness of OFPB may help to reduce the stigma associated with help-seeking and allow for equitable access to services and intervention, regardless of social profile or position, gender, ethnicity, and age.

Overall, the findings of this study provide a unique insight into the OFPB of elite athletes in New Zealand and make a contribution to the relatively small body of knowledge in this field. In comparison to previous research, a key feature of this research was that it enabled participants to share their stories and allowed their voices to be heard. A better understanding of how OFPB develops may help to inform

prevention and intervention strategies and increase the range of support available to elite athletes. The results of this study may also address potential triggers, motives, and risk factors that facilitate OFPB to enhance the effectiveness of current provision for elite athletes. It is hoped that this research will be of use for practitioners, sporting organisations, coaches and management, and athletes themselves. Further investigation into the conditions that promote OFPB is crucial for athlete development, sporting engagement, and reducing potential negative flow-on effects for society.

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Appendices

Appendix A – List of Contemporary Media Articles

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Appendix B – Participant Introductory Letter

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Department of Psychology
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton 3240
10 March, 2013

Introductory Letter to Potential Research Participants

Dear

I am studying towards a Masters of Social Science degree (MSocSc) at the University of Waikato and will be undertaking research entitled *'Players' perspectives of problematic behaviour experienced among elite athletes in Aotearoa New Zealand: Management and intervention.'* The purpose of this research is to find out about elite athletes who have experienced problematic behaviour during their careers, personally or through others. For this research I will be using the following as a definition of problematic behaviour; *behaviour which is a source of concern for the individual or others in their surroundings, is undesirable according to the social and/or legal norm of society, is negatively associated with relationship quality and moral reasoning, and/or elicits some form of social response (e.g., disapproval, worry, shame, legal process).*

I hope to understand factors that increase and decrease the likelihood of such behaviour, to identify prevention strategies to improve sporting performance and athlete engagement in sport.

My interest in this area has risen from my own experiences as a semi-professional athlete and psychology student. Although there has been recent media hype around problematic behaviour in New Zealand athletes, away from sport, there is relatively little published research in this area in New Zealand.

If you are 18 years or over and are or have been eligible for regional and/or international selection in your sport, I would like to invite you to take part in this study. Further information is attached to this letter.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Alternatively, if you would like to discuss the research with someone else, please feel free to contact my chief supervisor, Dr Cate Curtis, at the University of Waikato. Our contact details are listed below [removed for privacy reasons:

Caitlin Easter (Researcher)   Dr Cate Curtis (Supervisor)

If you know any other athletes who meet the criteria and may be interested in participating, please feel free to pass on this information or contact me for additional copies.

I hope you see this study as worthwhile and agree to participate in the research. I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Caitlin Easter

Appendix C – Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

<u>Overview:</u>
The aim of this research is to explore risk management in elite athletes and the players' perspectives around managing risks. Risk management is *the process which enables risk factors that might lead to off-field problematic behaviour to be identified and the levels of risk associated with activities to be estimated and evaluated.* I am interested in the perspectives of athletes who have experienced problematic behaviour (e.g., excessive drinking, public violence, or anything they found personally troubling) during their sporting careers, either personally or by someone else. I hope to identify what has lead athletes down such paths, what temptations there were, what circumstances increased the likelihood of such behaviour, what helped lead them out of such behaviour, and what support would have been helpful in dealing with it.

By exploring problematic behaviour in high profile sportspeople, I intend to identify prevention and intervention strategies and, ultimately, improve sporting performance and athlete engagement.

<u>Research procedures:</u>
I would like to spend approximately 60 minutes talking with you (either face-to-face or via Skype) about your experiences with problematic behaviour among elite athletes throughout your career. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed by me and you will be given a copy of the transcript to review, and change if you wish. All comments and changes are to be returned within three weeks of receiving your transcript. If I do not get feedback from you within this time, I will assume the transcript is a true and accurate record of the interview discussion.

<u>Confidentiality and use of the interview data:</u>
As a participant you may choose to use a pseudonym (fake name) and remain anonymous. Pseudonyms will be used for any other person or organisation that is mentioned in the interview. However, despite every effort being made, there is the possibility that people who know you well may be able to identify you. While you may have received information about this research from your coach or others known to you, they will not be made aware of whether you choose to partake or decline in this research. The consent forms, interview tapes, and transcripts will be stored securely in a locked filling cabinet in my home during the research. Non-identifying information will be archived for a minimum period of five years, as required by the University of Waikato regulations for postgraduate research.

