

Recent Trends in Cycling Behaviour in Older Males: An Analysis and Plea for Therapeutic Options

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Short commentary

In recent years there has been an increase in middle-aged and older males riding bicycles along city streets. While this in itself would not seem to represent a problem, a number of issues arise. Firstly, these riders do not seem to venture outdoors unless they are surrounded by a pack of like-minded individuals—presumably they only feel safe in large numbers, which probably makes good sense given the consistency with which they seem to disobey basic road rules. The fact that they often constitute a traffic hazard with potentially lethal consequences seems underappreciated; for example, a study of 42 cycling deaths in South Australia showed that 95% of decedents were male, with a mean age of 47 years [1].

Although exercise and fitness are the purported reasons for this activity, riding a bicycle 100 meters to the nearest cafe to then consume a muffin or pastry the size of an infant's head seems counter intuitive. However, the most problematic aspect of these packs is their insistence in wrapping their lower anatomy in skin tight Lycra®. This raises questions as to why this phenomenon occurs, and whether this behaviour might constitute a newly evolving paraphilia ("cyclophilia"), or whether instead it is simply another example of more mundane, yet sadly-misplaced, narcissism.

A paraphilia is defined as recurrent and intense sexual arousal induced by atypical objects or activities [2] that may be associated with exhibitionism. Of note, it is well recognised that the wearing of Lycra®, also known as Spandex®, is associated with fetishistic sexual behaviour [3], and so is it possible that some riders are actually obtaining sexual gratification from the wearing of their tight, shiny and skimpy costumes in public?

It seems unlikely, at least by direct observation, that fetishistic motivations apply to most of our aging riders, which per-

haps leads us to the conclusion that narcissism may be the real "elephant in the room" for our senescent would-be athletes. Narcissists consider themselves entitled and superior, and their behaviour is characterised by exhibitionism and vanity, often revolving around the purchase of "high-prestige objects" that have been described as "flashy, exclusive and luxurious" [4]. Could this description apply to our cyclists?

On a more positive note, the phenomenon of MAMIL (middle-aged men in Lycra®) activity may be a fruitful area for future investigation, with the ultimate goals of establishing an understanding of this "cyclopathic" behaviour, identifying diagnostic and prognostic features, and developing effective pharmaceutical and/or psychoanalytic treatments. Finally, a disturbing and sad fact is the number of medically-qualified geriatrics who are guilty of this type of behaviour.

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