<u>Publication of the findings:</u>
Brief extracts from your interview transcript may be published in my masters thesis that will be held in the University of Waikato library and once published will be available electronically. Some information may also be used for academic publications and conference presentations which may be accessible to the public. However, you will not be identified in any publication/dissemination of the research findings without your explicit consent.

<u>Your rights:</u>

You can withdraw from the research up to two weeks after the interview. You may decline to participate in the research without giving any explanation and have the right not to answer specific questions. You can also ask questions at any point during the data collection process. You are entitled to access and correct any personal information that is collected about you prior to publication of the final thesis. You are also welcome to have a support person with you during the interview if you so wish.

Informed consent:
For ethical reasons I would like you to sign a consent form acknowledging your understanding of what is involved. This form helps confirm that you are taking part of your own free will and feel fully informed about the research and your part in it.

Further information, or to volunteer:
If you have any further questions or would like to take part please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your interest so far, I look forward to hearing from you and working alongside you. I am especially grateful for you time as such a busy athlete.


Kind regards,

Caitlin Easter

The School of Psychology Ethics Committee at the University of Waikato has approved this research. If you have any queries about the ethical conduct of this research please contact: Dr Nicola Starkey (Ethics committee convenor), Phone: 838 4466 ext. 6472, Email: nstarkey@waikato.ac.nz.

Appendix D – Participant Consent Form

Consent Form

Ψ **School of Psychology**
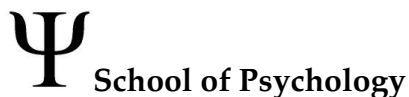
THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

PARTICIPANT'S COPY

Research Project: Players' perspectives of problematic behaviour among elite athletes in Aotearoa New Zealand: Management and intervention

Name of Researcher: Caitlin Easter

Name of Supervisor (if applicable): Dr Cate Curtis

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw up to two weeks after the interview. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Nicola Starkey, phone: 838 4466 ext.6472, e-mail nstarkey@waikato.ac.nz)

Participant's name: Signature: Date:

Consent Form

Ψ **School of Psychology**

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

RESEARCHER'S COPY

Research Project: Players' perspectives of problematic behaviour among elite athletes in Aotearoa New Zealand: Management and intervention

Name of Researcher: Caitlin Easter

Name of Supervisor (if applicable): Dr Cate Curtis

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee.

Participant's name: Signature: Date:

Appendix E – Participant Letter Post Data Analysis

Department of Psychology
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton 3240

Dear

I would like to thank you again for agreeing to participate in my research and for the knowledge and insight you have provided. I know that you are extremely busy and I really value the time you took to engage in the interview process.

Attached is a copy of a summary of main findings from my research. I am currently in the process of writing the relevant chapters of my thesis and plan to submit in January 2014. If you are interested in the final product please do not hesitate to contact me for an electronic copy. Alternatively, you can search for my thesis through the online database at the University of Waikato.

To access the research on the University database, please follow the link below (note it may not become available for some months):

   http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/handle/10289/2222

and search: Caitlin Easter

Once again, thank you for your time and willingness to share your experiences with me.

Kind regards,

Caitlin Easter

Appendix F – Summary of Key Findings

In total, 10 elite athletes, two of whom also have elite coaching roles, from seven different sporting codes were interviewed for this research.

Five major themes emerged from the interview:
1) Experiences of off-field problematic behaviour (OFPB) - both personal and observed in other athletes;
2) Stressors/motives/risk factors for OFPB;
3) Protective factors for OFPB;
4) Impact of OFPB; and
5) Help-seeking behaviour.

Key findings:
Numerous subthemes were found under each theme and these were broken down further into codes. In total, over 150 key ideas were noted as being consistent throughout the 10 interviews.

Theme one – Experiences of OFPB:
- Overall, elite athletes in New Zealand experienced or witnessed a wide range of OFPBs (NB: This is not suggesting that the participants necessarily experienced OFPBs themselves but that there was an awareness of OFPB within the New Zealand sporting context amongst elite athletes).
- Differences in perception of whether OFPB was increasing or decreasing were found. In general, the majority of participants felt that there had been a substantial increase in media reporting and attention in comparison to an increase or decrease in OFPB.
- Alcohol use was the most prevalent OFPB reported and discussed in this study. Other OFPB discussed included: violence, extreme risk-taking, sexualised behaviour, disordered eating, gambling, match-fixing and psychological manipulation.
- An interesting finding was the number of trivial or minor behaviours that appeared to fit into athletes' definitions of OFPB. For example, non-adherence to team protocols (e.g., being late, failing to meet curfews, wearing the wrong sponsored training gear, and poor nutrition). These behaviours would be considered trivial outside of the sporting context; however, they were a concern within the **elite** environment.

Theme two – Stressors/motives/risk factors for OFPB:
- Key triggers that increased the likelihood of OFPB or factors that acted as major stressors for elite athletes included: media influence; pressures in relation to professionalism in sport; and impact of coaches/management attitudes, values, and behaviour.
- Factors were also identified that were specific to the New Zealand (NZ) sporting context (e.g., having a elite profile and the impact of NZ drinking culture).
- Being on tour, competing overseas, and being detached from support networks also increased vulnerabilities to OFPBs.

Theme three – Protective factors:
- A number of stressors factors were also noted as protective factors depending on different contextual factors. For example, being elite at a young age, the media, professionalism, sponsorship, coaches/management, and having extra responsibilities had both risk and protective dual functions.
- Key findings for theme four were that of support, leadership, and making decisions that aligned with team and personal brands/values.

Theme four – Impact of OFPB:
- The biggest finding in relation to theme four was the impact of OFPBs on others. The impact of OFPB on the individual and performance were also noted; however, the impact on others, such as family, partners, friends, and the team were acknowledged as significant.

Theme five – Help-seeking behaviour:
- A range of barriers to seeking help were discussed as being present in the current sporting environment. The most important finding was issues with breaches in confidentiality by professionals when athletes sought help. This led to a reduction in help-seeking behaviour as athletes worried about non-adherence of confidentiality and the negative impact this may have on selection and career development.
- Similarly, athletes only approached those who they trusted, or identified something as being a problem when it came from someone they trusted and had a good relationship with.
- Stigma was another key barrier that reduced help-seeking behaviour. Athletes did not want to be seen as 'weak' if they admitted to having a problem or needing help.
- A lack of awareness in identifying problems (especially mental health issues) and a lack awareness of avenues to seek help also tended to reduce help-seeking behaviour.
- A number of recommendations were also made to help increase and enhance prevention and intervention strategies in the elite environment. These included:
  1) Greater education on social media and dealing with social situations (especially when alcohol is present and when a young athlete);
  2) Shared resources between sports and competitive levels on how to manage OFPB;
  3) Employing mental skills/sport psychologists or equivalent professionals in a full-time position;
  4) Scheduling activities that limit opportunities for engaging in OFPB when overseas;
  5) Building resilience in young elite athletes to ensure important life skills are developed; and
  6) Consistent intervention for dealing with OFPB (i.e., not ignoring inappropriate behaviour due to an individual's position and time in the team or sport).

Overall, a number of the findings were consistent with previous studies. However, no research has looked at such behaviours in elite samples from the perspectives of athletes themselves or in a New Zealand sample. Previous research has also focused largely on college/university samples, so this research highlights factors that are also present in elite adult

populations. Interesting and different findings were also established that were unique to the New Zealand sporting context and highlighted some relevant areas for future research.

If you would like any further information on these findings, please feel free to contact me. Thank you again for your insights.

Have a happy and safe Christmas.

Thanks again,

Caitlin Easter

Appendix G - Themes, Subthemes, and Codes

Table G1
Overview of Entire Data Set

Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Experiences of OFPB	Antisocial OFPB	Substance use Violence Risk-taking Match-fixing Sexual behaviour Gambling Psychological manipulation
	Other OFPB	Breaking team protocols Nutrition/recovery Emotional reactivity
	OFPB increasing/decreasing	OFPB increasing/decreasing
Stressors, motives, and risk factors	Individual	Decision-making Early sport engagement Elite at a young age Gender differences Injury Mental health Moved for sport Personality SES/culture Studying and elite Upbringing
	Social/external	Coaches/management Media influence Tour/travel Peer influence Professionalism Relationships Selection issues Social isolation Sponsorship Team culture Temptations
	NZ sporting factors	NZ drinking culture Elite profile Pressure to perform Winning/losing
Protective factors	Internal	Upbringing/SES culture Motivation Resilience Elite at young age

Themes	Subthemes	Codes
	External	Support Brand Leadership Extra responsibilities Contracts Coaches/management Team culture Media influence Professionalism Sponsorship
Impact of OFPB	Impact on others	Reputation Family Team
	Impact on self	Identity Mentality
	Impact on performance	During competition Focus Funding Physiological Opportunity
Help-seeking behaviour	Access	Trust/confidentiality Lack of awareness Stigma
	Prevention	Prevention (Past/current) Prevention (Needed/future)
	Intervention	Intervention (Past/current) Intervention (Needed/future)